



ACCESS AND EQUITY POLICY

STATEMENT:

Shafston endeavours to:

Ensure the establishment of non-discriminatory student selection procedures which encourage fair access for members of under-represented groups

Ensure access and equity issues are considered during curriculum development

Provide access to staff development to assist trainers/teachers who deliver courses to under-represented groups.

We will meet the needs of individuals, and the community as a whole through the integration of access and equity guidelines. We will ensure that equity principles for all people are implemented through the fair allocation of resources and the right to equality of opportunity without discrimination. We will increase opportunities for people to participate in the vocational education and training system, and in associated decisions which affect their lives.

We will implement oriented conservation programmes and target the specific needs of market segments in enhancing the economic development of the organisation.

Background

In the past there were often barriers and obstacles that prevented certain groups within the community being able to access education and training. Some of these barriers were deliberate – others were based on tradition, or lack of forethought and understanding. As a society, we have learnt that we cannot afford to limit the opportunities of different groups in this way. Our culture is rich with skills, ideas, creativity and potential. But if we don't offer people the chance to develop and use their talents and abilities we are not only limiting people's lives, we are also denying the community a wealth of resources.

Access and Equity means ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to successfully gain skills, knowledge and experience through education and training.

In the context of access and equity it is vital that we improve the participation of the following priority target groups:

- Women
- Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds
- People with a disability
- Rural and regionally-isolated communities
- People in transition and other special groups (ie. people re-entering the workforce, sole parents, people with literacy issues, the long-term unemployed, and those who have been institutionalised)

Access and Equity is about abolishing barriers and opening up opportunities to the target groups stated above. It means looking at education and training and asking a number of key questions:

- Is the training accessible to everyone?
- Is it inclusive?



- Is it meeting learner needs?
- Is it meeting industrial and community needs?
- Is there support for learners with different and diverse needs?
- Does the education and training acknowledge and celebrate diversity?
- Does the student population reflect the diversity of backgrounds and experiences found within the broader community?
- Is education and training attracting and supporting people who, in the past, have been excluded – or unsuccessful – in their studies?

Only when we can answer 'yes' to each of these questions will we be truly providing quality education to all.

Purpose

DETA Queensland is responsible for ensuring that the vocational educational and training products and services provided by Queensland Registered Training Organisations are relevant and responsive to the needs of their clients. DETA Queensland is the key policy adviser to the Minister for Training and Industrial Relations on issues associated with the vocational education and training system.

Access and Equity for the vocational education and training system in Queensland is based on the application of the following principles:

- *Equity for all people through the fair and appropriate allocation of resources and involvement in vocational education and training*
- *Equality of outcome within Queensland's vocational education and training for all people, without discrimination*
- *Access for all people to appropriate, quality vocational education and training programmes and services*
- *Increased opportunity for people to participate in vocational educational and training and in relevant decision making processes within the vocational education and training system*

Access and Equity, as a best practice strategy, underpins and informs all other policies and programmes within the vocational education and training system. It should be used and considered by all training providers, policy makers and programme managers in the vocational education and training system when:

- developing their own access and equity implementation strategy
- developing appropriate service and programmes
- formulating, implementing and reviewing their own operational policies and strategic plans, and
- evaluating the aims, objectives and delivery of their programmes

Best practice in vocational education and training (VET) involves the establishment of social justice in VET institutions and an adherence to the principles of access and equity. It involves benchmarking for people who face barriers to successful participation in mainstream VET and to achieve improvements for them.

Best practice programmes acknowledge the complexity within the specific groups and the multiple barriers to educational participation experienced by some people.

With these principles providing a basis for action, the objectives of the Access and Equity Policy for the VET system are:



1. To incorporate access and equity principles and practices in key processes which affect the outcomes for students in the vocational education and training system eg. training programme development and design; staff development.
2. To achieve equitable access for all current and potential students and clients to vocational education and training services and programmes in Queensland
3. To increase the participation of people who are under-represented in vocational education, training and employment services and programmes, by setting targets for funding arrangements
4. To increase participation in decision making processes associated with for people from under-represented groups
5. To encourage positive outcomes for students and clients of the vocational education and training system by giving them enabling skills to participate successfully in vocational education and training services and programmes
6. To develop quality and support services which enhance clients' and students' changes to achieve positive outcomes
7. To provide incentives and support for registered training organisations who develop and implement access and equity strategies

Terms and definitions

Affirmative Action is an umbrella term for a wide range of programmes designed to achieve equal opportunity for women, based on merit.

Cultural Diversity acknowledges the many differences within society based on cultural backgrounds and experiences (rather than just looking at differences between individuals)

Discrimination. There are two types of discrimination – direct and indirect

Direct Discrimination occurs when a person is treated unfairly because of their sex, sexuality, race, age or because they have a disability

Indirect Discrimination is more difficult to identify and often occurs unintentionally. Indirect discrimination often happens when there is a requirement (a rule, a policy or a system):

- which appears fair
- but has an unfavourable effect on one group compared with another
- and in the circumstances, the requirements is not reasonable

If the impact of the requirement is proportionally worse on one particular group (eg. one culture over another; women as opposed to men) then indirect discrimination is probably occurring.

Equal Opportunity is about making sure that people are not discriminated against on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, sexuality, marital status or pregnancy. Equal Opportunity legislation ensures that people have an 'equal starting point' and that they are not treated unfairly on the basis of difference.

Equity focuses on outcomes. Equity is not concerned with treating people 'the same', it is concerned with ensuring that all groups of people participate and benefit to the same level.

Inclusive: an 'inclusive environment, classroom or curriculum is one that acknowledges and values the differences between people and cultures. It 'includes' rather than excludes.