

Bullying and Harassment Prevention and Response Policy and Procedure

Purpose

This policy ensures HATS QLD Pty Ltd. T/A Hope Centre Education provides a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all students, staff, and stakeholders by preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying, harassment, or discrimination. It establishes clear procedures for reporting, investigating, and resolving incidents while protecting the rights and wellbeing of everyone in our learning community.

Clause Alignment:

- *Outcome Standard 1.4:* Learners receive information about policies ensuring a safe learning environment.
- *Outcome Standard 1.7:* Learners receive support when personal safety or wellbeing is affected.
- *Outcome Standard 4.1:* Clear, accurate communication of student rights and responsibilities regarding bullying and harassment.

Legislation Alignment:

- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) – Part 6-4B, Stop Bullying Orders: Establishes protections against workplace bullying for workers, including students in placements.
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) – Sections 6–7: Defines unlawful discrimination and harassment related to protected attributes, including disability, race, sex, age, and more.
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) – Section 5–6: Prohibits direct and indirect disability discrimination, relevant when bullying targets a person with a disability.
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) & Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth): Provide further protections from harassment based on race, sex, or related attributes.

Policy Statement

2.1 Hope Centre Education has zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, discrimination, or any form of threatening or abusive behaviour.

2.2 All members of Hope Centre Education, including students, staff, and visitors, have the right to learn and work in an environment free from harassment or bullying.

2.3 Bullying and harassment can include repeated, unreasonable behaviour that humiliates, intimidates, or threatens an individual. It may be verbal, physical, social, or psychological, and can also occur online (cyberbullying).

2.4 Harassment may relate to protected attributes such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or age, as defined in the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) and relevant Commonwealth legislation.

Bullying and Harassment Prevention and Response Policy and Procedure

2.5 All reports of bullying or harassment will be treated seriously, confidentially, and investigated promptly, ensuring natural justice for all parties.

Procedure

3.1 Prevention and Communication

- During orientation, students are informed of their rights and responsibilities regarding respectful behaviour.
- The Student Handbook, website, and policy documents clearly state Hope Centre Education's expectations and procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment.
- Trainers and staff are trained to identify signs of bullying or harassment and intervene early.

3.2 Reporting an Incident

- Any student or staff member who experiences or witnesses bullying or harassment should report it as soon as possible.
- Reports can be made to a trainer, the RTO Manager, or the CEO, either verbally or in writing.
- Anonymous reports will be accepted but may limit the ability to investigate.

3.3 Investigation

- A nominated senior staff member will acknowledge the report within two working days and conduct a prompt, fair, and impartial investigation.
- Investigations will gather relevant evidence, including witness statements if necessary.
- The process will ensure confidentiality and protect the rights of both the complainant and respondent.

3.4 Resolution

- Possible outcomes include:
 - Mediation between parties if appropriate,
 - Disciplinary action against the perpetrator, up to and including suspension or termination of enrolment/employment,
 - Referral to external agencies (e.g., police) if the incident may constitute a criminal offence.
- The outcome will be communicated to the complainant in writing.

Bullying and Harassment Prevention and Response Policy and Procedure

3.5 Support and Protection

- Support services will be offered to all parties involved, including counselling referrals where required.
- Measures will be taken to protect the complainant from further harm or victimisation.

3.6 Records Management

- A confidential record of the report, investigation, findings, and actions taken will be stored securely and retained in accordance with Hope Centre Education's Records Management Policy.

Communication

- This policy is communicated to students and staff at induction, in the Student Handbook, on the website, and during staff professional development sessions.

Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy is reviewed annually or sooner if required by legislative, standards, or organisational changes, as part of Hope Centre Education's Continuous Improvement process.