Clinical Care Policy

Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) This policy aims:

a. To ensure the delivery of best practice clinical care across VU Clinics.
b. To provide opportunities for students enrolled in health, allied health and social assistance courses at VU to undertake high quality clinical experience in-house.

Section 2 - Scope / Application

(2) This policy applies to:

a. All VU Clinics;
b. All healthcare staff, professional staff, students, supervisors, academic staff and volunteers in their activities at, with or on behalf of the Clinic; and
c. All client care, educational, and management activities performed at, with or on behalf of the Clinic.

(3) This policy does not apply to:

a. Clinical placements where students are placed with external healthcare providers (eg. hospitals) not operated by VU;
b. The research operations of any Clinics.

Section 3 - Commencement

(4) This Policy will commence on 1 July 2016.

Section 4 - Definitions

(5) Clinic: All clinics operated by or on behalf of Victoria University, in any health, allied health, or social assistance field or fields, which provide clinical services (excluding beauty services and therapeutic services such as massage).

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(6) VU operates Clinics for the following related purposes:

a. To provide opportunities for students in health, allied health and social assistance courses to obtain practical experience in their discipline in an in-house clinical setting;
b. To support best practice in teaching and learning, and community services; and
c. To deliver high quality and best practice clinical care to clients.

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Part A - Governance

(7) All Clinics will comply with any applicable federal, state and University regulations, legislation, rules and policies, in addition to any code of conduct established by relevant professional bodies.

(8) The Directors of Clinics will report annually to the Academic Board on the operations of all clinics.

(9) The University will provide all Clinics with appropriate insurance coverage.

(10) Each Clinic will operate within a current business plan. The business plan will set goals in line with the VU Strategic Plan.

(11) All Clinics will maintain records of their activities, including records of client care, in accordance with:

a. The Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic);
b. The Health Records Act (Vic) 2001;
c. The Privacy Policy and Procedure;
d. The Records Management Policy and Procedures;
e. All relevant University IT policies; and
f. any standards established by the relevant discipline's professional body;

Part B - Client Care

Client Rights and Engagement

(12) VU acknowledges and supports the rights of all clients as established under the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights in Victoria.

a. Access: All people have a right to access VU Clinics.
    i. Some eligibility criteria may be applicable for certain treatments offered at VU Clinics; and where this occurs, the criteria will be clearly stated, equitable and accessible.
    ii. Where costs are levied for treatments in Clinics, these costs will be kept at the lowest feasible level and will be clearly advised to all clients before treatments commence.
b. Safety: All people being treated at VU Clinics will receive safe, high quality care.
    i. All biohazards will be managed in accordance with the University's Biosafety Policy and Procedure.
    ii. Appropriate supervision will be in place to ensure safe care is delivered.
    iii. Staff and students involved in direct client care in Clinics will have, and provide evidence of, all required immunisations for clinical work.
c. Respect: All people who interact with VU's Clinics as clients, carers or members of the public will be treated with respect. In particular, this means:
    i. Cultural and religious differences will be respected, acknowledged, and where possible, complied with;
    ii. No person will be subjected to discriminatory, harassing or bullying behaviour based on any of the protected attributes covered under the University's Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Management Policy and Bullying Prevention and Management Policy;
    iii. Personal dignity will be supported at all times; and
    iv. Differences of opinion and perspective will be treated seriously and given due weight.
d. Communication: VU will ensure that all clients are informed about:
    i. the nature of any proposed treatments;

ii. what treatments are designed to achieve;
iii. the possible consequences of them;
iv. any alternative treatment options;
v. any costs involved;
vi. any use of technology (eg. medical equipment, audio-visual equipment); and
vii. any other information which may be relevant to their decision

in a way that is clear, comprehensible and acceptable to the client and (if relevant) any carer or carers.

(13) Clinics will ensure that they actively listen to clients, both in the establishment of their relevant medical history and in hearing and acting upon client expressions of preferences, concerns, and goals for treatment.

(14) Consent: VU will ensure that clients (or their authorised representatives) have enough information and time to consider their options and provide informed consent to any treatments proposed.

(15) Participation: Client participation is a key feature of Clinics.

a. Individual level: Clients have a right to participate in their treatment to the extent they wish. This includes the right to delay, modify or refuse treatment, the right to request referrals or second opinions, the right to involve family, friends or carers in the discussion or delivery of their care, and the right to refuse audio and/or video recording or live-streaming of their care.
b. Community level: VU will wherever possible engage with clients to help ensure that the Clinics' direction and focus is reflective of, and responsive to, community interests.

(16) Privacy: Clients' privacy will be maintained at all times, in accordance with VU's Privacy Policy and associated procedures.

(17) Feedback and comments: VU will make available a range of accessible, transparent mechanisms for clients, carers and the public to provide comments and feedback on all aspects of the clinics' operations.

Part C - Professional Practice

Scope of Practice

(18) All health, allied health and social assistance practitioners and students practising at Clinics will operate strictly within the scope of practice of the discipline in which they are working and, where appropriate, will also be registered at the appropriate level with the relevant professional body.

Professional Behaviour

(19) All students and practitioners have a professional and ethical obligation to protect and promote public health and safe healthcare, and to behave in a professional manner at all times.

(20) All health, allied health and social assistance practitioners and students practising at Clinics are expected to abide by the applicable Clinic Code of Conduct and any relevant discipline codes of practice. In particular, it is expected that staff and students will:

a. Act in the best interests of the client;
b. Act in accordance with the principles of client rights provided in Part B of this Policy;
c. Remove themselves from providing care if there is:
    i. a conflict of interest;
    ii. any factor, whether temporary or ongoing, affecting their capacity to deliver appropriate care; or

iii. an issue that falls outside of their scope of practice.

Part D - Learning and Teaching in Clinics

(21) VU Clinics are learning and teaching environments, supporting the practical education of future healthcare and related practitioners.

For this reason, these Clinics may:

a. Use single or group student consultations as appropriate;
b. With consent, live-stream or record some consultations for assessment and to promote better teaching and learning; and
c. Focus on continuous improvement of techniques for client treatment, communication and service.

(22) Clinics are a key part of the educational experience offered to VU students in health and allied health disciplines and social assistance. As such, disciplines that utilise the practical experience opportunities offered at Clinics will:

a. Have clearly defined learning outcomes for each unit of study involving Clinic experience;
b. Support students' learning through their Clinic experiences; and
c. Work collaboratively with any other disciplines involved with the Clinic to maximise opportunities for students to practice and learn approaches to healthcare delivery.

Part E - Behaviour Management at VU Clinics

Behaviour of staff

(23) All VU and Clinic staff, academic and professional, are expected to behave in accordance with all VU policies and all relevant legislation while working at the Clinic and engaging with its students and clients.

(24) Staff and supervisors are expected to provide adequate guidance to students, and act in the best interests of the client.

Behaviour of students

(25) All students are expected to behave in accordance with all VU policies and relevant legislation while working at the Clinic, and engaging with its staff and clients.

(26) Students are expected to interact cooperatively/inclusively with one another in the best interests of the client, and also respect and accommodate other disciplines'/students' professional opinions.

Behaviour of clients, carers and members of the public

(27) Clients, their carers and members of the public interacting with Clinics are expected to behave appropriately. In particular:

a. Aggressive or abusive speech or behaviour towards staff, students, other clients or carers will not be tolerated. People who exhibit these behaviours will be required to leave the Clinic immediately.
b. Generally offensive or objectionable behaviour will lead to a request for the behaviour to cease. If this request should be disregarded, the individual will be asked to leave the clinic.

(28) All VU clinics reserve the right to refuse further treatment to any individual who has previously exhibited aggressive or abusive behaviours towards staff, students, other clients, carers or members of the public.

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Complaints

Complaints by students or staff

(29) Students wishing to lodge a complaint regarding the behaviour of staff or other students, or the educational aspects of the clinical program may do so using the Student Complaints Policy.

(30) Staff wishing to lodge a complaint against another staff member may do so using the Staff Complaints Resolution Policy.

(31) Students or staff are also able to lodge a complaint under VU's Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Management Policy, and Bullying Prevention and Management Policy, where applicable.

Complaints by clients, carers or members of the public

(32) Complaints by members of the public about the University, its staff, its students or third parties providing services on behalf of the University may lodge a complaint under the Public Complaints Policy.

(33) Complaints by current or prospective clients, or members of the public, about any aspect of the service delivery provided at Clinics may be lodged under the particular Clinic's complaints guidelines.

Section 6 - Procedures

(34) Nil.

Section 7 - References

VU Policies

(35) Privacy Policy and Procedure

(36) Health and Safety Policy

(37) Research Policies

(38) Biosafety Policy

(39) Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Management Policy

(40) Bullying Prevention and Management Policy

(41) Student Complaints Policy

(42) Staff Complaints Resolution Policy

(43) Public Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure

Section 8 - Guidelines

(44) Individual Clinics may develop guidelines under this policy which are relevant to their particular Clinic.

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