

# Children on Campus Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- a. Staff and students are assisted and supported, wherever possible, to successfully combine their life, family, work and/or study responsibilities in ways which are proactive, contribute to staff development, career or educational progression for staff and support the University's operational requirements;
- b. The University is compliant with relevant anti-discrimination legislation and University policy by adopting a proactive approach to ensure that discrimination on the basis of sex, marital status, parental or carer status does not occur;
- c. The University complies with occupational health and safety requirements in order to protect all persons (including children) from exposure to risk when on University campuses or associated sites;
- d. Guidance is provided to staff and students and their supervisors/managers/teaching staff in relation to children on campus; and
- e. Staff and students are informed of their rights, responsibilities and obligations regarding bringing children onto University campuses or associated sites.

(2) This policy must be read in conjunction with the Breast/Bottle Feeding and Expressing on Campus policy, Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedures for staff, Student Complaints Resolution Policy and the Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures.

## Section 2 - Scope / Application

(3) This policy is important to:

- a. Staff;
- b. Students;
- c. Applicants (potential staff);
- d. Managers/Supervisors; and
- e. People and Culture / Student Wellbeing.

## Section 3 - Definitions

(4) Breastfeeding - the feeding of a child/infant directly from the mother's breast.

(5) Bottle feeding - the feeding of a child/infant from a bottle with expressed breastmilk or a substitute milk product.

(6) Campus or Associated Site - any University campus, workplace and site used for work or study purposes. It includes field and research stations, buildings, grounds, vehicles, farms and commercial operations.

(7) Carer - a person who responsibility for the care of a child(ren) at the time relevant to the application of the policy.

(8) Child/Children - any person 14 years of age and under.

(9) Staff - all persons employed by the University.

(10) Student - A person who is enrolled in any VU program. This includes students on leave of absence from their studies; research students awaiting thesis examination results; and persons enrolled or registered in non-award programs.

(11) Supervisor/Manager - all University staff members with a responsibility for the management or supervision of staff.

(12) Teaching staff - University staff with responsibility for the supervision of students.

## **Section 4 - Policy Statement**

(13) The University recognises that staff and students may need to combine their family, work and educational responsibilities and that staff and students who are parents or carers may need to bring their child/ren on campus on some occasions (eg. due to unexpected difficulties in normal childcare arrangements, breastfeeding or during school holiday time). The University is committed to ensuring that there is no direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of sex, parenthood or status as a carer and that the competing demands of various roles such as parent, carer, student and employee can be balanced in such a way that all staff and students have the opportunity to fulfil and exercise their potential.

(14) Staff and students may bring children onto a University campus or associated site where difficulties arise with normal childcare arrangements or for the purposes of breast/bottle feeding, provided that they comply with this policy. The University does not expect that children will be routinely brought onto campus in place of other childcare arrangements. The University expects that children on campus arrangements will not unreasonably interfere with operational requirements and, wherever possible and where it is safe to do so, will allow children on campus so that the parent/carer can attend classes or the workplace.

(15) A child who is unable to attend school or normal childcare facilities due to illness should also not be brought to the University to ensure the safety of other staff/students/visitors. In cases where a child is ill, staff members are able to access appropriate leave provisions for the purpose of caring for the child. Students should contact the appropriate teaching staff member to organise alternative study arrangements (e.g. study notes or extensions to assignments).

(16) The ultimate responsibility for the safety of any person on a University campus or associated site resides with the University. The University therefore reserves the right to decide whether a child should be permitted, or should be allowed to remain, in any particular location.

### **Children's Services**

(17) The University is committed to the long-term provision of on-campus, accessible childcare. Further information of childcare facilities is available from the Manager, Children's Services or from the University website.

### **Equal Opportunity**

(18) Anti-Discrimination Legislation prohibits discrimination against a person by reason of that person being a parent, carer or having certain family responsibilities. It is unlawful to discriminate in employment and education against a person on the grounds of parental status or status as a carer and on the grounds of family responsibilities. This policy seeks to ensure that staff and students are not disadvantaged in their careers or studies by family responsibilities. The University recognises that provision for staff and students with family responsibilities is a fundamental prerequisite for achieving equality of opportunity. While family responsibilities affect both men and women, the University

acknowledges that the primary responsibility for childcare more commonly remains with women. This policy therefore forms part of the University's equal opportunity program for women and reflects the University's obligations and commitments in this regard.

## **Health, Safety and Welfare**

(19) Where the presence of a child is deemed to be creating a hazard or creating an unreasonable interference with workplace or student operations the University is obliged to take action. This may include requesting the parent/carer remove the child(ren) from campus or the location assessed to be a risk.

## **Access to specific areas**

(20) Certain areas of the University may have supplementary policies or guidelines relating to children that must be consistent with overall University policy. Unless expressly authorised by the Head of School/Department/work unit, children are not permitted in the following areas:

- a. Laboratories, workshops, plant rooms and clinical areas;
- b. Agricultural, horticultural or other science based areas that store associated chemicals, liquids or equipment;
- c. Construction sites, areas where minor works or maintenance are being conducted or where machinery may be in use;
- d. Student residential areas operated by the University;
- e. Food preparation areas, kitchens, or areas where cleaning or associated chemicals may be found;
- f. Areas containing Sport Science (Physiology) fitness and exercise equipment, floor based heaters and wet floors; and
- g. Any other hazardous areas.

## **Supervision**

(21) The University requires that (except in the case of children attending campus child care or University sports camps):

- a. children brought onto a University campus or associated site are fully supervised at all times by a parent or carer;
- b. the parent/carer must not ask or expect other staff or students to take care of their child(ren); and
- c. responsibility for the safety and well being of the child(ren) resides with the parent/carer.

## **Requests**

### **Making a request**

(22) Staff and students wishing to bring a child(ren) onto a University campus or associated site should make a request to their supervisor/manager or teaching staff. Requests should be reasonable in the circumstances and give due consideration to the University's operational requirements and to health and safety. Requests should be made as soon as possible, preferably at least 24 hours in advance, to allow due consideration and time for any changes to be implemented.

### **Responding to a Request**

(23) Where a request to bring a child(ren) on campus is received from a staff member or student, the supervisor/manager/teaching staff will consider it on its merits and not unreasonably refuse the request. Consideration should be given to the University's Equity and Diversity Policy for Staff, Student Equity and Social Inclusion and the Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy for staff and its obligations under anti-discrimination and Fair Work

legislation. Where appropriate, advice should be sought from People and Culture and/or Student Equity, Student Engagement.

(24) Requests must comply with conditions outlined in the Children on Campus Policy and considerations will include:

- a. the nature of the request, including the nature of the workplace or the study forum attended by the parent/carer;
- b. the needs of the parent/carer and the provision of adequate supervision;
- c. whether the presence of the child on campus will present any health or safety risk to the child(ren) or any other person;

### **Refusing a Request**

(25) A request to bring a child(ren) on campus, or for work/study arrangements to allow a staff member/student to do so, may be refused if it imposes an unreasonable hardship or an unreasonable health and safety risk. Where a request is refused the staff member/student must be provided with a response in writing within 21 days of receipt of the request outlining in detail the reasons for the refusal and any suggested alternatives. The response must be signed and dated by the supervisor/manager/teaching staff member.

### **Appeals**

(26) Where a staff member or student feels that a request has been unreasonably refused they may proceed in accordance with the:

- a. Staff Issue and Complaint Resolution Policy; or
- b. Student Complaints Resolution Policy.

(27) Staff and students retain the right to use alternative and/or external avenues of appeal or complaint.

## **Section 5 - Procedures**

(28) Nil

## **Section 6 - Guidelines**

(29) Nil

## Status and Details

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