

# Equity and Diversity for Staff Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) Principles of equal opportunity, equity and social justice are embodied in the Victoria University Act 2010. The objectives of the University include 'the provision of programs and services in ways which reflect principles of equity and social justice'. Under the Act, the University is committed to contributing to realising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations and safeguarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage [Victoria University Act 2010, Part 2, s.5 (f) and (g)].

(2) These core principles are strongly aligned with 'Making VU 2016: A Statement of Purpose', which establishes Victoria University's Strategic Direction and Priorities 2008-2016. Two of Victoria University's Values are 'equality of opportunity for students and staff' and 'diversity for its contribution to creativity and the enrichment of life'. Planning and strategy development recognise that the University's past is characterised by 'an embedded commitment to social justice and equity'. This commitment also forms the basis of the University's Equity and Diversity Strategy for Staff.

(3) This policy replaces the former Equity and Diversity Policy (for Staff and Students) December 2009, which was approved as an interim policy subsequent to a review of the Equity and Diversity Policy 2008. A separate Equity, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy will apply to students of VU.

## Section 2 - Scope / Application

(4) This policy applies to all staff of the University community, at both domestic and offshore campus locations and associated work sites, including student residences, and to staff of the University undertaking University work, study or professional experience in places other than Victoria University campuses.

## Section 3 - Definitions

(5) Diversity: Diversity involves recognising the value of individual differences in the workplace and educational setting. Diversity in this context includes, age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, family responsibilities, gender, language, religious belief and sexual orientation. Diversity also refers to the other ways in which people are different, such as educational level, life experience, work experience, socio-economic background, personality and marital status.

(6) Equity: Equity relates to fair treatment. Our equity objective is to ensure that people from all groups in society have the opportunity to participate successfully in post-secondary education and employment. Target groups include (but are not limited to) Indigenous people, people with disabilities, women in areas where they are currently under-represented, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

(7) Equal Opportunity: Equal opportunity is about ensuring that everyone has equal access to, and opportunity to take part in, areas of public life such as, education, employment, accommodation and access to goods and services. Equal opportunity law sets standards for the way we treat each other in these areas and provides remedies for people who have been treated unfairly.

(8) Human Rights: Human rights are the basic entitlements that belong to all of us just because we are human beings. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, forms the basis of these entitlements. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 is a formal recognition of Human Rights and aims to protect people from injustice and to allow everyone to participate in and contribute to society.[The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities explained, VEOHRC, 2009.] Our human rights entitlements include:

- a. Civil and political rights such as the right to life, liberty and freedom from torture and slavery, freedom of opinion, expression and religion;
- b. Economic and social rights such the right to health care, education, work, food and a reasonable standard of living;
- c. Environmental and cultural rights including the right to live in a clean environment protected from destruction and the right to cultural, political and economic development.

(9) Social Justice: the attainment of a more equitable society, to which the University contributes through the transforming power of education.

(10) Discrimination: Discrimination means treating someone unfairly or less favourably because of a characteristic such as their sex or race or age (see list of protected attributes at clause 17). Discrimination can also be setting a requirement that people with a particular characteristic (protected attribute) cannot meet and which is not reasonable in the circumstances.

(11) Direct discrimination on the part of an educator, employer, provider of goods and services (including accommodation) and in the areas of sport or clubs, involves treating a person less favourably because of a protected attribute than another person in comparable circumstances. It is recognised that some forms of harassment may amount to unlawful discrimination.

(12) The term indirect discrimination refers to a requirement, condition or practice which appears to be neutral but which results in a particular person or group being adversely affected and which is unreasonable in the circumstances.

(13) Harassment: refers to discriminatory behaviour in relation to a protected attribute, which is reasonably likely in all the circumstances, to humiliate, offend, intimidate or distress the person(s) concerned. [See the Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy (for staff) for further details and examples of harassment, including sexual harassment.]

## **Section 4 - Policy Statement**

### **Purpose**

(14) This policy gives effect to Victoria University's commitment to the promotion of equity and social justice as well as the recognition of diversity in employment:

- a. by recognising the spirit and principles of equal opportunity legislation and practice, based on international human rights conventions;
- b. by undertaking proactive programs for designated staff equity groups (see definition of Equity above);
- c. by making a commitment to implement strategic initiatives to promote equity, diversity and social justice, particularly as it relates to the western region of Melbourne; and
- d. by responding appropriately to issues of unlawful discrimination & harassment in the workplace.

### **Equity, Diversity and Social Justice**

(15) Victoria University is committed to being fair, equitable and sensitive to the diverse needs of all its students and

staff in all its policies and practices. The following principles of equity and social justice will be integrated into all the University structures, policies and procedures:

- a. fairness in the provision of University services and programs to staff;
- b. fair access to educational and employment opportunities at the University;
- c. fair opportunities for successful participation of staff in University programs and services;
- d. opportunities for genuine participation in decision-making for staff and relevant members of the University community;
- e. promotion of a learning and work environment which is socially inclusive, values diversity and allows staff to realise their full potential, where staff are able to study and work effectively without fear of discrimination or harassment; and
- f. protection of the human rights of staff.

(16) The University will develop and operate plans and programs to increase access and promote success in education and employment for designated under-represented groups.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

(17) In order to meet its obligations under this policy, Victoria University will promote equal opportunity in all aspects of the University's activities through strategic initiatives and by eliminating unlawful direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on the grounds of:

- a. race, colour, national or ethnic origin, descent, nationality;
- b. sex, gender identity, lawful sexual activity, sexual orientation;
- c. marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, family responsibilities, status as a parent or carer;
- d. religious or political belief or activity, industrial activity, irrelevant criminal record;
- e. age, physical features, disability (past, present or imputed), medical record; and
- f. personal association with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above listed attributes.

(18) The University's policy should be interpreted to include all attributes protected by Federal and State anti-discrimination legislation.

### **The University's Commitments**

(19) The University will develop and implement plans and programs to promote equal opportunity and to increase access and promote success in education and employment for designated under-represented groups. The University is particularly committed to providing policies and programs which facilitate social inclusion by recognising and addressing the character and needs of the people of the western region of Melbourne.

(20) To promote equity and equal opportunity, Victoria University will:

- a. provide a teaching, learning and working environment that values cultural and linguistic diversity, fosters mutual respect and cultural competence and responds to diverse needs;
- b. ensure that its structures, policies and practices are free from direct and indirect discrimination
- c. educate the University community on the goals and philosophy of equal opportunity, equity and social justice;
- d. use non-discriminatory, inclusive language and practices; and
- e. provide effective mechanisms to resolve equal opportunity-related complaints.

## **Responsibility**

(21) All staff are responsible for understanding and applying the principles of equal opportunity, equity and social justice. Senior staff, academic and teaching staff, managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the teaching, learning and working environment is safe, inclusive and free from discrimination and harassment.

## **Implementation**

(22) Actions required to implement this policy include:

- a. Ensuring that all University policies, procedures and plans for staff are consistent with equal opportunity principles and practices;
- b. On-going review and implementation of the Disability Action Plan and staff equity and diversity plans and policies to meet legislative and government requirements;
- c. Undertaking the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Program;
- d. Ensuring procedures to resolve equal-opportunity related complaints are regularly updated and provide prompt, fair and effective outcomes for staff ; and
- e. Providing equal opportunity online training for all staff and specialised training as appropriate.

(23) Pro-active measures to assist faculties, departments, schools and units to achieve equal opportunity in employment will be identified, encouraged and monitored by Staff Equity. Such measures will take into account groups identified through analysis of the University's staff profile data as well as those targeted in anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation and relevant government policies and programs.

(24) To ensure the effectiveness of this policy, the University will:

- a. require senior managers in the University to integrate equal opportunity, equity, diversity and social justice objectives into the functional and operational plans for their area of responsibility;
- b. ensure that staff are trained in equal opportunity, equity, diversity and social justice matters;
- c. monitor and review progress in the implementation of equal opportunity, equity, diversity and social justice;
- d. develop objectives and/or performance indicators for equal opportunity, equity, diversity and social justice outcomes to facilitate accountability; and
- e. provide expert, professional assistance through Staff Equity to decision-making bodies and senior managers in order to facilitate embedding equal opportunity, equity, diversity and social justice strategies and mechanisms throughout the University; and
- f. provide support to all staff affected by this policy.

## **Promotion**

(25) Information regarding this policy shall be included in relevant Faculty, VE and FE material, relevant Equity and Diversity Committees and will be available on the University's website. Information regarding this policy will be included in staff induction material and reinforced in staff training and professional development activities.

## **Training Plan**

(26) The University will ensure that staff are trained in equal opportunity, equity, diversity and social justice matters and that targeted training is available to staff with management and supervisory responsibilities.

## **Compliance**

(27) This policy applies to all staff of the University community, at both domestic and overseas campuses, regardless

of location and to staff of the University undertaking University work, study or professional experience in places other than Victoria University campuses.

## **Section 5 - Procedures**

(28) Nil

## **Section 6 - Guidelines**

(29) Nil

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	4th September 2014
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