

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy Code	STU03
Policy Lead	Director Student Experience
Approving Authority	Academic Board
Approval date	20 January 2025
Commencement date	01 February 2025
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Version	2025.1
Relevant legislation or external requirements	<p>National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code) (NC: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.3, 6 (all), 7.2, 8.1, 8.4, 8.5, 8.8, 8.13, 8.14, 8.15, 8.16, 8.17, 8.18, 8.19, 8.20, 8.22, 10 (all).) Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HESFs: 1.1, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.2.1, 3.2.5, 3.3, 6.2.1g, 7.2.2)</p> <p>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) Disability Standards for Education (2005) Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth) Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth) Higher Education Provider Guidelines 2023</p>
Related ASA Documents	<p>Student Support Framework Quality Assurance Framework Student Admissions Policy Student Admissions Procedure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Participation Policy and Procedure Student Code of Conduct Student Assessment Policy Student Assessment Procedure Special Consideration Policy and Procedure Student Grievance Policy Student Grievance Procedure Student Support, Wellbeing, and Health Policy and Procedure Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedure Discrimination, Bullying, and Harassment Policy and Procedure</p>

1. Purpose

This Policy and Procedure affirms and supports the commitment of ASA Institute of Higher Education (**ASA**) to fostering a learning environment in which diversity is valued and all students have equal opportunity to access, participate, and succeed in their educational endeavours.

This Policy and Procedure has been developed to ensure that the services provided by ASA are founded on principles of equity and access.

2. Scope

This document applies to all ASA applicants, students, staff, directors, officers, external appointees on any ASA board or committee, volunteers, and contractors. The scope of this document includes all members of the ASA community engaged in classes, functions or events sanctioned or organised by ASA.

3. Principles

This document is informed by the following principles:

- a. ASA affirms that diversity increases the strength and value of its courses and business.
- b. ASA is committed to providing equal opportunity and promoting inclusive practices and processes for all students within the limits of its resources.
- c. ASA does not discriminate against people on the basis of protected attributes, either in the recruitment of students or the implementation of its policies, procedures and activities.
- d. ASA endorses the right of all people to be the expert in their own experience.
- e. ASA may adapt processes, requirements, academic activities, or facilities to achieve equitable opportunities. The achievement of equitable opportunities may not occur through identical treatment.
- f. ASA has integrated the principles of access and equity into all policies and procedures for all students.
- g. ASA supports the importance of legislative requirements to ensure equity and fairness and complies fully with all relevant legislation.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
access	Use, or participate in interactions, services and information.
accommodation	The process of adapting or adjusting an item, area or process to enable equitable access.
adaptive technology	Adaptive technology refers to special versions of already existing technologies or tools that provide enhancements or different ways of interacting with the technology. The adaptation helps individuals with a disability or impairment accomplish a specific task.
adjustment	Adjustments are actions taken to enable a student with disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students.
appeal	A formal request that a decision be changed.
applicant	A person who has applied to study at ASA.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO) / Principal	The Chief Executive Officer is the highest organisational role for ASA and performs the role of Principal as well as their other duties.
complaint	A formal notification to ASA that something was wrong or unsatisfactory, and usually indicates what actions would resolve the issue.
confidential	Information that is private and restricted to specific individuals.
disclosure	The act of providing information that is confidential or may not be known by others.
discrimination	<p>Happens when a person or a group of people:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is treated less favourably than another person or group because of a particular characteristic or attribute (or because they associate with another person or group with a particular characteristic or attribute) ('direct discrimination'); or 2. where an unreasonable rule or policy, which applies to everyone has an unfair effect on a person or group, because they have a particular characteristic or attribute ('indirect discrimination'). <p>Protected characteristics or attributes include a person's age, breastfeeding, family responsibilities, gender identity or intersex status, impairment or disability, lawful sexual activity, parental status, political belief or activity, pregnancy, race, relationship or marital status, religious belief or activity, sex, sexuality, social origin, trade union activity, and irrelevant criminal or medical record.</p>

Term	Definition
diversity	The range of differences that make individuals unique.
equal opportunity	Equal opportunity is a state of fairness in which individuals are treated similarly, without discrimination, except when particular distinctions can be explicitly justified.
equitable opportunities	When all students have equal access to opportunities.
equity	A quality of being fair and impartial, including the creation of equivalent opportunities for access and success in Australian higher education for historically disadvantaged or underrepresented student populations
external parties	Other businesses or organisations than ASA. They can include government organisations or other businesses.
genuine student	A person that stays as a student and is able to show an understanding that studying in Australia is the primary reason of their student visa. The GS requirement is intended to include students who, after studying in Australia, develop skills Australia needs and who then go on to apply for permanent residence.
governance reporting	Reports made to ASA's governing bodies, such as the Academic Board.
inclusion	The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups.
progression	The process of completing units in a course of study over time.
protected attributes	There is a range of federal and state legislation that prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of the following attributes or conduct: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Breastfeeding • Disability • Family or carer's responsibilities • Marital or relationship status • Political conviction • Pregnancy or potential pregnancy • Race, colour, descent, nationality, ethnic, ethno-religious or national origin • Religion • Gender • Sexual orientation or preference • Transgender status • Actual or imputed characteristics of any of the attributes listed above • Association with a person identified by reference to any of the attributes listed above.
reasonable adjustment	These are administrative, environmental, or procedural alterations in the learning situation which remove barriers for people so that they can perform the inherent requirements of the course of study. For students, this could mean adjustments to the mode of delivery or written material or the assessment process and timeframe. An adjustment is reasonable if it takes into account the requirements of the person and balances the interests of all parties affected.
Special Consideration	Special consideration is when ASA provides an alternative or different method of assessing a students' achievement of learning outcomes. Students may apply for Special Consideration if they have or are experiencing an illness, injury or misadventure during a study period or their course enrolment. A request for Special Consideration is not automatically granted and must be applied for within specific time periods.

Term	Definition
specific equity groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples • people from lower socio-economic backgrounds • people with disability • people from remote, rural or isolated areas • people who are the first in their family to attend a university or other higher educational institution • people from non-English speaking backgrounds • women, especially in areas of study where they have been under-represented, such as IT.
transition	The state of moving from one type of course or educational experience to another.

5. Policy Statement

ASA adheres to the principles of access and equity as set out under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005). It is also bound by other relevant state and federal legislation. These principles are integrated into policies and procedures, and in the development and implementation of academic activities to ensure that students are appropriately supported in their learning and progression.

5.1 Course Design and Assessment

The curriculum and course design are flexible and inclusive of a range of student needs and avoids non-inclusive and discriminatory language and examples. Adaptive technology is made available where possible.

Assessment of student achievement is fair, valid, reliable, and consistent. Students are able to apply for Reasonable Adjustment or Special Consideration for a particular assessment, unit or course. Approval will result in reasonable adjustments or special requirements being made to ensure that assessment allows an equitable opportunity for a student to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. Further information about assessment is described in the *Student Assessment Policy* and associated procedure, the *Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Procedure*, and the *Special Consideration Policy* and associated procedure.

5.2 Application and Admission

All applicants have access to accurate, relevant, and timely information to enable informed decision making about educational offerings and experiences on the ASA website. Information relating to diversity and equity is available to all applicants and students.

ASA uses equitable enrolment processes and entry requirements for all applicants to ASA courses. Admission to all courses is based on published entry criteria and availability. ASA may seek to address and reduce the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups. Specific consideration is given to the admission of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Further information is contained in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Participation Policy and Procedure*.

The recruitment and admission process is non-discriminatory. Information gathered in application forms is restricted to data that is required for:

- assessment of academic preparation;
- determining proficiency in English needed to participate in their intended study; and
- considering any limitations that would be expected to impede their progression and completion.

International applicants are also assessed on the likelihood that they are genuine temporary entrants as required by the Department of Home Affairs (**DoHA**).

Applicants have the right to appeal an assessment or decision in accordance with ASA's *Student Grievance Policy* and associated procedure.

5.3 Orientation and Progression

Students are requested to inform ASA of any additional or arising needs as soon as possible to enable appropriate support and consultation. Students are encouraged to identify their needs as these needs arise.

ASA will ensure that students have equivalent opportunities for successful transition into and progression through their course of study regardless of their educational background, entry pathway, or mode and place of study.

Orientation programs to suit the needs of its student cohorts are provided and individual consultation and assistance are available upon request.

5.4 Learning Resources and Educational Support

ASA acknowledges that the level of support or adjustment may vary from person to person and during that person's educational experience. Students with identified and/or stated needs are consulted in relation to their study requirements and supported throughout their enrolment.

ASA will ensure that access to learning resources does not present any unexpected barriers, costs, or technology requirements for students, including for students with special needs.

ASA will provide reasonable accommodation within the learning environment for students with special needs through a range of services including, but not limited to:

- reasonable adjustment;
- special consideration;
- physical access to premises;
- access to adaptive technologies; and
- personal and academic counselling services.
- Specific accommodations will be made in consultation with the person impacted by different needs.

Wherever possible, ASA will seek to address and reduce the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by specific equity groups. Specific consideration is given to the participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Further information is contained in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Participation Policy and Procedure*.

5.5 Monitoring, participation, and success

ASA commits to the monitoring of the participation, progress, and completion of all students, including specific equity groups that may have experienced or be at risk of disadvantage or inequitable outcomes. Data will be collected through the Admissions process, Student Services, and academic results in order to analyse the participation and success of these groups at ASA.

ASA monitors the participation, progress, and completion by student cohorts and specific equity groups and uses analysis of data to inform policy suite amendments and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for all students.

5.6 Wellbeing and Safety

ASA will ensure that all of its students, staff, employees, and contractors have access to the information and support needed to prevent and should it occur, deal with situations that negatively impact students' experiences. Further information is provided in the *Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure* and associated procedure and the *Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Policy and Procedure*.

Students with identified and/or stated needs will be consulted in relation to their study requirements and supported throughout their enrolment. Students may specify the level of confidentiality they desire in regard to their personal information; however, a high level of confidentiality may impact ASA's ability to provide reasonable adjustments.

Information about a student's disability or individual requirements will be recorded on the Student Management System under the student's profile, unless the student requests otherwise. Similarly, documentation and records relating to adjustments and accommodation will be recorded on the student's profile which is accessible to most staff. Relevant teaching staff will be advised of required and authorised special consideration or adjustment to ensure a smooth student experience. General staff and other students will not be advised unless there is a reason and permission are provided by the student. Within governance reporting the student will be de-identified. Disclosure may be permitted to external parties in accordance with a lawful requirement.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The CEO is responsible for

- Ensuring that ASA provides an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students and staff.
- Policy documentation complies with legislative requirements.
- Staff abide by this policy document.

The Director Student Experience is responsible for:

- Ensuring requests for adjustment or accommodation are recorded and actioned appropriately.
- Staff understand the content and requirements of this policy document.
- Contributing to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students.

The Academic Dean will:

- Monitor student progress and performance by specific equity groups.
- Inform and oversee appropriate adjustments to admissions, teaching, learning and support services, intervention strategies and program suitability for student learning and development needs.

All individuals in the scope of this document are expected to model respectful and inclusive behaviours in their interactions with each other and ASA community as a whole.

7. Grievances

Students have the right to complain or make requests about their experiences at ASA, which will be addressed through an appropriate structure in a fair, appropriate, and equitable manner. Complaints and appeals are addressed through an appropriate structure in a fair and equitable manner. The *Student Grievance Policy* and associated procedure has detailed information.

8. Relevant HESFs

As a registered education provider, ASA operates under various laws and regulations. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with such laws.

This Policy and the associated Procedure comply with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 which specifies that:

Standard 1.1 Admission

1. Admissions policies, requirements and procedures are documented, are applied fairly and consistently, and are designed to ensure that admitted students have the academic preparation and proficiency in English needed to participate in their intended study, and no known limitations that would be expected to impede their progression and completion.
2. The admissions process ensures that, prior to enrolment and before fees are accepted, students are informed of their rights and obligations, including:
 - a. all charges associated with their proposed studies as known at the time and advice on the potential for changes in charges during their studies
 - b. policies, arrangements and potential eligibility for credit for prior learning, and
 - c. policies on changes to or withdrawal from offers, acceptance and enrolment, tuition protection and refunds of charges.
3. Admission and other contractual arrangements with students, or where legally required, with their parent or guardian, are in writing and include any particular conditions of enrolment and participation for undertaking particular courses of study that may not apply to other courses more generally, such as health requirements for students undertaking clinical work, requirements for security checks, particular language requirements and particular requirements of work placements.

Standard 1.3 Orientation and Progression

1. Successful transition into courses of study is achieved through orientation programs that are tailored to the needs of student cohorts and include specific consideration for international students adjusting to living and studying in Australia.
2. Specific strategies support transition, including:
 - a. assessing the needs and preparedness of individual students and cohorts
 - b. undertaking early assessment or review that provides formative feedback on academic progress and is able to identify needs for additional support, and
 - c. providing access to informed advice and timely referral to academic or other support.
3. Methods of assessment or monitoring that determine progress within or between units of study or in research training validly assess progress and, in the case of formative assessment, provide students with timely feedback that assists in their achievement of learning outcomes.
4. Processes that identify students at risk of unsatisfactory progress and provide specific support are implemented across all courses of study.
5. Trends in rates of retention, progression and completion of student cohorts through courses of study are monitored to enable review and improvement.
6. Students have equivalent opportunities for successful transition into and progression through their course of study, irrespective of their educational background, entry pathway, mode or place of study.

Standard 2.2. Diversity and Equity

1. Institutional policies, practices and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage

- experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds.
2. Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
 3. Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups are monitored and the findings are used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those subgroups.

Standard 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety

1. All students are advised of the actions they can take, the staff they may contact and the support services that are accessible if their personal circumstances are having an adverse effect on their education.
2. Timely, accurate advice on access to personal support services is available, including for access to emergency services, health services, counselling, legal advice, advocacy, and accommodation and welfare services.
3. The nature and extent of support services that are available for students are informed by the needs of student cohorts, including mental health, disability and wellbeing needs.
4. A safe environment is promoted and fostered, including by advising students and staff on actions they can take to enhance safety and security on campus and online.

Standard 2.4 Student Grievances and Complaints

1. Current and prospective students have access to mechanisms that are capable of resolving grievances about any aspect of their experience with the higher education provider, its agents or related parties.
2. There are policies and processes that deliver timely resolution of formal complaints and appeals against academic and administrative decisions without charge or at reasonable cost to students, and these are applied consistently, fairly and without reprisal.
3. Institutional complaints-handling and appeals processes for formal complaints include provision for confidentiality, independent professional advice, advocacy and other support for the complainant or appellant, and provision for review by an appropriate independent third party if internal processes fail to resolve a grievance.
4. Decisions about formal complaints and appeals are recorded and the student concerned is informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons, and of further avenues of appeal where they exist and where the student could benefit.
5. If a formal complaint or appeal is upheld, any action required is initiated promptly.

Standard 3.2 Staffing

1. The staffing complement for each course of study is sufficient to meet the educational, academic support and administrative needs of student cohorts undertaking the course. [...]
5. Teaching staff are accessible to students seeking individual assistance with their studies, at a level consistent with the learning needs of the student cohort.

Standard 3.3 Learning Resources and Educational Support

1. The learning resources, such as library collections and services, creative works, notes, laboratory facilities, studio sessions, simulations and software, that are specified or recommended for a course of study, relate directly to the learning outcomes, are up to date and, where supplied as part of a course of study, are accessible when needed by students. [...]
3. Access to learning resources does not present unexpected barriers, costs or technology requirements for students, including for students with special needs and those who study off campus.
4. Students have access to learning support services that are consistent with the requirements of their course of study, their mode of study and the learning needs of student cohorts,

including arrangements for supporting and maintaining contact with students who are off campus.

Standard 6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability

1. The provider is able to demonstrate, and the corporate governing body assures itself, that the provider is operating effectively and sustainably, including: [...]
 - g. educational policies and practices support participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are sensitive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultures
 - j. the occurrence and nature of formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents are monitored and action is taken to address underlying causes, and [...]

Standard 7.2 Information for Prospective and Current Students

1. Accurate, relevant and timely information for students is publicly available and accessible, including access for students with special needs, to enable informed decision making about educational offerings and experiences.
2. Information for students is available prior to acceptance of an offer, written in plain English where practicable, accompanied by an explanation of any technical or specialised terms, and includes: [...]
 - b. information to assist in planning for and participation in educational and other activities, including contact points, advice about orientation and induction, delivery arrangements, technical requirements for access to IT systems for online activities, timetables, access to learning resources, avenues to participate in decision making and opportunities to participate in student representative bodies [...]
 - e. information to facilitate access to services and support including the types of services available such as educational resources including English language support, personal support services, cultural support and ancillary services, hours of availability, how to access services and emergency contact details where applicable
 - f. information to assist in resolution of grievances, including an explanation of processes for resolution of grievances and complaints and internal and external appeals processes, guidance on how to participate in the processes and sources of assistance including advocacy, [...]

9. Version Control

This Policy and Procedure has been reviewed and approved by the ASA Academic Board as at November 2023 and is reviewed every three years.

This Policy and Procedure is published and available on the ASA website

<https://www.asahe.edu.au/policies-and-forms/>.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2025.1	Director Quality and Compliance	Updated references to policy documents and legislation.	20/01/2025 by CEO	01/02/2025
2024.1	Quality and Policy Officer	Document formatting updated to reflect change of Trading Name to ASA Institute of Higher Education.	28/06/2024 by CEO	01/07/2024
2023.1	Director Quality and Compliance	Updated policy to include HESF references. Updated and benchmarked to ensure currency with legislation and sector practice.	20/11/2023	18/12/2023

Previous version archived. New Policy code and numbering system implemented.				
2.0		Academic Board Approval	04/11/2020	04/11/2020
1.0		Academic Board Approval	2017	2017