

Inclusive Culture Policy HEPP52

PURPOSE

Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education) acknowledges, endorses and celebrates the value of cultural diversity. The Institute will establish and implement policies and procedures that are inclusive and that actively promote inclusiveness in a positive learning and working environment. This policy supports compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021, specifically Standards 2.2, 2.3, 3.2, 4.1, and 6.2, by ensuring that institutional practices are inclusive, respectful, and supportive of the diversity of the student and staff community.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all institutional activities including teaching and learning, governance, employment practices, and support services of Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education).

DEFINITIONS

SCEI-HE	Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education)
Inclusive Culture	An environment in which all individuals feel respected, accepted, and valued, and where diversity of backgrounds, identities, and perspectives is actively welcomed.

POLICY

1. SCEI-HE aspires to be a community characterised by a pursuit for knowledge, learning achievement, academic excellence, ethical practices, and academic integrity. In all its pursuits, the institution is guided by a primary concern for equality of opportunity and equitable outcomes.
2. SCEI-HE distinguishes its identity by creating a welcoming community for all its students and staff that:
 - 2.1 Values and celebrates the cultural and social diversity of its community;
 - 2.2 Demonstrates ongoing commitment to access and equity;
 - 2.3 Encourages understanding, acceptance, tolerance, cooperation and compromise;
 - 2.4 Demonstrates fair and ethical conduct toward all students, staff and visitors;
 - 2.5 Always reflects SCEI-HE's core vision and mission to provide an enriching learning and working experience;
 - 2.6 Recognises the importance of cross-cultural proficiency and understanding; and
 - 2.7 Aims to provide a learning and working environment that is reflective of Australia's diverse and multicultural society.
3. A commitment to strengthening cultural diversity practices embodies SCEI-HE's core belief in providing an education and working experience for all that is sensitive to the cultural differences that exist within its community.
4. SCEI-HE has a particular commitment to the education of people of low socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby assisting the process of upward social mobility for many students. SCEI-HE is also committed to providing exemplary educational and employment opportunities to Indigenous Australians and new Australians.
5. A commitment is also made to international students by offering people from other countries a quality higher education alternative within Australia. These processes are beneficial for both local and international students by enabling people of different cultures and backgrounds the opportunity to work together and learn interactively with one another.
6. **Policy Objectives**
 - 6.1 The objectives of this policy are for SCEI-HE in its working, teaching, learning, research, and community engagement to:
 - 6.1.1 give acknowledgement and support to all students of all cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds;
 - 6.1.2 give specific support and encouragement to students of low socioeconomic circumstances, Indigenous heritage, and migrant backgrounds;
 - 6.1.3 recognise the importance and value of the ever-evolving multicultural nature of Australian society;
 - 6.1.4 provide a diverse and inspirational study and work environment which promotes and supports

- cultural diversity, and facilitates the development of insights into a range of cultures;
- 6.1.5 facilitate the successful participation within SCEI-HE's community, its courses, and activities, of students and staff from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds;
- 6.1.6 emphasis the commitment to cultural inclusiveness, in:
 - 1. the content and delivery of courses and subjects, including work placements;
 - 2. the delivery of services across all areas of SCEI-HE;
 - 3. ensure that inclusive teaching practices support the achievement of intended learning outcomes for all students.
- 6.1.7 inform students and staff so that they are capable of responding appropriately, sensitively, and justly in any cultural context;
- 6.1.8 attempt to redress any discriminatory or illegal conduct or practices which may result or have resulted directly or indirectly from cultural difference, or cultural identity and/or context;
- 6.1.9 endorse and promote cultural activities which celebrate the diversity of its staff and students; and
- 6.1.10 as far as is reasonably practicable, provide culturally appropriate support services for Australian Indigenous, domestic, and international students and staff.
- 6.2 SCEI-HE will develop and adapt its standards, policies, procedures, and practices to integrate the principles of inclusion, empathy, respect, and anti-discrimination.
- 6.3 SCEI-HE will establish regular review processes to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of inclusive practices.

7. Teaching and Learning

- 7.1 SCEI-HE will develop strategies to give effect to its commitment to ethical, inclusive, participatory, cross-cultural perspectives in the design and delivery of curricula.
- 7.2 Teaching and learning activities, including but not limited to curriculum design, subject content, delivery methods and assessment, will:
 - 7.2.1 provide an orientation to assist the introduction of students to the subject matter or discipline and to relevant academic performance expectations, and in particular will assist in the transition of students facing any degree of linguistic, personal, and intellectual challenges;
 - 7.2.2 include and incorporate cross-cultural content and diverse approaches to learning and ways of understanding;
 - 7.2.3 develop an open, safe, and inclusive approach which promotes learning from others and respects diversity of perspectives in learning discussions;
 - 7.2.4 educate and equip students to undertake research and assessments in a manner which observes ethical guidelines, and remains culturally appropriate;
 - 7.2.5 be designed and implemented to engage students of diverse cultural backgrounds; and
 - 7.2.6 maintain a safe learning environment that forestalls marginalisation or isolation of students on the basis of cultural or socioeconomic difference.
- 7.3 SCEI-HE will periodically review its curriculum, delivery methods, and assessment practices to ensure they remain inclusive, culturally responsive, and supportive of student diversity.

8. Employment

- 8.1 Employment policies and procedures will, where appropriate, foster the social and cultural diversity of the SCEI-HE workforce.
- 8.2 SCEI-HE will investigate how it may best expand viable and sustainable employment of Australian Indigenous people.
- 8.3 SCEI-HE will conduct educational programs of relevance for its staff on cultural diversity on the basis of need.
- 8.4 Committees and governance bodies will be provided training to promote inclusive decision-making, ensuring diverse input is actively sought and considered.

9. Decision-making

- 9.1 Decision-making within SCEI-HE will, wherever reasonably appropriate and practicable, be informed by input from staff and/or students from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- 9.2 To the extent reasonably possible, the membership of various associations, boards and committees will reflect the diversity of SCEI-HE's community.

10. Study and Workplace Culture

10.1 Consistent with the mission and vision of SCEI-HE, relevant standards, policies, guidelines, procedures and practices will support a culture in which all members of SCEI-HE's community:

10.1.1 value and have informed understanding and respect for cultural diversity in all interactions between and among:

1. students;
2. students and staff;
3. staff;
4. staff and contractors.

10.1.2 are sensitive to the requirements of students and staff whose first language is not English;

10.1.3 have the right, within reasonable limits, to adhere to their cultural traditions and to express their opinions, while respecting the ideas and rights of others, without fear of discrimination, isolation, exclusion, harassment or bullying;

10.1.4 recognise that visitors to and temporary residents in Australia are entitled, subject to relevant legislative provisions, to the same consideration and fair treatment as Australian citizens.

10.2 To the extent reasonably possible, SCEI-HE aims to make provisions:

10.2.1 to promote the successful adjustment by, students of different cultural backgrounds to study within SCEI-HE; and

10.2.2 subject to available financial, human, and material resources, provide specific cultural facilities on SCEI-HE premises that cater to the cultural needs of all students and staff.

10.3 Clear procedures for reporting and responding to discrimination, exclusion, or cultural insensitivity will be made accessible to all students and staff. These procedures will be regularly reviewed to maintain compliance with HESF Standard 2.3.

11. Support Services

11.1 For Managers:

11.1.1 The SCEI-HE counsellor will provide mental health workshops for managers of each department, providing tailored mental health training geared around:

1. Mental health awareness training on workplace culture, diversity and inclusion.
2. Educating managers on the damaging mental health effects caused by staff not following inclusive culture policies and procedures.
3. Teaching managers on how to first respond to employees that are not following workplace diversity and inclusion policies and procedures.
4. Educating managers on mental health risks imposed on staff that are experiencing discrimination, exclusion and no sense of belonging.

11.1.2 The SCEI-HE counsellor will provide support for managers who have and/or currently are experiencing any form of workplace discrimination or bullying due to diversity and inclusion

11.1.3 The SCEI-HE counsellor will share useful resources and tools to managers on how to handle mental repercussions of issues with diversity, inclusion and culture. These resources will be accessible at all times, to all managers.

11.2 For all staff:

11.2.1 The SCEI-HE counsellor will provide mental health workshops for all staff members, providing mental health training geared around:

1. Mental health awareness training on culture, diversity and inclusion;
2. Educating staff on the damaging mental health effects caused by not following inclusive culture policies and procedures;
3. Teaching staff on how to first respond to colleagues and students who are not following the diversity and inclusion policies and procedures;
4. Educating staff on mental health risks imposed on students that are experiencing discrimination, exclusion and a lack of sense of belonging;
5. Creating mental health awareness activities in groups for staff members, relative to diversity, culture and inclusion.

11.2.2 The SCEI-HE counsellor will provide 1-on-1 emotional management and support for staff who have and/or currently are experiencing any form of workplace discrimination or bullying due to diversity and inclusion.

11.2.3 The SCEI-HE counsellor will always ensure confidentiality and autonomy, unless the individual is in

- high risk of danger to themselves or to others.
- 11.2.4 The SCEI-HE counsellor will share useful resources and tools to staff on how to handle mental repercussions of issues with diversity, inclusion and culture. These resources will be accessible at all times, to all staff.
- 11.2.5 The SCEI-HE counsellor will have a referral system in place for all staff members who are in need of ongoing mental health support management.
- 11.3 For students:**
- 11.3.1 The SCEI-HE counsellor will provide 1-on-1 emotional management and support for students who have and/or currently are experiencing any form of workplace discrimination or bullying due to diversity and inclusion.
- 11.3.2 The SCEI-HE counsellor will always ensure confidentiality and autonomy, unless the individual is in high risk of danger to themselves or to others.
- 11.3.3 The SCEI-HE counsellor will share useful mental health self-management resources and tools to students, relative to issues of diversity, inclusion and culture. These resources will be accessible on Moodle at all times, for all SCEI-HE students.
- 11.3.4 The SCEI-HE counsellor will have a referral system in place for students who are in need of further, professional, external mental health care.
- 11.4 The effectiveness, accessibility, and inclusivity of all support services will be regularly monitored and improved to ensure ongoing alignment with the needs of a diverse population, as per HESF Standards 2.3 and 7.2.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Admissions Policy and Procedure HEPP37
Assessment Policy and Procedure HEPP40
Freedom of Speech and Academic Inquiry Policy and Procedure HEPP06
Staff Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure HEPP27
Staff Recruitment Policy and Procedure HEPP20
Student Charter HEMIS14
Student Code of Conduct HEPP07
Student Misconduct Policy and Procedure HEPP47
Student Support Policy and Procedure HEPP42
Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedure HEPP41

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
Disability Discrimination Act 1992
Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)
National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018, Standard 6 (Specifically 6.1)
Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
Racial Discrimination Act 1975
Racial Hatred Act 1995

RESPONSIBILITIES

All Staff and Students are responsible for the implementation of this policy.
Overall responsibility lies with the Corporate Board.

DOCUMENT AND RECORD CONTROL

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