## Policy - Fair Treatment and Equal Benefits and Opportunity Policy

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<th>Policy Number</th>
<th>VFH 01</th>
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<td><strong>References</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Victoria)</td>
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<td>• Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)</td>
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<td>• Information Privacy Act 2000 (Victoria)</td>
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<td>• Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</td>
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<td>• Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009</td>
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<td>• National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Commonwealth), VET Provider Guidelines</td>
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<td>• Victorian Guidelines for VET Providers (Victoria)</td>
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<th>Policy Number: VFH 01</th>
<th>Version: V 1.0</th>
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<tr>
<td>Version Date: 01/10/2014</td>
<td>Review Date: 01/10/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorised by: Director of ACUcom</td>
<td>Document Owner: Compliance Manager</td>
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Location: -Z:\Compliance - Master Folder\Compliance\ACU Operations\ACU Policies and Procedures
1. **Background**

Australian Catholic University/ACUcom supports the concept of equal opportunity and is committed to providing all staff, students and potential students with a working and learning environment which values diversity, respects differences and provides an environment that is safe, healthy, positive, supportive and free from all forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination.

2. **Scope**

This policy applies to all ACUcom staff and students.

3. **Policy**

The Australian Catholic University/ACUcom (The RTO) is committed to providing fair treatment and equal benefits and opportunities to its candidates.

**Pre-enrolment**

All potential students are provided with information, including a course brochure that details the accredited course, code, VET subject of study and vocational outcomes. Brochures are accompanied by general course information (or details of access through the ACU’s website) providing:

- Selection processes
- course content and outcomes
- fees, charges and refund policy
- fair treatment, equal benefits and opportunities processes
- provision for language, literacy and numeracy assistance
- learning support arrangements
- learning strategies and methods
- welfare and guidance services
- grievances, complaints and appeals processes
- disciplinary processes
- ACUcom’s approach to access and equity
- Skills recognition processes
- privacy requirements
References are made to ACUcom Policies and Procedures which are available in the Student Handbook on the ACUcom website:

- Fair Treatment, Equal Benefits and Opportunities Policy and Procedures;
- Grievances, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures;
- Privacy Policy;
- Student Review Procedures VET Tuition Fee Refund Policy (Including Re-Crediting of VET-FEE-HELP Balance Policy); and
- Tuition Assurance and membership of the Australian Student Tuition Assurance Scheme (ACPET ASTAS) to meet VET tuition assurance requirements.

Prospective student enquiries are directed to the administration staff that has the appropriate course knowledge. Prospective students are encouraged to attend Information Sessions or to discuss with the administration staff, details specific to their course. Course applicants are personally interviewed. Prospective students unable to attend information sessions (i.e. regional and country) are encouraged to discuss their enrolment application with the Course Coordinator and to make an interview time.

**Applications**

Applicants for all VET courses should apply through ACUcom.

**Fair Selection Process**

Selection is undertaken in a fair and transparent manner, based on a demonstration of ability to successfully participate in the study program and the completion of any prerequisites that may apply to a course or subject or VET study. This is demonstrated through an interview. Students are not compromised on social, cultural, language, literacy, sex, religious, physical or other status. ACUcom has equal benefits and opportunities processes. Adult student/learner applicants are required to demonstrate readiness for a return to study or capabilities based on prior learning. All applicants are interviewed and may be required to provide some written responses to questions. Where applicants do not have the prerequisites for course entry, as stated in the course information, they may be offered an alternative course more appropriate to their current skill level. Course fees are finalised on enrolment.

**Recognition**

ACUcom has mutual recognition processes for credit transfer where students have completed equivalent studies with other RTOs. It also has processes for recognising work and life experiences which are relevant to competencies to be undertaken in a VET course of study. Any queries concerning selection procedures, prerequisites, recognition, policies and procedures should be directed to the student services and the ACUcom website, [www.acu.edu.au/acucom](http://www.acu.edu.au/acucom).
Enrolment

All candidates are notified in writing of their application result. Appeals may be lodged in writing to the Director of ACUcom and are dealt with under ACUcom’s Grievance Policy and Procedures.

Induction/Orientation

All enrolled students are offered an orientation program. This is to confirm responsibilities and to provide further information regarding student services, facilities, vocational services, policies and procedures and ACUcom resources. Students who are unable to attend orientation sessions are directed to the administration staff or Course Coordinator and ACUcom web site for further information. Students have access to a current Student Handbook summarising ACUcom policies and procedures, course information, and student responsibilities. Any queries concerning selection procedures and prerequisites should be directed to the student support services and the website, www.acu.edu.au/acucom.

Student Grievance Procedures

ACUcom has student grievance procedures for dealing with complaints about academic and non-academic matters by students and persons who seek to enroll with the school. ACUcom addresses complaints and appeals efficiently and effectively. Its student grievance procedures are available in the Student Handbook available at, www.acu.edu.au/acucom. The student grievance procedures required under VET-FEE -HELP are in addition to other requirements or responsibilities that ACUcom has in place. There are grievance procedures addressing both Academic and Non-Academic matters.

Academic Matters


Non-academic matters

Non-academic matters include those matters which do not relate to student progress, assessment, curriculum and awards in a course and include complaints in relation to personal information that ACUcom holds in relation to a student. Non-academic grievances can arise from events occurring or from decisions made by ACUcom and cover issues such as financial matters, fines and payments, application procedures, exclusions from events and facilities, harassment, vilification, discrimination, and the use or misuse of personal information. Please see Grievance Policy and Procedures for Non-Academic Matters in the Student Handbook available at www.acu.edu.au/acucom.

Requirements

ACUcom has arrangements for handling complaints that:

- are easily accessible to students
• are provided at no cost, or at a reasonable cost and which encourage timely resolution of complaints
• include provision for independent internal investigation of complaints which remain unresolved
• include provision for external review of decisions made following any internal investigation and a mechanism for considering any recommendations arising from external review
• are complete, unambiguous and are agreed to and ratified by ACUcom
• do not discriminate or victimise
• are communicated to staff who are trained in their application
• specify reasonable timelines for responses
• allow third party representation
• if requested, provide reasons and a full explanation in writing of decisions and actions taken and require confidential accurate records of all grievances to be kept for at least 5 years.
• Students or those persons seeking to enroll with ACUcom are entitled to access the student grievance procedures, regardless of the location of the campus at which the grievance has arisen, the student’s place of residence or the mode in which they study.

Privacy Complaints and Advice

Student grievance procedures extend to complaints about breaches of personal information by ACUcom (including its officers, employees and those who perform services by or on behalf of ACUcom and relating to information obtained for the purposes of VET- FEE-HELP assistance and repayment of VET-FEE-HELP loans. The Privacy Policy is available in the Student Handbook available at www.acu.edu.au/acucom

Applications and Student Review Procedures (reviewable decisions)

Applications

Applications for VET-FEE-HELP must be made at Reception, Level 1, 81-89 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, Victoria 3065. Any variations must be submitted at the same address with clearly stating the reasons for the requested change and including all relevant documentation.

Review

A person has the right to apply for a review of a decision by ACUcom to not re-credit or remit their VET-FEE-HELP balance (reviewable decisions). ACUcom has student review procedures for reconsidering such decisions. Students should submit a valid request for review in writing, including the required content, clearly stating the reasons. ACUcom provides details of letters or required content of the letters that providers are required to send to a person who has requested the review.
of a decision to not re-credit or remit their VET-FEE-HELP balance. A request for a formal review of
the decision made should be directed to the Director of ACUcom, who is the person who can review
decisions. ACUcom must acknowledge receipt of an application for review of a decision in writing,
and inform the applicant that, if the reviewer has not advised the applicant of a decision within 45
days of receiving the application for review, the reviewer is taken to have confirmed the original
decision. ACUcom makes publicly available its VET-FEE-HELP Student Review Policy and Procedures

Privacy - Personal Information Procedures

For the purposes of VET-FEE-HELP assistance, ACUcom has a personal information procedure which
allows students to apply for and receive information that ACUcom holds about them. The Privacy
Policy is available in the Student Handbook on the website. This policy does not permit the
disclosure of a student’s personal information to a third party without specific, written, signed
instruction by the student in specific circumstances.

Publication

This Fair Treatment and Equal Benefits and Opportunity Policy and Procedure will be made available
to Students and Potential Students through publication on the website (www.acu.edu.au/acucom)
and (student handbook, ACUcom notice board and course leaflets).

4. Procedure

Fair Treatment

ACUcom treats fairly all of its students. This applies to those who are, or who would be, entitled to
VET-FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of schedule 1A of the act and all of the persons seeking to
enroll in a VET subject of study that meets ACUcom’ course requirements.

Specifically the fairness requirements include:
• fair treatment
• equal benefits and opportunities
• student grievance procedures
• student review procedures
• requirements to appoint review officers
• personal information procedures
• tuition assurance

The application of fair treatment does not require that all students are treated the same. Fairness
must be considered in the context of all the relevant circumstances. There will be situations in which
the fair treatment of students may result in students in varying circumstances being treated
differently.

ACUcom publishes these fairness procedures and makes them publicly available on its website in the
Student Handbook.
Equal Benefits and Opportunities

ACUcom has open, fair and transparent procedures that, in its reasonable view, are based on merit for making decisions about students undertaking, and persons applying for, VET courses. This includes:

- The selection, from among the persons who are, or would be, entitled to VET-FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of schedule 1A of the Act and who seek to enroll with ACUcom in a VET subject of study that meets the requirements under sub clause 45(1) of schedule 1A of the Act of persons to enroll; and
- The treatment of students who are, or who would be, entitled to VET-FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of schedule 1A of the Act undertaking a VET course of study.

Refer below to ‘Policy section regarding Selection Procedures’

Application of Merit

The application of merit in decision-making processes involves ACUcom considering each application on a case by case basis and not applying inflexible policies that preclude eligible applicants from having their application considered.

No income test

ACUcom does not apply an income test when making decisions about which students are eligible for enrolment or for VET-FEE-HELP assistance. ACUcom also protects student fees paid in advance and is a financial member of the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) and is a member of the ACPET Australian Student Tuition Assurance Scheme (ACPET ASTAS) to meet VET tuition assurance requirements.

Educational disadvantage

When making decisions about the selection of students, ACUcom takes educational disadvantages that a particular student has experienced into account. ACUcom does not use ‘proxy indicators’ of educational disadvantage in the absence of clear evidence that all students in such a group necessarily suffered educational disadvantage. Such proxy indicators are not used because they assume that all people who satisfy the proxy condition (e.g. being from a low income group or being from a rural area) have necessarily experienced educational disadvantage. ACUcom considers a particular student’s specific circumstances before making a decision about whether the student has actually suffered educational disadvantage.

Restricted access arrangement

When making decisions about the selection of students, ACUcom takes into account students that are enrolled under a restricted access arrangement, as appropriate. (This is an agreement entered into between ACUcom and an employer or industry body for the provision of a course(s) or places in a course(s) in which enrolment is limited or restricted to employees of the employer or industry body.)
5. Definitions

For the purposes of this document the following applies:

The Act refers to the Higher Education Support Act 2003

Student/s refers to all persons enrolled in a unit of study who are, or would be entitled to VET- FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act; and

Potential Students refers to all persons seeking to enroll in a VET unit of study that meets the course requirements under sub-clause 45(1) of Schedule 1A of the Act and who are, or would be, entitled to VET- FEE-HELP assistance under clause 43 of Schedule 1A of the Act.

Fair Treatment ACUcom will treat fairly all Students and potential Students.

Student Selection ACUcom has open, fair and transparent procedures, based on merit for making decisions about:
   a) the selection, from among Potential Students; and
   b) the treatment of Students.

ACUcom is vocational education and training department of Australian Catholic University.

6. Responsibility

All ACUcom staff and students

7. Policy Review Cycle

7.1. Annually, if otherwise not mentioned in the “Review Date” section.

8. Supporting Documentation

1. Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA)
2. VET FEE HELP Guidelines
3. VET Provider Guidelines

9. Version History

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Prepared by</th>
<th>Approved By</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>October, 2014</td>
<td>New policy for Vet fee help</td>
<td>Sukh Sandhu</td>
<td>Debbie Wilson</td>
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