Learning Environment, Student Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Name	Learning Environment, Student Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Policy number	SSP010
Date approved	24 July 2019
Approving body	Academic Board
Responsible officer	Executive Director
Implementation officer	Director of Corporate Services Head of School Academic Registrar
Next review date	June 2022
Linked policies	TLP001 Student Selection Admission and Enrolment Policy SSP003 Special Consideration Policy TLP004 Academic Integrity and Student Conduct Policy
Linked forms and documents	myCMI Student Support Site

1. Purpose of this policy

The Cairnmillar Institute (the Institute) aims to provide a supportive learning environment and to provide an optimal education for emerging professionals.

The Institute provides educational and support services to assist students with the transition into and throughout their enrolment, as well as services to help students overcome difficulties and barriers associated with coming to and staying in their chosen course.

This policy replaces the previous SSP010 Learning Environment, Student Life and Support Policy and subsumes the SSP001 Disability Policy

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2. Campus and Learning Environment

2.1. Campus

2.1.1. The Institute campus includes library facilities, a student kitchen and access to external cafes and food outlets, 24-hour access to the online learning management system, a computer laboratory, additional computer and wi-fi internet access, onsite IT support, a psychology test library, student clinics and counselling support services.

2.1.2. The campus has a strong presence in the community and is accessible by public transport.

2.2. Facilities

2.2.1. Facilities, whether physical or virtual, must be fit for their educational purpose and accommodate the numbers and educational activities of the students and staff that use them.

2.2.2. Secure access to electronic information and communication is available continuously to students and staff.

2.2.3. The learning environment supports academic and social interactions among students and staff outside of formal teaching.

2.3. Safety and Security

2.3.1. The Institute aims to provide a physically and interpersonally safe environment for staff and students. Including relevant and up-to-date policy on relevant areas such as an Occupational Health and Safety Policy (FSP004) and Discrimination Bullying Harassment Policy (FSP002).

2.4. Acknowledgement of Country

2.4.1. The Cairnmillar Institute is committed to reconciliation with local Aboriginal communities by showing value and respect for our country's past, present and future owners and recognising the Aboriginal communities who continue to be the cultural custodians and holders of knowledge for the land on which our events are held and our campus is built.

2.4.2. An acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the land should be said with respect and sincerity at the beginning of meetings, events and the first class of each semester.

3. Diversity and Inclusion

3.1. Commitment to diversity

3.1.1. The Institute's operations are underpinned by the following principles:

    a)   All people have inherent dignity and the right to be treated equitably

    b)   All people have the right to a work and learning environment that is free from discrimination

    c)   Difference is acknowledged, respected and valued

    d)   The range of needs of staff and students are best met by:

        i.   the use of inclusive practices and,

        ii.   the provision of additional support services where required.

3.1.2. 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.

3.2. Diversity and admissions

3.2.1. Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

3.2.2. 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.

3.2.3. The Institute actively develops processes and procedures which aim to recruit and support students from the following equity target groups:

    a)   Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander peoples

    b)   Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds

    c)   LGBTQ+ students

    d)   Other identified groups which may be added from time to time, with lower representation in the psychology, counselling, and psychotherapy professions

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4. Student Conduct and Interpersonal Behaviour

4.1. Classroom Management

4.1.1. Academic staff are responsible for maintaining a safe and open learning environment in the classroom (both physical and online) and develop a culture that welcomes diversity and supports the active pursuit of free intellectual inquiry and freedom of expression.

4.1.2. A student whose behavior is causing discomfort or distress to other students may be asked to amend that behavior or if necessary leave the classroom.

4.1.3. Continued, ongoing or substantial disruptions or distressing behaviors may be referred for review under the TLP004 Academic Integrity and Student Conduct policy.

4.2. Respectful Interactions

4.2.1. Students must adhere to relevant ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for their future professions.

4.2.2. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other forms of prejudice will not be tolerated.

4.2.3. Students and staff are expected to show professionalism in their interactions with staff, clients, placement stakeholders and other students, as well as respect for the school environment at all times.

4.2.4. Students can expect and should contribute to a professional and welcoming environment which acknowledges and supports a diversity of opinions, backgrounds and experiences.

4.2.5. Breaches of this policy may be referred for review as general misconduct under the TLP004 Academic Integrity and Student Conduct policy.

5. Student Support Services

5.1. Orientation, Progression and Transition

5.1.1. The Institute develops and maintains an active student orientation program to help students adjust and adapt to studying at the Institute.

5.1.2. Orientation and transition support is developed to be accessible and relevant to each cohort of students including adaptation for on campus and online delivery modes.

5.1.3. Orientation activities and resources are reviewed and updated annually to maintain relevancy and improve quality.

5.2. Support Services and Referrals

5.2.1. The Institute offers a range of student support services and actively seeks additional suitable and cost-effective support solutions for students in identified key areas.

5.2.2. Processes for accessing supports and support information are reviewed at least once annually and are made easily available to students through the myCMI Student Website or similar such system which may replace it.

5.2.3. At a minimum the following services and advice must be available to students:

a) Careers and employment advice: This advice is available from course coordinators.

b) Counselling and personal development: An independent part-time counsellor and support person is available on an "as needs" basis. All sessions are private and confidential between the student and the consultant.

c) Disability support: This is provided on application through the Special Consideration process.

d) Financial assistance: As the Institute is a not-for-profit organisation, financial assistance is limited. However, the School actively seeks support and funding to offer targeted scholarships and flexible payment plans where possible.

e) Budget advice and financial planning: links to financial planning resources and budgeting services for students are provided, such as the National Debt Helpline (1800 007 007) and ASIC MoneySmart (www.moneysmart.gov.au)

f) Medical centers: Students are expected to have their own medical practitioner. However, one can be recommended, if the student requests.

g) Study skills assistance: A Language and Learning Adviser and the Librarian help students develop their academic skills such as writing essays and reports or preparing for exams. Students may drop in or make appointments. Free online workshops, seminars and study resources are also provided.

h) International student support: see the SSP009 International Student Policy.

i) Chaplaincy: The Institute does not have religious leaders on site. However, counselling staff may be the first person to consult with advice about how to find a chaplain, imam, rabbi or other religious leader suited to the student.

j) Legal services: If students have any legal concerns, they are referred to either: Victoria Legal Aid (www.legalaid.vic.gov.au) or the Law Institute of Victoria (www.liv.asn.au) or similar equivalent services.

k) Student advocacy and representation:

i. Students are invited to participate in the governance of the School. Representation is actively sought from students for membership of the Academic Board (Senatus), Course Advisory Committees, and The Cairnmillar Institute Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

ii. Informal feedback and advocacy can be made directly to course coordinators at any time, and to the Head of School.

iii. The Institute actively supports student efforts to provide or create a student lead association or student clubs.

iv. Processes and procedures for discipline and other potentially distressing or difficult matters include provision for students to bring a support person where possible.

6. Student Mental Health

6.1. Active Wellbeing and Mental Health Processes

6.1.1. The Institute aims to improve student and staff awareness of self-care and mental wellness and to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness.

6.1.2. The Institute actively promotes positive and proactive mental health and wellbeing for staff and students and provides and promotes access to relevant activities, concepts and resources.

6.1.3. The Institute provides accessible mental health support and resources for all students in a format that is suitable to their enrolment type including options for both online or in person support.

6.1.4. The Institute has a mental health and wellbeing strategy which must be reviewed biannually by the Head of School and Associate Heads of School for relevance, quality and ongoing improvement.

7. Disability and Accessibility

7.1. Commitment to people with a disability

7.1.1. The Institute is committed to actively developing services and support for members of the Cairnmillar community who have a disability and abided by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA).

7.2. Accessibility and inclusive practices

7.2.1. Inclusive practices anticipate and accommodate the needs of a diversity of people, thus minimising the need for adjustments to respond to individual needs, while maintaining quality and other standards

7.2.2. Resources, systems, websites and educational products are developed to be as accessible, including consideration of:

a) Accessibility for people with visual impairments including screen reader compatibility and alt image text;

b) Accessibility for people with hearing impairments, including offering closed captions for video materials or written as well as audio information;

c) Accessibility for people with physical disabilities including an elevator and accessible bathrooms on campus and consideration for access when booking offsite venues;

d) Inclusive practices and language with the inclusion of diverse perspectives including people with lived experience of mental health issues in teaching and research praxis;

7.3. Reasonable Adjustments

7.3.1. Reasonable adjustments are measures which can be reasonably implemented to enable a student with a disability undertake the inherent requirements to meet the academic standards of their course of study.

7.3.2. Students with a permanent or temporary disability may apply for reasonable adjustments through the Special Consideration process.

7.3.3. The institute aims to approve and provide reasonable accommodations where possible within the resources and requirements of the program or course of study.

7.3.4. Precedent and national benchmarks may be taken into account when deciding what accommodations are recommended or approved.

7.3.5. Course and Program Coordinators will be responsible for the arrangement and provision of approved adjustments.

7.4. Mental Health and Disability Data

7.4.1. All data relating to a person's physical and/or mental health are regarded as sensitive, personal data and all staff and students of the Institute who are party to such information are bound by a duty of confidentiality in accordance with the Institute's Privacy Policy and the Health Records Act.

7.4.2. If a member of staff or student feels it necessary to disclose personal disability or mental health information about a student, then that student's informed consent should be obtained in the first instance.

7.4.3. In cases where consent is given, information should be shared only for the purposes of providing support, care or protection for the student or for fellow students or staff and only on a 'need to know' basis. Where information is recorded or shared, the terminology must be agreed with the student and reflect needs as opposed to diagnosis.

7.4.4. In cases where consent is not given, the wishes of the student should be respected.

7.4.5. However, the needs of the wider academic community must also be considered and, therefore, the following exceptions have been identified as circumstances that would warrant disclosure in the absence of consent:

   a)   where the Institute or a member of staff would be liable to civil or criminal prosecution if the information were not disclosed (e.g. where the law requires disclosure) further detailed in section 7.5;

   b)   where a student is putting their self or others at risk;

   c)   where there is a direct or imminent threat to the safety of any student, staff member, client, or other stakeholder.

7.5. Required Mental Health or Disability Disclosures

7.5.1. Certain courses and programs require students to be provisionally registered with AHPRA or lead to a profession which will have specific expectations regarding 'fitness to practise'.

7.5.2. AHPRA, PACFA or other professional bodies may identify additional criteria with regard to 'exceptions to maintaining confidentiality' or required disclosure of mental health or disability status.

7.5.3. Students enrolled in postgradaute psychology or counselling programs at the Institute are therefore required to disclose to the Institute any mental illness or any other condition which may impact their ability to practise or obtain professional registration.

7.5.4. Disclosure may also be required, by either the student or the Institute, to placement providers and/or to AHPRA or other professional bodies where duty of care extends to a student's eventual client group and to placement providers during training.

7.5.5. Students with mental health difficulties must be given honest information about the possible impact that their mental health difficulties may have on their chosen course of study due to any additional regulatory requirements.

8. Resources and References

Legislative and compliance framework relevant to the development of this policy:

- [TEQSA Guidance Note on Diversity and Equity](#)
- [University Student Wellbeing Framework](#)
- [The wicked problem of university student mental health (by Ben Veness)](#)
- [Australians Together Educational Resources](#)
- [Inclusive Language Guide (LGBTIQ+)](#)
- [How to be Disability Inclusive](#)