

## CULTURAL AWARENESS POLICY

### PURPOSE

ACTB is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful, supportive and culturally aware environment for our students and staff members. We aim to achieve this by educating our students and staff members on culturally appropriate communication techniques, as well as acceptable behaviours and actions.

This policy outlines ACTB's commitment to diversity, inclusion, well-being, and the prevention of vilification, including antisemitism and other forms of religious or racial hatred. ACTB recognises that a diverse and inclusive environment supports positive learning outcomes, staff wellbeing, and equitable access to education and training services.

### Cultural Sensitivity Statement

ACTB recognises that cultural groups are diverse and individuals may not necessarily identify with all cultural practices or values described in this policy.

The cultural information provided in this policy is intended as general guidance to promote awareness and respectful engagement and should not be interpreted as assumptions about any individual.

Staff and students are encouraged to approach all interactions with respect, openness and willingness to learn from each individual's personal experiences and cultural identity.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All staff, students and visitors; and
- All of our business functions.
- All training, assessment, administrative, and support functions
- All physical campuses, online learning platforms, and digital communication channels
- All RTO-related activities, including events, field activities, and student services

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### RTO Manager

- Ensures compliance with legislation, regulations and Standards for RTOs.
- Oversee compliance with cultural protocols and practices.
- Ensure compliance with anti-discrimination and anti-vilification requirements
- Oversee implementation of diversity, inclusion and well-being initiatives
- Ensure staff receive training in inclusive and culturally responsive practices
- Monitor and respond to incidents of discrimination, harassment or vilification
- Promote a safe and inclusive organisational culture

#### All Staff

- Observe cultural sensitivities when interacting with others.
- Respect the customs, traditions and cultural practices of others.
- Report any concerns or issues regarding cultural insensitivity to the RTO Manager promptly.
- Treat all individuals with dignity, fairness and respect
- Use inclusive and culturally respectful language
- Avoid assumptions based on cultural, religious or personal characteristics
- Maintain professional conduct in both face-to-face and online environments
- Report any incidents of discrimination, harassment, bullying or vilification

#### Trainers & Assessors

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- Integrate culturally appropriate communication techniques into training and assessment practices.
- Support students in navigating cultural barriers within the learning environment.
- Embed inclusive teaching and assessment practices
- Provide reasonable adjustments where required
- Support students from diverse cultural and social backgrounds
- Identify and address barriers to learning
- Foster safe and respectful classroom environments

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

ACTB is guided by the following principles to promote cultural awareness and support:

- All cultures have customs, values, and codes of behaviour that are important. These contribute to the cultural diversity we get to cherish in Australia.
- Recognise and celebrate the diversity of cultural customs, values, and behaviours in Australia.
- Provide training and education on culturally appropriate communication techniques and acceptable behaviours.
- Promote understanding and inclusion of the practices and etiquettes of the various cultural groups in our community.
- Develop learning environments that promote and support the diversity of our students.
- ACTB recognises and values the diversity of its students and staff members, including diversity in culture and ethnicity, religion and belief, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, socioeconomic background, family responsibilities and educational background.
- All staff members, students, contractors and visitors are expected to treat others with respect, dignity and fairness, demonstrate cultural sensitivity and awareness, communicate professionally and inclusively, avoid any language or behaviour that may be offensive, discriminatory or exclusionary, and actively support a safe and welcoming learning environment.
- ACTB will ensure that learning environments are culturally safe, inclusive and respectful, support diverse learning needs, provide reasonable adjustments where required, encourage respectful dialogue and cultural exchange, and prevent discrimination, harassment and vilification, while promoting culturally responsive teaching practices that recognise the diverse experiences and learning needs of students.

### ACTB is committed to:

- Creating inclusive learning environments that respect and celebrate diversity
- Ensuring equitable access to training, assessment and support services
- Removing barriers to participation in education and training
- Promoting a culture where differences are respected and valued
- Supporting students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Encouraging students and staff to share cultural perspectives where appropriate to strengthen mutual respect and understanding
- Promoting diversity, equity and inclusion
- Supporting the well-being and safety of all students
- Preventing discrimination, harassment and vilification
- Encouraging respectful communication and cultural understanding

### Wellbeing and Safety

ACTB is committed to supporting the well-being of all students and staff members by maintaining a safe, supportive and inclusive environment. This commitment includes promoting psychological safety and respectful relationships, supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing, encouraging cultural safety and social inclusion, identifying wellbeing concerns early, and providing referral pathways to appropriate support services when required. Wellbeing considerations encompass mental and emotional health, cultural and psychological safety, social inclusion and respectful, supportive relationships. ACTB encourages students and staff to seek assistance whenever needed and ensures that all well-being concerns are managed confidentially and with respect.

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### Prevention of Vilification and Discrimination

ACTB maintains a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, vilification or hate speech based on any protected attribute, including race, ethnicity, religion or belief, cultural background, nationality, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or age. This also includes antisemitism, Islamophobia and all other forms of racial or religious hatred. Such behaviour is strictly prohibited in all ACTB learning environments, workplaces and online platforms. Vilification refers to behaviour that incites hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule towards a person or group based on protected attributes, and may occur through verbal, written, visual or online conduct. Examples include offensive remarks targeting cultural or religious groups, harassment based on religious beliefs, displaying hateful symbols or materials, and engaging in online abuse or discriminatory comments.

#### Antisemitism

Antisemitism refers to hostility, prejudice or discrimination directed toward Jewish individuals or communities.

Examples may include:

- Derogatory comments about Jewish people or Judaism
- Promoting harmful stereotypes about Jewish communities
- Denying or trivialising the Holocaust
- Harassing or excluding someone because they are Jewish
- Displaying antisemitic symbols or gestures

Such behaviour is strictly prohibited within ACTB learning environments, workplaces, digital platforms and any activity associated with ACTB.

#### Prohibited Conduct

The following behaviours are not permitted within ACTB environments:

- Racial or religious slurs
- Hate symbols or gestures
- Online harassment or discriminatory posts
- Mocking cultural or religious practices
- Spreading misinformation targeting cultural or religious groups
- Bullying, intimidation or exclusion based on identity

#### Reporting, Support and Resolution of Concerns

Any student, staff member, client or visitor who experiences or witnesses discrimination, harassment or vilification is encouraged to report the matter promptly to the RTO Manager, a Trainer or Assessor, or any staff member in a supervisory role. ACTB ensures that all reports are treated seriously and confidentially, investigated promptly and managed in accordance with ACTB policies and procedures. Appropriate corrective actions will be taken where required, and individuals who raise concerns will not be victimised or disadvantaged. Corrective actions may include mediation or facilitated discussions, behavioural agreements, formal disciplinary action or referral to external authorities when appropriate. When incidents occur, ACTB will take suitable steps to resolve the matter, which may involve informal mediation, formal investigation, behavioural warnings, disciplinary action or referral to relevant support services. Support options may include counselling services, student support assistance and cultural support services where appropriate.

#### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are culturally diverse, and protocols and practices may vary significantly between regions and communities.

ACTB recognises the importance of respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land.

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- **Respect and acknowledgement** — to the original people of Australia (both mainland and the 274 islands located north of the mainland), the First Nations, respect is essential to good working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and it should always be our priority. This demonstration of respect will make it easier to set up mutual standards of respect and trust, and will make it easier for working relationships to take place effectively.
- **Addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders** — it can be offensive to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders incorrectly. Some prefer to be called 'Aboriginal', and others prefer 'Indigenous'. It is always a good idea to try to gauge how people want to be addressed. You can do so by spending some time listening to their conversation, or you can ask respectfully how they would like to be referred to. It is generally better to avoid referring to Aboriginal people as Kooris or Murris.
- **Gender protocols** — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies still regard some information as specific and sacred to either men or women. The knowledge is sacred and recorded in a way that only men or women can access. Discuss with the student if there are any aspects of the training that are considered men's or women's business, and if so, make appropriate adjustments in the program.
- **Communication processes** — requires respect, good listening, patience, understanding, checking, clarification and confirmation. It is important to remember the following when interacting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:
  - Not to assume anything
  - Be honest, sincere and open-minded
  - Use simple, clear, plain and appropriate language
  - Do not mimic Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ways of speaking (i.e. words, slang, speech or accent)
  - Never be boastful about your ideas
  - Do not be too direct, as this can be taken as confrontational and/or rude
  - Do not ask hypothetical questions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make considerable use of non-verbal signs, especially when discussing direction. These are an integral part of the communication process and should not be ignored. Be sensitive to the use of non-verbal communication cues. The use of silence does not mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not understand. They may be listening, remaining non-committal or waiting for community support. During discussions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may delay expressing a firm opinion, preferring to listen to others' opinions first before offering their own.

It is common for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to use swear words in their regular vocabulary and in general conversation. Swearing is not considered offensive as it is in non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Be aware that if an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person swears, it is important not to take any offence. The only exception to this is if the person swears directly at you. When this happens, it is important to speak to the RTO Manager about this as soon as possible, as this behaviour should not be tolerated by anyone.

- **Providing support** — it is important to approach this sensitively and not cause embarrassment or shame to the person by asking them whether or not they can read and/or write. In most cases, the person will ask for assistance if they need it, provided the issue has been approached with sensitivity and respect.
- **Naming and images of deceased people** — each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community may have different protocols regarding naming and displaying images of the deceased. It is best to avoid naming or displaying images of the deceased. If it is important to do so, make sure that you have permission from the person's family and/or community and include a relevant disclaimer. The RTO Manager must be consulted if it is important to name or display images of the deceased, and approval must be given by the RTO Manager.
- **Welcome to Country** — this is where the Traditional Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Custodians, in most cases the Elders, welcome people to their Land. A non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cannot perform a 'Welcome to Country' as to do so is considered to be rude and disrespectful to the traditional owners and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is a significant recognition and is made through a formal process. A 'Welcome to Country' should always occur in the opening ceremony of the event in question, as the first item, and the person or group delivering the 'Welcome to Country' must be remunerated.

Protocols in relation to the performing of a 'Welcome to Country' ceremony are wide and diverse and can vary according to region and locality. A 'Welcome to Country' may consist of a single speech by the representative of the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community, or it can also include a performance of some description (which varies according

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to region and locality). Performances can include a Traditional Welcoming Song, a Traditional Dance, a didgeridoo performance, or a combination of any of the aforementioned.

- **Acknowledgement of Country** — a way that non-Aboriginal people can show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and the ongoing relationship of traditional owners of the land.

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' can be performed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the Traditional Custodians of the Land and/or Sea where the gathering of participants is being conducted.

An example of 'Acknowledgement of Country' is:

*'Let us acknowledge that we are meeting on country for which the members and elders of the local Aboriginal community have been custodians for many centuries, and on which Aboriginal people have performed age old ceremonies. We acknowledge their living culture and unique role in the life of this region.'*

### Learning Environments

- Culturally safe spaces with strong connections to Country and Elders.
- Incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into curriculum, where appropriate.
- Flexible and community-driven learning approaches, such as, yarning circles, storytelling, visual learning.
- Outdoor and land-based learning opportunities, where appropriate.

### Support Needs

- Culturally appropriate mentorship and role models.
- Trauma-informed teaching to address historical and systemic barriers.
- Bilingual support in Indigenous languages where relevant.
- Community and family engagement in education.
- Digital access support in remote areas.

## CHINESE

### Cultural Awareness

- **Proper character and behaviour** — traditional Chinese beliefs place a great deal of importance on observing the proper social etiquette and showing good character and behaviour. In many Chinese cultural contexts, modesty and humility are highly valued, and individuals may downplay personal achievements in social interactions. Chinese people will often downplay their own positions and achievements while emphasising those of others. The average Chinese person will generally not attempt to make waves or to make themselves stand out overtly when compared to others. When praised by strangers or friends, a Chinese person will often downplay an accomplishment or character trait. Those who are not as modest or prefer to claim their own accomplishments can be viewed as rude, proud or braggarts.
- **Touch and personal contact** — they dislike being touched by strangers. It is not common for Chinese people to touch, hug, lock arms, back slap or make any body contact. You can, however, greet a Chinese person by using a handshake or a nod.
- **Respect** — there is a strong emphasis on respecting the feelings of others, often by not directly refusing a request. Aside from respecting the feelings of others, speaking in a less direct, roundabout manner is also viewed as a proper way to comport oneself, and by talking in this manner, one upholds the socially acceptable idea of how to behave as a cultured individual. They can be overly polite, and it is not common for them to be as open with their communication as those from a Western background are.
- **Language** — there are many dialects in the Chinese language, with the two most common dialects being Mandarin and Cantonese. It is considered very disrespectful to assume that all Chinese people speak the same dialect.
- **Lucky colours** — Chinese people believe that red, yellow and green are the three main lucky colours and white and black are considered unlucky colours.
  - Red — is believed to bring happiness, beauty, vitality, good luck, success and good fortune. It is widely used during festivals and important events like weddings. Red lanterns adorn businesses and residences, red outfits are worn during weddings and festivals, and red envelopes are stuffed with money and given as gifts during the Chinese New Year.

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- Yellow — is the most important colour from an ancient perspective and symbolises royalty and is reserved for the emperor. Emperors were dressed in yellow imperial robes, rode in yellow carriages, and travelled on yellow paths. Official seals were packaged in yellow fabric.
- Green — is the colour of wealth, fertility, regeneration, hope, harmony and growth. Buildings, banks and restaurants in China are often painted green. Packaging for milk or produce is often green to indicate that the product is free of contamination.

### Learning Environments

- Structured and disciplined learning styles with clear expectations.
- Emphasis on academic excellence and achievement.
- Bilingual education support, particularly for first-generation migrants.
- Group learning and peer collaboration.

### Support Needs

- English language support for new migrants and older students.
- Familial engagement programs that bridge cultural differences in educational expectations.
- Mental health and well-being support, especially around high academic pressure.
- Culturally responsive teaching strategies to integrate Chinese cultural perspectives.

## INDIAN

### Cultural Awareness

- **Family** — for generations, India has had a prevailing tradition of the joint family system. It is when extended members of a family live together. Usually, the oldest male is the head of the joint Indian family system, and he makes most of the important decisions and rules. The other family members are likely to abide by them without question. This is why they are very respectful of their elders and treasure the family structure.
- **Significance of the cow** — the cow is a sacred animal in Hinduism, and it is believed to be the mother goddess bringing good fortune and wealth. For this reason, cows are revered in Hindu culture and feeding a cow is seen as an act of worship. It is an offence to consume any beef in mainstream Hindu and Jain society. It is important to be mindful when consuming any beef around Indians, as this may be seen as an act of disrespect.
- **Language** — in some Indian cultural contexts, asking personal questions may be viewed as a way of building familiarity and social connection. One should not be surprised or offended if someone asks how much you earn for a living and a host of other intimate questions in the first meeting. It is encouraged to ask the same types of questions in return.
- **Etiquette** — it is not polite to point your finger or feet at people, or touch people or objects with your feet or shoes. If you do so accidentally, you should apologise straight away. It should also be noted that Indians will often touch their head or eyes as a show of apology, and it is a sign of respect to bend down and touch an elder person's feet in India.
- It is also considered to be impolite to pass food or objects with your left hand. The left hand is considered to be unclean in India as it is used to perform matters associated with going to the bathroom. Therefore, it is advisable to only use the right hand to pass food or objects.

### Learning Environments

- High respect for educators and structured classroom environments.
- Interactive and discussion-based learning styles encouraged.
- Strong familial involvement in academic choices.

### Support Needs

- Networking opportunities, especially with those who are in careers the student is working towards.
- English language support for new migrants and older students.
- Community-based learning opportunities.

## MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURAL AWARENESS

- **Respect and acknowledgement** — a foundational value in Middle Eastern cultures, deeply rooted in family, religion, and community. Demonstrating respect through politeness, hospitality, and understanding of cultural norms is

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essential in building strong relationships. This includes showing respect for elders, religious beliefs, and traditional customs.

- **Addressing Middle Eastern people** — come from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, including Lebanese, Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, and others. Some may prefer to be addressed by their nationality (e.g., Lebanese-Australian), while others may prefer broader terms such as "Middle Eastern." It is always best to ask respectfully how someone prefers to be identified rather than assume. Be mindful that some surnames may indicate religious or cultural affiliations, and avoid making assumptions about beliefs or practices based on names.
- **Gender protocols** — gender roles can be more traditional in Middle Eastern cultures, with certain interactions between men and women following cultural or religious etiquette. Some Muslim women may prefer not to shake hands with men due to religious reasons. If unsure, wait for the woman to initiate a handshake. When addressing a Middle Eastern family, it is respectful to acknowledge the elders first. In some communities, separate seating for men and women may be preferred in social or learning environments.
- **Communication processes** — effective communication within many Middle Eastern cultural contexts requires patience, respect, and cultural sensitivity. Important aspects include:
  - Direct eye contact may be seen as a sign of confidence and sincerity, but prolonged or intense eye contact with the opposite gender may be considered inappropriate.
  - Non-verbal communication is important, as facial expressions and hand gestures often convey meaning.
  - Saving face is a strong cultural value — some may avoid openly disagreeing or admitting mistakes to maintain dignity.
  - Hospitality and small talk are highly valued; it is common to engage in polite conversation before discussing business or educational matters.
- **Religion and cultural sensitivities** — Middle Eastern communities include a variety of religious traditions, including Islam, Christianity, and other faiths. It is important to be mindful of religious practices, including:
  - **Islamic prayer times** — Muslim students may need breaks to pray during the day.
  - **Ramadan considerations** — During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslim students may be fasting, affecting their energy levels.
  - **Halal dietary requirements** — Muslim students may only consume halal food and may need suitable options.
  - **Religious holidays** — Be aware of significant holidays such as Eid (for Muslims) and Christmas or Easter (for Middle Eastern Christians).
- **Handling sensitive topics** — certain topics may be sensitive or require careful handling in discussions, including:
  - **Politics and international conflicts** — These issues can be deeply personal and should be approached with sensitivity.
  - **Religion and religious conversion** — Avoid making assumptions or engaging in discussions that may be seen as proselytising.
  - **Personal and family matters** — Family honour is important, and discussing personal issues openly may be uncomfortable for some students.
- **Hospitality and social norms** — a central part of Middle Eastern cultures, and gestures of warmth and generosity are common. If invited to a Middle Eastern home or event:
  - It is customary to accept food or drink as a sign of appreciation.
  - Giving and receiving with the right hand is preferred in some cultures.
  - Expressing gratitude and showing politeness when receiving hospitality is highly valued.
- **Cultural celebrations and contributions** — Middle Eastern Australians have enriched Australian society through food, business, arts, and education. Recognising and celebrating cultural contributions fosters inclusion and appreciation. Participating in cultural events such as Lebanese festivals, Persian New Year (Nowruz), or Eid celebrations can demonstrate respect and inclusivity. Encouraging the sharing of cultural traditions and stories in learning environments can build stronger relationships.

### Learning Environments

- Respect-based and structured learning.
- Faith-based facilities and sensitivities observed.
- Group learning and community-focused education.
- Preference for career-oriented and technical information.

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### Support Needs

- English language support for new migrants and older students.
- Culturally appropriate mental health and counselling services.
- Mentorship support.

### COMPLIANCE

This policy aligns with:

- **Standards for RTOs 2025:**
  - **Standard 2.3** — VET students have reasonable access to training support services, teachers, Trainers & Assessors and other staff to support their progress through the training product.
  - **Standard 2.5** — The learning environment promotes and supports the diversity of VET students.
  - **Standard 2.6** — The well-being needs of the VET student cohort are identified, and strategies are put in place to support these needs.
  - **Standard 4.2** — Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood.
  - **Standard 4.3** — Risks to VET students, staff, and the RTO are identified and managed.
  - **Standard 4.4** — The RTO undertakes systematic monitoring and evaluation to support the delivery of quality services and continuous improvement.

This policy also supports compliance with:

- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Applicable State and Territory Anti-Discrimination legislation

Failure to comply with this policy can have serious consequences, including but not limited to:

- **For the RTO** — non-compliance with this policy can result in reputation damage and potential financial losses.
- **For Staff Members** — staff found to have knowingly or negligently failed to comply with this policy can create conflict in the work environment.
- **For Students** — non-compliance could lead to disruptions in training and assessment services and conflict with others, which can impact their well-being and learning experience.

### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

ACTB is committed to continuous improvement of diversity, inclusion and well-being practices.

This policy will:

- Be reviewed annually or as required
- Incorporate feedback from students, staff and stakeholders
- Be monitored through internal audits and compliance reviews
- Inform updates to policies, procedures, and training practices

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required to ensure alignment with stakeholder feedback and operational needs. Feedback will be sought from staff members during the annual reviews to make this policy more robust.

An internal audit is to be conducted at least once a year to ensure our compliance with this policy and the relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. The Continuous Improvement Schedule outlines when this audit is to take place.

Internal audit review questions for self-assurance purposes should include:

- How do you support and encourage participation by a diverse range of students?
- How is your organisation perceived by the local First Nations community? Have you tested this?

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- How do you ensure your systems, policies, procedures and practices are inclusive and culturally safe?
- What strategies do you have in place to prevent discrimination and identify and respond to instances of discrimination where these occur?
- What strategies do you have in place for preventing abuse, harassment or violence, and for dealing with such issues should they arise amongst your student cohort?
- How do you support and build the cultural competence of your staff?
- How do you monitor the learning environment to ensure it is inclusive, culturally safe and welcoming of students and staff?

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Continuous Improvement Register
- Continuous Improvement Schedule
- Student Handbook