Institution	Mercury Institute of Victoria
Policy Name	Access and Equity Policy
Policy Governance	Compliance Manager
Reference to Standards	Standards for RTO 2015 – Standard 8 Clause 8.1 – 8.2
Date of Approval	April 2022
Review Date	April 2023

PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for ensuring equal opportunities to all people regardless of their background. Mercury Institute of Victoria supports government policy initiatives and provides access opportunities whenever possible or alternatively seeks assistance for participants from the relevant agency.

Mercury Institute of Victoria establishes this policy and procedure to:

- Comply with the requirements of Standards for RTO 2015 – Standard 8 Clause 8.1 - 8.2

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Mercury Institute of Victoria students.

LEGISLATION

Australian federal and state legislation makes it unlawful for organisations to discriminate against people because of their age, gender, race, marital status, sexuality, or physical or intellectual disability.

The following legislation underpins all matters related to access and equity at Mercury Institute of Victoria:

- The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (VIC)
- Disability Act 2006
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975

- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001

1. POLICY

The following access and equity guidelines are designed to remove barriers and obstacles so that all students have the opportunity to gain skills, knowledge and experience through access to Vocational Education & Training (VET) subjects. Access and equity guidelines will be implemented through the following strategies:

- Access to VET programs will be available to all eligible participants regardless of gender or race.
- All participants will be provided with the opportunity to gain a full qualification.
- For participants with special needs, access to additional assistance will be provided.
- Where poor literacy and/or numeracy skills present a barrier to participation, additional support will be provided to the participants within the capacity of the organisation's resources to provide such support and/or external assistance will be accessed as required.

We actively encourage the participation of a cross section of the community. This is achieved through the establishment of non-discriminatory selection procedures, encouraging access for all members of the community.

Access and equity principles

The following principles are applied by Mercury Institute of Victoria in the development and implementation of all learning and assessment strategies.

To ensure that the student recruitment and admission process is bias-free and non-discriminatory, Mercury Institute of Victoria:

- uses the same recruitment and admission process for all applicants
- provide a special consideration must be made while enrolling specific groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students. All Trainers/Assessors, ELICOS Teachers and staff needs to be made aware of any student enrolling from special groups

- provide applicants with adequate information and support to enable them to select the most suitable program for their needs

To ensure that the learning environment is free from harassment, discrimination and victimisation, Mercury Institute of Victoria:

- specifies standards of behaviour expected from students and staff in its *Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure*

To ensure that all curriculum developed by Mercury Institute of Victoria are inclusive of a range of student needs, Mercury Institute of Victoria:

- considers issues relating to access and equity when specifying course entry requirements and prerequisites
- offers flexible course design that provides multiple entry and exit points or pathways through the course, including credit transfer and recognition of prior learning
- takes into account the requirements of students with a disability when designing courses
- provides inclusive and non-discriminatory learning materials
- in the case of vocational courses, language, literacy and numeracy requirements are consistent with the vocational level of the qualification
- provides students without online access with information through other media according to needs

Mercury Institute of Victoria provides an assessment process that is fair, valid, reliable and consistent through:

- recognition of previously acquired skills and knowledge
- adequate information on course and subject assessment, prior to enrolment in the course
- adapting assessment to meet student needs while still maintaining a high quality, valid and consistent process
- giving students the right to appeal an assessment or recognition of prior learning decision
- giving all students an equal opportunity to demonstrate competence

Special consideration may be granted if through misadventure (e.g. illness, bereavement or personal trauma) a student is prevented from completing an assessment or sitting an examination; or believes that their performance in an assessment event has been affected by the incident.

Mercury Institute of Victoria's premises provide appropriate access to those with a physical disability. Where Mercury Institute of Victoria provides training and assessment at other venues, Mercury Institute of Victoria will ensure to the best of its ability that venues are accessible to people with a disability.

Complaints and Appeals are addressed in a fair and equitable manner. Individuals who believe they have been treated unfairly are encouraged to use Mercury Institute of Victoria's student complaints and appeals procedures. Mercury Institute of Victoria will promptly and thoroughly investigate all complaints and appeals in accordance with stated procedures.

Students also have the right to appeal against any decisions as set out in the *Complaint and Appeal Policy and Procedure.*