

Student Support and Welfare Policy

Relevant Standards

SRTO: 1.3 (b)
The National Code 2018: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4

Linked Documents

Anti-discrimination and Bullying Policy
Sexual Harassment Policy
Student Handbook
Student Complaints and Appeal Form

1. Purpose

Purpose of the Student Support and Welfare Policy is to foster an environment which is conducive to effective learning and in which each student feels safe and supported and contributes in a positive manner to Mervic community. This policy compliments college's other relevant policies and procedures, including the Health and Safety Policy and Procedure, and emphasises college's commitment to supporting student learning and well-being, and promoting a positive learning environment for all involved.

This policy provides a student support mechanism that not only provides academic and learning support services but also an opportunity for students to access welfare-related support services to assist with issues that may arise during their study.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all the current and prospective clients of Mervic.

3. Definitions

Student: Means a learner, enterprise or organisation that uses or purchases the services provided by an RTO

Student Support Services: Means the services provided by Mervic to students in order to assist and support the successful achievement of learning outcomes. Services may include (but are not limited to):

- Study and learning support and study skills programs;
- Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) programs or referrals to these programs;
- Equipment, resources and/or programs to increase access for learners with disabilities;
- Mediation services or referrals to these services;
- Flexible scheduling and delivery of training and assessment;
- Counselling services or referrals to these services;
- Information technology (IT) support;
- Learning materials in alternative formats, for example, in large print

Welfare Related Services: Services which address the mental, physical, social and spiritual well-being of students. These services may include, through direct provision or referral, information/advice about accommodation, counselling, crisis services, disabilities and equity issues, financial matters, legal issues, medical issues, mental health, peer mentoring, programmes promoting social interaction, religious and spiritual matters, and stress-management

4. Legislative Context

Mervic acknowledges its obligation under various federal and local government acts and regulations including;

- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth)

- Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000
- Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995

5. Policy

5.1 Mervic is committed to providing appropriate support and welfare services to students to enable and provide them an environment, in which each student feels safe and supported, and contributes in a positive manner to Mervic community.

5.2 Mervic shall ensure that appropriate student support services are available to assist students in completing their studies and reaching their academic goals.

5.3 STUDENT SUPPORT MECHANISM

5.3.1 Student Support and Safety

Mervic is committed to providing and maintaining an environment that is without risks to the health, safety and security of Mervic employees and students. Mervic will achieve this by;

- Developing and implementing a Health and Safety Policy
- Developing and implementing policies on procedure to prevent and deal with any form of discrimination, harassment, or vilification of college employees and students
- Upholding the Student Code of conduct
- Appointing an OHS/WHS representative
- Appointing a Student Support Officer to address academic support and welfare related services
- Providing referrals to external counselling services to students to deal with issues that are not within college's expertise, scope, or authority
- Keeping students abreast of any general security issues or concerns (relevant to international students in particular) as observed in media, or government announcements; and providing relevant information as appropriate
- Monitoring student course progress and providing academic and administrative support to all the students within college's policy framework to enable them to achieve their academic objectives
- There are many issues that may affect a student's social or personal life. Students will have access to the Student Support Officer to gain advice and guidance on personal, accommodation, or family/friend issues. Where the Student Support Officer feels, further support may be required, a referral to an appropriate external support service will be organised (Ref 5.3.3).

5.3.2 Student Handbook

- All current and prospective students will be provided with a Student Handbook containing all the essential information to adjust to life in Australia including external resources for international students, college facilities and resources to help them with their studies.
- A copy of the Student Handbook will also be available on college's website.

5.3.3 Student Support Officer

- Mervic will appoint a full-time, on-campus Student Support Officer to provide student support services including (but not limited to) accommodation, counselling, crisis services, disabilities and equity issues, financial matters, legal issues, medical issues, mental health, peer mentoring, programmes promoting

social interaction, religious and spiritual matters, and stress-management. Student Support Officer will also coordinate learning and academic support services in consultation with the Academic Manager.

- Students will need to make an appointment to meet the Student Support Officer. Urgent matters will be attended to promptly on advice of the front desk (initiated by the student) or college staff members.
- Academic and learning support needs will be referred to the Academic Manager. The Student Support Officer will, however, ensure that the required academic support services have been provided to the students through scheduled learning support sessions and/or activities, and will maintain a regular communication with the students to obtain feedback. When needed, Mervic shall consider appointing/delegating an academic staff as the Learning Support Office based on the student needs analysis and review of the feedback. This position will dedicatedly assist and support students with academic issues and preparation; including writing, learning, and research skills under supervision of the Academic Manager.
- Counselling services and other external referrals will be arranged if deemed appropriate by the Student Support Officer. There is no fee attached to this welfare support and referral service. Any cost charged by the external services will be paid by the students.
- All students are required to attend an orientation day at the beginning of their studies (*Student Orientation Policy and Procedure*). The Student Support Officer shall discuss the provision or support services and how best the students can avail these services during their studies at the RTO.

5.5 Academic and Learning Support

- Students may have concerns with their attendance, academic performance or other related issues that are placing them at risk of not achieving the requirements of their program or completing within the expected duration. Mervic will, accordingly, provide an ongoing academic support to students in form of Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) programs or referrals to these programs if needed, course progress intervention and academic support if deemed at risk of not completing the course on time, scheduled learning and study support sessions, and academic support for people with disability and learning difficulties.
- Students can access college's student support services by approaching either the Student Support Officer or any staff member in their immediate contact. Students will also be provided with a Student Concern form and additional information (Ref: 5.8) on the relevant policies and procedures to deal with and report any issues of concern or welfare.
- All students will have an unequivocal access to college resources and an equal opportunity to access college programs, services and resources, including Information Technology (IT), library, course and learning materials, access to academic and administrative staff members, avenues to lodge and resolve complaints, student welfare and student support services, and access to their administrative and academic records.

5.6 Students with LLN Needs

- LLN needs may be identified through pre-enrolment and pre-training assessments, during student orientation, and/or trainer/assessors' recommendations. Mervic will analyse these needs and provide a strategy for assistance. These needs will be addressed through classroom learning and assessment activities over the duration of the program. Mervic's Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (LLN) Policy further supports these needs.
- For all learners, LLN are key underpinning skills that will support their vocational learning, the development of their employability skills and their workplace communication skills whatever level of course or training they are doing (The Crux of the Matter, DET, 2011). Accordingly, Mervic will embed LLN principles within its delivery and learning and assessment tasks.

- Mervic uses Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) as a reference to assess current LLN skill levels.
- LLN needs may be identified through student’s self-assessment (pre-enrolment), during student orientation, and/or trainer/assessors’ recommendations. These needs will be addressed through classroom learning and assessment activities over the duration of the program. Mervic may refer students to appropriate levels of English language programs within the RTO or external providers depending on the specific needs/requirements of the student.

5.7 Students with Disability

- Mervic acknowledges the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005, and its obligation as an education and training provider to support the rights of students with disability to participate in educational courses and programs on the same basis as students without disability.
- Students who wish to apply for adjustments to teaching or assessment methods on the basis of a disability should contact Academic Manager and bring supporting documents for consideration of disability (e.g. a letter from your treating professional).
- Reasonable adjustments to training and assessment methods are made using the following principles (Ref: ACARA):
 - Students with disabilities are subject to the standard rules and policy on assessment and teaching methods, and assessment is only varied where a student can demonstrate with appropriate documentation that he/she is disadvantaged as a result of disability.
 - The nature of reasonable adjustments is such that they are designed to minimise the disadvantage experienced by students with disabilities, rather than provide students with a competitive advantage.
 - Any adjustments to assessment for a student with a disability are to be made in such a way as to ensure that the fundamental nature of the assessment remains the same i.e. students with disabilities are still required to demonstrate a pre-determined level of ability in relation to essential competency requirements.

5.8 Student Hardship

The requirements of study may present some students with hardship, due to economic, social, or other difficulties. Where genuine hardship exists, a student may seek permission to review their workload or other related matters.

To make a request, a student will be required to provide a letter to the Student Support Officer describing the reason for their hardship. It is essential to include evidence supporting a claim of hardship, for example:

- Financial hardship: Financial documents, pay slips or bank statements which indicate financial status;
- Medical grounds: Medical certificates stating nature of condition, duration;
- Family Situation: Doctor or Counsellor’s report or recommendation, external community/welfare agency recommendation

Student Support Officer shall review the request and where necessary arrange a face-to-face meeting to discuss the issues and provide the required support through internal or external referrals and advice.

5.8 Information to Students

Information on student support services, and procedures for accessing these services, including contact details of the Student Support Officer will be made available to all the students through;

- Student Handbook
- RTO Website
- Student Orientation Program

The Student Support Officer shall ensure that up-to-date information is available for student support services and that any contact details provided are current.

Students may access the Student Support Officer directly (e.g. email, phone), by contacting any administrative staff, Academic Manager, or via the front desk. The front desk shall also assist with organising appointments as soon as practicable.

6. Review and Continuous Improvement

In order to ensure that the Mervic has support services for students that are appropriate in scope and quality for the capacity of the Mervic and mode of delivery of its programs, Mervic shall implement a regimen of regular review and feedback from various stakeholders to monitor the efficacy of the availability and accessibility of the support services and action enhancements and improvements where necessary.

Mervic shall ensure that its staff members who interact directly with overseas students are aware of the college's obligations under the ESOS framework and the potential implications for overseas students arising from the exercise of these obligations. Staff shall be required to undertake professional development activities to continuously apply their knowledge of the ESOS framework and requirements under the National Code 2018.

6.1 Stakeholder Feedback

Regular stakeholder feedback through the use of survey instruments will inform the Mervic when reviewing the adequacy of its support services through the following process;

- A survey of students is conducted for selected programs during each study period that will include a section on the quality of the Mervic's support services soliciting suggestions on any improvements which might be made to improve the student experience.
- The QA Committee will review the surveys, analyse the feedback and summarise any issues raised in regard to support services, and make appropriate recommendations to the CEO.
- The CEO will meet formally and informally with the Student Support Officer to discuss any issues raised and to formulate possible strategies for improvement.
- The Student Support Officer will recommend any improvements to support services to the CEO for action.
- All improvements that have been recommended by the Student Support Officer to the CEO for action will be discussed by the Senior Management Committee and allocated to a responsible person for completion within an agreed timeframe.
- Outstanding actions will be monitored by the Senior Management Committee until evidence of completion.
- Where amounts not allocated in the budget are required for the improvement of support services, the CEO will include it in their report to the Board of Directors in conjunction with a request for additional funding.

6.2 Ongoing Review

The Senior Management Committee will continuously review the efficacy of support services in their areas of responsibility through the following process:

- Each member of the Senior Management Committee will be required to report at each meeting on any issues related to support services that have arisen since the previous meeting. This will be a standing item on the agenda for meetings of the Senior Management Committee.
- Where improvements to the Mervic's support services need to be addressed, any actions required will be decided upon by the Senior Management Committee and will be allocated to a responsible person for completion within the agreed timeframe.

- Outstanding actions will be monitored by the Senior Executive Committee until evidence of completion.
- Where amounts not allocated in the budget are required for the improvement of facilities or resources, the CEO will include it in their report to the Board of Directors in conjunction with a request for additional funding.

7. Responsibility

The Campus Manager is responsible for effective implementation and management of this policy as well as provision of information on ways to resolve complaints of breaches of this policy.

The Student Support Officer is responsible for responding to and addressing the mental, physical, social and spiritual well-being needs of students; and making appropriate referrals to external agencies when required.

The Academic Managers and the academic staff members are responsible for identifying and supporting academic needs.

The Academic Manager is responsible for planning, implementing, and monitoring learning and academic support services.

The CEO has the overall responsibility for management of these guidelines in consultation with the Senior Management Committee.

Staff members in their respective roles are responsible for using these guidelines to plan and enhance support services.