

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create and maintain culturally safe environments where all individuals, and particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, feel respected, included, and supported. Cultural safety is not only a human right but an organisational responsibility that must be embedded at all levels of The Animal Academy's operations.

Cultural safety is embedded through governance, systems, leadership and everyday practice. It is a shared responsibility across all roles within The Animal Academy and is maintained through reflection, relationship and accountability.

Implementation of this policy is supported by a Cultural Safety Action Plan reviewed annually and co-developed with community stakeholders, including First Nations stakeholders.

Scope

This policy applies to all:

- Students, including children, young people, adults and those from culturally diverse backgrounds
- Personnel, contractors, volunteers and employer/community work placement hosts
- Learning and service environments, both face-to-face and online
- Governance, operations, communications and stakeholder relationships
- All partnership arrangements, subcontracting, procurement and delivery undertaken with or on behalf of The Animal Academy

Definitions

Cultural Safety

Cultural safety means creating environments where all people feel respected, valued and free from any challenge, denial or assault on their identity, culture, beliefs or lived experience. Cultural safety includes respect for religious identity, belief systems and cultural practices, ensuring individuals are not subjected to discrimination, stereotyping or hostility.

Cultural safety extends beyond cultural awareness or sensitivity to focus on shared respect, shared meaning and shared knowledge. Cultural safety is determined by those who experience it, not by the organisation. It is achieved when systems, structures and relationships uphold dignity, agency and belonging for everyone, including but not limited to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people of diverse faiths, genders, abilities and backgrounds.

Cultural Capability

Cultural capability is the ongoing development of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that enable individuals and organisations to work respectfully and effectively across cultures. It involves continuous learning and reflection to recognise one's own biases and assumptions while valuing and engaging with different worldviews, communication styles and cultural practices.

Cultural capability supports safe, inclusive and responsive environments for all people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other culturally diverse communities.

Personnel development at The Animal Academy includes learning on:

- Cultural diversity
- Racism and bias
- Religious discrimination
- Respectful engagement with culturally and religiously diverse communities

Rationale

Cultural safety is essential to equitable access, engagement and achievement in education. It supports student wellbeing, strengthens cultural identity, and mitigates systemic barriers and trauma. Cultural safety is defined by those who experience it, not by the organisation.

This policy recognises that learning and work are shaped by First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing, and values relational, place-based and collective approaches to education.

The Animal Academy implements a Student Wellbeing Strategy that provides an integrated framework for supporting student safety, wellbeing, participation and success. The Strategy aligns organisational policies, support systems and monitoring processes to ensure students are supported throughout their learning journey.

Use of Sensitive Terms

The terms 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander', 'Aboriginal', 'Indigenous' and 'First Nations' may be used interchangeably in The Animal Academy's work. In using these terminologies, the organisation seeks to acknowledge and honour diversity, shared knowledge and experiences, as well as the right of stakeholders to define their own identities.

Commitments

The Animal Academy has zero tolerance for racism, discrimination or vilification based on culture, ethnicity, faith or belief systems. This includes antisemitism, Islamophobia and discrimination directed toward any religious community.

Cultural safety is created through both structural design and daily practice. The following organisational commitments apply across training delivery, employment, governance and community engagement.

The Animal Academy:

- Delivers annual training to all personnel on unconscious bias, racism and their ongoing impacts
- Embeds reflective practice in personnel supervision, professional learning and leadership development
- Co-designs programs, strategies and communications with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders where relevant
- Recognises and respects First Nations perspectives on safety, healing, knowledge and wellbeing
- Trains personnel to recognise and respond to the social and emotional wellbeing needs of students

- Dedicates financial, staffing and time resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led initiatives, events, research and partnerships
- Addresses cultural safety objectives in organisational plans and risk frameworks
- Holds executive leaders accountable for cultural safety implementation and progress
- Routinely collects and acts on feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities
- Integrates cultural safety KPIs into performance and outcome monitoring activities
- Includes First Nations representation or engagement advice and feedback in governance and decision-making bodies
- Reviews all major organisational decisions for cultural safety impact
- Allocates dedicated funding for cultural safety roles and partnerships

Learning environments must be free from behaviour that demeans or marginalises individuals because of:

- Cultural identity
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Language
- Nationality

Children and Young People

In addition to the general commitments above, The Animal Academy ensures that:

- Child-friendly, culturally safe communication tools are available
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are engaged with using preferred protocols
- Cultural identity is respected and supported in all interactions

First Nations People

In addition to the general commitments above, The Animal Academy:

- Acknowledges the unique experience of First Nations people in Australia
- Recognises that First Nations peoples do not always have the same level of access to vocational education and training as non-Indigenous Australians, nor the same positive experiences
- Actively addresses unconscious bias, racism and discrimination, and supports self-determination for First Nations people
- Supports progression and leadership opportunities, resourcing for community partnerships and co-designed training models with First Nations stakeholders

Building Cultural Capability

The Animal Academy provides structured, locally led cultural capability development for all personnel and learners. Cultural learning is ongoing, reflective and embedded in supervision, induction and professional development. Capability is measured through application and reflection, not attendance.

Inclusive Entry Pathways

The Animal Academy ensures that entry pathways for First Nations learners and personnel are culturally safe, flexible and strengths-based. Processes include supported enrolment, verbal application options, recognition of prior experience, and visible cultural support roles from first contact.

Partnerships

The Animal Academy builds and sustains culturally safe partnerships with First Nations organisations and communities using a four-phase approach: prepare, initiate, build and maintain. Partnerships are based on reciprocity, shared decision-making and long-term relationship, not transaction.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Animal Academy monitors and evaluates cultural safety processes to ensure performance is effective and outcomes are met.

A process of performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting has been established and implemented. The organisation continually improves the effectiveness and efficiency of its processes. Process performance and outcomes are regularly reviewed to identify and address causes of existing and potential problems, as well as to uncover opportunities for improvement.

Please refer to the Quality Policy for further information on the monitoring and evaluation process.

Related Documents

- Quality Policy
- Student Wellbeing Strategy
- Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Code of Conduct — Students
- Code of Conduct — Personnel
- Cultural Safety Action Plan
- Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Document Control

Policy Owner: The Animal Academy Pty Ltd

Version: 1.1

Review Date: Annually or as required

Approved By: Chief Executive Officer