

Australian Lutheran College

Access, Equity and Equal Opportunity Policy and Procedures

Purpose

This policy provides a framework for the development of policies and strategies which are aimed at achieving educational processes that address the needs of staff and students belonging to disadvantaged groups.

ALC recognises that particular groups of people in society have experienced, and continue to experience, institutional disadvantage and unequal educational outcomes. These include women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people of non-English speaking backgrounds, people with disabilities, and the rurally isolated.

We all have a right to work and study in an environment free from harassment, discrimination or threatening behaviour. This right is accompanied by our responsibility to respect the rights of others and respect differences and diversity; ie, apply the biblical principle of 'the golden rule'- doing unto others as you would have them do to you (cf Matthew 18:15-17).

This policy aims, therefore, to assist the ALC community to achieve best practice by promoting the establishment of strategies and processes which effectively address the issues of disadvantage, equity and equal opportunity.

Commitment

ALC's commitment to the principle of access, equity and equal opportunity in education gives practical expression to the nature and purpose of Australian Lutheran College as the tertiary educational institution of the Lutheran Church of Australia, having regard to the particular needs of members of disadvantaged groups.

In keeping with this commitment ALC will strive to ensure that programs and services are relevant, accessible, fair and inclusive by

- promoting programs and services to the ALC community in a manner that includes and reflects the diverse College population, to ensure that all prospective staff/students are well informed on the options available to meet their individual educational and work place needs;
 - implementing fair educational program and resource allocation practices, to promote the participation of members of disadvantaged groups;
 - undertaking to eliminate policies, practices, structures, assumptions and behaviours which may contribute to the disadvantages suffered by disadvantaged groups.
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Legislative obligations

This policy acknowledges ALC's legal obligations under State and Federal legislation, to ensure that our working and teaching practices are fair and equitable, and our working and learning environment non-discriminatory and safe; viz, the

- Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 (SA)
 - Racial Discrimination Act, 1975 (Cth)
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- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act, 1986 (Cth)
- the Sex Discrimination Act, 1984 (Cth)
- the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 (Cth)
- the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act, 1986.

Roles and responsibilities

The CEO, Program Directors and Managers are responsible for fostering the implementation of access and equity best practice by ensuring that:

- ALC's mission statements and corporate goals clearly define its role in meeting the needs of members of disadvantaged groups;
- policies are in place, widely dispersed and understood;
- barriers to access and participation are identified and strategies developed to overcome them;
- key staff have identified responsibility and expertise in equal opportunity matters;
- the equity profile of the potential staff/student base is defined and participatory practices established;
- all ALC policies and procedures are non-discriminatory;
- all staff are provided with information and training about access and equity issues and ALC's complaint resolution processes;
- all students are provided with information about access and equity issues and ALC's complaint resolution processes;
- all components of the education process are evaluated to ensure that they are inclusive and value students from diverse backgrounds;
- action plans are developed and put in place to meet any deficiencies.

Staff are responsible for ensuring that they understand and comply with the policy and behave in a courteous, sensitive and non-discriminatory manner when dealing with other staff, students and outside clients.

Students are responsible for behaving in a courteous, sensitive and non-discriminatory manner when dealing with staff, other students and visiting members of the community.

See also ***Australian Lutheran College Handbook***, p 56, regarding

- ALC's rights and responsibilities
- Students' rights and responsibilities, and
- Student Support

As **Access & Equity Co-ordinator, the Dean of Studies'** role is to provide services to staff and students, including advice and information on anti-discrimination legislation, and assist with grievances under the ALC anti-discrimination policies and procedures including sexual harassment and complaint resolution.

Sexual Harassment Contact Officers in the Lutheran Church of Australia provide, in a confidential environment, information on the various options open to anyone should he/she wish to making a complaint of sexual harassment. The Sexual Harassment Contact Officer can also provide support to those who wish to take action.

The **Program Directors, together with the Business Manager and the Student Counsellor**, provide information, support and confidential counselling to assist students, as appropriate, including:

- educational and career planning
- student allowance
- benefits and access to financial assistance
- study skills and learning assistance
- personal counselling

grievance and conflict resolution
stress management
support for students with a disability.

Disability support

The **Business Manager** is the principal point of support, providing information and negotiation for resources and/or equipment for students. Students are under no obligation to disclose a disability or to seek additional assistance. However, staff are more likely to provide effective assistance and support if they understand the disability requirements. If students decide to disclose this information, the earlier they do so the more likely ALC will be able to provide for their particular needs.

[A **Guide for ALC Staff on Students with a Disability** is being designed to assist if students have a disability and are currently undertaking or considering undertaking study.]

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome or uninvited sexual advance that a person does not initiate, like or reciprocate. If someone offends, humiliates or intimidates a person, information on options on how to deal with it can be found by contacting a Sexual Harassment Contact Officer (see LCA policy attached).

For the complete policy and procedures see
<http://www.lca.org.au/whos/churchminsafespace.htm>

Complaint Resolution (non-academic)

- ALC has a Grievance Resolution policy and procedures that exist to provide a proper and fair avenue of redress for student and staff concerns. This includes any complaints of discrimination and harassment, although sexual harassment has its own procedures.
- Complaints will be treated seriously and dealt with promptly, impartially, sensitively and confidentially.
- The procedure is based on the understanding that no action will be taken without consulting the person making the complaint.

Students with complaints about courses, assessment, grading, delivery etc must make use of the **Grievance Policy and Procedures (academic)**.