

# STUDENT HANDBOOK

Congratulations on your decision to undertake a formal vocational qualification, and welcome to Learning Options.

Learning Options specialises in Vocational Education & Training that is nationally recognised. Our training personnel are committed to equipping you with a high level of skills and knowledge through active learning, and to assisting you to realise your ambitions. Programs are planned and executed in conjunction with both industry and government to facilitate the highest achievable outcomes in terms of student competencies and employment opportunities.

We are accredited under the Australian Quality Training Framework and as such, we adhere to standards to ensure that you receive high quality learning and assessment services. This handbook introduces you to a number of the policies and procedures we have in place to ensure that you receive this quality service and are able to make the most of the learning.

Please read the policies outlined on the following pages prior to signing your course enrolment form. Signing your enrolment form indicates acceptance of the policies outlined.

I ask you to take advantage of every learning opportunity available to you to maximise the value of vocational education and training. I trust you will find your learning journey rewarding.

**Karen Nicholas**  
Director, Learning Options

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## WHAT IS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING?

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“Vocational education and training (VET) is 'education and training for work' and part of a broader educational network in Australia that includes schools, universities and adult and community education.

The Australian VET system is one of the most sophisticated in the world because it is:

### Industry-led

The employers, unions and professional associations of an industry define the outcomes that are required from training.

### National

The VET system is jointly-managed by state, territory and Australian governments, in partnership with industry and training providers.

### Client focused

Clients of the VET system are employers and individuals who use it or intend to use it. This simple, flexible and relevant system responds to client needs.”

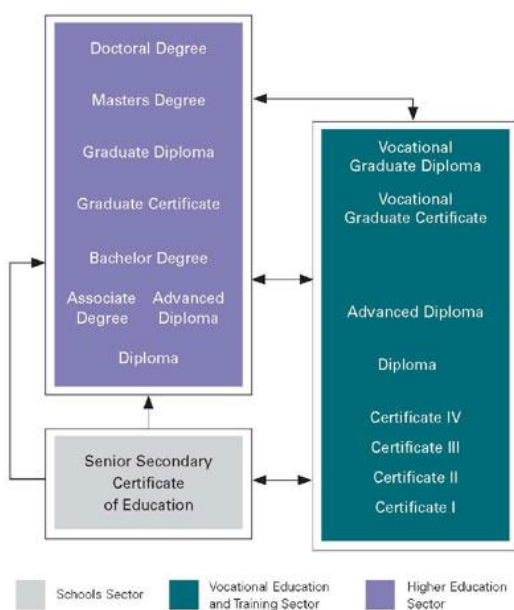
*From [www.training.com.au](http://www.training.com.au)*

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING PATHWAYS

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Vocational Education & Training qualifications are aligned to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) which is the framework for all qualifications in Australia across the school, VET and Higher Education Sectors. The term ‘pathways’ is used to refer to the linkages between qualifications as shown in the table below. Pathways may also refer to the delivery and assessment of a course. You might undertake a learning and assessment pathway, or an assessment only pathway, and still achieve the same outcome.

### CROSS-SECTORAL QUALIFICATION LINKAGES



From [www.aqf.edu.au](http://www.aqf.edu.au)

## THE COMPETENCY BASED SYSTEM

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All programs delivered and assessed under the Australian Qualifications Framework are competency based. The aim of Competency Based Training is to assess your ability to do the activities in each unit rather than sit an exam that has a specific “pass mark”. Your Assessor will assess your ability (or “competency”) to carry out the activities in each unit.

Competencies are normally expressed in terms of a unit of competency. For example, if you were working in a hotel kitchen, a unit of competency might include ‘prepare pastry, cakes and yeast goods’.

Competencies include the skills and tasks that are required in the workplace. When you are being assessed on these activities, you will be required to perform them to the level required in the workplace.

You will be notified of your result in each assessment, and have access to your assessment records through your Training Consultant.

## PRIVATE PROVIDERS VS TAFE: WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

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A Registered Training Organisation (RTO) is a company that is registered to deliver nationally recognised qualifications. RTO's have to meet criteria defined in the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), and are audited against the criteria regularly.

Private training organisations in Australia can apply to become an RTO. TAFE colleges, many schools and some universities also have RTO status.

There are differences between institutions, BUT THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE IN THE QUALIFICATION YOU ACHIEVE.

Differences may be in areas such as:

- Delivery method
- Flexibility
- Trainers
- Resources
- Venues
- Course Costs
- Course durations
- Packaging of qualifications (ie. Which elective units are offered)

All RTO's adhere to the same quality standards.

## OUR QUALITY STANDARDS

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The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) is a set of nationally agreed standards to ensure the quality of vocational education and training services throughout Australia. The standards we adhere to are:

- Standard 1*            The Registered Training Organisation provides quality training & assessment across all of its operations.
- Standard 2*            The Registered Training Organisation adheres to principles of access and equity and maximises outcomes for all clients
- Standard 3*            Management systems are responsive to the needs of clients, staff and stakeholders, and the environment in which the Registered Training Organisation operates

## SOME INDUSTRY DEFINITIONS

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**Competency**                      To be competent means you have been assessed as having the skills, knowledge and attitude required to perform a task or an aspect of a job correctly, safely and efficiently, and in a range of contexts.

**Unit of Competency**            A Unit of competency is a documented group of tasks that a person does to perform a job. Each of these tasks is called an element. Your Workplace Assessor will show you an example of this soon.

**Workplace Assessor**            A Workplace Assessor is a training professional who must have a minimum assessment qualification to sign you off as being competent in a unit. The Workplace Assessor may design, conduct or oversee the assessments conducted in the workplace or the classroom.

**Assessment**                      Assessment is the process of assessing evidence of your skills and knowledge against the Unit of Competency. It may be a process that takes place over a period of time, or it may be conducted as one event, such as a meeting. Assessment will result in an outcome of 'Competent' or 'Not Yet Competent'.

**"Competent/Not Yet Competent"**    Every assessment needs to be marked. A Competent result means the trainee has met the relevant competencies. A Not Yet Competent result means that further training is required, or perhaps that more evidence needs to be provided to prove competence.

**Evidence**                          Your Workplace Assessor is required to collect information about your competence. This information may be in the form of work samples, completed workbooks, observation, written confirmation from your supervisor, resumes or other ways. This information is called Evidence.

### **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

RPL is a process of official recognition of skills and knowledge an individual has gained through previous learning or experience. In some instances this previous experience may provide enough evidence to give you current competence. If RPL is granted to you, this will reduce the amount of formal training required to complete your qualification.

**Appeal**                              An appeal is the formal lodging of a complaint disputing a result or outcome of a training program or assessment including RPL and RCC. The correct procedure to do this is found in this Student Handbook.

## HOW ARE STUDENTS SELECTED FOR COURSES?

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Learning Options adheres to a fair and open selection processes for all courses. Selection of students for courses is based on the specific criteria developed for each course. Only applicants who meet the entry requirements for the course will be considered for selection to that course.

The following selection process shall apply in the event that there is a limit to the number of places that are available for selection by potential students:

Only applicants who meet the prerequisites for the qualification can be accepted. An alternative course may be offered where applicants do not have the pre-requisites required.

Successfully meeting entry requirements does not guarantee entry into the course. If there are more applicants meeting the course entry requirements than there are available places, applicants will be accepted on a 'first come, first served' basis. Persons not accepted on this basis will be placed, in order of application, on a waiting list in case one or more persons accepted into the program subsequently withdraw.

All successful applicants are to follow the enrolment procedure set out below:

- Complete the enrolment form.
- Applicant then receives a letter/phone call informing of the outcomes.
- If successful, the applicant will receive a "confirmation of enrolment letter".
- Invoice is forwarded to new student.

The RTO has the right to cancel the enrolment of any student if the student has:

- Gained admission by misrepresentation, falsification of documents, or other fraudulent means
- Failed to fulfill the requirements for admission or enrolment
- Failed to fulfill the ongoing requirements of a student, such as minimum attendance requirements
- Engaged in any act of serious misconduct associated with the academic program of the SWTA
- Failed to satisfy the minimum academic performance level required
- Failed to pay any outstanding fees, or
- Been involved in unacceptable conduct.

## ENROLMENT FEES

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Many government funded programs have separate guidelines surrounding enrolment and administration fees. Contract guidelines take precedence over this policy. You will be advised if there are separate fee guidelines relevant to your program.

Learning Options charges participant fees where determined by the specific terms of the contract or in the instance of user pays.

Learning Options may withhold students' results for non payment of fees or refuse enrolment in a program if the enrolment fee is not paid.

## FEE REFUNDS

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Refunds will be paid in accordance with the following:

- Where the participant ceases training of their own volition prior to the midway point of the program, the refund must be applied for (ie. It is not automatic) and made at the rate of 50% of the total fee payment.
- Where the participant ceases training of their own volition after the midway point of the program, no refund is payable.
- This applies irrespective of whether the participant has actually attended classes or not.
- Fee refunds will be calculated from the date the participant officially notifies Learning Options of their withdrawal from the program.
- Learning Options will retain a \$30 administration charge in addition to the pro rata amount calculated as above.
- Fee refunds will only be made after the fees have been cleared through the bank account.

## THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

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All programs delivered by Learning Options are assessed under the principles of Competency Based Assessment.

The aim of Competency Based Training is to assess your ability to do the activities in each unit rather than sit an exam that has a specific “pass mark”. Your Trainer will assess your ability (or “competency”) to carry out the activities in each unit.

*Assessment is the process of gathering evidence to determine your competence against an agreed standard or ‘unit of competency’.*

You will be notified of your result in each assessment, and have access to your assessment records through your Training Consultant.

***The role of the Assessor is to:***

- Plan your assessment**
- Assess your competence against the standard**
- To provide you with a flexible and fair assessment**
- To record your results**

Assessment is the means by which we determine whether or not a competency has been achieved. It is the process of collecting evidence and making judgements about the extent to which a person demonstrates the knowledge and skills as set out in the standards or learning outcomes of a unit of competency. You may be asked to complete workplace projects, participate in classroom activities, undertake self paced tasks, obtain third party reports, complete observations and various other forms of assessment.

## ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES

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For an effective assessment system in a competency environment, some basic principles must apply.

### Underlying principles of assessment:

#### **(a) Validity**

The assessments actually assess what they claim to assess and what they have been designed to assess. Validity of assessment is achieved when:

- Assessors are fully aware of what is to be assessed, as indicated by the standards of competence, including clearly defined performance criteria

#### **(b) Reliability**

Reliable assessment uses methods and procedures that ensure that the competency standards are interpreted and applied consistently from person to person and from context to context. The following are important to ensure that assessment produces consistent outcomes:

- Clear, unambiguous, well documented assessment procedures and competency standards;
- Clear, consistent and specific assessment criteria;
- Effectively trained, briefed and monitored assessors;
- Adequate assessors across industries and a hierarchy of assessment which ensures a quality outcome; and
- Assessment is carried out within a system flexible enough to cope with multiple and diverse forms of evidence.

#### **(c) Flexibility**

Every portfolio or set of candidate evidence is unique. Each candidate will identify and develop his or her own specific set of evidence to prove competency against the standards. This set will be based on the workplace experience of the candidate and will comprise diverse types and forms of relevant and appropriate evidence.

Assessors will take a flexible approach to the assessment of evidence. Clearly, this approach must always take time and cost into account both to ensure the best use of assessor time and the best use of the candidate and his or her employer's time.

#### **(d) Fairness**

The assessment process will not disadvantage any individual.

### There are also some rules of evidence that we adhere to when assessing.

#### **(a) Validity**

Appropriate evidence is collected from activities that can be clearly related to the units of competency.

#### **(b) Currency**

Under an effective system, assessment evaluates whether or not the individual's skills and knowledge are current and can be applied in today's workplace. As a general rule, competencies that have not been demonstrated within the past 3 years are not usually accepted as "current". However, an assessor, under some circumstances may make exceptions to the specified period.

There may be specific situations where skills have not been directly applied for a longer period, but these skills are in fact still current for the individual. In cases such as this, evidence from earlier periods may be admissible, and assessed

for currency, within an appropriately flexible assessment system.

**(c) Sufficiency**

Evidence of competency should be sufficient to cover all the elements, performance criteria and required range of variables in the standards against which assessment is to be carried out.

A tendency of many candidates is to provide more (or less) evidence than is actually required to prove competency against the standards. An effective assessment system ensures that candidates are clearly advised regarding the amount and form of evidence, which is sufficient to prove competency. This should avoid the situation where masses of evidence are provided, requiring assessors to spend more time than necessary per candidate, or too little evidence, making it difficult to judge competence.

**(d) Authenticity**

The evidence collected is authentic that is, actually comes from you and is directly attributable to your skills and knowledge of the individual being assessed.

## FORMS OF EVIDENCE

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In general, basic forms of skills evidence include:

**(a) Direct performance evidence**

- current or from an acceptable past period;
- extracted examples within the workplace;
- natural observation in the workplace; and
- simulations, including competency and skills tests, projects, assignments

**(b) Supplementary evidence, from:**

- oral and written questioning;
- personal reports; and
- Witness testimony.

Appropriate and valid forms of assessment utilised for both skills and knowledge may include:

- (a) Evaluation of direct products of work;
- (b) Natural observation;
- (c) Skill tests, simulations and projects;
- (d) Evaluation of underpinning knowledge and understanding;
- (e) Questioning and discussion; and
- (f) Evidence from prior achievement and activity.

Assessments are not a stressful activity. They are conducted in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Do not regard your assessment as an examination. Your Assessor simply needs to know which competencies from your course you have mastered, and which competencies require further practice and will be flexible in the assessment method used.

It is in your long-term interests to ensure that all of the skills necessary for the job have been mastered; our aim is to help you to learn those skills in the right way

## FORMAT OF ASSIGNMENTS

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- ▶ Assignments are to be presented in organisational format, ie typed & English language. Where you are unable to access a computer, work must be clearly presented.
- ▶ References are to be cited.
- ▶ Present on one side of the paper only.
- ▶ There are no word limitations or expectations on assignments. Use your discretion and ensure that you appropriately cover the material requested.

## SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

- ▶ It is advisable to number each page and include your name in the header or footer;
- ▶ Please do not use staples to secure assignments.
- ▶ Assignments are to be presented in one plastic sleeve, not in folders or other presentation materials.
- ▶ If you are submitting a draft assignment for feedback, please clearly label it as such.
- ▶ Your assignment should normally be returned to you within three weeks of submission, provided it was submitted on time.
- ▶ Keep a copy of all submitted assignments.

## ASSESSMENT APPEALS

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An appeals process underpins all assessments carried out by Learning Options. All candidates have the right to appeal assessment outcomes.

Training participants will be informed of the appeals procedure for assessments on the first day of the program and prior to assessments.

Candidates may lodge a grievance with their Assessor within seven (7) days of notification of the assessment outcome. The Training and Assessment Consultant must discuss the grievance with the candidate and advise the candidate of their decision.

If the candidate is unsatisfied with the decision, they may then lodge an appeal with the Manager.

At the discretion of the Manager, a second Training and Assessment Consultant may review the candidate. All appeals resulting in reassessment must be recorded in writing.

If the candidate considers that the appeals process was unsatisfactory, they may contact the State Training Authority.

## RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

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Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an assessment process designed to recognise the skills you have obtained from previous formal and informal study, life experiences, and workplace experience. This means that you can receive credit for skills you already hold against a unit of competency, or a whole qualification.

### Who can apply?

Anyone who wishes to have their skills recognised.

### How do I apply?

Applications for RPL must be submitted using a self evaluation form, which can be provided by your assessor. Applicants must submit an evidence portfolio for assessment along with the application.

An evidence portfolio is essentially a collection of “evidence”.

### What evidence do I need to provide?

You need to provide a range of evidence to support your application. This might include:

- resume
- duty statements
- references or testimonials
- work samples
- self assessment

The evidence you provide will depend on the qualification you are being assessed against, and should be discussed with your assessor. There are no time limits set for how old evidence should be, however your Assessor will ensure your knowledge is still current.

### What if I can't provide evidence?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is an evidence based process. We assess the evidence you provide. If you can't provide evidence, your opportunities for RPL are reduced, however you should discuss your individual circumstances with your assessor.

### How am I assessed?

Your assessor will make a decision regarding your competence on the basis of your application and the supporting evidence you provide.

The documentary evidence provided is examined by a Qualified Assessor, who matches the evidence against the Training Package requirements. You may also undertake an interview or observational assessment.

### How much is it?

If you have enrolled on an accredited course and paid the course fee, you will automatically be offered RPL at no additional cost.

Separate fees apply if you are not undertaking study by coursework.

### EXEMPTIONS/DIRECT CREDIT

Applicants with evidence of nationally recognised qualifications will be granted automatic exemption from units already achieved.

### TIMEFRAMES

It is anticipated that RPL assessments may take up to 30 days for the initial assessment where the initial assessment is not purely one of direct credit. However you can significantly decrease this time by submitting an early (and complete) application.

### APPEAL RIGHTS

RPL assessments are subject to the same rights of appeal as outlined later in this handbook.

## QUALIFICATIONS

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### Academic Transcript

The Academic Transcript is a full record of all of the units of competence which comprise the training program. It provides a listing of your assessment results for each unit of competency.

The following results are used to record Unit outcomes on the Academic Transcript:

Competent	The student has demonstrated competency in all learning outcomes for that unit, either through a learning or recognition pathway.
Not Yet Competent	The student has been assessed and has not demonstrated competency in all of the learning outcomes for an individual unit.
Withdrawn	The student has withdrawn after one quarter of the way through the unit and not completed all required learning outcomes.
Exempt	The student has been granted a credit transfer from studying the unit due to previous study.
Deferred Result	Indicates that assessment has not been finalised or fees are outstanding.

### Certificate:

A certificate is issued when the student has completed all requirements for a credential as listed in the syllabus document. The certificate does not list the modules or units of competency completed (these are listed on the Transcript of Academic Record, which is issued at course completion).

### Statement of Attainment

A Statement of Attainment is issued where candidates have partially completed the qualification. This may be done in two ways:

1. The Trainee is not competent in all units of competence required for the full qualification, or
2. A package of units has been delivered from an accredited and registered program.

The code and title of all units successfully completed by the Trainee are listed on the Statement of Attainment.

### Reissuing of Qualifications

If your Academic Transcript is misplaced or damaged, contact your Training Consultant to order a replacement.

Requests for a copy of a certificate need to be in writing and accompanied by identification. This protects your right to privacy by ensuring that information is disclosed only to the appropriate person.

## YOUR PRIVACY

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Learning Options is committed to upholding the National Privacy Principles (NPPs).

- ▶ We will only collect information that is necessary to providing you the service we offer;
- ▶ We will collect information in a fair and lawful way;
- ▶ You will be told of why we are collecting it and who will have access to it;
- ▶ We will take reasonable steps to ensure that the information we keep regarding you is accurate;
- ▶ We will take reasonable steps to ensure that your personal information is protected from misuse, loss or unauthorised access or disclosure;
- ▶ You can make a request in writing to access any information we hold about you and we shall provide access, unless access will impact unreasonably on someone else's privacy;
- ▶ If there are mistakes in the information we hold about you, we will correct them;
- ▶ We will not ask you for a Tax File Number or a commonwealth "identifier" such as your medicare number;
- ▶ We will not request sensitive information about you. Sensitive information includes information about your health, political beliefs, religious beliefs and sexual preference.

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

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Individuals have rights of access to documents held by Learning Options under the Freedom of Information Act. The Act is designed to guarantee individuals a legally enforceable right of access to records held by the organization, unless there are matters of public or private concern which need to be protected.

Applications may be made under the Act to:

- ▶ gain access to a document; and/or
- ▶ amend personal information;

A written application to access personal information under the FOI Act is only required where, in the opinion of the relevant section manager, the person seeking access would not as a consequence of normal administrative procedure, have access to the documents concerned.

An application under the Freedom of Information Act should:

- ⊕ give an Australian address for correspondence;
- ⊕ give enough information to identify the documents which the applicant seeks to access or amend

Before accessing personal documents, applicants must provide proof of identity for example, a birth certificate, driver's licence with a photograph, or a passport.

Should you have any concerns about your privacy please direct these to:

The Manager, Learning Options

PO Box 3433, MANUKA ACT 2603

Phone: (02) 6260 6677, Fax: (02) 6260 6300

Email: [courses@learningoptions.com.au](mailto:courses@learningoptions.com.au)

## COMPLAINTS

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Learning Options is committed to ensuring that all grievances and complaints are dealt with appropriately, either via means of formal or informal complaint resolution.

We ask that if you have a complaint, you bring it to the attention of your trainer or assessor in the first instance. This will provide opportunity for immediate informal resolution of issues. If you are not satisfied with the response, formal procedures are appropriate if:

- ▶ informal attempts at resolution have failed;
- ▶ the complaint involves serious allegations of misconduct and informal resolution could compromise the rights of the parties;
- ▶ the allegations are denied, the complainant wishes to proceed and investigation is required to substantiate the complaint; or
- ▶ the complainant wishes to make a formal complaint from the outset.

A formal complaint should be lodged in writing to the Manager and the parties are permitted to have a support person, advocate or other representative accompany them to any interviews or meetings.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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Learning Options is committed to providing a safe, healthy and family and community focused working environment for all employees, contractors and visitors. Learning Options will not tolerate any form of harassment within the organisation under any circumstance. Learning Options will investigate any allegation in a fair, confidential and timely manner and take necessary disciplinary action against any employee found to be breaching this policy.

Harassment is verbal or physical conduct, which because of its severity and/or persistence, is likely to create a hostile or intimidating environment and detrimentally affect an individual's employment. Harassment is defined by reference to the nature and consequences of the behaviour, not the intent of the initiator. Harassing conduct includes but is not limited to:

- communication of spoken, written, graphic and computer mediated material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion to individuals or groups on the grounds of actual or perceived race, gender, transgender status, marital status, disability, homosexuality or age;
- threatening, intimidating or demeaning behaviour directed at individuals or groups on the grounds of actual or perceived race, gender, transgender status, marital status, disability, homosexuality or age;
- acts of vilification, i.e. public acts which may have the effect of inciting others to hate, have serious contempt for, or seriously ridicule a person or group of people, on the grounds of actual or perceived race, AIDS or HIV-positive status, homosexuality, or transgender status;
- Sexual Harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which makes a person, feel offended, humiliated or intimidated, and where that reaction is reasonable in the circumstances. Sexual harassment can involve physical, visual, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

## ANTI DISCRIMINATION

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Discrimination is any unfair distinction, exclusion, or preference made on the basis of race, sex, age, pregnancy, colour, religion, political opinion, marital status, sexuality, physical and intellectual impairment or national extraction which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation.

Direct Discrimination is where there is a specifically direct policy or action which treats one group of persons less favourably than another.

Indirect Discrimination is where a policy or practice, which appears to be non-discriminatory, by its operation results in discrimination against one group of persons.

Any allegation of misconduct will be taken seriously and must be brought to the immediate attention of the Manager.

## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

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OH&S is the responsibility of every employee and visitor to our organisation. All Learning Options employees are aware of OH&S requirements and adhere to the principles and practices that ensure a safe working environment.

We aim to achieve the highest levels of OH&S by:

- Adhering to government legislation and taking a personal interest in the well being of our team and visitors;
- Identifying, assessing and eliminating or effectively controlling all hazards and risks to health and safety;
- Monitoring and evaluating measures to control hazards and risks to health and safety;
- Disseminating appropriate information, instruction, training and supervision to all staff to enable them to safely carry out their responsibilities;
- Ensuring all employees take responsibility for making their work environment safe

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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Learning Options' IT resources are supplied to enable our business activities. Access to the internet has been provided to use primarily as a business tool. We understand from time to time that you may want to access non-work related sites (such as university, library and other general interest sites) however, this is not appropriate during work/course hours.

We may withdraw access from any person who has violated this policy or any state or federal law.

IT resources are provided for legitimate purposes including approved teaching, research and administrative functions. External customers may be given access to services for job seeking purposes or relating to a course of study.

**All persons with access to IT resources are permitted to only access resources for which they have been authorised. Any individual who abuses privileges assigned to them may have their access withdrawn.**