

Understanding and promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education

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Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are fundamental principles in shaping the culture, policies and practices of higher education institutions across Australia and for that matter - globally. These concepts are not just 'buzzwords' - they are essential for fostering environments where all individuals can thrive, contribute and feel valued.

Diversity

In higher education, diversity refers to the presence and recognition of differences among people. This includes, but is not limited to, differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, socioeconomic background, religion, and cultural identity. A diverse university community brings together a wide range of perspectives, experiences and ideas.

Equity

Equity is about ensuring fair treatment, opportunities, and advancement for all, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. In the context of higher education providers - equity aims to provide students and staff with the support and resources they need to succeed, recognising that some may face additional challenges due to their backgrounds or circumstances.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the active, intentional and ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals are welcomed, respected, supported and able to fully participate in all aspects of campus life. It goes beyond simply having diverse representation - it means creating a sense of belonging for *everyone*.

Why DEI Matters in Higher Education

Higher Education Providers are essentially microcosms of broader society and play a pivotal role in shaping future leaders and citizens. Embracing DEI leads to a richer educational experience, where students and staff are exposed to multiple viewpoints and can learn from each other's lived experiences. Research shows that diverse and inclusive environments improve critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving and overall academic outcomes.

Promoting equity helps address historical and systemic disadvantages faced by certain groups, such as First Nations peoples, people with disabilities, and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. This commitment ensures that higher education remains accessible and relevant to all segments of the community.

Challenges

Despite significant progress, higher education institutions still face challenges in achieving genuine DEI. These may include unconscious bias in admissions or recruitment, underrepresentation of minority groups in leadership positions, inaccessible facilities or learning materials, and instances of discrimination or harassment. Addressing these issues requires ongoing effort, self-reflection and the willingness to change established practices.

How to promote DEI on Campus

There are many ways to promote and encourage diversity, equity and inclusivity on campus including -

Developing an **inclusive curriculum** that embeds diverse perspectives and voices in course materials and teaching methods

Providing **support services** tailored for students and staff from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds including such matters as mentoring, financial assistance, and mental health services.

Ensuring **accessible environments** by providing physical and digital spaces that are accessible to all - including people with disabilities

Encouraging **community engagement** through building partnerships with local communities and organisations to promote broader social inclusion

Championing **policy development** that not only creates but enforces policies that prevent discrimination, promote respect, and respond effectively to incidents of bias or harassment

Supporting **Staff Training** that provides professional development on cultural competency, anti-racism, and inclusive practices.

Understanding and championing diversity, equity and inclusion is crucial for the success and integrity of higher education. By committing to DEI, providers can ensure all members of their community can learn, grow and contribute meaningfully. The journey towards a truly inclusive academic environment is ongoing, requiring the collective effort of students, staff and leadership alike. Our own institution is committed to DEI.

Also worth reading –

AGE Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and Procedure - [8776b7_52fc1e1b1e5b4e9e8d359e997ccfbdcc.pdf](#)

Diversity and Equity at AGE - [87330e_760e080141f0421f9646202b26212b50.pdf](#)

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