

It is all about inclusivity

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Diversity, equity and inclusivity are key elements of a truly welcoming work environment – and a higher education institution is no exception. If the three elements can be applied to a higher education provider, the outcome is usually impressive – and equally important, staff and students at that institution usually feel comfortable and enjoy their time and experience with the provider.

For students it is about feeling welcome and supported. For staff members it is about acceptance and being appreciated. The challenges are often demanding (to say the least), but the outcome is well worth the effort.

Diversity

Diversity, according to the Victorian Government, is described as ‘what makes each of us unique and includes our backgrounds, personality, life experiences and beliefs, all of the things that make us who we are. It is a combination of our differences that shape our view of the world, our perspective and our approach. Diversity is also about recognising, respecting and valuing differences based on ethnicity, gender, age, race, religion, disability and sexual orientation. It also includes an infinite range of individual unique characteristics and experiences, such as communication style, career path, life experience, educational background, geographic location, income level, marital status, parental status and other variables that influence personal perspective’.

See - [Why diversity in the workplace matters and how to increase DEI - Workable](#)

Equity (Equal Opportunity)

Equity is captured again, by the Victorian Government, as meaning that ‘every person can participate freely and equally in areas of public life such as in the workplace, in education, or in accessing goods and services without disadvantage or less favourable treatment due to their unique attributes. Everyone in the workplace (and HE environment) has rights and responsibilities under equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation to prevent discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimisation’.

See - [7 exceptional examples of equity in the workplace | InStride](#)

Inclusivity

Inclusivity is articulated by way of ‘practices that anticipate and accommodate the needs of a diversity of people, minimising the need for adjustments to respond to individual needs, while maintaining quality and other standards.’

See - [The importance of inclusion in the workplace \(kornferry.com\)](#)

The three elements are interdependent and can be highly complementary.

Mandated in Higher Education

The Higher Education Standards Framework (2021) mandates that HE providers ensure that the three elements are embraced and evident. Standards 1.1.1 and 1.3 address admission requirements, orientation and progression. Standards 2.2.1, 2.2.2 and 2.3.3 emphasise the need to accommodate under-represented or disadvantaged groups, encourage the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the provision of wellbeing and safety conditions. Standards 3.3, 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 speak to access to learning support and learning resources. Standards 7.2 and 7.2.2d emphasise the provision of information, policies and requirements.

See - [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021 | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(teqsa.gov.au\)](https://www.teqsa.gov.au/standards-framework)

The importance of leadership

In order to achieve a community of acceptance the role of the leader is vital. Good leadership not only endorses the three elements but *models* them as well. Consideration, acceptance and support play a key role in creating a harmonious community – and the leader has a critical role in this. The more I reflect on leadership – the more I appreciate how critical good leadership is within the organisation – and how quickly a community can suffer when the leadership is lacking.

See - [Why is Leadership Important? | Indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com/leadership)

The three elements – diversity, equity and inclusivity – working together and actually operating (not just given lip-service to) can create a dynamic and comfortable environment for all students and staff. The effort is well worth the trouble.

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