

A detailed view of an industrial automation system. It features a complex arrangement of grey metal frames, black and clear plastic piping, and various Siemens electronic components. A large, light-blue Siemens flow meter is prominent in the lower-left foreground. Above it, a smaller flow meter and a tan-colored solenoid valve are visible. A Siemens PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) is mounted on a vertical rail in the center. To the right, a large grey metal cabinet houses additional electronic modules, including a terminal block with many wires and a red emergency stop button. A small digital display is mounted on the cabinet's front. The background shows a warehouse or workshop setting with shelves filled with boxes.

ACCESS EQUITY & FAIRNESS

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Purpose

This policy sets out Skills Lab's position in relation to the provision of open access and equity to all stakeholders of the organisation.

Applicable Standards

This policy aligns with the Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2025, Standards 2.3 to 2.6, and the Compliance Requirements 2025, Sections 12–13, addressing equity, access, support, and fairness.

[National Vocational Education and Training Regulator \(Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations\) Instrument 2025 - Federal Register of Legislation](#)

[National Vocational Education and Training Regulator \(Compliance Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations and Fit and Proper Person Requirements\) Instrument 2025 - Federal Register of Legislation](#)

[National Training Register](#)

Scope

Skills Lab's CEO and Managers are responsible for client equity.

The CEO and Managers are to ensure staff act according to this policy and all clients are made aware of their rights and responsibilities pursuant to this policy.

Information regarding the Access Equity & Fairness Policy is available on the SAGE website and can be accessed in hardcopy by asking the Training and Operations Manager.

The scope of this policy encompasses all:

1. Domestic, off-shore and international candidates for enrolment in any Skills Lab courses or qualifications
2. All domestic, off-shore and international students of Skills Lab
3. All candidates for employment with Skills Lab
4. All employees of Skills Lab
5. All sub-contractors of Skills Lab
6. Third Parties in partnership with Skills Lab
7. Other stakeholders

8. The on and off-job and workplacement learning and all qualifications and courses and services delivered by Skills Lab
9. All employees, contractors, students or potential students and other stakeholders.

Anti-Discrimination, Human Rights, Equal Opportunity & Disability Discrimination legislations are all covered by this policy.

Definitions

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|--------------------------|--|
| Advocate | Individual who accompanies an appellant for the purposes of support throughout the complaint or appeal process. An advocate for the purposes of this policy does not include Legal Representation. |
| Access Equity & Fairness | <p>Refers to the policies, procedures and approaches that ensure that Skills Lab's training programs are responsive to the diverse needs of all employees, students and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Being accessible and equitable means ensuring that people with differing needs and abilities have the same opportunities to successfully gain skills, knowledge and experience through education and training irrespective of their age, disability, colour, race, gender, religion, sexuality, family responsibilities, or location.</p> <p>It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing and promoting non-discriminatory, inclusive practices and processes; and ▪ Ensuring equal opportunities for all students to achieve their learning outcomes through reasonable adjustment of services, learning and assessment; and ▪ Commitment to treating all students or prospective students fairly. |
| Appeal | An appeal arises when a stakeholder is not satisfied with a decision taken by Skills Lab. |
| Bullying | <p>The Fair Work Act (2009), defines bullying as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a person or a group of people who repeatedly behave unreasonably towards a worker or a group of workers at work; and ▪ the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety. <p>Unreasonable behaviour includes victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening. Whether a behaviour is unreasonable can depend on</p> |

whether a reasonable person might see the behaviour as unreasonable in the circumstances.

Examples of bullying include;

- behaving aggressively;
- teasing or practical jokes;
- pressuring someone to behave inappropriately;
- excluding someone from work-related events or;
- unreasonable work demands.

Bullying does not include **reasonable management action** carried out in a rational manner with the intention to assist. (See: s.789FD of the [Fair Work Act 2009](#)).

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Children's Protection Officer | The Children's Protection Officers role is to provide and/or facilitate appropriate support services and protections for minor children. The CPOs are: Training and Operations Manager in Australia for Domestic and International Students |
| Contractor | Individual or entity engaged by Skills Lab under contract to deliver specified work on its behalf and who is not employed as an employee within the ATO definition e.g. Sessional trainer/assessor. |
| Diversity | Is the variety of differences between people from differing cultural, religious and educational backgrounds |
| Discrimination | A person is treated less favourably than others due to the person's circumstances, characteristics or beliefs. |
| Employee | Person employed by Skills Lab on a full or part time or casual basis as defined by the ATO. Does not include Contractors. |
| Fairness | Reasonable, impartial just manner in the treatment of individuals or groups. |
| False or Fictitious Allegation | False allegation made intentionally and without foundation or to cause detriment or mischief. Knowingly lodging a false allegation. (without truth or foundation). |
| Harassment | Unwelcome and unwarranted behaviour that offends, intimidates, humiliates or embarrasses another person. This behaviour can be written, physical, verbal or visual in nature. Harassment is not necessarily deliberate or intentional and can be one |

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| | incident or several incidents occurring over a period of time. Harassment may be accompanied by an expressed or implied threat. |
| Student Support Officer | The Student Support Officer's role is to provide and/or facilitate appropriate support services for SAGE students. They are: Training and Operations Manager in Australia for Domestic and International Students |
| Malicious Allegation | Fictitious allegation made intentionally and without foundation or to cause detriment or mischief. Knowingly lodging a false appeal (without truth or foundation). |
| Minor Child | A child under the age of 18 years. |
| Sexual Harassment | Sexual propositions or advances, verbal or written requests of a sexual nature, sexually explicit conversations, sexual suggestions or innuendos, gender-based insults and taunting, invasive questioning, physical contact and the display of offensive material (e.g. posters, cartoons, jokes, graffiti, magazines, screensavers, email). |
| Stakeholder | Individual or Entity who is not legally employed by Skills Lab e.g. Supplier, Contractor, Regulatory Authority. |
| Zero Tolerance | Zero tolerance means that Skills Lab will not accept any form of discriminatory behaviour and will impose automatic suspension from education or employment during investigation for breach of our Access, Equity & Fairness policy. Where allegation is proven disciplinary action will be taken. |

Policy

It is the policy of Skills Lab to ensure the learning environment and workplace are safe and equitable through:

- zero tolerance of any form of harassment, bullying, discrimination and/or racial vilification which is, as a minimum, aligned with State and Federal legislation; and;
- an inclusive learning environment with support mechanisms to ensure the success of all students.

Skills Lab's Access and Equity is based in the following principles:

- All employees, contractors, students or potential students and other stakeholders will be treated with respect in a workplace and learning environment free of harassment and intimidation; and
- All decisions will be fair, reasonable, non-discriminatory and based on merit; and
- No individual or group will be treated less favourably than another; and

- All communications and interactions will be free of bias, prejudice and discriminatory language; and
- All stakeholders will be encouraged to participate in the development and improvement of services.

Skills Lab is committed to supporting learner wellbeing, including mental health, by providing information on, or referral to, appropriate wellbeing support services.

ZERO TOLERANCE APPROACH

1. Where an allegation of discriminatory behaviour is made:
 - 1.1. in the first instance Skills Lab will discuss the allegation with all parties immediately;
 - 1.2. the perpetrator will be placed on suspension from employment, study or service provision;
 - 1.3. an investigation will be conducted and completed within 5 working days of the allegation having been made;
 - 1.4. all parties will receive a copy of the investigation report.
2. Where the allegation is proven to be true Skills Lab will:
 - 2.1. where the misconduct is of a lesser degree (e.g. inappropriate humour) and the complainant is willing to enter into mediation, Skills Lab will:
 - 2.1.1. in the case of employee or student;
 - 2.1.1.1. arrange mediation; and
 - 2.1.1.2. place the perpetrating employee, subcontractor (trainer/assessor) or student on probation; and
 - 2.1.1.3. require the perpetrator to undertake appropriate anti discrimination training, at their own cost;
 - 2.1.2. require other stakeholders to provide written guarantee that:
 - 2.1.2.1. the individual(s) have been reprimanded; and
 - 2.1.2.2. the individual(s) have undertaken appropriate anti-discrimination training; and
 - 2.1.2.3. either the individual(s) providing the service will be replaced or that they will not perpetrate any type of discriminatory behaviour in the future.
3. If the perpetrator refuses to participate as indicated above:
 - 3.1. students will be expelled and a ban placed on future re-enrolment until they evidence Skills Lab's requirements;

- 3.2. employee will be terminated from employment until they evidence Skills Lab's requirements;
- 3.3. sub-contractor and contractor contracts will be terminated with a ban placed for all future contracted services unless they can evidence Skills Lab's requirements.
- 4. where the misconduct is of a significant type or level Skills Lab will implement:
 - 4.1. Employee - termination of employment from Skills Lab.
 - 4.2. Contractors and other stakeholders – termination of current contract or services and ban on all future contracts or services;
 - 4.3. Students – expulsion from current and ban on future enrolments with Skills Lab.

FALSE OR MALICIOUS ALLEGATIONS

Anyone found to have made a false or misleading allegation will face disciplinary action as per 4.1 to 4.3 above.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING

Complaints or appeals will be handled promptly, transparently, and in accordance with natural justice and trauma-informed practices, to ensure procedural fairness and learner safety.

Minor Children

Children in the first instance should report any concerns to any Skills Lab employee they feel most comfortable with.

The employee will report the issue to the Child Protection Officer who will commence investigations immediately.

The employee will concurrently with the Child Protection Officer's investigation assist the student and their parent/guardian(s) to access and complete the Complaints Process.

The Children's Protection Policy should be followed.

Adults

Concerns regarding Equal Opportunity, Harassment, Discrimination or other inappropriate conduct should be reported **immediately** to the General Manager, Skills Lab.

Where the General Manager, Skills Lab is not available or the complainant prefers they may report to the Training and Operations Manager, Trainer/Assessor or other Skills Lab personnel with whom they feel most comfortable.

Please refer to *Complaint Process Policy* and associated documentation for detailed information on the handling of all complaints.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Skills Lab employees and contractors are delegated with the authority to determine whether an individual should be immediately removed from a harmful situation.

Employees and stakeholders are authorised to remove a student, employee or other stakeholder from a harmful situation without prior consultation with senior management.

All actual or suspected harmful situations must be reported **immediately** to the General Manager, Skills Lab.

ACCESS

All stakeholders are strongly encouraged to discuss any issues and/or request further information regarding access and equity by speaking with any Skills Lab employee.

ZERO TOLERANCE CLASSIFIED BEHAVIOURS

Abuse of Children

Skills Lab is committed to a child safe environment for all of our minor students and all allegations of inappropriate behaviours towards children are zero tolerance behaviours and will immediately be reported to police as is required by law and the alleged perpetrator placed on suspension pending an investigation. Where an allegation is proven to be true this will result in immediate expulsion, termination of employment or contract.

All employees, contractors, students and other stakeholders should note that children accessing Skills Lab's services will be provided with greater supervision and support than adults.

Abuse of children incorporates physical or mental harm of any kind and neglect and may include but not be limited to:

- any of the behaviours listed as Zero Tolerance below;
- inappropriate physical contact of any kind;
- sexual contact of any kind;
- verbal abuse;
- exploitation;
- intimidation;
- ostracising.

Any person or persons making a report under Child Safe Environments will be supported and will not be victimised.

Bullying & Harassment

Skills Lab recognises that ignoring harassment and bullying can have serious consequences for all parties. Given that Skills Lab seeks to attract and retain talented personnel and students from all backgrounds and to maintain safe and positive work and learning conditions, it is determined to provide an environment free of

harassment, victimisation and bullying and to upholding of State and Federal laws pertaining to any form of harassment or discrimination.

The boundaries of what constitutes harassment, victimisation and bullying may vary from person to person and these may vary dependent upon the relationships.

Bullying and harassment should not be confused with legitimate comment and advice (including positive feedback) given appropriately by management or trainers and assessors.

Note: Some types of bullying and harassment may be classified as “assault” and may be prosecutable under law.

Skills Lab is committed to a safe environment for all employees and students and specifically will not condone, encourage or tolerate inappropriate interpersonal behaviours such as bullying or harassment.

Skills Lab will respond quickly in the event that incidences of bullying and / or harassment are reported during on or off the job training. Skills Lab will manage a bullying complaint via its current *Complaint Process Policy*.

All bullying and harassment behaviours are zero tolerance behaviours and may immediately result in expulsion, termination of employment or contract. Serious cases of bullying or harassment may constitute a criminal offence. In such cases Skills Lab will notify police immediately especially if any bullying or harassment includes incidents of physical assault.

From 1 January 2014, a worker in a [constitutionally covered business](#) who reasonably believes that he or she has been bullied at work can apply to the Fair Work Commission for an order to stop the bullying.

A **worker** includes:

- an employee
- a contractor or subcontractor
- an employee of a contractor or subcontractor
- an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in a particular business or organisation
- an outworker
- an apprentice or trainee
- a student gaining work experience
- a volunteer.

The Commission can only make an order if there is a risk that the worker will continue to be bullied at work by the particular individual or group nominated in their application.

Any person experiencing bullying or harassment should immediately advise the General Manager, Skills Lab or an employee with whom they feel most comfortable.

Any person or persons making a report under the Fair Work Act will be supported and will not be victimised.

Sexual Harassment

Harassment of a sexual nature (e.g. sexual propositions or advances, sexually explicit conversations, suggestions or innuendos etc.) are illegal if in circumstances in which a reasonable person would be able to have anticipated that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Skills Lab is committed to a safe environment for all employee and students and sexual harassment of any form will be dealt with immediately. Serious cases of harassment may constitute a criminal offence.

Skills Lab will notify police immediately if harassment includes incidents of physical assault which may include inappropriate touching.

Any person or persons making a report under the relevant legislation will be supported and will not be victimised

Discrimination

Note: Serious cases of discrimination may constitute a criminal offence. Any person or persons making a report under the relevant legislation will be supported and will not be victimised.

Discrimination is broadly defined as treating one person or a group of people unfairly over another based on factors that are unrelated to their ability or potential. State and Federal legislation protects people from discrimination and from being treated unfairly because they have complained about discrimination.

Direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of one or more of the following attributes is unlawful:

- Age
- Gender identity
- Breastfeeding
- Physical, psychiatric or intellectual illness or impairment
- Lawful sexual activity / sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Physical features
- Political affiliation
- Pregnancy
- Nationality and/or cultural background
- Religious affiliation
- Status as a parent or carer

FAIRNESS & EQUITY

Skills Lab will proactively identify learners who may require reasonable adjustment and ensure these adjustments are negotiated, documented, and reviewed in consultation with the learner, while maintaining the integrity of the assessment or training outcomes.

Students

1. Skills Lab's student selection process is fair, equitable and transparent. No candidate for training selection will be discriminated against and reasonable adjustment and support mechanisms will be adopted where required to ensure a student's success; and

2. Skills Lab's assessment system and its processes will not disadvantage any student or candidate. All students or candidates are guaranteed access to assessment, which does not discriminate on any basis. Assessment guidelines include flexibility and reasonable adjustment for working with candidates and students who have special needs; and
3. Skills Lab's assessment process evidences the following characteristics:
 - The standards, assessment processes and all associated information are straight forward, understandable and accessible; and
 - The characteristics of potential candidates are identified, to enable flexibility and reasonable adjustment of delivery and assessment where required; and
 - The chosen processes and materials within the system of assessment do not disadvantage candidates or students; and

Appropriate and effective complaints and appeal resolution mechanisms, linked to a pro active continuous improvement, are in place to address and remediate any unintentional issue of unfairness or disadvantage identified; and

 - Where potential disadvantages are identified, remedial actions are taken as a matter of priority to ensure there is no repetition of the situation.
4. All candidates applying for course entry will be informed of and provided with the Access and Equity Policy via the Skills Lab website, included in the application pack and at induction.
5. All students and candidates will be afforded the confidential opportunity to disclose any situation they believe may impede their ability to successfully complete without support or assistance. This will be done via the Disability Disclosure Form and a consequent meeting with Skills Lab's Trainer/Assessor for the qualification applied for.

The Trainer/Assessor will discuss and negotiate with the individual an appropriate support plan which may include both internal and external support strategies. The Trainer/Assessor will clearly identify in writing that referral to external support services will be free and that any cost for the support service is not covered by the course fees and will be at the expense of the individual.

Employee Selection & Recruitment

Skills Lab is an equal opportunity employer and values the diversity of its workforce. This means that without discrimination on any grounds:

1. the most capable person for placement in a position will be selected;
2. within Skills Lab's capacity all stakeholders will be assisted to participate, maintain and develop personally and professionally;
3. does not grant favouritism or special favours to any candidate or employee in selection or promotion.

Skills Lab is committed to providing culturally safe practices that respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities.

AWARENESS & RIGHTS

1. Employees, students and other stakeholders of Skills Lab are expected to be conscious of actual and potential difference and to actively recognise and respect the boundaries directly or indirectly set by others.
2. All people associated with Skills Lab may expect the following rights to;
 - be treated with respect and fairly;
 - be emotionally and physically safe in the environment;
 - have all reports of harassment treated respectfully, seriously, impartially, sensitively and with reasonable confidentiality and for those issues to be addressed immediately and appropriately;
 - wherever possible, have complaints resolved by a process of discussion, cooperation and conciliation; and
 - receive information, support and assistance in resolving the issue for all parties involved in the complaint.
3. No person lodging a complaint, or assisting in the investigation of a complaint, will be victimised or treated unfairly.
4. Timely access to their student or personnel records/files.
5. All employees and students are expected to participate in the complaint resolution process in good faith.

Responsibilities

Chief Executive Officer

The CEO is the Responsible Officer for legislative compliance including but not limited:

- Corporate e.g. ASIC;
- Occupational Health Safety & Welfare;
- Industrial Relations
- VET Quality Framework including Australian Qualifications Framework;
- Education Services for Overseas Students Framework;
- Discrimination & Human Rights.

It is the CEO's responsibility to ensure that Skills Lab and all of its stakeholders are afforded and provide open access to this policy and related legislation.

General Manager, Skills Lab

The General Manager, Skills Lab is responsible for compliance to legislative requirements in relation to development and delivery of all learning and assessment including but not limited to:

- VET Quality Framework including Australian Qualifications Framework
- Education Services for Overseas Students Framework
- Workplace Health & Safety
- Discrimination & Human Rights

and for setting an example by appropriate behaviour at all times.

Additionally they are responsible for ensuring, directly and through the all supervisory staff, that:

- all employees, contractors and students are conversant with and correctly action this policy and procedure
- all students are fully informed of the policy and procedure as part of the pre enrolment information and induction process
- appropriate monitoring/auditing of Trainer/Assessor activities in relation to this policy and procedure is conducted effectively and regularly
- intervention options are made available to students with supportable issues in a timely and appropriate manner
- fair and equitable decisions are taken in relation to this policy and procedure.

The General Manager, Skills Lab is accountable for quality of training and assessment and student completion. In particular in collaboration with trainer/assessors:

- actively monitor student progress
- intervene immediately if it becomes apparent a student is not progressing satisfactorily and provide mentoring and intervention supports to students experiencing supportable issues
- Ensuring that employee and students are aware that harassment is unlawful, unacceptable and will not be tolerated
- Setting an example by appropriate behaviour at all times.

The General Manager, Skills Lab is responsible for ensuring access, equity and fairness through;

- establishing open lines of communication with all stakeholders to ensure reporting of incidents
- treating any reporting of unacceptable behaviour in a confidential, sensitive, and serious manner
- treating the alleged perpetrator impartially pending a fair and open investigation

- acting on any allegations, complaints or appeals swiftly following Skills Lab's procedures as outlined in this policy and the *Complaint or Appeal Policies/Procedures*
- continuously monitoring, educating, informing and supporting all employees, contractors, visitors and students to reinforce a safe and equitable workplace and learning environment
- the currency of and ease of access to relevant legislation, policy and support in relation to access, equity and fairness for all stakeholders
- support services are available and accessible to stakeholders
- this policy is incorporated at Skills Lab website, is including in application packs and the induction process for both students and employees.

The General Manager, Skills Lab is responsible for continuous improvement. Skills Lab will analyse feedback, complaints, participation rates, and outcomes to monitor equity and fairness, and review this policy annually through the Learning and Assessment Committee.

Training and Operations Manager

The Training and Operations Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that stakeholders are aware that harassment is unlawful, unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Setting an example by appropriate behaviour at all times.
- Establishing open lines of communication with all stakeholders to ensure reporting of incidents.
- Treating any reporting of unacceptable behaviour in a confidential, sensitive, and serious manner.
- Treating the alleged perpetrator impartially pending a fair and open investigation.
- Acting on any complaints swiftly following Skills Lab's procedures as outlined in the Complaints Policy.
- Continuously monitoring, educating, informing and supporting all stakeholders to reinforce a safe and equitable workplace.

Student Support & Children's Protection Officers

The Student Support Officers and Children's Protection Officers are responsible for the welfare of students and Children's Protection throughout the student's period of study with Skills Lab.

Staff & Stakeholders

All stakeholders and personnel, including supervisors and management, have a responsibility for ensuring the workplace and learning environments are free of discrimination and harassment. Each employee has the responsibility to ensure that Skills Lab's culture is one of respect for others and:

- To ensure that they avoid committing harassment or discrimination in any form
- Offer support to anyone affected by harassment or discrimination
- Report any example of harassment or discrimination to the General Manager, Skills Lab
- If harassed, take action to stop it, not only for self-protection, but to prevent others suffering the same form of discrimination
- Treat alleged perpetrators fairly
- If they believe that they have been harassed or denied equality in employment should contact General Manager, Skills Lab
- Request the assistance of another person in raising a complaint and in any resultant interviews
- Setting an example by appropriate behaviour at all times

Employees, Contractors and students are required to be aware of and be compliant with the relevant legislations in regards to access, equity and antidiscrimination including:

Trans Border

All other Federal & State Government legislation, regulations, Acts that may be ratified or updated and as may be relevant from time to time.

Vocational & Industry Sectors

Legislation unique to the vocational sector.

Additional Legislative Information and Updates

Can also be accessed at

- <http://www.austlii.edu.au>
- www.legislation.sa.gov.au
- <http://www.comlaw.gov.au>

Employees and students should not make false or malicious complaints.

Students

All students should be aware that the laws and cultural norms of Australia may be different from their norms and that they must abide by the laws and norms of Australia in relation to discrimination and harassment.

All students have the responsibility to:

- Ensure that they avoid committing harassment or discrimination in any form

- If harassed, take action to stop it, not only for self-protection, but to prevent others suffering the same form of discrimination
- Make themselves aware of and act within the confines of relevant legislation and this policy
- Enhance the learning experience by allowing others to learn without compromise of the learning environment through poor or distracting behaviours
- Exhibit positive behaviour at all times
- Follow instructions at all times
- Request the assistance of another person in raising the complaint and in any subsequent resultant interviews.

Third Parties

Skills Lab retains accountability for ensuring third-party providers meet the same access, equity, and fairness standards, and will monitor compliance on a regular basis.

All Third Parties will operate under an arrangement that will include agreement to meeting Skills Lab policy as a minimum.

All Third Parties will be required to meet Skills Lab's Access, Equity and Fairness requirements.