

---

## Equity and Diversity Policy

### Academic Policy Group

---

#### 1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to support the Victoria University of Wellington ('the University') in achieving its Strategic Objectives, and in particular, those relating to equity and diversity and articulated in the [Equity and Diversity Strategy 2010-2014](#). The policy responds to the government priorities for the tertiary education sector as set out in the [Tertiary Education Strategy 2010-2015](#) by supporting the provision of an inclusive environment for a diverse student body.

#### 2 Organisational Scope

This is a University-wide policy.

#### 3 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

**Equity:** Principles and practices that ensure fairness to all students and staff members irrespective of gender, race, religious belief, sex, marital status, ethical belief, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, political opinion, employment status, family status, sexual orientation (the grounds set out in section 21 of the Human Rights Act 1993) in providing the opportunity for them to participate in the activities of the University and successfully fulfil their roles.

These principles and practices include respect and inclusiveness, ensuring fairness and making sure that barriers, overt or covert, which stand in the way are eliminated wherever possible.

**Diversity:** Understanding, appreciating and realising the benefits of individual differences, backgrounds and experiences, reflected in members of the University community. These may include disabilities, differences of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, religious beliefs or political beliefs.

**Equity groups:** The following have been identified as equity groups for targeted actions in the period 2010 – 2014:

Māori students and staff;

Pacific students and staff;

Students and staff members with disabilities;

Men or women in disciplines or professions in which they are under-represented; and

Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The student equity groups are the groups identified as under-represented and/or disadvantaged in gaining access to and succeeding at University.

The staff groups are the groups identified on the basis of current underrepresentation in the University's staffing complement and on the principle of non-discrimination.

## **4 Policy Content and Guidelines**

### **4.1 Overview**

- (a) The University is committed to providing all of its staff and students with an inclusive and accessible environment for work and learning and an environment that gives them equal opportunities to fulfil their potential and make their contribution.
- (b) The University recognises that the presence and success of a broad range of talented students and staff members of different backgrounds and experiences will help to link it more meaningfully to the local and global communities that it serves.
- (c) The University accepts that it plays a role in ensuring that the New Zealand community is able to draw upon the abilities and the contributions of all sectors of its diverse populations.

### **4.2 Principles**

The following principles will inform equitable practice at the University.

- (a) Supporting all staff and students by providing an inclusive and accessible environment with equal opportunities for all to fulfil their potential and make their contribution, and making a commitment to embrace and understand diversity and equity.
- (b) Ensuring that merit is the overriding criterion for decisions affecting individuals. In doing so the University will give careful attention to definitions of merit, recognising that the distribution of talent does not favour any particular class, gender or ethnic group.
- (c) Recognising that diversity enables the University and members of its community to benefit from encountering and understanding people from a wide range of backgrounds, holding a multiplicity of beliefs and opinions, and contributing in a variety of ways.
- (d) Instilling a culture of respect, with no tolerance for unfair discrimination or harassment.
- (e) Recognising and addressing systemic disadvantage
- (f) Meeting our commitment to Māori as Treaty of Waitangi partners by providing fair and equitable distribution of resources to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori, as well as consulting and ensuring autonomy over things Māori.

### **4.3 Student practices**

- (a) Student practices will need to reflect a consideration of equity and diversity matters and contribute to the achievement of equity outcomes in areas including: student recruitment and advice; selection; admissions; support services; retention; progress; completion; transition; international opportunities including exchanges; built spaces; and practices in teaching and learning, including assessment practices.
- (b) Students will be admitted to the University on the basis of merit, either as demonstrated through prior academic achievement or as assessed by special admission processes. Methods of assessment to determine admission for students from the equity groups will include assessment of the potential to succeed. These methods may include interviews, recognition of prior learning, and measurement through written or other tests.

- (c) Targeted admission schemes for students from equity groups underrepresented in particular programmes will be established by Council on the recommendation of the Equity and Diversity Committee.

#### **4.4 Staff practices**

- (a) Staff practices will need to reflect a consideration of equity and diversity matters and contribute to the achievement of equity outcomes in areas including: staff recruitment; selection; appointment; development and training; recognition; career progression and promotion; workload allocation; and retention.
- (b) Selection and progression of staff will be on the basis of merit. The interpretation of merit is broad, recognising that the distribution of talent does not favour any particular class, gender or ethnic group, and may include experience and personal qualities as well as formal qualifications. The University aims to avail itself of as wide a cross-section of talent as possible to deliver on the [Strategic Plan](#) and work programmes.

#### **4.5 Monitoring and reviewing**

- (a) Formal responsibility for equity and diversity lies with the Vice-Provost (Academic and Equity). The University's strategic and annual planning processes will embed equity and diversity principles and practices. The [Equity and Diversity Strategy](#) provides a framework to ensure that equity and diversity actions and initiatives help to meet the University's strategic goals. A commitment to actions, accountabilities, targets and timelines is articulated in the unit plans of faculties, schools and central service units.
- (b) Actions will be monitored through the University's normal review processes. The Vice-Provost (Academic and Equity) will co-ordinate an end-year review of progress against the equity actions and report this to the University Council.

## **5 Legislative Compliance**

[New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006](#)

[Employment Relations Act 2000](#)

[Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994](#)

[Human Rights Act 1993](#)

[Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992](#)

[Privacy Act 1993](#)

[Education Act 1989](#)

[State Sector Act 1988](#)

[Equal Pay Act 1972](#)

## **6 References**

[Victoria University Strategic Plan 2009–2014](#)

[Capability Strategy Te Rautaki Kaiaka 2013–2017](#)

[Equity and Diversity Strategy 2010–2014](#)

[Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019](#)

[Kia Orite: Achieving Equity. New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments](#)

[Equal Opportunities Guidelines](#)

[Staff Development Policy](#)

[Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments Policy](#)

[Treaty of Waitangi Statute](#)

**7 Approval Agency**

Vice-Chancellor

**8 Policy Sponsor**

Provost

**9 Approval Dates**

This policy was originally approved on: 17 June 2010

This version was approved on: 28 January 2014

This version takes effect from: 1 October 2014

**10 Contact Person**

Executive Officer, Academic Office

Ext: 5104