

# GENDER+

# CHARTER



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## Gender + Charter

A gender positive VET organisation is a tolerant, inclusive and accepting environment in which students' gender identity is recognised, protected and supported. All students should be allowed to identify and express their gender authentically. It is a place where:

- All stakeholders (teachers, parents, pastoral staff, etc.) respect one another and learn to work together regardless of their differences
- Everyone is taught to recognise and resist stereotypes, not to tolerate mistreatment (discrimination, stereotyping, teasing, bullying, harassment) based on gender expression or identity and to protect students, parents, teachers and other staff from discrimination because of their gender
- Proactive education and training is offered to students and staff to help them fully understand gender diversity. This provides students with an opportunity to explore a greater range of interests and ideas and discover new talents, training opportunities and career pathways
- Diverse representations of gender are reflected in structural and interpersonal aspects of the VET organisation, including policies, curriculum, facilities and application forms

Creating a VET organisation that acknowledges and affirms gender diversity requires a purposeful strategy, which is based on several key elements.

A gender positive VET organisation endorses specific structural approaches (policies, procedures, etc.) that demonstrate its commitment to recognise and honour the gender diversity of all students.

2

### General policies

Gender positive VET organisations:

- Develop policies/administrative regulations that emphasise gender as an area of diversity protected and supported by the training centre
- Ensure mechanisms which guarantee that the structures representing students are inclusive of all students, regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity or origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, as well as health status or disability
- Use student information systems which allow families to specify a student's gender marker, preferred name and pronouns
- Identify staff members who function as leads around gender diversity work or issues (**IO3 Gender Champion**)
- Have gender neutral toilets/facilities that provide options for privacy without stigmatising any students
- Have readily available written materials and information about gender diversity
- Have signage/imagery celebrating gender diversity
- Present opportunities for all students to take part in decision-making about policies that affect them



## Vocational Education and Training

- A gender positive VET organisation provides equal education, training and career opportunities for all students, regardless of their gender identity
- Curricula and training programmes are free from gender stereotypes and discrimination based on traditional binary roles (for example: typical 'male/female' jobs or models)
- Create a culture of support so that students' voices are heard, their talents, interests and career aspirations are respected, their training and development needs are adequately supported and their work is valued

## Staff training and personal development

- Organise systematic staff training that builds the capacity of teachers and other staff (administrative staff, advisors, aides, bus drivers, cafeteria etc.) to honour the gender diversity of all students. The training should improve their understanding of gender diversity, understand the complexities of gender as well as specific methods to stop gender-based harassment and bullying, including topics such as biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, gender diversity, gender inclusion, etc.)
- Advisors/psychologists are trained to deal with the topic of gender diversity and to provide support to students and their families on these issues

## Teaching and Training Approaches

Gender positive VET organisations use teaching and learning approaches which instil greater awareness and understanding about gender. Whether alone or integrated into other aspects of course delivery, these approaches are the most direct way to impact students:

- Use lesson plans that help students see, appreciate, support and understand one another as individuals
- Use lesson plans that help students identify and tackle gender stereotyping and limits such as examining mainstream popular culture, advertising, picture books or toys for younger students etc.
- Integrate gender topics into all aspects of the curriculum and invite guest speakers who work for greater gender equality in education, law or other fields
- Use video, books or other media that present alternative ideas about gender and promote discussion
- Assign projects and tasks that include gender-related topics, reading or news
- Create space for students to articulate their own understanding and beliefs about gender
- Periodically review and update educational programmes with respect to the needs of students, teachers and making use of the expertise of non-governmental organisations
- Provide role models through books – biographies or fictional – that show a wide range of occupations and achievements for all genders

3

## Communication

Interpersonal communication reinforces the VET organisation's commitment to gender inclusion.

In a gender positive VET organisation, teachers:

- Recognise the gender diversity of all students
- Honour the name and pronouns that a student uses, ensure that all efforts are made for others (classmates, other staff) to respect and use the students preferred pronouns, and be



aware that each student may have a preferred name and gender pronoun that is different from what is indicated on the student's records.

- Use language that is inclusive of all communities and which does not reinforce traditional (binary) stereotypes about gender – students or trainees
- Challenge limited portrayals of gender and normalise gender diversity
- Support processes of reflection
- Teach empathy and respect
- Develop classroom messages that emphasise 'all students can...'
- Group students in ways that do not rely on gender – table groups, letters in their names, colours of their clothes
- Let students know that their strengths are recognised and that their unique qualities are appreciated
- Encourage students to find activities that they enjoy and that respect their interests. This helps students develop social connections

### Communication with Parents

- Support families with gender questioning students. Help parents/guardians see their child's strengths – academic, artistic, athletic, dramatic or interpersonal
- Hold an evening event for parents and caregivers in the community to help people understand the importance and complexity of gender identity
- With families, share ways to talk about gender that are affirming, inclusive and age appropriate

### Student Records and Student Information Systems

- Review parent/guardian forms allowing them to specify their relationship to the student regardless of gender
- Allow families to specify a student's gender marker, preferred name and pronoun and ensure this is reflected in all records – attendance records, class list etc.
- Ensure privacy for transgender students. Clarify who has access to records

4

### Access to information

- Provide access to information and support to students, teachers and non-teaching staff on issues related to gender identity and gender expression, including: the introduction of relevant materials in the library of the educational institution, access to psychological counselling from a specialist with relevant expertise on minority issues; access to electronic and printed materials, etc.
- Provide support to self-organised groups, such as clubs and interest groups of people from minorities, including LGBTQ students, teachers, non-teaching staff and parents
- Ensure access to a specific person at every VET organisation who would consult students, teachers and the non-teaching staff on issues related to minorities, and LGBTQ in particular (**IO3 Gender Champion**), also by means of tools which provide confidentiality and anonymity, such as email
- Cooperate with students, teachers and parents in the implementation of projects and initiatives which include activities where the administration lacks capacity or expertise
- Guarantee that students of all ages receive comprehensive education about their fundamental rights, equality, freedom from discrimination and the principles of a democratic society



- Provide access to materials that educate students on, gender identity and gender expression in a reliable and constructive way
- Place information in publicly visible and accessible locations at VET organisations that is relevant to gender expansive students, such as events, health or social services, in the form of flyers, posters, brochures and other materials

### Counteracting Bullying

- Put into practice policies and strategies for counteracting bullying that openly refer to, gender identity and gender expression as protected characteristics, as well as prepare teachers and the administration of VET organisations to deal with such issues
- Introduce standards for responding to bullying at VET organisations, based on best practices, integrating specific measures and understanding bullying and victimisation of vulnerable groups, including LGBTQ people
- Challenge student comments based on gender stereotypes
- Sanction hate speech in public in the name of reinforcing the principles of equal treatment and acceptance of all vulnerable communities, including LGBTQ people
- Ensure supervision of hallways and cafeterias to increase a sense of safety
- Ensure timely reaction in removing inscriptions and symbols created by graffiti, posters, flyers or in any other way, which express hatred based on grounds which have been protected in the antidiscrimination law; which defame minority groups or promote anti-democratic ideologies
- Introduce effective mechanisms for protecting the victims of bullying and violence, giving priority to ensuring their safety. These mechanisms should involve effective and prohibitive sanctions for the perpetrators, which aim at correcting their behaviour
- Enable all students, including those who are the subject of transphobic bullying, to have access to support services for victims of violence, including psychological support
- Organise a centralised system for the collection of statistical data on bullying, which takes into account the cases of bullying based on the minority identity of the victim, including transphobic bullying

5

### Facilities

- If possible, allocate at least one gender neutral bathroom/changing room with options for privacy that do not stigmatise any students
- Allow students the opportunity to share rooms in a dormitory/ hotel during excursions and sports events, etc. based on their gender identity, with a recognition that any student who needs extra privacy should be accommodated whenever possible

### Dress codes and uniforms

- Dress codes and uniforms are gender neutral

### Visibility and celebration of diversity

- Implement active and publicly visible policies supporting equality and non-discrimination, embracing the celebration of occasions that are important for the minority communities, including LGBTQ people
- The diversity of gender is made visible in textbooks, hallway displays and in everyday conversation



**Sport (relating to VET programmes which are sports/activity-related)**

- **Allow transgender students to play sports in their affirmed gender:** all young people, including transgender young people, should be able to participate in recreation sports in their affirmed gender and have their personal dignity respected.
- **Allow transgender students to compete at another educational institution:** without violating a transgender student's confidentiality or privacy, VET leaders and athletic coaches should communicate with their counterparts at other educational institutions prior to competitions in which a transgender athlete is participating about expectations for treatment of transgender student athletes on and off the field. This will include ensuring access to appropriate changing, showering or bathroom facilities, and to request the use of preferred names and pronouns by coaches, opponents, officials, announcers, spectators and media

*This Charter is based on Gender Spectrum's [Framework for Gender Inclusive Schools](#) and Welcoming Schools [Gender and Students: A Place to Begin](#).*

