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Policy: Student Support and Welfare

Overview

Builders Academy Australia (BAA) is committed to protecting and promoting the welfare of our students. BAA recognises that individual students have individual needs, and some may need additional support.

In accordance with the Standards for RTOs 2015, and providing quality training and assessment services to students with disabilities, this policy ensures that BAA will take active steps to prevent harassment or victimisation of all learners and staff, including those with a disability.

BAA is committed to giving every student an opportunity to successfully complete their chosen course and recognises that our students come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have a diverse range of work and life experiences.

Student welfare and support aspects includes, but is not limited to:

1. Academic support
2. Non-academic support
3. Providing additional support to students who may have special needs (i.e., Students with specific health issues, students with disabilities and students needing support with Language Literacy and Numeracy, students under the age of 17)

BAA has a separate Child Safety and Welfare Policy and a Vulnerable Persons Policy.

Key Staff

The following staff are critical in the provision of support to students:

1. Course Advisors – help explain the nature of the course to prospective students.
2. Student Services – undertake a pre-training review of students and also answer public queries.
3. Trainers and Assessors – who deliver and assess courses.
4. Senior Trainers and Assessors – who may provide additional support to individual students.
5. Training Managers– who may provide student welfare support to students when required or to Trainers.
6. Individual Learning and Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator – who evaluates language, literacy and numeracy skills and supports both Trainer and student in LLN matters and provides student welfare support as required.
7. Learner Management System Support Officers – who provide support to students and staff regarding issues with the online learning management system.

Student Welfare

The Training Manager will touch base with each Trainer to see if any students have been identified as having special needs or needing welfare support.

A detailed record of each case is entered into the Student Welfare Register. Due to the often-sensitive nature of welfare cases, access to the Student Welfare Register is highly restricted.

The Training Manager is also available to support Trainers when working with difficult students or when they have personal matters. The Training Manager may liaise with the Simonds Personnel HR Team where relevant.

Student Support – Pre-Apprenticeship Courses

BAA provides student support in a range of ways to students enrolled in pre-apprenticeship programs.

Students undertaking pre-apprenticeships are frequently completing a VET in Schools program. Where students are under the age of 18, please also refer to the Child Safety and Welfare Policy.

Our Pre-Training Review (PTR) and Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) evaluations are designed to determine whether a student may need additional support to successfully undertake this qualification.

This support may vary from LLN needs, to learning difficulties, students with physical or medical disabilities and to students who traditionally may have struggled with study.

Where additional support needs are determined, the matter is referred to the Training Manager who then develops a support plan in conjunction with the Trainer and school (where applicable) prior to the student commencing.

Trainers and / or students may also contact the Builders Academy or the School Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator (if applicable) if they believe a student who has commenced may need additional support. The Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator will then work with both the Trainer and the student to identify an appropriate support plan.

Student Support – Certificate III and Higher-Level Courses

BAA provides student support in a range of ways.

Our course suitability review (also known as a Pre-Training Review or PTR) and Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) evaluations are designed to determine whether a student may need additional support to successfully undertake their preferred qualification.

This support may vary from LLN needs, to learning difficulties, students with physical or medical disabilities and to students who may not have studied for some time.

Where additional support needs are determined, the matter is referred to the Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator who then develops a support plan in conjunction with the Trainer prior to the student commencing.

Trainers and students may also contact the Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator if they believe a student may need additional support. The Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator will then work with both the Trainer and the student to identify an appropriate support plan.

Evaluating Support Needs of Students with Special Needs

Students with health issues or disabilities

Students intending to enrol for training with BAA are requested prior to enrolment to advise BAA if they have any disability, physical, health issue or other impairment which may adversely affect their ability to successfully undertake training and assessment. Students are encouraged to discuss with BAA any 'special needs' and/or 'reasonable adjustments' to the study environment which they consider are necessary or would assist them in the performance of their studies.

BAA, in collaboration with the student, will assess the potential for the student to successfully complete the training which may include flexible delivery options to optimise the ease and benefit of the student's learning. However, no compromise to the integrity of the assessments against competency will be allowed.

Students with a disability are required to have the ability to fulfil the core requirements of the units of competence to attain the relevant award. However, it is recognised that flexibility in arrangements may need to be implemented.

Where a prospective student indicates that they have a health issue or disability on or prior to their application, the staff member undertaking the enrolment process will ask if they have any special requirements.

Where relevant, the prospective student will be referred to the Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator for a formal interview to confirm that the student is able to physically participate in the course (where relevant), identify support mechanisms required and identify any requirement for reasonable adjustment in the provision of materials, unit selection, delivery, or assessment.

Many students with disabilities or special needs use assistive technology such as a hearing aids, cochlear implant, specialist computer programs such as 'Jaws,' PC-tremor control, etc.

Where a student may benefit from assistive technology, the Training Manager will investigate assistive technology available and seek advice from experts which may include:

- The student's GP, medical specialist, or other specialised expert such as a physio, case or social worker, etc.
- National and local specialty support groups and experts that can provide advice on accessing and implementing assistive technologies such as Vision Australian, Deaf Australia, MS Foundation Australia, etc.

Where a student has a requirement for Reasonable Adjustment, the Trainer will liaise with the Training Manager. An outline of the support required will be discussed and documented and professional development will be provided to the Trainer if needed.

The Training Manager may also consult with or refer to an external body for guidance on particular issues if required.

It is important to note that the Training Manager is not expected to be an expert in assistive technology nor hold qualifications in assistive technology.

In assessing whether a particular adjustment is *reasonable*, the following is taken into consideration:

- The nature and severity of the disability and / or medical condition
- The physical health requirements of the course
- The requirements of the course
- The effect of the adjustment on the student's ability to:
 - Achieve learning outcomes
 - Participate in the courses and complete assessments and learning activities
 - Obtain a job aligned to the qualification
 - Maintain independence
- The effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including BAA, personnel, and other students
- The costs and benefits of making the adjustment
- The impact on the employer (if undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship)

This same process is applied if an existing student develops a disability or medical condition.

If a student cannot meet the inherent requirements of the course, even with adjustments, then they will not be able to successfully complete the course. Where this is the case, BAA will advise the prospective student or actual student and may recommend alternatives. These alternatives may include recommending another course or qualification (which may or may not be provided by BAA).

BAA is committed to setting students up for success at all times.

Costs associated with adjustments

BAA will analyse all direct and indirect costs associated with any adjustments. In some cases, a student may be able to access funding to obtain help with LLN, digital skills and / or assistive technology and aids. This will be considered as offsetting costs where applicable.

In other cases, BAA may consider how many students may benefit now or in future from a technology investment to assist an individual student.

Where the student is participating or is intending to participate in an apprenticeship or traineeship and the physical aids or assistive technology would also be used within the workplace, BAA may seek to share costs with the employer.

In other cases, the student may already hold the technology or aids and the costs to BAA is minimal or negligible.

However, it is important to acknowledge that in some cases, the costs of implementing an adjustment may not be practical. And that such a cost may impose an unjustifiable financial hardship on BAA (or a workplace if relevant to apprenticeship / traineeships).

In all cases, BAA will try to accommodate reasonable adjustments where practical.

Where BAA cannot make reasonable adjustment due to financial costs, we will provide this outcome both verbally and in writing as soon as practicable after the decision is made.

Students who are identified as disengaged

The Trainer and Assessor will notify the Training Manager to discuss where a student has an attendance issues and where there is a potential disengagement issue.

In some cases, the student may also choose contact Student Services to discuss this themselves.

The Training Manager will conduct a 'well-being call' to contact them and identify any underlining issues that may be impacting on their attendance and liaise with the Trainer to develop an individual re-engagement strategy taking into account the student's specific needs. The Trainer and assessor will then monitor ongoing participation of the student.

The focus is on early intervention to ensure that students do not fall too behind in their academic progress.

If the student is under the age of 17, please also refer to the section "Students under the age of 17 Exempt from School Attendance".

Students under the age of 17 Exempt from School Attendance

All children and young people in Victoria aged from 6 to 17 years are legally required to be at school unless they have been granted an exemption from school attendance (the 'exemption'). An exemption only applies to the specific training provider and program listed on the exemption letter or certificate.

An exemption can only be approved if the training is:

- on a full-time basis of at least 25 hours a week; or
- a combination of training and employment for an average of at least 25 hours a week.

While the student remains under the age of 17, we must notify the student's previous school and the relevant Department Regional Office (refer to list of regional contacts below) if the student under 17 makes any changes to their enrolment, such as disengaging or exiting, changing to part-time, or reducing program hours to below 25 hours a week.

- The Student Engagement team will alert the Training Manager and General Manager, Quality and Compliance of a disengaging or exiting, changing to part-time, or reducing program hours to below 25 hours a week.

- The Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator will advise the Training Manager and General Manager, Quality and Compliance if they become aware of a student's non-attendance or disengagement from their studies.
- The General Manager, Quality and Compliance will notify the student's previous school and the relevant Department Regional Office if a student under 17 makes any changes to their enrolment, such as disengaging or exiting, changing to part-time, or reducing program hours to below 25 hours a week.

Youth Pathways and Transitions Team (Regional Office Contacts):

North East pathways.transitions.nev@education.vic.gov.au
North West pathways.transitions.nwv@education.vic.gov.au
South East pathways.transitions.sev@education.vic.gov.au
South West pathways.transitions.swv@education.vic.gov.au

Note: Students under 17 do not need an exemption if they are still attending school and are enrolling in:

- a VET program on a part-time basis.
- VET fee-for-service programs.
- VET in schools.
- A School-Based Apprenticeship/Traineeship (SBAT).
- a Head Start Apprenticeship/Traineeship (HSAT).

Students with behavioural issues during class

The Trainer and Assessor will attempt to deal with the behavioural issue in the first instance. Where the issue is repeated, they will seek advice from the Training Manager.

The Trainer or Training Manager will address behavioural issues and work on a strategy to re-engage the student (if applicable) or suggest another education pathway if applicable.

Language Literacy Numeracy (LLN)

Where the Language, Literacy, and Numeracy (LLN) evaluation indicates that there may be an LLN issue, the Student Services Officer who inputs the LLN score, creates an LLN support event which is escalated to the Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator for review and follow-up with the student.

The LLN evaluation documents will be reviewed to identify whether there may be a requirement for:

1. Low level support.
2. Higher level support and / or reasonable adjustment.
3. Potentially not suitable for the course.

Please refer to the Language, Literacy and Numeracy policy for further details.

Students who struggle with digital literacy

Students will be evaluated for their digital literacy skills as part of the Pre-Training Review process prior to commencing the course.

Students who need additional assistance can still participate in courses, reasonable adjustment may be made through allowing the students to complete hard copy assessments, or by providing them with additional coaching, or referring them to a course to help develop their computer skills. An

individual learning plan (ILP) will be developed by the Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator.

See the Online Service Standards policy for more information.

Students who are struggling academically

The Trainer and Assessor monitors student progress and may provide additional coaching to those students who are struggling academically.

In some cases, the Trainer and Assessor may liaise with the Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator to devise an academic strategy to provide the student with the best opportunity to successfully complete their course.

In some cases, reasonable adjustment may be made where relevant.

Students with personal issues

Students may contact the Training Manager if they are having personal issues such as a relationship or family breakdown, difficulties within their workplace, medical or physical health issues, mental health issues, serious illness with a family member etc. The Training Manager will help the student obtain appropriate support through relevant local agencies.

Death or Serious Illness of a Student

The Training Manager is also notified when there is a death of a student, or a student needs to withdraw due to serious illness.

The Training Manager may be notified of the death or serious illness of student verbally or in writing. The notification may come from any staff member of BAA or directly from a student or the student's family.

Death

The Training Manager will advise the Trainer (if they are not already aware) and provide counseling services where required.

Where the student is part of a class, the Training Manager will then meet with the class and Trainer and brief the class on what has happened and discuss grief counselling options and provide resources for support services such as Beyond Blue and other grief counselling services and provide ongoing support to the general class and individual students.

The Training Manager may also be the contact point for the family.

Serious illness

With permission from the student (or family where appropriate), the Training Manager will advise the Trainer (if they are not already aware) and provide counseling services where required.

The Training Manager will then meet with the class and Trainer and brief the class on what has happened.

Where the student is part of a class, the Training Manager will then meet with the class and Trainer and brief the class on what has happened and discuss grief counselling options and provide

resources for support services such as Beyond Blue and other grief counselling services and provide ongoing support to the general class and individual students.

The Training Manager may also be the contact point for the family.

The Training Manager will keep in touch with the student where applicable and should the student recover and wish to continue to their studies, will assist the student to reengage back into a class.

Training and Experience Requirements of Support Staff

All BAA staff are inducted into the requirements of legislation, such as:

- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Privacy Act and National Privacy Principles (2001)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- The Disability Standards for Education 2005
- The Standards for RTOs 2015 and Providing quality training and assessment services to students with disabilities
- Disability Rights: Facilitating the empowerment of people with a disability (issued by the Australian Human Rights Commission)

Course Advisors

Are trained on:

1. Each product offering.
2. Government funded subsidies available and eligibility requirements.
3. Entry requirements for each course.

Student Services

Are trained on:

1. Each product offering.
2. Government funded subsidies available and eligibility requirements.
3. Entry requirements for each course.
4. Course suitability / pre-training review process for all courses available to complete via class based training or virtual classroom or workplace delivery.
5. Process of LLN Robot and identifying whether the student has met the minimum entry requirements.

Trainers and Assessors – Workplace Based

Must meet the minimum Trainer and Assessor requirements for each course that they deliver as set out in the Training and Assessment Strategy for each course

Are trained on:

1. Each product offering.
2. Government funded subsidies available and eligibility requirements.
3. Entry requirements for each course.

Trainers and Assessors – Class or Virtual Class Delivery

Must meet the minimum Trainer and assessor requirements for each course that they deliver as set out in the TAS for each course.

Senior Trainers and Assessors

Must meet the minimum Trainer and assessor requirements for each course that they deliver as set out in the TAS for each course.

May also hold management qualifications.

Training Manager

Must hold the Certificate IV or Diploma in TAE and any other requirements as outlined in the TAS for any courses that they deliver.

May also hold management qualifications.

Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator

The Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator is expected to have experience working with LLN issues in education as a student welfare, student support role or senior Trainer.

The following is a list of qualifications that they might hold:

- Certificate IV or Diploma in TAE (Mandatory).
- Higher education in Adult education (highly desirable).
- Qualification in Adult Literacy or English as a Second Language (highly desirable).
- Diploma or higher level of Management (highly desirable).

The Individual Learning Needs and Student Welfare Coordinator is also expected to undertake relevant professional development activities in LLN matters.