

Student Welfare Policy

Version 1.1 | Date: July 2025

Approved by: RTO Manager and Compliance consultant

1. Purpose

This policy outlines VCVE's commitment to promoting and maintaining the **health, safety, wellbeing, and personal development** of all students, supporting their educational success. It ensures compliance with the **Standards for RTOs 2025 (SRTOs)**, including obligations around student welfare and cultural safety (e.g., Standard 2.5), and the **Skills First 2024–25 V3.0** contract, including obligations related to student support and equity funding.

(References: SRTOs 2025 Quality Outcome 2; Skills First V3.0 VET Funding Contract – Student support obligations, inclusive delivery provisions.)

2. Scope

Applies to all **students enrolled** at VCVE—across accredited programs (Community Services, Mental Health, Education Support, Early Childhood, EAL)—and all **staff and third parties** responsible for supporting student welfare.

(References: SRTOs 2025 student cohort obligations; Skills First V3.0 – inclusive and accessible support requirements.)

2A. Definitions

- **Wellbeing Needs** – Physical, emotional, social, cultural, and mental health needs that may impact a student's capacity to study. *(SRTOs 2025 requirement to identify cohort needs.)*
 - **Critical Incident** – Any event that significantly impacts student safety or wellbeing (e.g., serious injury, mental health crisis, violence, or other emergencies).
 - **Wellbeing Risk Escalation Process** – A defined sequence of steps to support students in distress, from early identification through referral and follow-up.
 - **Cultural Safety** – An environment that is respectful and inclusive of cultural differences, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. *(SRTOs 2025 Quality Outcome 2)*
 - **Intervention Strategy** – A formal plan to provide tailored support (internal or external) for at-risk students.
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3. Guiding Principles

VCVE is committed to:

- Supporting students holistically—academically, personally, mentally, and emotionally.
 - Providing a safe, inclusive, respectful, and culturally safe learning environment. (*SRTOs 2025 Quality Outcome 2*)
 - Ensuring students know their rights, responsibilities, and available supports.
 - Encouraging early identification of difficulties and providing timely, appropriate interventions.
 - Respecting student privacy and confidentiality under the **Privacy Act 1988** and VCVE Privacy Policy.
 - Clear, ongoing communication with students.
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4. Key Areas of Student Welfare Support

4.1. Physical and Emotional Wellbeing

- Access to first aid and mental health—first-aid trained staff.
- Recognition of distress signs by staff and appropriate response/referral.

4.2. Learning Support

- Tutorials, tailored learning resources, trainer consultations.
- Initial and ongoing LLN assessments and support.
- Monitoring welfare processes to assess effectiveness.

4.3. Cultural Safety and Inclusion

- Promotion of diversity, inclusion, and cultural respect across all programs.
- Specific supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, migrants, and learners with disabilities. (*SRTOs 2025 Quality Outcome 2, Skills First inclusive obligations.*)

4.4. Bullying, Discrimination, and Harassment

- Zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination.
- Access to confidential grievance and complaints procedures.

4.5. Work Placement and Safety

- Brief students about workplace safety, rights, and expectations.
- Ensure host organisations meet **WHS requirements** and supervise placements appropriately.

4.6. Student Engagement and Voice

- Feedback via surveys, forums, meetings.
- Use feedback to enhance welfare and learning supports. (*Skills First feedback loop provisions.*)

4.7. External Referrals

- Partnerships with health, housing, financial, and social service providers.
- Referral pathways when needs exceed internal capacity.

4.8. Critical Incident Management Registry

- Record and respond to serious incidents affecting student welfare.
- Document investigations, actions taken, and follow-up support.

4.9. Intervention Strategies & Wellbeing Risk Escalation Process

- Tailored support plans for students identified as being at academic or personal risk.: e.g., adjusted learning, counselling referrals, check-ins.
- **Escalation Flow:**
 1. Identify early signs → 2. Initial internal support → 3. If unresolved, escalate to Student Support Officer → 4. Refer to external services or escalate to management as needed → 5. Document and follow up.

5. Responsibilities

| Stakeholder | Responsibility |
|--------------------------|--|
| Students | Engage respectfully, seek support, comply with policies. |
| Trainers/Assessors | Identify welfare concerns, offer initial support, refer when needed. |
| Student Support Officers | Coordinate welfare services, maintain referral pathways, monitor support plans. |
| RTO Management | Ensure resources, training, and systems are in place to support student welfare. |

(*Implicitly aligned with SRTOs 2025 emphasis on staff capability and organisational support structures.*)

6. Confidentiality and Privacy

- All welfare matters are kept strictly confidential.
- Student data handled in line with the **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)** and relevant VCVE policies.

(*Supports both SRTOs privacy obligations and Skills First student data provisions.*)

7. Continuous Improvement

- Annual policy review, or sooner following legislative changes or critical incidents.
- Updates reflect SRTOs, Skills First, regulatory changes, or feedback outcomes.

8. Contact for Student Welfare Support

Student Support Services

[Insert contact details]

Appendix – Skills First Compliance Mapping Table

| Policy Section | Skills First V3.0 Obligations | Notes |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Purpose | Inclusive delivery, funding contract support | Sets intent and compliance alignment. |
| 2. Scope | Inclusive student coverage | Covers all enrolled students and staff involved in welfare. |
| 2A. Definitions | — | Clarity for key terminology used in compliance. |
| 3. Guiding Principles | Inclusive & equitable training mandates | Reflects inclusive, equitable, and student-focused obligations. |
| 4.1–4.9 Key Support Areas | Duties to support students, incident response | Covers holistic welfare and early intervention strategies. |
| 4.9 Wellbeing Escalation Flow | Incident management expectations | Demonstrates proactivity and clear escalation and referral process. |
| 5. Responsibilities | Student support infrastructure requirements | Aligns with staff roles and organisational obligations. |
| 6. Confidentiality and Privacy | Student data handling and privacy practices | Meets legal and contractual privacy requirements. |
| 7. Continuous Improvement | Policy governance demands in contract | Ensures policy stays current and responsive. |

** Standard 4.2 from SRTOs 2025 requires staff to be informed and supported in their roles.

Appendix – Mapping to SRTOs 2025 Clauses

| Process Step | Relevant SRTOs 2025 Clause(s) | Notes |
|---|--|---|
| Trainer/Assessor observes wellbeing concern | Clause 1.5 – Support services for learners | Includes academic, wellbeing, and language/literacy/numeracy support obligations. |
| Immediate safety or wellbeing risk identified | Clause 2.1 – Compliance with legislation; Clause 1.5 | Encompasses WHS and duty of care responsibilities. |
| Initial discussion with learner and internal referral | Clause 1.5 | Requires clear referral pathways and documented learner support. |
| Escalation to Wellbeing Officer or Designated Staff | Clause 2.1; Clause 1.5 | Ensures escalation is documented and managed by a responsible person. |
| External referral to specialist services | Clause 1.5; Clause 2.1 | For cases beyond RTO capacity; must align with privacy and confidentiality legislation. |
| Documentation and record-keeping | Clause 8.5 – Retention of records | Applies to student support and incident documentation. |
| Review and continuous improvement | Clause 2.2 – Continuous improvement | Ensures feedback from incidents informs policy and practice updates. |