

Pegasus International College is committed to fostering a culturally inclusive and respectful learning and working environment. Given our international student cohort, we recognise the importance of cultural awareness in supporting the success and wellbeing of all learners and staff. This policy establishes our approach to promoting cultural awareness, inclusion and respect across all aspects of our operations.

Policy Name	Cultural Awareness Policy
RTO Name	Pegasus International College
RTO Code	46222
Standard	Standards for RTOs 2025 – Standard 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
Version	V1
Effective Date	March 2026
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Policy Owner	CEO

1) SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All staff, learners and any third parties engaged with Pegasus International College; and
- All training, assessment, administrative and operational activities.

2) SOFTWARE

- Microsoft Teams (online delivery platform – ensuring inclusive delivery in all sessions)
- Moodle (LMS – providing culturally accessible learning materials)

3) RESPONSIBILITIES

CEO

- Ensures compliance with legislation, regulations and Standards for RTOs.
- Ensures Pegasus International College operates as a culturally inclusive organisation.

Academic Manager

- Ensures training and assessment delivery is culturally sensitive and inclusive.
- Provides cultural awareness guidance and support to Trainers and Assessors.

Trainers and Assessors

- Deliver training and assessment in a culturally sensitive and inclusive manner.
- Identify and respond appropriately to cultural barriers that may affect learner participation or performance.

All Staff

- Treat all learners and colleagues with respect, regardless of their cultural background.
- Report any instances of cultural insensitivity or discrimination to the CEO.

4) GENERAL PRINCIPLES

At Pegasus International College, we are committed to:

- Creating and maintaining a learning and working environment that is welcoming, inclusive and respectful of all cultural backgrounds, languages, beliefs and practices.
- Recognising that our international student cohort brings diverse cultural perspectives that enrich the learning environment.
- Ensuring that training delivery, resources and communication styles are culturally sensitive and do not disadvantage learners from any cultural background.
- Providing staff with cultural awareness training as part of our induction and professional development program.
- Addressing cultural insensitivity, discrimination or harassment promptly and in accordance with our Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Policy.
- Continuously improving our approach to cultural awareness by seeking feedback from learners and staff from diverse backgrounds.

5) ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

Cultural Awareness

- **Respect and acknowledgement** – to the original people of Australia (both mainland and the 274 islands located north of the mainland), the First Nations, respect is essential to good working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and it should always be our first priority. This demonstration of respect will make it easier to set up mutual standards of respect and trust and will make it easier for working relationships to take place effectively.
- **Addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders** – it can be offensive to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders incorrectly. Some prefer to be called 'Aboriginal' and others prefer 'Indigenous'. It is always a good idea to try and gauge how people want to be addressed. You can do so by spending some time listening to their conversation, or you can ask respectfully how they would like to be referred to. It is generally better to avoid referring to Aboriginal people as Kooris or Murris.
- **Gender protocols** – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies still regard some information as specific and sacred to either men or women. The knowledge is sacred and recorded in a way that only men or women can access. Discuss with the learner if there are any aspects of the training that are considered men's or women's business, and if so, make appropriate adjustments in the program.

- **Communication processes** – requires respect, good listening, patience, understanding, checking, clarification and confirmation. It is important to remember the following when interacting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:
 - Not to assume anything
 - Be honest, sincere and open-minded
 - Use simple, clear, plain and appropriate language
 - Do not mimic Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ways of speaking (i.e. words, slang, speech or accent)
 - Never be boastful about your ideas
 - Do not be too direct as this can be taken as confrontational and/or rude
 - Do not ask hypothetical questions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make considerable use of non-verbal signs, especially when discussing direction. These are an integral part of the communication process and should not be ignored. Be sensitive to the use of non-verbal communication cues. The use of silence does not mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not understand. They may be listening, remaining non-committal or waiting for community support. During discussions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may delay expressing a firm opinion, preferring to listen to others' opinions first before offering their own.

It is common for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to use swear words in their regular vocabulary and in general conversation. Swearing is not considered offensive as it is in non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Be aware that if an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person swears, it is important not to take any offence. The only exception to this is if the person swears directly at you. When this happens, it is important to speak to the CEO about this as soon as possible as this behaviour should not be tolerated by anyone.

- **Providing support** – it is important to approach this sensitively and not cause embarrassment or shame to the person by asking them whether or not they can read and/or write. In most cases, the person will ask for assistance if they need it, provided the issue has been approached with sensitivity and respect.
- **Naming and images of deceased people** – each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community may have different protocols regarding naming and displaying images of the deceased. It is best to avoid naming or displaying images of the deceased. If it is important to do so, make sure that you have permission from the person's family and/or community and include a relevant disclaimer. The CEO must be consulted if it is important to name or display images of the deceased, and approval must be given by the CEO.
- **Welcome to Country** – this is where the Traditional Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Custodians, in most cases the Elders, welcome people to their Land. A non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cannot perform a 'Welcome to Country' as to do so is considered to be rude and disrespectful to the traditional owners and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. This is a significant recognition and is made through a formal process. A 'Welcome to Country' should always occur in the opening ceremony of the event

in question, as the first item, and the person or group delivering the 'Welcome to Country' must be remunerated.

Protocols in relation to the performing of a 'Welcome to Country' ceremony are wide and diverse and can vary according to region and locality. A 'Welcome to Country' may consist of a single speech by the representative of the local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community, or it can also include a performance of some description (which varies according to region and locality). Performances can include a Traditional Welcoming Song, a Traditional Dance, a didgeridoo performance, or a combination of any of the aforementioned.

- **Acknowledgement of Country** – a way that non-Aboriginal people can show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and the ongoing relationship of traditional owners of the land.

An 'Acknowledgement of Country' can be performed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the Traditional Custodians of the Land and/or Sea where the gathering of participants is being conducted.

An example of 'Acknowledge of Country' is:

'Let us acknowledge that we are meeting on country for which the members and elders of the local Aboriginal community have been custodians for many centuries, and on which Aboriginal people have performed age old ceremonies. We acknowledge their living culture and unique role in the life of this region.'

Learning Environments

- Culturally safe spaces with strong connections to Country and Elders.
- Incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into curriculum, where appropriate.
- Flexible and community-driven learning approaches, such as, yarning circles, storytelling, visual learning.
- Outdoor and land-based learning opportunities, where appropriate.

Support Needs

- Culturally appropriate mentorship and role models.
- Trauma-informed teaching to address historical and systemic barriers.
- Bilingual support in Indigenous languages where relevant.
- Community and family engagement in education.
- Digital access support in remote areas.

6) CHINESE

Cultural Awareness

- **Proper character and behaviour** – traditional Chinese beliefs place a great deal of importance on observing the proper social etiquette and showing good character and behaviour. Chinese people prefer modesty and keeping a low profile, both in regard to their own achievements and status as well as their interactions with others. Chinese people will often downplay their own positions and achievements while emphasising those of others. The average Chinese person will generally not attempt to make waves or to make themselves stand out overtly when compared to others. When praised by strangers or friends, a Chinese person will often downplay an accomplishment or character trait. Those who are not as modest or prefer to claim their own accomplishments can be viewed as rude, proud or braggarts.
- **Touch and personal contact** – they dislike being touched by strangers. It is not common for Chinese people to touch, hug, lock arms, back slap or make any body contact. You can however greet a Chinese person by using a handshake or a nod.
- **Respect** – there is a strong emphasis on respecting the feelings of others, often by not directly refusing a request. Aside from respecting the feelings of others, speaking in a less direct, roundabout manner is also viewed as a proper way to comport oneself, and by talking in this manner, one upholds the socially acceptable idea of how to behave as a cultured individual. They can be overly polite and it is not common for them to be as open with their communication as those from a Western background are.
- **Language** – there are many dialects in the Chinese language, with the two most common dialects being Mandarin and Cantonese. It is considered very disrespectful to assume that all Chinese people speak the same dialect.
- **Lucky colours** – Chinese people believe that red, yellow and green are three main lucky colours and white and black are considered unlucky colours.
- **Red** – is believed to bring happiness, beauty, vitality, good luck, success and good fortune. It is widely used during festivals and important events like weddings. Red lanterns adorn businesses and residences, red outfits are worn during weddings and festivals, and red envelopes are stuffed with money and given as gifts during Chinese New Year.
- **Yellow** – is the most important colour from an ancient perspective and symbolises royalty and is reserved for the emperor. Emperors were dressed in yellow imperial robes, rode in yellow carriages, and travelled on yellow paths. Official seals were packaged in yellow fabric.
- **Green** – is the colour of wealth, fertility, regeneration, hope, harmony and growth. Buildings, banks and restaurants in China are often painted in green. Packaging for milk or produce is often in green to indicate that the product is contamination free.

Learning Environments

- Structured and disciplined learning styles with clear expectations.
- Emphasis on academic excellence and achievement.
- Bilingual education support, particularly for first-generation migrants.
- Group learning and peer collaboration.

Support Needs

- English language support for new migrants and older learners.
- Familial engagement programs that bridge cultural differences in educational expectations.
- Mental health and wellbeing support, especially around high academic pressure.
- Culturally responsive teaching strategies to integrate Chinese cultural perspectives.

7) INDIAN

Cultural Awareness

- **Family** – for generations, India has a prevailing tradition of the joint family system. It is when extended members of a family live together. Usually, the oldest male is the head of the joint Indian family system and he makes most of the important decisions and rules. The other family members are likely to abide by them without question. This is why they are very respectful of their elders and treasure the family structure.
- **Significance of the cow** – the cow is a sacred animal in Hinduism and it is believed to be the mother goddess and brings good fortune and wealth. For this reason, cows are revered in Hindu culture and feeding a cow is seen as an act of worship. It is an offense to consume any beef in mainstream Hindu and Jain society. It is important to be mindful when consuming any beef around Indians as this may be seen as an act of disrespect.
- **Language** – they are really inquisitive people and their culture is one where people do anything but mind their own business, often due to a lack of privacy in India and the habit of placing people in the social hierarchy. One should not be surprised or offended if someone asks how much you earn for a living and a host of other intimate questions in the first meeting. It is encouraged to ask the same types of questions in return.
- **Etiquette** – it is not polite to be pointing your finger or feet at people, or touching people or objects with your feet or shoes. If you do so accidentally, one should apologise straight away. It should also be noted that Indians will often touch their head or eyes as a show of apology, and it is a sign of respect to bend down and touch an elder person's feet in India.

It is also considered to be impolite to pass food or objects with your left hand. The left hand is considered to be unclean in India as it is used to perform matters associated with going to the bathroom. Therefore, it is advisable to only use the right hand to pass food or objects.

Learning Environments

- High respect for educators and structured classroom environments.
- Interactive and discussion-based learning styles encouraged.
- Strong familial involvement in academic choices.

Support Needs

- Networking opportunities, especially with those who are in careers the learner is working towards.
- English language support for new migrants and older learners.
- Community-based learning opportunities.

8) MIDDLE EASTERN

Cultural Awareness

- **Respect and acknowledgement** – a foundational value in Middle Eastern cultures, deeply rooted in family, religion, and community. Demonstrating respect through politeness, hospitality, and understanding of cultural norms is essential in building strong relationships. This includes showing respect for elders, religious beliefs, and traditional customs.
- **Addressing Middle Eastern people** – come from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, including Lebanese, Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, and others. Some may prefer to be addressed by their nationality (e.g., Lebanese–Australian), while others may prefer broader terms such as "Middle Eastern." It is always best to ask respectfully how someone prefers to be identified rather than assume. Be mindful that some surnames may indicate religious or cultural affiliations, and avoid making assumptions about beliefs or practices based on names.
- **Gender protocols** – gender roles can be more traditional in Middle Eastern cultures, with certain interactions between men and women following cultural or religious etiquette. Some Muslim women may prefer not to shake hands with men due to religious reasons. If unsure, wait for the woman to initiate a handshake. When addressing a Middle Eastern family, it is respectful to acknowledge the elders first. In some communities, separate seating for men and women may be preferred in social or learning environments.
- **Communication processes** – Effective communication with Middle Eastern people requires patience, respect, and cultural sensitivity. Important aspects include:
 - Direct eye contact may be seen as a sign of confidence and sincerity, but prolonged or intense eye contact with the opposite gender may be considered inappropriate.
 - Non-verbal communication is important, as facial expressions and hand gestures often convey meaning.
 - Saving face is a strong cultural value—some may avoid openly disagreeing or admitting mistakes to maintain dignity.
 - Hospitality and small talk are highly valued; it is common to engage in polite conversation before discussing business or educational matters.
- **Religion and cultural sensitivities** – Middle Eastern communities include a variety of religious traditions, including Islam, Christianity, and other faiths. It is important to be mindful of religious practices, including:
 - **Islamic prayer times** – Muslim learners may need breaks to pray during the day.
 - **Ramadan considerations** – During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslim learners may be fasting, affecting their energy levels.
 - **Halal dietary requirements** – Muslim learners may only consume halal food and may need suitable options.
 - **Religious holidays** – Be aware of significant holidays such as Eid (for Muslims) and Christmas or Easter (for Middle Eastern Christians).

- **Handling sensitive topics** – certain topics may be sensitive or require careful handling in discussions, including:
 - **Politics and international conflicts** – These issues can be deeply personal and should be approached with sensitivity.
 - **Religion and religious conversion** – Avoid making assumptions or engaging in discussions that may be seen as proselytizing.
 - **Personal and family matters** – Family honour is important, and discussing personal issues openly may be uncomfortable for some learners.
- **Hospitality and social norms** – a central part of Middle Eastern cultures, and gestures of warmth and generosity are common. If invited to a Middle Eastern home or event:
 - It is customary to accept food or drink as a sign of appreciation.
 - Giving and receiving with the right hand is preferred in some cultures.
 - Expressing gratitude and showing politeness when receiving hospitality is highly valued.
- **Cultural celebrations and contributions** – Middle Eastern Australians have enriched Australian society through food, business, arts, and education. Recognizing and celebrating cultural contributions fosters inclusion and appreciation. Participating in cultural events such as Lebanese festivals, Persian New Year (Nowruz), or Eid celebrations can demonstrate respect and inclusivity. Encouraging the sharing of cultural traditions and stories in learning environments can build stronger relationships.

Learning Environments

- Respect-based and structured learning.
- Faith-based facilities and sensitivities observed.
- Group learning and community-focused education.
- Preference for career-oriented and technical information.

Support Needs

- English language support for new migrants and older learners.
- Culturally appropriate mental health and counselling services.
- Mentorship support.

9) LEGISLATIVE AND STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

This policy aligns with the following:

Standards for RTOs 2025

- **Outcome Standards:**

- **Standard 2.3** – VET students have reasonable access to training support services, teachers, Trainers & Assessors and other staff to support their progress through the training product.
- **Standard 2.5** – The learning environment promotes and supports the diversity of VET students.
- **Standard 2.6** – The wellbeing needs of the VET student cohort are identified and strategies are put in place to support these needs.
- **Standard 4.2** – Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood.
- **Standard 4.3** – Risks to VET students, staff and the RTO are identified and managed.
- **Standard 4.4** – The RTO undertakes systematic monitoring and evaluation to support the delivery of quality services and continuous improvement

Failure to comply with this policy can have serious consequences, including but not limited to:

- **For the RTO** – failure to promote cultural awareness may result in regulatory non-compliance or reputational damage.
- **For Staff Members** – staff who act in a culturally insensitive or discriminatory manner may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- **For Learners and Clients** – learners who experience cultural insensitivity may be adversely affected in their training and may seek formal complaints.

10) CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- This policy will be reviewed annually or as required to ensure alignment with stakeholder feedback and operational needs. Feedback will be sought from staff members during the annual reviews to make this policy more robust.
- An internal audit is to be conducted at least once a year to ensure our compliance with this policy and the relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. The Continuous Improvement Schedule outlines when this audit is to take place.
- Internal audit review questions for self-assurance purposes should include:
 - How do you support and encourage participation by a diverse range of students?
 - How is your organisation perceived by the local First Nations community? Have you tested this?
 - How do you ensure your systems, policies, procedures and practices are inclusive and culturally safe?
 - What strategies do you have in place to prevent discrimination and identify and respond to instances of discrimination where these occur?
 - What strategies do you have in place for preventing abuse, harassment or violence, and for dealing with such issues should they arise amongst your student cohort?

- How do you support and build the cultural competence of your staff?
- How do you monitor the learning environment to ensure it is inclusive, culturally safe and welcoming of students and staff?

11) RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Complaints and Appeals Policy
- Continuous Improvement Register
- Continuous Improvement Schedule
- Individual Learner Needs Policy
- Student Handbook