

# Occupational Health and Safety Policy

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## 1. PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) recognises its legal, ethical and moral responsibilities to provide a safe work place and to prevent work related injury and illness.

This policy reflects VIT's commitment to promote a positive, healthy and safe workplace culture through the management and control of risk. The VIT seeks to achieve this through effective communication, collaboration and consultation.

This approach is underpinned by legislative compliance, robust systems and procedures that are designed to, so far as is practicable to:

- identify, assess and control workplace hazards
- reduce the incidence and cost of occupational injury and illness
- identify and appropriately manage work and work practices which impact on occupational health and safety (OHS)
- provide a rehabilitation system for workers affected by occupational injury or illness
- consider the impact of changes to work practices and staffing on occupational health and safety and
- promote a positive health and safety culture that contributes to the well-being of all employees, Council members, contractors, volunteers and other visitors.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all employees, VIT Council members, contractors, volunteers and visitors to VIT's office.

## 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The VIT's OHS obligations arise under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)* ('OHS Act'), the common law duty of care and under Clause 73 of the *Victorian Institute of Teaching Enterprise Agreement 2021* ('the **Agreement**).

Clause 73 of the Agreement is annexed as **Appendix 1**.

In line with relevant Workplace Health and Safety legislation, compliance codes and standards and the internal Workplace Values and Behaviours Policy, VIT is committed to:

- providing an environment that promotes and supports the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace
- ensuring OHS is an integral part of all VIT management systems and core operations
- reflecting OHS expectations within position descriptions, performance development and planning processes
- ensuring staff are appropriately trained and educated in the area of OHS in line with position accountability and responsibilities including individual obligations to personal safety
- providing facilities, equipment, resources and services to enable employees to perform their role safely
- regularly communicating with staff in relation to OHS initiatives and programs that support a health and safety culture at the workplace
- reporting on OHS performance targets and incidents at the organisational and branch level evaluating OHS performance through analysis of organisational data of best practice and benchmarking with industry peers.

Encouraging a positive workplace culture that supports the safety and wellbeing of staff and other participants, contributes to a productive and effective workforce and strengthens the long-term health of VIT as an organisation. The benefits manifest in lower absenteeism, lower voluntary staff turnover, greater productivity and teamwork and greater assurance of achieving VIT's strategic objectives.

## 4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The involvement of all employees, Council members, contractors and volunteers at every level is required to achieve health and safety objectives.

### 4.1.1 The VIT Council

- oversee legal obligations and the effective implementation of the OHS policies, systems and processes relating to employee health and safety
- ensure that OHS remains a strategic priority for VIT in support of embedding a strong safety culture
- monitor the performance of OHS through regular reporting.

### 4.1.2 The CEO

- ensure that legal obligations and the effective implementation of OHS policies, systems and processes relating to employee health and safety are met and maintained
- ensure that OHS remains a strategic priority for VIT in support of embedding a strong safety culture
- monitor the performance of OHS through regular reporting
- ensure the effective implementation of the OHS Committee structure and related forums for employees to raise health and safety issues and have these issues addressed
- ensure the effective OHS training and education of staff through the allocation of sufficient resourcing and operational funding to support related activity
- ensure OHS roles and responsibilities within the organisation are effectively communicated and maintained via positions descriptions, performance development and planning discussions and management forums
- ensure the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of staff is promoted and supported through participation in programs and initiatives designed to enhance employee wellbeing
- embed a positive risk culture whereby employees are encouraged to discuss health and safety issues and concerns in a transparent and open manner.

### 4.1.3 Directors/Managers/Team leaders

- ensure effective implementation of workplace health and safety practices in line with OHS policies, systems and processes, templates and checklists that support expectations and responsibilities of a director/line manager/team leader
- ensure branch procedures are in place for the systematic identification of workplace hazards; and assessment of their level of risk as well as implementation of controls to manage risks
- lead branch safety inspections and audits and investigate and report on all incidents, including near misses
- ensure staff return to the workplace from a physical or psychological injury in line with return-to-work plans
- prioritise OHS requirements within the branch to ensure a safety culture is always promoted
- report on OHS performance
- ensure sufficient forums for employees to raise and discuss workplace health and safety issues in a transparent and open manner
- encourage staff to take accountability for personal health and safety
- participate in OHS training and education and facilitate OHS representative participation in training obligations as required
- ensure the physical and psychological health and wellbeing of staff is promoted and supported through participation in programs and initiatives designed to enhance employee wellbeing
- promote and act as a role model to support a positive risk culture in health and safety.

### 4.1.4 Employees/Volunteers/Contractors

- assume individual accountability for personal health and safety including psychological wellbeing
- undertake tasks in accordance with relevant procedures and/or work instructions

- participate in health and safety consultative forums and contribute ideas to improving the health and safety practices at VIT
- where appropriate, participate in workplace health and safety training, programs and initiatives to embed a safety culture
- report all work health and safety breaches, hazards and incidents, including near misses, to the director/manager/line manager or health and safety representative and assist with actions to reduce and eliminate risks.

#### 4.1.5 People and Culture

- manage the ongoing development and maintenance of workplace health and safety practices in line with this OHS policy, procedures, systems and processes, and resources that support line managers and employees in meeting their health and safety responsibilities
- lead the education process for:
  - departmental safety inspections and audits
  - investigations and reporting of incidents, including near misses
  - hazard identification and risk controls; and
  - wellbeing initiatives.
- manage programs for employees remaining in the workplace or returning to the workplace after an injury
- report on OHS performance
- facilitate, record and report on all OHS training and education requirements including maintenance of compliance training and refresher training needs
- ensure the physical and psychological health and wellbeing and safety of staff is promoted and supported through the development and implementation of programs and initiatives designed to enhance employee wellbeing and safety
- manage the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) as a key resource for employees and directors/managers/team leaders in support of work and life issues.

#### 4.1.6 OHS committee

- monitor the organisational health and safety risk and incident registers and report to stakeholders on progress
- support OHS communication and education initiatives throughout VIT
- provide a mechanism to consult with the workforce and management
- promote OHS practices and behaviours across VIT
- support the investigation and resolution of any unsafe processes, practices and risks
- support wellbeing initiatives
- support the CEO in discharging OHS initiatives.

### 5. STAFF CONSULTATION

The VIT will consult with staff and OHS committee members and representatives in accordance with s35 of the *OHS Act* and clause 73 of the Agreement.

### 6. RELATED LEGISLATION AND POLICY

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- OHS Committee Charter (ECM Reference: 4964766)
- Procedure for the Reporting and Management of Incidents, Hazards and Incident Reporting Charter (ECM Reference: 5395884)

### 7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX	DOCUMENT NAME	DOCUMENT CODE
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1	Clause 73 of the VIT Enterprise Agreement 2021	The VIT Enterprise Agreement is available on the Staff Hub
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# APPENDIX 1

## VIT ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT 2021

### **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND REHABILITATION**

#### **73.1 Objectives**

- 73.1.1 This Agreement acknowledges and supports the rights of Employees to work in an environment, which is, so far as is practicable, safe and without risks to health. The Parties are committed to the promotion of a joint and united approach to consultation and resolution of Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) issues.
- 73.1.2 The Agreement commits the Parties to improving health and safety with a view to improving workplace efficiency and productivity. This will be accomplished through the ongoing development, in consultation with Employees and their Health and Safety Representatives, of management systems and procedures designed to, so far as is practicable to:
- (a) identify, assess and control workplace hazards;
  - (b) reduce the incidence and cost of occupational injury and illness;
  - (c) identify and appropriately manage work and work practices which impact on OH&S;
  - (d) provide a rehabilitation system for workers affected by occupational injury or illness; and
  - (e) consider the impact of changes to work practices and staffing on occupational health and safety.
- 73.1.3 OH&S statutory requirements, including regulations and codes of practice, are minimum standards and will be improved upon where practicable.

#### **73.2 OH&S consultation**

- 73.2.1 Consultative mechanisms appropriate to the Employer will be established to address OH&S issues. Such mechanisms will be:
- (a) in accordance with the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*;
  - (b) established in consultation with Employees and their Health and Safety Representatives; and
  - (c) consistent with the Employer's agreed issue resolution procedures and the rights and functions of Health and Safety Representatives, consistent with the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*.
- 73.2.2 Where an OH&S committee is established at least half the members shall be Employees, including Health and Safety Representatives.
- 73.2.3 The OH&S committee must operate within the requirements of the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*.
- 73.2.4 A CPSU Workplace representative may attend local OH&S committee meetings (by giving notice) from time to time.

#### **73.3 OH&S training**

- 73.3.1 Workplace training programs, including induction and on-the-job training will outline relevant details of OH&S policies and procedures.
- 73.3.2 The contents of OH&S training programs will outline the OH&S roles and responsibilities of Employees, managers and supervisors, OH&S policies and procedures, particular hazards associated with their workplaces, control measures applicable to each hazard, and how to utilise OH&S systems to identify hazards and instigate preventative action

#### **73.4 Designated Work Groups**

- 73.4.1 The Employer will review the Designated Work Groups (DWGs), and negotiate revised DWGs where appropriate through workplace CPSU/management consultative structures.
- 73.4.2 The CPSU will be notified of vacancies for Health and Safety Representatives in DWGs where the majority of DWG Employees are eligible to be members of the CPSU.
- 73.4.3 Each elected Health and Safety Representative will be provided with reasonable access to facilities such as email, telephone, fax, office and computer access, where available. An Employee will be granted reasonable time release or paid time (including time in lieu) to attend to their functions as a Health and Safety Representative, including but not limited to regularly inspecting workplaces (as defined by their DWG), consulting with Employees

in their DWGs, OH&S representatives and other persons involved in the organising of Employees health, safety and welfare.

73.4.4 The Employer will post and maintain current in each workplace the names and relevant contact details, including email where available, of elected Health and Safety Representatives for identified DWGs. Such circular shall be required to be posted on a notice board for the regular attention of all Employees working in the workplace.

73.4.5 To monitor the maintenance of effective OH&S structures and training delivery the parties will jointly establish a central register of DWGs and their Health and Safety Representatives. The register will be maintained by the Employer from information provided on a quarterly basis from the workplace.

73.4.6 Information from the updated register will be provided periodically (quarterly) in electronic format to the CPSU. The information provided will be in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2000* (Vic). Where possible, this information will include:

- (a) a description, including the location, of each DWG within the VIT;
- (b) the name of each elected Health and Safety Representative their workplace contact details and email address;
- (c) the date the Health and Safety Representative was elected;
- (d) a description of the training the OH&S representative has attended and the date of attendance;
- (e) the name and contact details of the nominated management representative responsible for each DWG;
- (f) details of the structure of OH&S committees, their meeting frequency and the name and contact details of the committee convener.

### **73.5 Bullying and violence at work**

- (a) The Parties to this Agreement are committed to working together to reduce bullying and occupational assault so far as is practicable in the workplace.

### **73.6 Employee support and debriefing**

73.6.1 The Employer will provide staff support and debriefing to Employees who have experienced a "critical incident" during the course of the work that results in personal distress. The Employer is committed to assisting the recovery of staff experiencing normal distress following a critical incident with the aim of returning staff to their pre-incident level of functioning as soon as possible.

73.6.2 A critical incident is defined as an event outside the range of usual human experience which has the potential to easily overcome a person's normal ability to cope with stress. It may produce a negative psychological response in a person who was involved in or witnessed such an incident.

73.6.3 Critical incidents in the workplace environment include, but are not limited to:

- aggravated assaults;
- robbery;
- suicide or attempted suicide;
- murder;
- sudden or unexpected death;
- hostage or siege situations;
- discharge of firearms;
- vehicle accidents involving injury and/or substantial property damage;
- acts of self harm by persons in the care of others;
- industrial accidents involving serious injury or fatality; and
- any other serious accidents or incidents.