

Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy - Students

1. Introduction:

The Geelong College values the diversity of cultures, beliefs, practices, customs, physical and intellectual abilities and life experiences of the whole school community.

It aims to provide a welcoming, supportive, emotionally and physically secure learning and working environment for every member of this community.

2. Commitments:

We are committed to:

- a. creating an inclusive culture that fosters acceptance and respect for diversity amongst its members
- b. being aware of the implications of equal opportunity and diversity when enrolling, educating and managing our students
- c. creating an environment that strives to be free from discrimination and where all students have fair and reasonable access to learning and co-curricular opportunities
- d. fostering an awareness of the rights and responsibilities of each individual through the implementation of non-discriminatory policies and practices
- e. ensuring that processes are in place for resolving issues of discrimination as soon as possible, if and when they arise, and in the least disruptive manner
- f. treating allegations of discrimination seriously, sensitively and confidentially

The College supports the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic), which stipulates that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of their actual or assumed:

- I. age
- II. disability/impairment
- III. gender
- IV. physical features
- V. political belief or activity
- VI. race
- VII. religious belief or activity
- VIII. sexual orientation
- IX. personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, one of these personal characteristics

No member of the school community will be treated less favourably because they possess any of these personal characteristics, nor will such characteristics affect access to the benefits and services the College provides.

The College also recognises its responsibility under the Act to be proactive about discrimination and to take steps to prevent discriminatory practices.

3. Discrimination is Unacceptable at the College:

Discrimination may be direct or indirect – both are unlawful.

- a. *Direct discrimination* is defined as treating someone unfairly or less favourably because of one of the personal characteristics listed above or because of an association with someone identified with one of those characteristics. Examples of direct discrimination would include offensive notes, phone, text or email messages about a student's disability.
- b. *Indirect discrimination* occurs when a rule, policy or requirement unnecessarily or unreasonably disadvantages a group of people because of a protected personal characteristic they share.

4. Bullying and Harassment are Unacceptable at the College:

Bullying or harassment is any repeated behaviour that is unwelcome, degrading, intrusive, violent, abusive or offensive towards a person.

Although a person may not intend their behaviour to be bullying or offensive, if the behaviour directed at

another person is perceived to be bullying or offensive, steps must be taken to resolve the issues. Examples of bullying include pushing, fighting, teasing, offensive remarks (including racial and sexist), continual criticism, intimidating language, rumour spreading, offensive notes, phone, text or email messages, cyber bullying, drawings and photographs, graffiti, defacing possessions, stand-over or 'gang' behaviour, psychological pressure (*intimidatory*), and excluding or isolating people.

More specific information about the College's stance against bullying and harassment can be found within the College's Anti-Bullying (Harassment) Policy which can be found on StudentNet,

Sexual Harassment is unwanted and unwelcome sexual behaviour that a person should have realised would have offended, intimidated or humiliated the other person. Examples of sexual harassment include unwanted touching, unwelcome sexual innuendo or jokes, displaying sexually explicit material (posters, emails, internet sites).

More specific information about the College's stance against sexual harassment can be found within the College's Sexual Harassment Policy which can be found on StudentNet.

5. Racial and Religious Vilification is Unacceptable at the College:

Vilification is behaviour (through words or actions) that incites hatred, contempt or ridicule of another person because of their race or religious belief. Examples of vilification would include public threats of harm, insults, ridicule.

Victimising is defined as treating someone unfairly or otherwise disadvantaging them. Examples of victimising would include humiliating a student because they gave evidence in support of another student's complaint of sexual harassment or because they have made an equal opportunity complaint or might do so in the future.

The College will take action to prevent discrimination, harassment, vilification, bullying and victimisation and to promote a safe and inclusive school. The College will also take immediate and appropriate action to address and resolve equal opportunity issues and complaints.

6. An Inclusive School:

The College recognises that equal opportunity underpins its aim to create an environment that is inclusive and safe. The College strives to do this through:

- a. Active management support and leadership
- b. Induction and orientation of new staff and students
- c. Effective complaint resolution procedures
- d. Effective communication of policies and procedures
- e. The checking of facilities, services and programs for ease of access
- f. Appropriate training and education of staff and students
- g. Staff wellbeing policies and programs
- h. An inclusive curriculum
- i. Policy that is implemented, monitored and reviewed

7. Complaints Procedures:

The College encourages all members of the school community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns through the school.

Any complaint the school receives will be treated confidentially, fairly and consistently, and resolved as speedily as possible.

Any member of the school community who raises an issue of discrimination, harassment, bullying or vilification in good faith will not be victimised or otherwise unfairly treated or disadvantaged. All complaints of victimisation will be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon as quickly as possible.

8. Concern and Complaint Handling Options:

A complainant needs to decide which option will be best to achieve the desired outcome. The following options are available as alternative ways of handling complaints and concerns:

- Self- Management – the complainant takes careful and informed action themselves to resolve their issue or concern.
- Informal Resolution – the complainant seeks the assistance of a responsible adult (Head of House, Head /Deputy Head of Student Welfare, Team Leader, Area Leader, Class Teacher, Tutor, Learning Mentor, School Counsellor) to help resolve the issue or concern without a formal complaint being made.
- Formal Complaint/ Grievance Procedure - the complainant lodges a formal complaint in writing with a Head of School who investigates, makes a finding and suggests recommendations.
- External – the complainant contacts the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, or another external complaints body.