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Characteristics that make up diversity

Organisations can employ or interact with people who are diverse in ways that have different implications for interactions.

Here are some categories of diversity and a short explanation of each.

Ability, aptitude or disability



Staff may have a basic education or be highly qualified.

People may have a physical or cognitive disability.

Some people may be more suited to a particular job role than others based on their skills, ambitions and aptitudes.

Age



An organisation may employ people of all ages, from young people straight from high school to mature age people in their 60s or 70s.

Personality



A diverse workforce has people with a range of different qualities, such as people who are outgoing, shy, cheerful, quiet, talkative or imaginative.

Marital status or family arrangements



Staff may be married, not married, in a de facto relationship or separated. They may be a single parent, have children or have no children.

Diversity policies

To ensure organisations are meeting their legal obligations to follow the principles of workplace diversity in their business practices and culture, management should develop a diversity policy (also known as an access and equity policy or an equal opportunity policy) that shows how they plan to ensure their workforce is diverse and how they will display respect for their customers and the public.

A diversity policy also enhances an organisation's competitiveness and standing in the community, as well as staff morale and satisfaction. The policy must relate to all staff: permanent, part-time, casual and contracted.



It is not a legal requirement for all organisations to have a specific diversity policy, but it is implied under the law that all organisations must adhere to the principles of diversity and equity. Some organisations, such as registered training providers and childcare centres, are required under legally binding industry codes to establish such policies.

Under Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation, an employer may be held legally responsible for any discrimination or harassment that occurs in the workplace or in connection with a person's employment unless it can be shown that all reasonable steps have been taken to reduce this liability.

A diversity policy helps an organisation plan and administer a management system and culture that encourage diversity, and implement practices and procedures to ensure the policy is enacted.

Components of a diversity policy

A diversity policy should be relevant to the specific workplace and have the endorsement of the CEO, board and/or manager responsible. It may also include supporting documentation, such as an ethics guide, code of conduct, workplace behaviour guidelines, and guidelines for managing poor behaviour in the workplace or a complaints procedure.

The policy should begin with a framing statement on diversity that states the organisation's philosophy on diversity, which should include the need for staff to reflect the Australian community and include people of different abilities, ages, genders, ethnicities and backgrounds.

A diversity policy should include the following components.

Components of a diversity policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of discrimination, harassment and behaviours that will not be tolerated in the workplace • Consequences of breaches of the policy • Management responsibilities for equal employment opportunity (EEO) • Procedures for complaints and how these are to be made and managed

Comply with diversity legislation and organisational policy

When applying the diversity policy in the workplace, managers need to be aware of how to proactively comply with the policies and how to avoid noncompliance.

Here are examples of diversity legislation and organisational policy.

Age	Age must not be a consideration when hiring an employee. Discrimination on the basis of age may include hiring only younger people or not employing younger workers even though they have the required skills to perform the work. Your workplace may be able to employ older workers by adjusting the physical conditions of some jobs or recruiting them on a reduced-hours basis.
Ability, aptitude or disability	Employment should be offered on the basis of a person's ability to carry out the job. It is illegal to refuse to hire someone with a disability that does not prevent them doing the job.
Personality	Employees must be hired based on their ability to do the job. Rejecting an otherwise suitable applicant for a job based on personality (for example, 'She's too outgoing to be a manager') is a form of discrimination.
Culture	Celebrating important cultural events in the workplace is an example of promoting diversity, as is allowing people to dress according to their traditions as long as this does not breach safety laws or dress codes. Refusing leave requests made in a timely fashion to attend cultural or religious festivals and ceremonies can be discriminatory.
Language	Important notices should be translated into community languages for display on noticeboards. It is discrimination to hire a person who speaks a language other than English and not offer them safety information in their community language.
Ethnicity and race	Staff must be hired, promoted, trained and rewarded based on merit, regardless of ethnicity. Offering better conditions to members of a specific ethnic group is illegal. A person's race must not be made an issue in hiring, promotion or workplace behaviour. It is against the law to allow racist behaviour, such as jokes being circulated in the workplace that insult people of a specific race.

Information sessions and formal presentations

It is a good idea to make a formal presentation about the diversity policy to senior management and board members to ensure their acceptance and understanding. Emphasise that the policy complies with current legislation. Check that all relevant staff are present and follow up with any who are absent on the day.

Work with other managers to support their role in informing team members of their rights and responsibilities and how they can use diversity in their everyday work practices.

You can deliver an information session to staff focusing on the diversity policy and their responsibilities towards other staff, customers, visitors and contractors. A session could include an electronic presentation, an expert speaking on diversity and legislation, opportunities to role-play, handouts with an overview of the policy, and/or tips to implement diversity within each team.

Make sure the language expression is appropriate for the audience and handouts are written clearly in English and/or relevant community languages. Explain technical words and discuss legislation using plain English. Make sure the content does not offend anyone; for example, be careful that a description or joke intended to illustrate an area of diversity is not offensive to any specific characteristics of your audience.

Organise presentations in the following way.

Characteristics of information sessions and presentations

Hold them in a comfortable learning environment

Make them relevant to the workplace and the staff of the organisation

Have clear objectives

Provide a variety in activities with time for participants to check their understanding

Provide an opportunity for participants to brainstorm ideas, ask questions or discuss the information and how it impacts on the workplace with team-mates

Implement the policy

There are many ways to ensure the policy is being successfully implemented once its implementation has become a goal of the organisation.

Here are strategies and tips for managers who have implementation responsibilities.

Strategies for implementation	Tips for implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe staff in their day-to-day interactions with others. • Check that procedures for recruiting and promoting staff are being followed. • Identify the number and types of complaints being made in relation to harassment and discrimination. • Discuss diversity at performance appraisal sessions to confirm understanding. • Check that recommended changes are being implemented, such as celebrating other cultures, including newsletter articles on diversity or introducing flexible work hours for parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask a colleague for advice on how to approach a client or customer from the same cultural background. • Learn how to say 'hello' in community languages and use this to greet colleagues who speak these languages. • Speak up when someone tells a joke or makes a comment that appears derogatory based on specific human qualities such as age, gender, race or sexuality. • Scan for any indirect discrimination when reviewing policies and procedures; for example, where a requirement that should apply to all staff accidentally excludes some members of staff on the basis of specific qualities or characteristics. • Seek balance when approaching staff as volunteers for a specific task; for example, encourage both younger and older people, and both men and women to volunteer for tasks.

Measure success

There are various ways of monitoring whether the implementation of a diversity policy has resulted in positive changes in the workplace.

Here are examples of ways to measure success.

Different measures of success
Responses of staff from observation, sampling, interviews and quizzes in the organisation's newsletter can show the levels of understanding and acceptance of the policy.
Completing a profile of staff with respect to age, gender, ethnicity and so on can show the diversity of the workforce and whether it is more diverse than previously.
A job satisfaction survey can reveal an increase in job satisfaction, with positive comments for flexible work hours.

Conduct a formal, critical review of the policy

A review of your organisation's diversity policy requires planning and is a more formal way of evaluating the currency and effectiveness of the policy.

Making sure all staff are consulted will indicate how effective the policy is. Go through each section of the policy and check it for currency, how effectively it relates to the organisation, what amendments or additions should be made and whether it could be written more clearly.

Here are examples of actions that could be undertaken as part of a review of diversity policy.

Strategies for consultation and review
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open informal forums that encourage input, debate and an exchange of ideas and views• Arranging for staff to visit other workplaces to research best practice• Surveys or questionnaires completed by staff, managers and board members• Interviews with relevant stakeholders• A suggestion box for anonymous comments and suggestions related to diversity and policy implementation• Engaging state/territory agencies responsible for implementing diversity legislation to review the organisation's diversity policy and practices• Role-plays that challenge staff members to manage situations involving potential incidents of noncompliance with the diversity policy

Make suggestions to improve the policy

You may be able to suggest a range of improvements following a formal review, staff feedback, observations and informal discussions. If so, follow the organisation's procedures for implementing suggestions, such as preparing a formal report to management, discussing the improvements with staff and ensuring training is organised.

You may have found that the religious practices of growing numbers of your staff have not been adequately catered for and suggest including new provisions in the policy: a request form to attend religious ceremonies; a specific area for staff to observe prayer requirements; and a dress code that embraces people's cultural dress while still complying with safety regulations.

There are a number of ways to address issues you have discovered in your review of the efficacy and currency of your organisation's diversity policy.

Suggestions to strengthen your diversity policy include:

- revising the wording of the policy to eliminate complex language
- conducting regular diversity discussions with staff
- making the policy more visible through displays or newsletter articles
- promoting the organisation's diversity policy within the local community.

Topic 2

Foster respect for diversity in the work team

One of a manager's responsibilities is to encourage and promote diversity in the workplace. They can do this by addressing their own prejudices about people who are different to themselves and by being a positive role model for changing negative attitudes and behaviour.

Strategies that support the organisation's diversity policy include promoting the benefits of diversity, providing training in diversity to staff and managing conflict between team members.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Address own prejudices and demonstrate respect for difference
- 2B Select and recruit diverse staff
- 2C Identify and address training needs to address issues of difference in the team
- 2D Manage tensions and encourage collaboration and respect between staff
- 2E Assist staff to see the benefits of diversity
- 2F Manage allegations of harassment and address complaints according to organisational procedures

Positive interactions

Here are some tips for respecting differences when interacting with others.

Strategies to promote positive interactions

- Use inclusive language that recognises a person's worth. Avoid remarks that are demeaning, such as referring to women as 'dear'.
- Avoid jargon and Australian colloquialisms; use plain English when speaking and writing.
- Be aware of a person's physical and mental limitations, but do not assume that a person needs to be treated differently because of a physical or intellectual disability.
- Acknowledge the experience and skills that older people bring to the workplace.
- Develop a professional rapport with colleagues and customers.
- Be aware of different learning styles and adapt your interactions to accommodate the ways other people like to work.
- Show genuine interest in other people's beliefs. Listen actively and ask clarifying questions.
- Respect people's traditions such as bowing when greeting, having sufficient personal space when speaking and addressing people in certain ways.

Example: a manager addresses own issues and prejudices

Steve is employed in a food distribution business as an overseer, supervising the work of the dispatch team of five workers. The company has recently undergone expansion and now imports canned foods from Spain, Greece, Italy and Croatia.

As much as he tries not to, Steve finds he still gets impatient with some of his crew who do not speak English well. He becomes annoyed when he has to read documents aloud for individual crew members, as his own reading skills are not strong.

The training manager arranges literacy support for the crew, which Steve also attends. He says he is only there to help his crew. The sessions focus on reading workplace documents.

By the end of the sessions, everyone has improved their reading skills, including Steve. Morale at work improves and Steve now enjoys working with the crew. He asks for their help in reading the labels on the imported foods, using their community language skills.



Interviews and selection of candidate

During the interview process, discrimination against applicants (either intentionally or unintentionally) is unacceptable. All members of the interview panel need to understand diversity, equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination principles, as well as associated legislation and their legal obligations.

Here are examples of the process that could be followed when interviewing and selecting staff.

How to interview and select staff in an equitable way

1

Prepare interview questions and check these for discrimination before the interviews begin. To maintain consistency, all applicants must be asked the same questions.

2

Devise a rating system to rate each candidate against the key selection criteria. This makes the decision objective, rather than subjective. You may choose to have certain criteria worth more 'points' than others.

3

Record the selection process and how a decision has been arrived at. This is crucial if an applicant appeals a decision.

4

Provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants; this process is useful to the applicants, but also enables the selection team to make objective decisions by asking the panel why a specific candidate was not chosen.

Grievance management

Employees need to know how to make a complaint about alleged discrimination, harassment or bullying. Managers and HR team members need to understand the organisation’s grievance and dispute handling procedures. Training may also include how to identify grievances before they are formally lodged.

Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection training emphasises the need for non-discriminatory practices during the recruitment and selection process. Strategies to avoid indirect and direct discrimination in recruitment and selection should be explored.

Industry-specific training

Different industries have different client groups and issues.

Here are two types of training that are delivered in industries where understanding of ethics and human rights is considered essential.

Ethics training

Ethics training focuses on an industry or a specific type of industry (for example, business services, manufacturing or aged care) and the established ethics of working in that industry. Definitions of ethics and codes of conduct are discussed.

Human rights training

Human rights training focuses on human rights legislation and people’s rights and responsibilities. This is especially valuable for people working in the disability sector or with refugees and asylum seekers, and links human rights legislation and day-to-day work with clients.

Training design and delivery

Team training sessions are useful to provide input and share ideas and thoughts, while training conducted by an external agency or trainer can introduce new ideas and provide new perspectives.

Here are some examples of training providers.

Types of training providers

- Specialist learning and development staff
- A manager or HR team member assigned to the task
- Representatives of a training institution or registered training organisation (RTO)
- A consultant with appropriate expertise from a state or territory agency established to support and promote diversity in the workplace

Here are some tips for using conflict management strategies and negotiation skills.

Conflict management strategies

Listen to the position of each party in the dispute or conflict without judgment or questioning of their position.

Get to the root of the problem and analyse whether the problem has a plausible solution or is a personality clash that requires you to separate the conflicting parties.

Speak to both parties about the nature and cause of the problem and suggest small, simple changes that can improve the chances of resolving the conflict successfully.

Work further with each party separately, and with both parties together, to come up with possible solutions. Obtain agreement from both parties regarding a solution.

Implement a solution.

Review and learn from the incident.

Example: a manager assists her team to collaborate and deal with tensions

Following a state election, two departments are combined into one. One of the departments is external to the ministry and comprises six men who are career public servants with an average of 25 years' experience. The men were all born in Australia and are of Anglo-Celtic ancestry. The other department consists of five women and two men and has a much lower average age. All have university degrees. One of the men is gay. Four members of this group were born overseas.

Fiona, the manager of the new department, addresses each group separately and acknowledges that the groups have different qualities and values. She asks each staff member to write, anonymously, what they are most concerned about with regard to the restructure.

On the first day of the new arrangement, all 13 staff attend a half-day program to facilitate the restructure and work through a process to get each person to talk about their skills and what they offer the new team.

Fiona then facilitates a process to determine what skills gaps exist that could be addressed through training. She arranges for the group to attend a program called 'Working with diversity'. Other plans include having a fortnightly lunch together. Staff meetings are to be held once a week, where they can air any grievances or talk about issues that have arisen.



2F

Manage allegations of harassment and address complaints according to organisational procedures

The complaints process set out in the diversity policy and supporting documentation (procedures and a complaints form) are designed to provide a fair process for dealing with allegations of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

All staff should be aware of the complaints procedure and feel able to use it when necessary.

This helps minimise the legal risks associated with noncompliance, which can be costly in terms of morale and lost staff time.



What is harassment?

Harassment in the workplace includes actions by one person towards another that humiliate, intimidate or offend and are unwelcome and uninvited. Harassment can be unintentional or deliberate.

It includes behaviour that may be physical, verbal, nonverbal and/or written (including inappropriate emails, text messages and social media comments).

Harassment is behaviour that is derogatory towards a person's:

- race, where race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin
- sexual orientation, lawful sexual activity or gender identity
- gender, marital status or age
- parental status, pregnancy or breastfeeding
- physical features
- impairment or disability, including total/partial loss of body function/part; mental or psychological disorder; disease, malformation, disfigurement
- religious beliefs or activities.

Laws relating to harassment

Harassment is against the law. This is underpinned by a series of Commonwealth and state/territory Acts that form the legislative base for policy developed by organisations to address potential claims of harassment, discrimination and bullying.

Bullying can also be regarded and handled as a WHS matter. A criminal case can be brought against another person (a colleague) for workplace harassment, as well as for bullying or discrimination.

Here are some relevant laws.

Commonwealth laws relating to harassment

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*
- *Racial Hatred Act 1995*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

Organisational responsibilities

Organisations need to be aware of their responsibility to protect individuals' rights by having a robust anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy in place, with associated procedures implemented in the workplace.

Here are examples of an organisation's responsibilities around the management of an individual's rights.

Organisations' responsibilities regarding rights of individuals
Having an effective and workable grievance procedure
Making the policies available to all employees in the workplace
Training employees on the policies and procedures and how complaints will be managed
Implementing the policies and associated procedures where a breach arises
Taking immediate and appropriate action when a harassment complaint is made
Having arrangements for adequate supervision and monitoring of the workplace

Contact officers

Some organisations select and appoint contact officers, who are trained to support anyone in the workplace who needs to discuss an incident. A contact officer's role does not include investigating the incident.

Here are some tasks that can be undertaken by a contact officer.

Contact officer's tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be an initial point of contact for inquiries from staff related to harassment, bullying or discrimination• Discuss actions the person can take based on the organisation's policy and procedures• Act as a support person once a complaint is acted on• Contribute to staff awareness of policy and procedure related to harassment, bullying and discrimination• Provide feedback to the HR manager or diversity officer related to the number of issues raised with contact officer

A complaints form

A complaints form may require details such as the complainant's name, the date and a description of the incident, the name of the alleged harasser and actions already taken. Following an incident, the organisation should conduct a review of what occurred and how the complaint was managed, to strengthen its commitment to preventing harassment in the workplace and managing incidents in the future.

Training in incident investigation and managing complaints is available through registered training organisations and appropriate agencies.

There are a number of possible outcomes when a formal complaints procedure has been entered into. Here are several examples of formal complaint outcomes.

Possible outcomes of a formal complaint

- A formal apology
- Counselling
- Disciplinary action against the harasser up to and including dismissal or demotion, transfer, suspension or probation
- Official warnings that are noted on the harasser's personal file
- Conciliation or mediation conducted by an impartial third party, where the parties to the complaint agree to a mutually acceptable resolution
- Reimbursing of any costs associated with the harassment and crediting of any leave taken as a result of the harassment

Examples: instances of harassment

Example 1: failure to support

A staff member sees a colleague, Zac, walking along the street holding hands with another man. The next day, he tells some of his colleagues at work that Zac is gay. The next week, someone in the workplace sticks a postcard of two men dressed in suspenders and stockings on Zac's computer monitor. Zac complains to his manager, who says she will take action if he can tell her who did this. As Zac does not know the culprit, the manager expresses sympathy but says she can't do anything.

Over the following weeks, an array of cards, notes and newspaper clippings alluding to his sexuality are stuck on Zac's monitor. Zac talks to his manager again but receives little support, so he raises the matter at a staff meeting. He tells his colleagues that his sexuality is his own business and that the behaviour of some people in this workplace is harassment, against the law and contrary to the policy of the organisation. The activity stops from that point onward, but Zac decides to look for another job.

Example 2: provision of support

Bert is a keen cricket fan and barracks for England. At work, Bert gets teased about his support for the English team. After a while, he asks his colleagues to 'knock it off', as he is sick of the comments. His colleagues ignore his request and he is subjected to a barrage of abusive and negative comments about the English cricket team.

He talks to his manager, who is at first dismissive of the issue until Bert appears to be close to tears. The manager then approaches the main staff members responsible for the comments and has an informal chat with them about harassment and how it is dealt with in the organisation. The comments stop and one of the group apologises to Bert. The two men have an interesting discussion about cricket and decide to go together to a forthcoming one-day game.

7. Complete this table to show why a team member may need additional training in diversity and how to address this training need.

Area	Reason for training	Strategies to address the training need
Diversity training		
Equal opportunity training		

Part B

Read the scenario, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

You work for a local government department that provides support for a range of community groups, including groups that support people from specific cultures, older people, people with disabilities and youth. You have been asked to recruit three staff for a new branch of your organisation.

The abilities to speak community languages and to work with people of diverse backgrounds are essential selection criteria for these positions.

The current staff profile of the council is not representative of the local community, which has a high percentage of people born overseas. Your task is to ensure there is greater diversity within the organisation by recruiting staff with diverse backgrounds.

As the first step, you are asked to write down the process you will use for recruitment and selection.

Prepare a one-page document (using dot-points) to outline the strategies you will use to manage the selection process.

Acknowledge workplace diversity

Here are some suggestions of opportunities that may be used to enhance the organisation's image and reputation by acknowledging the workforce's diversity.

Staff meetings

Arrange for staff other than managers to chair staff meetings so a diverse range of staff are given a high profile within the organisation.

Newsletters and bulletins

Newsletters and bulletins are usually available to all staff and may also be available to customers. Newsletters can demonstrate the organisation's commitment to diversity by including an article on different learning styles, providing a staff profile to show the organisation's diversity or describing improvements to the office layout and workstations that provide better access for people with disabilities.

Staff updates

Staff updates can be used to celebrate achievements associated with diversity, such as an employee's return to work after maternity leave or a male staff member going part-time to be at home with young children.

Poster displays

Before posting on noticeboards, the organisation may translate posters providing safety, quality and other important information into relevant community languages or develop them so as to address different learning styles and abilities.

Induction materials

Induction materials can explain the diversity policy and associated procedures, and can include a component that provides training in cultural awareness.

Organisational website

The organisation's website or intranet may be used to showcase events within the organisation that promote diversity, such as a morning tea to celebrate a culturally important event.

Improve the layout of the business, to assist staff and customers with disabilities.

Actively promote the diversity of the organisation's staff in the industry, as a strategy to attract new customers and contribute to competitive advantage.

Suggest that the organisation investigates having an onsite crèche if there are many single parents on staff.

Strategies for capturing suggestions

Information and ideas may come from many places. As a manager, you should be alert to ways that you can capture the ideas and information raised by staff. Record the results of all sessions and any actions to be taken.

Here are some examples of ways you can source ideas and information.

Sources of ideas and information

- Discussion forums where new ideas for products and improvements to customer service are put forward and debated
- SWOT analysis sessions to identify where there are opportunities to increase the organisation's competitive advantage and its strengths and weaknesses
- Discussions at inductions
- Team meetings
- Review of incidents to learn from mistakes
- Visits to other organisations to share ideas on embracing diversity in running and managing the organisation
- Guest speakers who present ideas on how organisations can become better at managing diversity
- Conferences and in-service sessions focused on diversity issues

Profile organisation

- Research statistics, census figures, and industry and community benchmarks for diverse workforces.
- Compare the organisation with the information obtained.

Promote organisation efforts

- Promote efforts in media and at conferences.
- Research suitable trade journals, magazines and other publications and suggest writing an article for them.
- Draft articles for publication.

Diversity contact officer

- Implement a diversity contact officer program.
- Research how this type of program works and prepare a business case for establishing one at your organisation.
- Train a volunteer as a diversity contact officer or offer support to contact officers in their role.
- Support a staff from your department to volunteer as a diversity contact officer.

Award program

- Apply for awards for excellence in diversity.
- Research awards and volunteer for a committee to apply for awards.

Recruitment and selection

- Apply diversity to recruitment and selection.
- Contribute to drafting new procedures for training material.
- Offer to sit in on interview panels as an impartial person from another area of the business.

Develop products

- Develop new services or products by capturing ideas and information from the diversity in the workplace.
- Contribute to organising a consultative approach.
- Research other organisations that have been successful in this area and publicise the results.

Summary

1. Whenever the opportunity arises, managers should help promote the organisation's workforce diversity in both internal and external forums, to enhance the organisation's image and reputation.
2. Internal forums for promoting an organisation's workforce diversity include staff meetings, management meetings, newsletters, bulletins, poster displays, induction material, the intranet and the website.
3. External forums for promotion include conferences and seminars, professional networks, press releases, trade journals and awards.
4. An organisation should plan how to capture and use its employees' skills, ideas and abilities, to enhance its products and services, and to add to the organisation's reputation and advantage over its competitors.
5. Staff who have different backgrounds, such as overseas business experience or experience with discrimination, may have ideas, suggestions and information that the organisation can use to improve its practices.
6. Ideas and information may be captured at discussion forums, SWOT analysis sessions, inductions and team meetings.
7. Managers have a responsibility to implement, support and promote organisational efforts to value diversity in the workplace.