

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited



Department: Education	Description: Policy
Administrative Area: Policy and Legislative	Type: Recommended
Document Name: Equity Contact Officer	Issue Date: 22 September 2020
Document ID: SQS190.002.EDU	Review Date: Term 3 - 2022

Noosa Christian College

Equity Contact Officer Policy

Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to outline the purpose, role and responsibility of an Equity Contact Officer	
Scope:	Equity Contact Officers (ECOs) provide assistance to staff and students who are subjected to discrimination and harassment, as well as support school leadership in the prevention and elimination of such behaviour in the school community	
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld) • Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) • SDAS(SQ)Ltd Anti-Discrimination Policy (SQS192.002.EDU) • SDAS(SQ)Ltd Child Protection Policy (SQS170.003.EDU) • SDAS(SQ)Ltd Student Code of Conduct Statement (SQS204.001.ADM) • SDAS(SQ)Ltd Staff Code of Conduct Policy (SQS188.002.EDU) • SDAS(SQ)Ltd Complaints and Dispute Resolution Policy (SQS193.002.EDU) • SDAS(SQ)Ltd Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedures (SQS194.001.ADM) • SDAS(SQ)Ltd Sexual Harassment Policy (SQS189.001.ADM) • SDAS(SQ)Ltd Equity Contact Officer Position Description (SQS191.001.ADM) 	
Status:	Approved	Supersedes: SQS190.001.ADM
Policy Owner:	Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited	
Authorised by:	Chief Executive Officer	Date of Authorisation: 22 September 2020
Approved by:	<p>This policy has been ratified by the Board of Directors of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited as the Equity Contact Officer Policy for Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited.</p> <p>Pr Brett Townend Board of Directors Chairperson Date of Approval: 22/09/2020</p> <p>Pr Colin Renfrew Board of Directors Secretary Date of Approval: 22/09/2020</p>	
Review Cycle:	Reviewed Biennially (every two years)	Next Review Date: Term 3 - 2022
Review Team:	Board of Directors, AdSAFE, NSSAB, Chief Executive Officer, Project Officers	

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<u>Revised by</u>	<u>Section</u>	<u>Details of Changes</u>
Steve Cowley (26 March 2018)	Whole document	As per BoD 'flying minute' of 26 February 2018: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • document status changed from 'Draft' to 'Approved' • issue and approval dates changed to 26 February 2018 • names of BoD Chairperson and Secretary added • SDASSQ changed to SDAS(SQ)Ltd
Steve Cowley (6 April 2018)	Whole document	As per email from Jack Ryan 5 April 2018, changed Education Director and Chief Education Director titles to Chief Executive Officer
Vanessa Woodman (24 August 2020)	References	Updated Policy document numbers for the following: Anti-Discrimination Policy – SQS192.002.EDU Child Protection Policy – SQS170.003.EDU Staff Code of Conduct – SQS188.002.EDU Complaints and Dispute Resolution Policy – SQS193.002.EDU

Rationale

Equity Contact Officers (ECOs) provide assistance to staff who are subjected to discrimination and harassment and support management in the prevention and elimination of such behaviour in the workplace.

The objective of having ECOs is to

- Raise staff awareness on harassment issues;
- Educate staff on options available;
- Facilitate early resolution of incidents of discrimination or harassment;
- Provide a safe environment for staff to express concerns in a confidential manner;
- Make recommendations to management about ways to prevent further incidents;
- Assist in promoting a workplace free from discrimination and harassment.

Definitions

- Staff - an individual employee undertaking all categories of work, whether it be full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term, casual, work experience, vocational placement or voluntary, and in every aspect of work
- Student - an individual enrolled in a year level or course of study at an educational entity of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited

Role of an Equity Contact Officer

- To promote a discrimination and harassment free workplace;
- Behave as a positive role model of workplace behaviour;
- Listen to the concerns of staff members and students who believe they are subjected to harassment or discrimination;
- Understand the role of agencies and services that you provide as options to staff members and students;
- give information on options available to staff members and students who believe they are being subjected to discrimination or harassment;
- Listen and discuss options for resolving a complaint including contact details of organisations where staff members or students might choose to consult;
- Allow the staff member or student to choose the option/s most suitable to them;
- Maintain confidentiality and be impartial;
- Act as a resource for providing information to any staff member or student about the nature and effects of discrimination and harassment;
- Support the staff member and/or student to access applicable policies and procedures and explain the content of these documents if necessary;
- Advise the staff member or student to use appropriate complaint procedures and reporting and only discuss the issue with those who need to know to avoid any risk of defamation;

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- Explain internal complaint procedures and resolution mechanisms;
- Provide de-identifying statistical data to school leadership about behaviours that are unlawful or breach the Code of Conduct;
- Give confidential and timely information to management about issues in the workplace that indicate an environment where harassment and discrimination occur and about the risks of complaints or potential complaints arising and make recommendations for action;
- Encourage the reporting of behaviour which breaches the discrimination and harassment policy;
- Assist in promoting Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Grievance Resolution Policies where appropriate.

Responsibilities

System Responsibilities

Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited acknowledges its responsibility to provide an environment free from discrimination and harassment. The appointment and support of the ECO at each school is an indication of the Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited commitment to take incidents of discrimination and harassment seriously. It also assists Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited to discharge its responsibilities under the vicarious liability provisions of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, i.e. to take reasonable steps to prevent discrimination and harassment from occurring in the workplace, and as such it will:

- Understand the role of the ECO and support ECOs in their role;
- Prevent, investigate and resolve complaints;
- Implement policy and complaints procedures;
- Communicate with and supervise ECOs;
- Prevent and resolve grievances;
- Understand obligations under the law;
- Provide training for ECOs, depending on the level of knowledge that ECOs have about the role and the legislation. Formal training is offered through the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland;
- Treat all complaints seriously;
- Performance manage inappropriate behaviour;
- Implement reasonable steps in response to information provided on statistical data sheets (see appendix of the SDAS(SQ)Ltd Equity Contact Officer Position Description (SQS191.001.ADM));
- Respect that the ECO should not reveal any identifying details provided by an employee unless it involves serious misconduct;
- Understand the role of the ECO and how management and the ECO should inter-relate;
- Establish a role description for the ECO that clearly sets out expectations of the role (see SDAS(SQ)Ltd Equity Contact Officer Position Description (SQS191.001.ADM));
- Support and or facilitate an ECO network for the development of ECOs.

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School Responsibilities

The education entities of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited are responsible for providing an environment free from any type of discrimination and harassment. All education entities of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited will undertake the following steps to prevent and appropriately respond to any instances of discrimination and harassment:

- Meet regularly with the ECO to give the ECO the opportunity to alert the manager/employer on general terms to any issues in the workplace which may need attention;
- Acknowledge that the time spent in the role of the ECO is part of their duties;
- Set and maintain appropriate workplace standards;
- Inform all staff and students about the role and functions of ECOs through the induction process, equity awareness training sessions, and generic training courses.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness and performance of ECO's and their role and report to Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited as required.
- Recognise demands placed upon the time and attention of ECOs, and ensure ECO's are given sufficient time to provide the necessary support to staff;

Implementation

To provide fair and inclusive workplaces, all educational entities of Seventh-day Adventist Schools (South Queensland) Limited will need to:

- Commit to best practice in relation to discrimination and harassment at all stages of employment relationship (recruitment, terms and conditions of work, training, promotion, retrenchment and dismissal);
- Appoint a minimum of one ECO for each educational entity;
- Provide ECOs with a clear position description;
- Inform employed staff, students and the parent/carer community about the role of the ECO;
- Ensure that appropriate training is provided to all ECOs;
- Create an ECO network across schools that are suitably trained and reflect the diversity within the workplace.

Considerations for the Recruitment of Equity Contact Officers

The following issues are critical for ECOs to carry out their role successfully and should be considered.

- The responsibilities of the ECO will be in addition to those of their normal position but a component of their normal position;
- The role of the ECO will be assigned to the individual rather than to a position within the organisation;
- Selection and designation of ECOs will be on the basis of an individual's skills, abilities and knowledge and will be assessed at an individual level;
- People who are selected as ECO's should be 'credible', i.e. they should be individuals who will be respected by the staff. Not only should the ECOs be able to provide accurate and objective information, but the staff should regard them as being able to do so;
- It is preferable to appoint ECOs at a range of levels in the organisation.

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