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Policy: Student support and welfare

Overview

Builders Academy Australia (BAA) is committed to protecting and promoting the welfare of our students. BAA recognises that individual students have individual needs and some may need additional support.

BAA is committed to giving every student an opportunity to successfully complete their chosen course and recognises that our students come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have a diverse range of work and life experiences.

Student welfare and support aspects includes, but is not limited to:

1. Academic support
2. Non-academic support
3. Providing additional support to students who may have special needs (ie. Students with specific health issues, students with disabilities and students needing support with Language Literacy and Numeracy)

Key staff

The following staff are critical in the provision of support to students:

1. Course advisors – help explain the nature of the course to prospective students
2. Student services – undertake a pre-training review of students and also answer public queries
3. Trainers and assessors – who deliver and assess courses
4. Senior trainer and assessors – who may provide additional support to individual students
5. Training Managers – who may provide support to students when required or to trainers
6. Student Welfare Coordinator – who provides specific support as required
7. LLN Coordinator – who evaluates language, literacy and numeracy skills and supports both trainer and student in LLN matters
8. Learner management system support officers – who provide support to students and staff regarding issues with the online learning management system

Student Welfare Coordinator

BAA has a dedicated Student Welfare Coordinator.

The Coordinator will touch base with each trainer to see if any students have been identified as having special needs or needing welfare support.

The Coordinator keeps a detail record of each case which into the Student Welfare Register. Due to the often sensitive nature of welfare cases, access to the Student Welfare Register is highly restricted.

The Coordinator also puts together a monthly report outlining general information about current students on the register and welfare activities undertaken. This is provided to executive team members without student identifiers.

The Coordinator is also available to support trainers when working with difficult students or when they have personal matters. The Coordinator may liaise with the Simonds Personnel HR Team where relevant.

Student support – pre-apprenticeship courses

BAA provides student support in a range of ways to students completing pre-apprenticeship programs.

Students undertaking pre-apprenticeships are frequently completing a VET in school program.

Our pre-training review (PTR) and language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) evaluations are designed to determine whether a student may need additional support to successfully undertake this qualification.

This support may vary from LLN needs, to learning difficulties, students with physical or medical disabilities and to students who traditionally may have struggled with study.

Where additional support needs are determined, the matter is referred to the Student Welfare Coordinator who then develops a support plan in conjunction with the trainer and school (where applicable) prior to the student commencing.

Often the school will already have a support program for students with specialised needs and will work with the trainer directly without involvement of our Student Welfare Coordinator.

Trainers and / or students may also contact the Builders Academy or School Student Welfare Coordinator if they believe a student who has commenced may need additional support. The Student Welfare Coordinator will then work with both the trainer and the student to identify an appropriate support plan.

Student support – certificate III and higher level courses

BAA provides student support in a range of ways.

Our course suitability review (also known as a pre-training review or PTR) and language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) evaluations are designed to determine whether a student may need additional support to successfully undertake their preferred qualification.

This support may vary from LLN needs, to learning difficulties, students with physical or medical disabilities and to students who may not have studied for some time.

Where additional support needs are determined, the matter is referred to the Student Welfare Coordinator who then develops a support plan in conjunction with the trainer prior to the student commencing.

Trainers and / or students may also contact the Student Welfare Coordinator if they believe a student may need additional support. The Student Welfare Coordinator will then work with both the trainer and the student to identify an appropriate support plan.

Evaluating support needs of students with special needs

Students with health issues or disabilities

Students intending to enrol for training with BAA are requested prior to enrolment to advise BAA if they have any disability, physical, health issue or other impairment which may adversely affect their ability to successfully undertake training and assessment. Students are encouraged to discuss with BAA any 'special needs' and/or 'reasonable adjustments' to the study environment which they consider are necessary or would assist them in the performance of their studies.

BAA, in collaboration with the Student, will assess the potential for the Student to successfully complete the training which may include flexible delivery options to optimise the ease and benefit of the Students' learning. However, no compromise to the integrity of the assessment against competency will be allowed.

Students with a disability are required to have the ability to fulfil the core requirements of the units of Competence to attain the relevant award. However, it is recognised that flexibility in arrangements may need to be implemented.

Where a prospective student indicates that they have a health issue or disability on or prior to their application, the staff member undertaking the enrolment process will ask if they have any special requirements.

Where relevant, the prospective student will be referred to the Student Welfare Coordinator for a formal interview to confirm that the student is able to physically participate in the course (where relevant), identify support mechanisms required and identify any requirement for reasonable adjustment in the provision of materials, unit selection, delivery or assessment.

Many students with disabilities or special needs use assistive technology such as a hearing aids, cochlear implant, specialist computer programs such as 'Jaws', PC-tremor control, etc.

Where a student may benefit from assistive technology, the Student Welfare Coordinator will investigate assistive technology available and seek advice from experts which may include:

- The student's GP, medical specialist or other specialised expert such as a physio, case / social worker, etc
- National and local specialty support groups and experts that can provide advice on accessing and implementing assistive technologies such as Vision Australian, Deaf Australia, MS Foundation Australia, etc.

Where a student has a requirement for Reasonable Adjustment, the trainer will liaise with either the Student Welfare Coordinator and / or Training Manager. An outline of the support required will be discussed and documented and professional development will be provided to the trainer if needed.

The Student Welfare Coordinator may also consult with or refer to an external body for guidance on particular issues if required.

It is important to note that the Student Welfare Coordinator is not expected to be an expert in assistive technology nor hold qualifications in assistive technology.

In assessing whether a particular adjustment is *reasonable*, the following is taken into consideration:

- The nature and severity of the disability and / or medical condition
- The physical health requirements of the course
- The requirements of the course
- The effect of the adjustment on you and your ability to:
 - Achieve learning outcomes
 - Participate in the courses and complete assessments and learning activities
 - Obtain a job aligned to the qualification
 - Maintain independence
- The effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including BAA, personnel and other students
- The costs and benefits of making the adjustment
- The impact on your employer (if undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship)

This same process is applied if an existing student develops a disability or medical condition.

If a student cannot meet the inherent requirements of the course, even with adjustments, then they will not be able to successfully complete the course. Where this is the case, BAA will advise the prospective student or actual student and may recommend alternatives. These alternatives may include recommending another course or qualification (which may or may not be provided by BAA).

BAA is committed to setting students up for success at all times.

Costs associated with adjustments

BAA will analyse all direct and indirect costs associated with any adjustments. In some cases, a student may be able to access funding to obtain help with LLN, pc skills and / or assistive technology and aids. This will be considered as offsetting costs where applicable.

In other cases, BAA may consider how many student may benefit now or in future from a technology investment to assist an individual student.

Where the student is participating is intending to participate in an apprenticeship or traineeship and the physical aids or assistive technology would also be used within the workplace, BAA may seek to share costs with the employer.

In other cases, the student may be already hold the technology or aids and the costs to BAA is minimal or negligible.

However, it is important to acknowledge that in some cases, the costs of implementing an adjustment may not be practical. And that such a cost may impose an unjustifiable financial hardship on BAA (or a workplace if relevant to apprenticeship / traineeships).

In all cases, BAA will try to accommodate reasonable adjustments where practical.

Where BAA cannot make reasonable adjustment due to financial costs, we will provide this outcome both verbally and in writing as soon as practicable after the decision is made.

Students who are identified as disengaged

The Trainer and Assessor will notify the Training Manager to discuss where a student has an attendance issue and there is a potential disengagement issue.

Where relevant, the Training Manager will refer this to the Student Welfare Coordinator
In some cases, the student may also contact Student Services of the Welfare Coordinator to discuss this themselves.

The Student Welfare Coordinator will conduct a 'well-being call' to contact them and identify any underlining issues that may be impacting their attendance and liaise with the trainer to develop an individual re-engagement strategy taking into account the student's specific needs. The Student Welfare Coordinator will then monitor ongoing participation of the student.

The focus is on early intervention to ensure that students don't fall too behind in their academic progress.

Students with behavioural issues during class

The Trainer and Assessor will attempt to deal with the behavioural issue in the first instance. Where the issue is repeated, they will seek advice from the Student Welfare Coordinator.

The Student Welfare Coordinator will liaise with the Welfare Coordinator to address behavioural issue and work on a strategy to re-engage the student (if applicable) or suggest another education pathway if applicable.

Students who haven't studied for some time

The Student Welfare Coordinator can provide assistance in study planning to students who haven't studied for some time.

Language Literacy Numeracy

Where the language, literacy, and numeracy (LLN) evaluation indicates that there may be an LLN issue, the Student Services Officer who reviews the application will refer the application to the LLN Committee.

The Committee will review the LLN evaluation document and identify whether there may be a requirement for:

1. Low level support
2. Higher level support and / or reasonable adjustment
3. Potentially not suitable for the course

Where support requirements are identified, the LLN Coordinator or other member of the LLN Committee will liaise with the Trainer and Assessor to identify the support strategy.

Where a student is identified as potentially not having the required LLN skills for the course, the student is asked to come in and undertake another LLN evaluation.

A determination is then made by the LLN Coordinator and if the student is deemed not to have the required LLN skills to undertake the course, the Coordinator will suggest other education pathways and may assist the student in locating LLN support services.

Please refer to the Language, Literacy and Numeracy policy for further details.

Students who struggle with PC literacy

Students who will complete part or all of their course online will be evaluated for the PC skills prior to commencing the course.

For the purposes of this policy, 'online' refers to:

1. Accessing course content via Learning Management System (LMS)
2. Undertaking research online to complete specific assessment tasks
3. Completing learning activities online
4. Submitting assessments online
5. Participating in live or recorded webinars

Evaluation will take place via three methods:

1. They will be asked to self-evaluate their skills against key tasks during their course suitability evaluation (eg. Google, using email etc)
2. They will be required to complete an online LLN which requires them to use PC Skills which includes, but is not limited to: opening an email, clicking a link, entering basic details into an online form, use typing skills, use mouse skills such as: drag and drop, highlight, click on links etc
3. Respond to emails throughout the enrolment process

Students who need additional assistance with PC Skills can still participate in courses where PC skills are required. Reasonable adjustment may be made through allowing the students to complete hard copy assessments, or by providing them with additional coaching, or referring them to a course to help develop their computer skills. An individual learning plan (ILP) will be developed in conjunction with the trainer by the Student Welfare Coordinator or the LLN Coordinator.

Students who are struggling academically

The Trainer and Assessor monitors student progress and may provide additional coaching to those students who are struggling academically.

In some cases, the Trainer and Assessor may liaise with the Student Welfare Coordinator to devise an academic strategy to provide the student with best opportunity to successfully complete their course.

In some cases, reasonable adjustment may be made where relevant.

Students with personal issues

Students may contact the Student Welfare Coordinator if they are having personal issues such as a relationship or family breakdown, difficulties within their work place, medical or physical health issues, mental health issues, serious illness with a family member etc. The coordinator will help the student obtain appropriate support through relevant local agencies.

Death or serious illness of a student

The Student Welfare Coordinator is also notified when there is a death of a student or a student needs to withdraw due to serious illness (such as cancer or a terminal illness, etc).

The Student Welfare Coordinator may be notified of the death or serious illness of student verbally or in writing. The notification may come from any staff member of BAA or directly from a student or the student's family.

Death

The Coordinator will advise the trainer (if they are not already aware) and provide counseling services where required.

Where the student is part of a class, the Coordinator will then meet with the class and trainer and brief the class on what has happened and discuss grief counselling options and provide resources for support services such as Beyond Blue and other grief counselling services and provide ongoing support to the general class and individual students.

The Coordinator may also be the contact point for the family.

Serious illness

With permission from the student (or family where appropriate), the Coordinator will advise the trainer (if they are not already aware) and provide counseling services where required.

The Coordinator will then meet with the class and trainer and brief the class on what has happened.

Where the student is part of a class, the Coordinator will then meet with the class and trainer and brief the class on what has happened and discuss grief counselling options and provide resources for support services such as Beyond Blue and other grief counselling services and provide ongoing support to the general class and individual students.

The Coordinator may also be the contact point for the family.

The Coordinator will keep in touch with the student where applicable and should the student recover and wish to continue to their studies, will assist in reengaging back into a class.

Training and experience requirements of support staff

Course advisors

Are trained on:

1. Each product offering
2. Government funded subsidies available and eligibility requirements
3. Entry requirements for each course

Student services

Are trained on:

1. Each product offering
2. Government funded subsidies available and eligibility requirements
3. Entry requirements for each course
4. Course suitability / pre-training review process for all courses available to complete via class based training (including courses that may also have workplace requirements)
5. Process of LLN Robot and identifying whether the student has met the minimum entry requirements and the process of flagging with the LLN Committee where a student has not

It should be noted that student services do not grade or interpret LLN evaluations. Where students have completed an online LLN evaluation and the student does not meet the minimum LLN requirement for that course, they refer the matter to the LLN Committee for review.

Trainers and assessors – workplace based

Must meet the minimum trainer and assessor requirements for each course that they deliver as set out in the TAS for each course

Are trained on enrolment paperwork and course suitability for the courses that they deliver.

Hard copy assessments are referred to the LLN Committee for marking.

Trainers and assessors – class based

Must meet the minimum trainer and assessor requirements for each course that they deliver as set out in the TAS for each course

Senior trainer and assessors

Must meet the minimum trainer and assessor requirements for each course that they deliver as set out in the TAS for each course.

May also hold management qualifications.

Training Managers

Must hold the Certificate IV or Diploma in TAE and any other requirements as outlined in the TAS for courses that they deliver.

May also hold management courses.

Student Welfare Coordinator

The Student Welfare Coordinator is expected to have experience in education as a student welfare or student support role. The following is a list of qualifications that they might hold:

- Certificate IV or Diploma in TAE (mandatory)
- Experience as an adult educator (mandatory)
- Higher education in Adult education (highly desirable)
- Qualification in counselling or community services case management (highly desirable)
- Diploma or higher level of Management (highly desirable)

The Coordinator is also expected to undertake relevant professional development activities in student welfare matters.

LLN Coordinator

The Student Welfare Coordinator is expected to have experience working with LLN issues in education as a student welfare, student support role or senior trainer. The following is a list of qualifications that they might hold:

- Certificate IV or Diploma in TAE (Mandatory)
- Higher education in Adult education (highly desirable)
- Qualification in Adult Literacy or English as a Second Language (highly desirable)
- Diploma or higher level of Management (highly desirable)

The Coordinator is also expected to undertake relevant professional development activities in LLN matters.