

BSBDIV301

Work effectively with diversity

Release 1

Learner guide

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Aspire Version 1.1

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BSBDIV301 Work effectively with diversity Release 1

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Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA
Phone: (03) 9820 1300

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Contact details

Participant
Name:
Start date:
Phone number:
Email:
Work location
Name:
Address:
Postal address:
Workplace supervisor name:
Phone number:
Fax:
Email:
Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
Name:
Address:
Postal address (if different):
Phone number:
Fax:
RTO contact name:
Mobile:
Email:

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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBDIV301 Work effectively with diversity*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples and case studies	Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help
Summary	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.



Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehends textual information to determine regulatory requirements and adhere to internal policies
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Records key information related to the outcomes of the job, using appropriate vocabulary and style• Varies writing style to meet requirements of audience and purpose
Oral Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses appropriate tone, speech and pace in verbal interactions• Selects vocabulary appropriate to the audience
Navigate the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complies with legislative requirements and explicit policies and procedures
Interact with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies and takes steps to follow accepted communication practices and protocols• Contributes to work group activities using accepted conventions• Recognises common cultural and other differences of people in the work context and makes adjustments to respect and accommodate these differences
Get the work done	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plans and implements routine tasks according to directions

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Recognise individual differences and respond appropriately	1A Recognise and respect diversity and individual differences	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1B Respond to differences sensitively	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1C Comply with legislation and guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	1D Consider diversity in your communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
Topic 2 Work effectively with individual differences	2A Recognise and document diversity in skills to enhance teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2B Encourage colleagues to use and share their skills and talents with team members and clients	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident
	2C Demonstrate that diversity is valued by your organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Basic understanding <input type="checkbox"/> Not confident

Topic 1

Recognise individual differences and respond appropriately

In very broad terms, diversity in the workplace (and the wider community) is about respecting the many differences individuals can bring to the situation. Our differences can present themselves in many ways. Our age, gender and race can determine our physical appearance. Our value systems, interests and ways of thinking can set us apart psychologically. Respecting diversity means respecting human individuality. While negative reactions to others' differences can cause great distress and confusion between people, responding positively to diversity can increase understanding, enhance teamwork and build good working relationships. Employees must be able to recognise and deal productively with diversity and respond effectively and sensitively to issues of diversity in their day-to-day work.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 1A Recognise and respect diversity and individual differences
- 1B Respond to differences sensitively
- 1C Comply with legislation and guidelines
- 1D Consider diversity when communicating

1A

Recognise and respect diversity and individual differences

People learn from each other's different experience and skills. Interacting with diverse people tends to generate knowledge and innovation. Diversity challenges people's assumptions and makes them think differently about the world around them. Within business, human difference is essential. Different people are good at different things and a business or organisation needs a wide variety of skills.



More and more organisations are now competing globally and dealing with many international businesses. This means that all sorts of different people from around the world will be involved in, or affect, your organisation. The most successful businesses are those that accommodate diversity in all its forms.

Australia has a very diverse workforce that reflects the different people who make up the Australian population. Australian employers recognise the value of having

a diverse range of employees. Australian employers are prohibited by law from denying anyone of employment based on gender, disability, race or religion. In your work life, you will encounter colleagues of different ages, races, religions and levels of expertise or ability, among many other things.

Value diversity

Diversity brings together different points of view, different ways of doing things and different methods of solving problems. This can result in improved products and services, a larger customer base, greater profits and/or enhanced productivity. Australian workplaces rely on teamwork and the ability of employees to work with and support each other. Whether you deal with the public, your organisation's suppliers, consultants, business associates or with your colleagues, you will be expected to accommodate the full range of diversity.

Valuing and accommodating diversity means we avoid stereotypes and prejudices, and don't discriminate against people. Many organisations implement diversity policies that provide guidelines and encourage staff to embrace diversity. This also helps organisations to increase their competitiveness and market relevance, and attract valuable and talented people working for them.

Diversity in the workplace can be shaped by:

- age
- belief and value systems
- politics
- culture
- race
- religion
- interpersonal practices
- cultural calendars
- conflict
- rural and urban cultures
- expertise/experience/work styles
- work practices
- interpersonal style
- educational background
- interests
- literacy and numeracy
- language
- gender
- physical characteristics and abilities
- social differences.

Work with diversity: age

Organisations are usually made up of people of varying ages. If you work specifically with people in a particular age group, for example with the aged, you will need to be aware of the particular needs of that age group. However, even in specific roles such as these, you will still need to liaise with your colleagues and the families of your clients.



Within your organisation, you will work with people older, younger and the same age as you. Their work experience and skills will vary, as well as their values and lifestyles.

Everyone needs to learn new skills regardless of their age. Most workers need to continually update their information technology skills by learning about new program operations, software packages and communication technologies. It can be difficult to keep up with every new development. Younger people generally find it easier to adapt to new developments because they have been born into a period of great technological advancement, while some older people may find it more challenging.

Work with diversity: belief and value systems

Most people have their own ideas about what is right, what is wrong and how they measure happiness, failure and success. Everyone has their own unique experience of the world. Never judge anyone because their value system is different from yours. Devaluing someone's opinion, work performance, contribution or client potential because of judgments you have made about their personal philosophy is not appropriate.

Belief and value systems include ethics, standards and morals, lifestyles and the way people make judgments about their own and others' lives.

People have certain beliefs and values attached to:

- money
- family
- friends
- relationships
- work
- honesty
- authority
- religion
- honour
- politics
- personal appearance
- individual identity.

Work with diversity: politics

Politics is concerned with government and governing; it affects everyone's life, all over the world. Political systems are very powerful in that they largely define how people are able to live, what they are and aren't allowed to do and how a country's money is spent. A person's political viewpoint often stems from their belief and values system and, therefore, can be a very personal and strong belief.

In Australia, everyone has the freedom to express their political views. Australian citizens over the age of 18 must enrol to vote and, therefore, usually take some interest in the political process that shapes Australian policies and laws. Even so, many people prefer not to participate in political debates. Others may feel they may be discriminated against because of their political views. Some people prefer not to discuss their personal beliefs and values. To work effectively with people who have diverse political views, you need to respect everyone's right to their political opinion, whether it is similar to your own or not.

Work with diversity: culture

Culture refers to the social behaviour, lifestyle and characteristics that describe a group of people. Cultural references often relate to a person's ethnicity, from which their cultural customs emerge. Cultural aspects may include religion, interpersonal practices, types of celebrations, health care, hygiene, manners, family relationships, decision-making and personal presentation.

Australian culture is made up of Indigenous cultures, Anglo-Celtic culture (due to Australia's history of British settlement) and a diverse mix of cultures from all over the world. Cultural diversity grew in the post-war period of migration and continues to grow as more people born overseas migrate to Australia.

Immigrants come to Australia for a range of reasons; some people immigrate because they believe they can make better lives for themselves in Australia, while some are trying to escape war-torn countries, or political and social persecution. Consequently, a unique culture has developed in Australia as a result of these different cultures converging.

Immigrants come from a wide range of social, technological, industrial, political and economic backgrounds. The diverse skills and experiences they may bring to their work can make them very valuable employees.

Australian immigration statistics

- More than six million people have immigrated to Australia since 1945.
- 23.1% of the Australian population in 2001 was born overseas.
- 43% of the Australian population has at least one parent born overseas.
- Within the workforce, approximately one-quarter of employed people were born overseas.
- Nearly one-third of small businesses are owned and operated by immigrants.

Example: use of focus groups to assist with marketing

A company wants to find out how well its latest marketing campaign will work, so it creates several focus groups from its diverse range of employees. These focus groups can advise the organisation's marketing department about the appropriateness of advertising campaigns. If the advertising is not inclusive of the variety of races within the advertising demographic, the focus groups will point out the problem. They can also point out other concerns the marketing department may have missed, such as issues over language and cultural protocol. The marketing department can then be sure that it has not overlooked the needs of its target audience.

Work with diversity: race

Most people think about race in terms of physical differences such as how people or groups of people look. Cultural practices can also affect people's ideas about race.

A person's race is determined by their ancestry and/or their genetic background.

Within the workplace, you may come across many different people whose different appearances, languages and birthplaces indicate that they belong to a certain race. Many people will also look at you as representative of a certain race. It is important that these differences and representations do not become a problem because of prejudices or stereotypes that some people have about race.



Racism

Racism is the notion that a particular race of people is superior or inferior to another race of people. Racial vilification refers to behaviour that insults individuals and groups on the grounds of their colour, race or ethnic or national origins. This includes racist jokes and racially offensive terms, stereotyping, provocative media reporting, historical revisionism and racist hate propaganda. Many countries have legislation prohibiting racism.

In the workplace, racism causes conflict and problems, preventing employees from contributing as effectively as possible. The reputation of an organisation can suffer if it is known to have racist attitudes.

Avoiding racism

Australia is a signatory to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Racial discrimination and abuse is illegal under the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), and the *Racial Hatred Act 1995* (Cth).

Avoiding racism is largely a matter of eliminating prejudices and stereotypes, and focusing on the qualities and value of each individual. For example, you should not make assumptions that people from a certain area such as Africa, America, Asia or Britain are all the same in some way. Nor should we make assumptions about people who share the same religion.



Work with diversity: religion

Many different religions are followed in Australia, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Paganism, Shinto and Sikhism. People in Australia are free to practise any religion they find appropriate to their beliefs, faith and values and have the right to express those religious beliefs, or to practise no religion at all.

Religion can play a part in diet, dress and how a person chooses to be administered health care. It can also influence how people approach events like births, deaths, birthdays, anniversaries and marriages. Some religions also have taboos (restrictions or bans) on certain things, issues or people.

Religion in the workplace

You should only need to ask a person about their religious habits if it affects the way you provide service to them or you are required to by law.

A person's religion, or lack of one, should never be a source of hostility or antagonism, or used as a means to discriminate against them.

Many workplaces cater to employees' religious beliefs by providing prayer rooms and approving leave to observe religious holidays, festivals and celebrations.

Despite what you know of another person's religion, you should never make assumptions about an individual's religious practices.

Work with diversity: interpersonal practices

Cultural practices can affect the way people interact with each other. For example, it can alter the way people prefer to be addressed. In some cultures, given names are followed by family names, as in Anglo-Celtic culture. In other cultures (such as in the Vietnamese and Chinese tradition), family names are followed by given names. Some people are happy to be addressed by their given names. Others prefer to use their title and family name. Names shouldn't need to be modified because others find them awkward or inconvenient.

While no one should be expected to conform to another's cultural practices, it is helpful to have some understanding of the issues that can arise from cultural expectations. In some cultures people greet each other by bowing, others greet by shaking hands. People prefer to stand quite close to the person they are speaking to in some cultures, while in others they prefer to keep a greater distance between themselves and other people. Cultural issues can also influence health care, hygiene, manners, family relationships, decision-making and personal presentation.

Work with diversity: food

Different ethnic groups have different practices regarding cooking and eating food, based on traditional or religious reasons. Knowing about the food practices of different cultures can help you understand why people eat as they do and how it affects their daily lives. In turn, this contributes to more effective working relationships because issues surrounding food, diet, mealtimes and fasts can be relevant to your interaction with your customers and workmates.

There may be occasions when you need to arrange refreshments or organise a meal at a restaurant. At these times you should be aware of people's dietary restrictions or preferences, including allergies or intolerances. For example, some people may choose not to eat meat or drink alcohol; some may not be able to eat food containing gluten. Periodic fasting or food restriction is a part of some cultural calendars. If in doubt about another's dietary requirements, don't be afraid to ask. A simple way to do this can be to ask everyone to indicate if they have any special dietary requirements when you send out an invitation or a meeting request.

Work with diversity: dress

One of the most obvious ways of displaying a different culture is through dress. Many cultures have traditional dress that is worn either on special occasions, as in the Scottish kilt or the Hawaiian lei, or as part of everyday life, as in the Indian sari or the business suit worn in many Australian offices. Workplaces usually have their own dress code and employees are largely expected to conform to the organisation's policy.

However, concessions are often granted if the employee wears traditional dress, or dresses according to religious doctrine, as long as the formality of clothing is consistent with organisational policy and the employee is serious about their requirements. Concessions cannot be made on clothing items such as safety boots and hardhats and other items that affect workplace health and safety.

Treating people differently because of the way they dress is unacceptable in the workplace, and there are Australian laws legislating against this sort of discrimination. However, employers are entitled to set reasonable dress codes within their organisations.



Work with diversity: cultural calendars

People from different backgrounds celebrate or observe different events or prominent times throughout the year that are important to them. Such events could include birthdays, anniversaries, cultural and religious holidays as well as national days.

Australia has many cultural festivals, celebrations and holidays, based on its dominant cultural heritage (largely acquired from Britain and Europe) and Australian history. National public holidays include New Year's Day, Australia Day, Easter Friday and Monday, Anzac Day, Queen's Birthday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. States also have public holidays that may include Bank Holiday, Labour Day, Show Day and Cup Day.

Regular school holidays are also part of the Australian calendar, though their timing varies from state to state. The working week is generally considered to run from Monday to Friday, although more and more industries (such as retail and hospitality) are open for business on Saturday and Sunday.

Work with diversity: conflict

Conflict can sometimes occur when people from one culture feel they are not accepted because of the prejudices of other people, or because of tensions or hostilities taking place in their countries. Animosity between different cultural groups is not appropriate workplace behaviour. Tension in the workplace caused by this type of antagonism should be referred to management for mediation. Allowing personal prejudices and intolerance to disrupt the function of the team will cost the company time and money.

In the workplace, immigrants from similar countries often form close groups because they feel more comfortable together. An organisation's management should strive to encourage a team-based environment that means people work effectively together despite their differences.

Work with diversity: rural and urban cultures

Differences between urban and rural cultures might also be felt in the workplace.

There is a big difference in the life experience of a person growing up in rural Australia compared with someone growing up in a city. City environments can overwhelm many people from rural backgrounds, while people with urban backgrounds may find adjusting to rural environments difficult. Rural locations often do not have the same facilities as urban ones; they may not have much public transport, access to health care or retail options. People from rural communities sometimes have different social values and priorities from city people.

Rural and urban cultures may differ in styles of dress, speech, work habits and living arrangements.

Work with diversity: expertise, experience and working style

People bring a variety of past experiences and abilities to a workplace and may have different levels of experience and expertise based on their training or their natural abilities. Some will have formal training, others may be self-taught or have learnt through direct experience. You may work with beginners, industry leaders, professionals and experts. Managers allocate tasks within the workplace based on what they believe to be employees' expertise and talents.

Beginners or newcomers may need extra time and patience to become familiar with their work and to fit into the workplace. Without the cooperation of more experienced colleagues, newcomers will not be able to work effectively as part of the team.

Experienced or senior colleagues can show others how to deal with real-life situations and problems. They can help others adjust to different workplaces and can coach or mentor less experienced or junior colleagues.

There can also be tension between traditional practices already within the workplace or industry and new practices brought into the workplace or industry by newcomers.

Work with diversity: work practices

The people you work with will all have different methods of approaching their work. These methods may or may not be consistent with your own work habits. Some people like to focus on one task at a time, others are happier when they can take breaks from tasks and spend time on other work. Some people like to work in a noisy environment, while others prefer a quiet workspace. Some employees take great care with detail, while others prefer to look at the bigger picture. Some people are perfectionists, while others are happy to do the best they can as long as the work gets done on time. Some people are very organised, while others are less so. There are lots of different ways people like to work, and many different ways people do their work.

Individual personalities affect the way people work, and because everyone is different, everyone works differently. This mix of personalities can make for a very positive and dynamic team if people learn how to work with each other's different work styles, not against them. Learning how to work with others involves finding the positive and productive elements of others' work practices.

Example: work with each other's different work styles

Eddie was continually frustrated because her colleague, Raoul, took on so many tasks that he never finished anything on time, and held up everyone else. Raoul was always irritated because Eddie liked to point out tiny ways she thought his work could be improved. He thought if she stopped trying to make him do everything perfectly he would have enough time to finish his tasks. Eddie thought that if Raoul would just do one thing at a time he wouldn't have so much trouble doing the work correctly.

Eventually both of them realised that the friction between them was creating a tense atmosphere that no-one was happy with. They decided to try to find more productive ways of working together.



After discussing how each of them felt they could best contribute to the work at hand, they decided that it would be better for themselves and the organisation if they worked more closely together. That way, Eddie could keep an eye on Raoul's workload, correct errors and make improvements where necessary and on time. Raoul was then free to deal creatively with the work he did and keep an eye on the bigger picture.

As a result of working together, the team's work improved considerably and both Eddie and Raoul were much happier.

Work with diversity: interpersonal style

The way you work with your colleagues is referred to as your interpersonal style. Everyone's personality is different. Personalities influence how people interact with each other. Being aware of people's personality style and work preferences will help you work together as a team.



Everyone has interpersonal styles they are most comfortable with. The interpersonal style we are most comfortable with depends on our unique character and personality. It is influenced by many things such as age, cultural experiences and training.

Misunderstandings and communication breakdowns can occur when people's interpersonal styles are incompatible or conflicting. For example, a person who treats everyone on a professional level may take offence or become impatient with a more casual person.

Example: accept each other's interpersonal style

Akiko was very capable and highly qualified for the job she was applying for. Her interpersonal style, however, was very shy and introverted until she felt comfortable with the people she was dealing with. She would then become more personal and assertive. When she attended the interview for the position she had to push herself to be more open and confident, because she knew the interviewers would want to know more about her, and would need to know whether she would fit into the work team.

When Akiko was offered the job, her colleagues were a little taken aback by her quiet and reserved nature. Jerome, however, wondered whether Akiko would be more comfortable when she got to know the others better, and he made an effort to be friendly and include her in the team. Eventually Akiko became the most relied-on member of the team because of her diplomacy and sensitivity.

Work with diversity: educational background

Some people make judgments about others based on what school they went to, what level of education they have received, what sort of education they have chosen or how well they performed at school. Largely, these judgments revolve around the person's perceived abilities, but they can also focus on the person's social background.

You should not make judgments about another's capabilities based on your perception of their educational background. Assuming that someone is intelligent simply because they have received a tertiary education is just as unreasonable as assuming someone is unintelligent because they haven't. There are always reasons for the level of education people achieve.

A person's educational background should be irrelevant once they have been employed to perform workplace tasks. People need to come from many different backgrounds to effectively undertake the work of an organisation, and your colleagues should have earned their job through their demonstrated ability, commitment and dedication.

Work with diversity: interests

People have a wide variety of interests and hobbies. These may or may not affect your working relationships as your relationship is first and foremost professional. However, taking an interest in the personal activities or pursuits of colleagues or external customers can help strengthen your relationship with them. People feel noticed and valued as individuals if they are asked about their personal interests. Knowing your customers' personal interests can make you a better employee.

Work with diversity: literacy and numeracy

Literacy and numeracy skills involve more than just the ability to read, write and count. Literacy and numeracy also refer to the ability to comprehend and summarise, to focus on important detail, critically analyse, measure, calculate, estimate and follow instructions. Literacy and numeracy also refers to such skills as using email, automatic teller machines and mobile telephones. These skills are often referred to as ICT (information and communication technology) literacy.

The changing nature of work, and our information-rich society, increasingly requires that people be computer and technology literate in order to function effectively in daily work life. The literacy and numeracy levels of your internal and external customers will vary according to their abilities, experiences and opportunities.

Here are some important things to remember about adults with low literacy and numeracy.

Lack of confidence

Adults with low literacy and numeracy often lack confidence and are vulnerable because they depend on others for information and communication needs. They may find it difficult performing everyday tasks, have trouble expressing themselves, understanding instructions, calculations, filling in forms and explaining problems, and will need patience and understanding.

Literacy and mental capability

Literacy levels are not necessarily indicative of a person's mental abilities; often low English literacy is a product of limited educational access and/or lack of experience with the English language.

Example: different aspects of low levels of literacy and numeracy

Lucy is literate enough to read novels and comprehend written information, but becomes very confused when faced with an ATM or a mobile telephone. She even finds remembering telephone numbers and appointment times a problem.

Samuel can operate the internet and works on a building site where he follows pictorial instructions including figures and measurements, but he cannot analyse written text to ascertain instructions or important information.

Doreen can follow simple language and write sentences but she cannot follow the prescription on her medication, or correctly follow a recipe.

Work with diversity: language

According to the Australian 2011 census, 76.8% of people speak only English at home. Other languages spoken at home included Mandarin 1.6%, Italian 1.4%, Arabic 1.3%, Cantonese 1.2% and Greek 1.2%. A considerable proportion of first- and second-generation migrants are bilingual.

People who speak English as a second language may need extra time to understand complicated documents or procedures. Sometimes, the assistance of an interpreter may be needed. Guidelines for communicating with the assistance of an interpreter are shown below.

Address the client or colleague

When you use an interpreter, address the client or colleague rather than the interpreter. Always make sure the client or colleague has enough time to ask questions and express concerns. Government departments provide interpreting services and/or guidelines for the use of interpreters.

Give encouragement

If clients or colleagues are reluctant to use an interpreter, they should be reassured that they are not being judged on their language skills, and that the interpreter is there to ensure that everyone is understood.

Colloquialisms

You should be careful about using colloquialisms and abbreviations. Always verify that the information you give and receive is correct. Sometimes important meaning can become lost in translation.

Example: present information in a number of languages

Joseph wondered why counter sales in his deli were so low. He decided to do a demographic analysis of the local community, relying on council statistics and local research. He realised that many of the women in the local community were from non-English speaking backgrounds (particularly from Greece), and his store only had English-speaking staff. He translated all the signs and information in the store into a number of different languages, introduced a few new food lines, and did some advertising about his new promotions.

Sales increased immediately and Joseph found he needed to employ another person. He ended up employing a young woman from the local area who could speak Greek as well as English.

Work with diversity: gender issues

A number of issues relate to a person's gender and these must be acknowledged and dealt with sensitively in the workplace. Until the twentieth century, most males and females in Australia were separated by work and domestic duties and roles. Australian society now promotes equality between the sexes. While there are still elements of society that conform to gender stereotypes and expect others to conform also, there are no longer laws that prevent females from accessing



advantages traditionally only accorded to males. Equal rights are protected under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth).

Many people from different cultures and religions may uphold 'traditional' gender roles and values. It may be hard for some older people to accept change and it may be hard for some younger people to accept habits of stereotyped behaviours

from older workers, but we all have to work together to ensure the workplace is fair for everyone. Our laws provide a framework for that to happen.

People who discriminate against women should understand that national laws override cultural or religious doctrine.

Work with diversity: sexism

Sexism is a behaviour that demeans or discriminates against people based on their gender. Sexism involves a lack of respect for the qualities of individual human beings. It reduces humans to sexual and gender stereotypes that usually focus on traditional gender roles or the person's sexuality. People who behave in a sexist manner are usually trying to assert their superiority or dominance over others, and prefer people to conform to traditional roles.

Sexism is also noticeable when issues such as pregnancy and family duties arise and impact on an employee, for example, breastfeeding a baby in public.

Regardless of the culture of your workplace, or the way you were raised, you will work more effectively with colleagues and external customers if you do not display or condone sexist behaviour.

Sexism can be perpetuated in the terms we use to describe people and things and some sexist comments are considered demeaning.

Women	Men
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are degraded by terms such as 'chick' and 'bimbo'. • Referring to women as 'girls' suggests they can't look after themselves or be responsible for their own behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men are degraded by terms such as 'macho' and 'muscles'. • Referring to men as 'boys' suggests they can't look after themselves or be responsible for their own behaviour.

Work with diversity: sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a type of sex discrimination; it is illegal under anti-discrimination laws.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour that makes a person feel offended or humiliated. The sexual orientation or gender of the perpetrator or victim is irrelevant.

Victims of any type of harassment can make complaints to the Human Rights Commission. People who have been sexually harassed can lose confidence and self-esteem and can find it difficult to trust others. They can become frightened of coming to work and also of being left alone with people. Their work suffers and, in the long term, the work of the organisation suffers as well.

Managers have a responsibility to correct offensive behaviour. Once an employee has raised the matter, managers must take it seriously. It is also illegal to punish or victimise people who complain of being sexually harassed. Individuals found guilty of sexual harassment can be fined thousands of dollars to compensate their victim. Discrimination can cost organisations and people a lot of money.

Sexual harassment can:

- be physical
- be spoken
- be written down, texted or emailed
- involve the use of pictures or images
- involve making comments about a person's sexuality
- involve touching a person in a sexual way
- involve making sexual advances towards a person that are unwelcome
- involve asking a person to wear sexually provocative clothing
- involve behaving in a sexual way.

Work with diversity: sexual orientation or preference

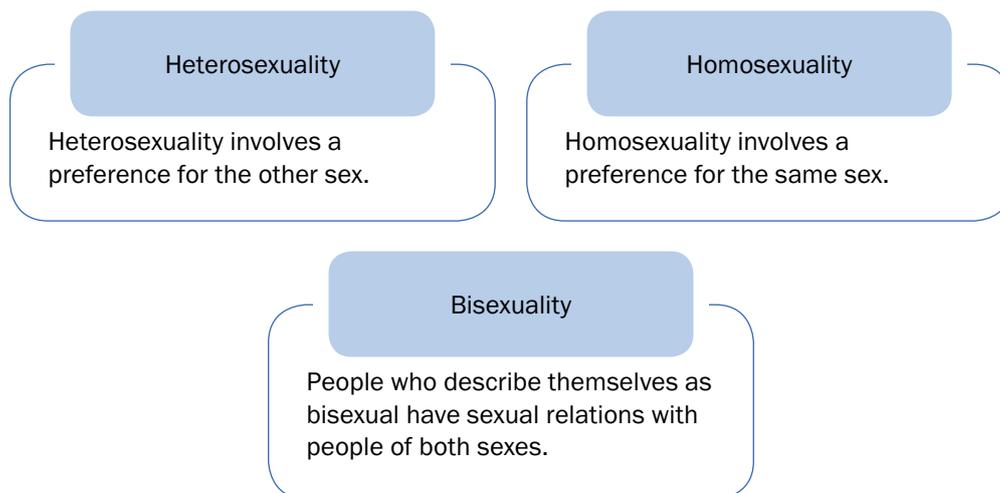
Sexual orientation refers to a person's sexual preference. Homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality are common terms used to describe people's sexuality.

Prejudice and fear of homosexuality can create an environment where homosexual people feel they need to hide and lie about their sexuality in order to fit in with their heterosexual colleagues and customers. Openly gay people may be subject to hostility.

Discrimination against people on the basis of their sexuality, sexual preference or sexual orientation regarding many areas of life including employment, provision of goods and services, education and membership of clubs is now illegal in all states and territories of Australia. It is also illegal to ask for information about a person's sexual orientation, if the information will be used to discriminate against that person.

Federal industrial relations legislation prohibits workplace dismissals and discrimination on the grounds of sexual preference.

Generally accepted definitions of sexual orientation are described below.



Work with diversity: physical characteristics

In your workplace, you and your work colleagues will all have different physical characteristics and abilities. People will be better suited to some tasks than others. In some cases, physical characteristics may impair or compromise the abilities of the person which may be referred to as a disability.

According to Australian law, disability includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities such as dyslexia. It also includes physical disfigurement and disease. About 20 per cent of the Australian population is disabled in some way. There are many different types of disability with varying degrees of severity. A disability can result from an accident, a genetic disorder, infection, birth or a psychiatric condition.

Worries and preconceived notions about persons with a disability may lead to discriminatory practices for the reasons described below.

Ideas that may lead to discriminatory behaviour

There can be a lot of stigma surrounding disabilities, and employers sometimes avoid hiring people with disabilities because they feel uncomfortable talking about the person's needs and feel embarrassed and awkward.

People can also equate disability with lack of ability, or worry about how people with disabilities fitting into the existing team and the expense of accommodating employees who are disabled.

Existing employees may also be nervous around and resistant to making changes to accommodate people with disabilities.

Capabilities of those with disabilities

The capabilities of people with disabilities are often underestimated. People with disabilities make up more and more of the available workforce and have training and education that is valuable to all organisations. Being able to accommodate people with a disability and having a diversity of employees that reflects the population is becoming more of a priority for organisations. Ignoring the needs of external customers who have a disability disadvantages the organisation in the long run.



People with disabilities have often had to overcome barriers, deal with enormous changes and adapt to different lifestyles, technologies and tools, as well as different methods of communication. The skills acquired through these experiences can contribute enormously to an organisation.

Disability-friendly workplace

If a person with a disability is employed by an organisation, the employer may need to make some workplace changes so that the employee can best perform the job. Employers are not required to make workplace changes if it would cause major difficulties or unreasonable costs. This is called 'unjustifiable hardship'. However, employers would need to show how making those changes would cause such hardship.

Your organisation may implement policies and procedures that make the workplace more accessible for disabled clients and customers. Making the workplace accessible means taking steps to ensure that all people can participate fully in the workplace for what it does, regardless of whether they have a disability or not.

Organisations that have addressed accessibility have looked at a number of workplace features and situations such as those shown here.

Physical access

Physical access, including the layout of a building; fittings such as doorways, stairs, furniture, and kitchen facilities; appropriate lighting and signage.

Communication

Communication, including use of appropriate formats, use of interpreters and other spokespeople; provision of supportive communication devices such as telephone typewriters (TTY).

Training and accountability

Training and accountability, including ensuring that everyone within the organisation is aware of the organisation's policies and procedures regarding disability and diversity.

Assistive technology

Assistive technology such as speech recognition programs, screen readers, touch screens, keyboard and mouse alternatives.

Work with diversity: mental abilities

Mental or cognitive ability means how well a person is able to understand and process information, as well as understand the consequences of their own behaviour and decisions. It involves memory, focus, attention, awareness, logic and reason, as well as self-awareness.

People's abilities differ. Some are better at numerical problems than language or word problems. Some may have high recall abilities while others are slower with information processing. People who don't have high levels of mental ability are often very capable in other areas. Sometimes a person's mental ability is affected by an intellectual disability or impairment or by disorders or diseases such as autism or Alzheimer's disease. Finding out how people think is a good way of assessing how to allocate tasks in the workplace.

Learning styles vary from person to person, too. People may be visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learners. Catering to a client's preference for comprehension and learning will help make your dealings with them more effective.

Mental ability is often judged by a person's:

- spatial reasoning
- numerical reasoning
- verbal reasoning
- logical reasoning.

Work with diversity: social differences

Many people make judgments about other people according to their social differences, and treat them accordingly.

For example, class status is still an issue for some people. Remember that many people do not have choices about their social differences, and can be limited by opportunities and circumstances. Also, people in Australia have a right to choose different lifestyles and make decisions about how they live their lives. This right should be respected.

Social differences may include differences in:

- social class – people may be working class, middle class or upper class
- income and property ownership
- family status – a person's marital or parental status
- employment status – people may be employed or unemployed
- type of occupation – whether the occupation is professional, managerial, trade or manual
- social ability – a person's ability to make friends and influence people
- social status – the prestige attached to a person's position in society.

Work together

Human differences play a very important part in determining the culture of a workplace. Workplace culture and practices can change dramatically according to the diversity of people working in the workplace.

Some workplace cultures expect newcomers to adopt their ways of thinking and practices so that newcomers are absorbed into the dominant culture. This can be very unfair on the new employee. No-one should be required to give up their beliefs or values in order to fit in with a group of people. In fact, your organisation may have employed a person specifically because they have different practices and different ways of looking at things that existing employees can learn from. On the other hand, a workplace may expect certain work practice to be adhered to as part of the defining characteristics of that workplace.

Australia has a very diverse workforce and Australian employers recognise the value of having a diverse range of employees and rely on teamwork and the ability of employees to work with and support each other.



Factions

Factions can arise when employees divide into sub-groups based on similar beliefs or characteristics. Often this process means that people take sides over workplace or social issues.

Factions can be destructive when members are expected to adhere to the group mentality regardless of whether they actually agree with it. Factions can exert a sort of peer pressure that urges total conformity or punishes people by leaving them out of the group. Alienated members may find it difficult to work cooperatively and effectively, while members adhering to group mentality, despite their misgivings, can be stressed and anxious, which also reduces their productivity.

One faction's set of values or opinions are not necessarily better than those of another. Unfortunately, ongoing arguments and problems arising from an organisation dissolving into factions can cause great damage to an organisation that depends on cooperation and a common goal. When faced with a factional organisation it is best to keep an open and independent mind.

Prejudice and stereotyping

Prejudice is an opinion or attitude that is based on a preconceived idea rather than an experience or fact. Prejudice involves believing something about a situation or someone before knowing enough about that situation or person to make appropriate judgments. Prejudice is unfair and inappropriate.

Stereotyping is the process of unfairly or incorrectly making assumptions or generalisations about all the people within a certain group. Saying or believing that 'all women want to have babies', or 'all men are the major income earners in their families' is stereotyping those people.

A person from one type of community group doesn't necessarily represent that entire group. Prejudice and stereotyping are always unhelpful, whether they relate to gender, age, ethnicity, personality type, visual appearance or physical features, dress standards, personal interests or differences, or any form of diversity.



Discrimination

Discrimination is when a person is treated less fairly than another person because of some difference. For example, if a company plans a social outing or team-building exercise that requires people to play sport, this may discriminate against people with a disability.

Discrimination can occur when rules or conditions made for everyone have an unfair effect on some people because of their different circumstances. Here are some examples of discriminatory behaviour in the workplace.

Three examples of discriminatory behaviour in the workplace

- If the executive director of a company decides to change the company's office hours from beginning at 9.00 am to beginning at 8.00 am, this might indirectly discriminate against employees with family duties, as it makes it harder for parents to work around school hours.
- Providing only written material may discriminate against employees who are vision impaired.
- Conducting a test on a particular day may discriminate against employees who have to attend religious duties on that day.

Discriminative 'humour'

Seemingly harmless 'joking' based on a person's race, sex, religion, sexuality or appearance is a form of discrimination. The victim of the jokes is being treated less fairly than other people. These types of jokes hinder rather than promote understanding because they can be very demeaning to the people concerned. Most humour of this sort, including mimicry of a person, is based on prejudicial and discriminatory stereotypes. This sort of 'humour' can be extremely hurtful to individuals. This is unacceptable both in and out of the workplace.

Positive discrimination

Positive discrimination is the term used to describe the practice of allocating perceived privileges or advantages to otherwise disadvantaged or under-represented groups. Positive discrimination is also known as reverse discrimination or affirmative action.

The theories behind positive discrimination are complicated and a source of ongoing debate. The principal idea is that under-represented groups have been disadvantaged throughout history and deserve some redress or balancing out.

Many people are very concerned that, for example, there are very few women in Australian parliament, while females total more than half of the Australian population. They think facts like these point to oppression and prejudice that should no longer be tolerated. Other people believe under-represented groups are given an unfair advantage because of the positive discrimination programs. Another example of positive discrimination is shown here.

Diversity policy excludes qualified job applicants

An organisation's diversity program may include hiring a certain percentage of Asian males, because this group is under-represented in the employee demographic.

In such a situation, a well-qualified woman might be turned down in favour of a less qualified Asian male to adhere to the positive discrimination policy.

Practice task 1

1. What are the major groups you can identify in Australian culture?

2. Explain the value of diversity to the economy and society in terms of:

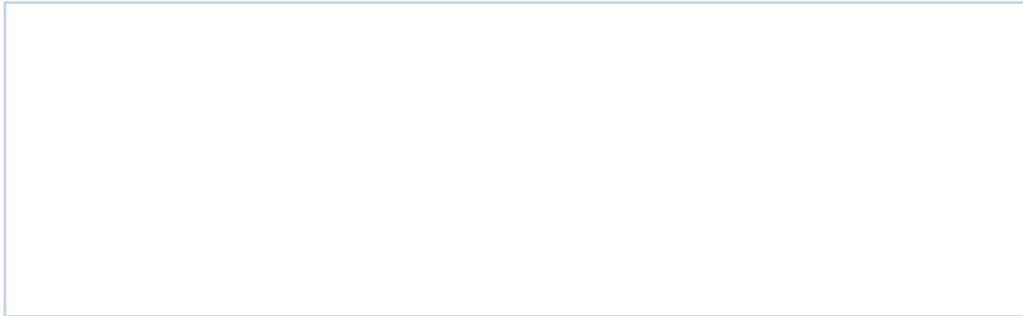
- workforce development and innovation
- Australia's place in the global economy

3. Can employers hire or fire people based on what they wear? Why or why not?

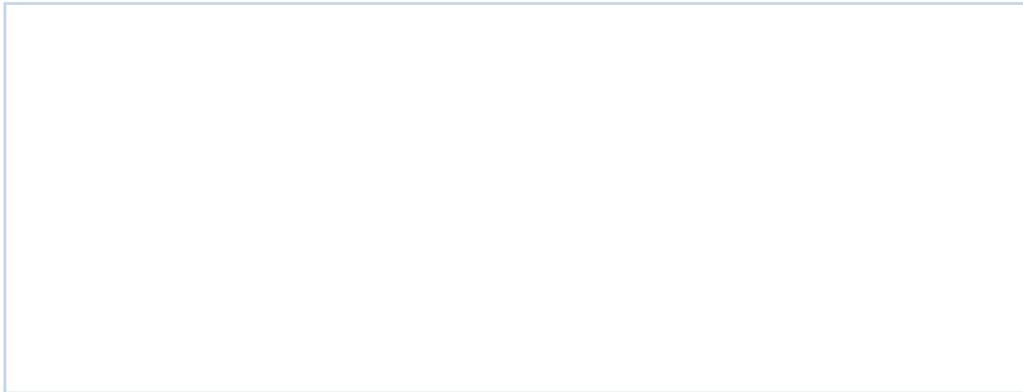
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4. Can you make assumptions about people's ability based on their qualifications? Why or why not?



5. Access the Australian Human Rights Commission website at www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/legal/legislation. What are the major objectives of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)?



1B

Respond to differences sensitively

Our differences as people are displayed in many ways. To be effective within a diverse workplace, we need to be able to recognise and understand the characteristics that make people different from each other, know how these differences can affect the individual and know how these differences can affect others in the workplace.

At work you will deal with managers and supervisors, internal customers, stakeholders and people from other organisations. Everyone you deal with will be different from you in some way. Some of these differences may not concern you at all, while for others you may need to make adjustments in your work practices or your usual way of thinking. Other people may need to make adjustments to accommodate you. Everyone needs to cooperate, respond positively to differences and respect the rights of all individuals to ensure that your organisation performs successfully.

Being able to respond effectively and sensitively to these issues in your day-to-day work means:

- acknowledging that differences exist between people, but that no person deserves less courtesy or respect because of those differences
- not ignoring or dismissing differences, but giving them appropriate attention where it is warranted
- recognising that people have a right to be different and all individuals should be treated fairly, regardless of any perceived differences.

Respond to diversity: age

Workplace structure has changed and many people now experience workplaces where all employees are involved in decision-making and plans. Conflict can occur when people of any generation stereotype others and refuse to acknowledge different values and opinions.

Australia's population is ageing. This means that older people are increasingly making up a larger proportion of the whole population, of consumer and client markets and the workforce. Below are some tips for communicating effectively with older people in the workplace.

Tips for engaging with older people in the workplace

- Acknowledge the experience and skills an older person brings to the workplace.
- Be open to being mentored by an older person.
- Offer to assist with or teach new technologies to an older colleague.
- Question older people on operations, best practice and how to deal with problems.
- Listen and observe how they approach work tasks and problem-solving.
- Avoid stereotyping.

Respond to diversity: belief and value systems

People have different beliefs and value systems that are attached to many areas of their life including money, family and politics. They have their own unique view and experience of the world.

Politics is one area where conflict can arise. Political bias happens when a person or organisation treats people differently because of the person's or organisation's political views. This is a form of discrimination. It is unlawful in Australia to treat someone unfairly or harass them because of their political beliefs or activities, or what you assume are their political beliefs or activities.

Tips for dealing with different beliefs or value systems

- Try to be understanding.
- Remember that there are reasons for the way others make decisions.
- Don't allow personal differences to be an obstacle to your work.
- Maintain a professional attitude.

Respond to diversity: culture

It is not necessary to learn all there is to know about another person's culture before you can interact effectively with them. Acknowledging differences and acting on issues as they arise will show that you respect their culture and their individuality.

Assuming that people will conform to cultural stereotypes undermines their individuality and can ignore individual attributes that may be beneficial to the workplace. For instance, not all Australians refer to each other as 'mate' or always greet each other with 'g'day'. Not all Australians play football and surf and live near the beach, contrary to the cultural stereotype of Australians. Likewise, not all Japanese people are interested in sumo wrestling and drinking sake. Here are some ideas for approaching and communicating effectively with others who have a culture different to your own.

Tips for working with people from different cultures

- Respect another person's culture on a one-to-one basis.
- Take your lead from the way the person approaches you or interacts with you, and be aware if they appear to feel uncomfortable or upset.
- Avoid stereotyping people based on what you suppose is their cultural practice.

Example: advantage of being familiar with different cultures

Weng has worked in an Australian bank branch for a number of years. He originally came from China. The branch provides services to a large community of Chinese immigrants and Weng is a valuable asset to his organisation because he can interact with the bank's Chinese customers and act as an intermediary between the Chinese community and the bank.

He translates English into Chinese dialects for his clients and advises his colleagues on correct name pronunciations and usage, what to expect when communicating with Chinese people and how to build relationships by recognising business and social etiquette. He makes sure that his colleagues understand the differences between Chinese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong cultures so that they don't inadvertently offend their customers.

Weng's bank has a lot more customers than other banks in the area and management believes this is a direct result of Weng's influence. The bank can also use Weng's work to help it create policies and procedures for other branches as well as senior management. The whole organisation will then have procedures in place that enable it to build further relationships with business people from China, a country of enormous economic power.

Respond to diversity: expertise, experience and working style

People in a workplace bring varying levels of experience, education and expertise and they approach and apply their training, knowledge and skills in different ways.

Some people bring broad past experiences to a workplace, whilst others may have had limited experience or experience in one particular area. Others possess a specific ability.



You need to recognise your colleagues' experiences and expertise and respond and work positively with each individual to achieve your work goals and objectives.

Work practices

Trying to impose your own work practices on others will only lead to resentment and an unproductive team. People will only thrive if they are encouraged to make the most of their natural abilities. Certain workplace practices such as safety, respect for others and completing workloads must be conformed to, but employees must find a way of accommodating others' working styles.

If another person's work practices are interfering with your work, you should try to discuss the issue with your colleague or refer the matter to management. A colleague's inappropriate attitude to work should never interfere with the work of the organisation.

Also recognise how your external customers prefer to work with you. For example, do they like you to take things slowly and explain things in a structured way? Do they like to be in control during a meeting? Are they obsessive about small issues? Do they prefer to discuss issues in a very social environment?

Tips for working cooperatively with others

- Approach people in a way that respects their work style. Try to build a rapport with others.
- Don't make judgments about others based on what you perceive their work style to be.
- Give criticism sensitively and receive criticism open-mindedly.
- Focus on the work of the organisation, rather than the work of individuals.
- Ask yourself what others need to be able to work effectively.
- Be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things. Learn from and help your colleagues.
- Use the talents of others to help you do your own work more effectively.
- Know the difference between personal and professional opposition.
- Recognise and acknowledge the contribution of your colleagues.
- Remember that everyone brings unique qualities to the workforce.

Interpersonal styles

You may need to accommodate different styles of behaviour to work effectively with others. Use the tips presented below to assist when working with others who have interpersonal styles different from your own.

Tips for working effectively with people of different interpersonal styles

- Recognise and respect different behavioural styles.
- Avoid stereotyping.
- Formulate responses to difficult questions or problems carefully.
- Look at how you can gain the other person's cooperation.
- Try to be flexible.
- Avoid being provoked or goaded into taking on a style that is not appropriate.
- See the interaction as a challenge or opportunity.
- Try to understand: that you won't always know the reasons for the person's behaviour.
- Prevent conflict from escalating.
- Try to see the impact your own style has on the other person.

Recognise low literacy and numeracy skills

There are a number of ways you can identify if someone is having difficulty with literacy and numeracy. They may tell you and ask you for assistance when they need it, or you may have to be observant and take notice of the way reference to written material is avoided. Some guides for how to recognise someone who has trouble with low levels of literacy or numeracy are shown here.

To recognise low literacy or numeracy in others, check for people who:

- avoid written material, including documents, letters, email and internet sites
- ask you to verbally summarise written information for them
- continually miss appointments, don't respond to letters and arrive for interviews without relevant documentation filled out
- claim to have visual impairments when asked to read text
- ask questions that should be obvious if they had read the information
- ask no questions about written material
- may appear uninterested or uncooperative
- ignore or misunderstand written instructions; never refer to written information or figures
- take time and effort to read and understand text
- scan written material quickly and with no evidence of understanding
- don't take notes or make lists or reminders
- appear anxious when confronted with written material or figures.

Work with those with low literacy skills

You can do many things differently to assist those with low literacy and numeracy skills. Some tips and ideas are shown below.

Contact people by telephone where necessary and possible.

Physically take people through a set of actions, such as accessing public transport or using new technology.

Describe instructions in pictures rather than written words.

Avoid jargon and use simple and plain language when speaking and writing.

Use face-to-face meetings wherever possible.

Look for alternative ways of presenting information, such as on DVD, video, CD or audiocassette, picture books and models.

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Limit the amount of information you present at one time. Repeat instructions if required.

Ask people to summarise information or advice you have told them; however, simply asking, 'Do you understand?' is not useful.

Respond to diversity: gender

Gender issues in a workplace may include sexism, sexual harassment and sexual orientation or preference. Sexist behaviour that demeans or discriminates against people largely relies on assumptions and stereotypes.

The key to non-sexist behaviour is to treat both genders with equal respect and be alert to sexist behaviour, in yourself and others.



To avoid sexism, don't assume that:

- men can't do things that women can do or vice-versa
- women will look and behave 'like women', and that men will look and behave 'like men'
- men and women should be treated differently according to their genders
- all your workmates or clients are heterosexual.

Example: sexist assumption when allocating tasks

Rika leads a team of employees in the homewares section of a large department store. When the store manager told her that the team would need to build and set out a new display for the department window, Rika decided to allocate tasks. Without asking about her team's personal preferences, she decided that her male colleagues would do the building and her female colleagues would do the decorating.

When asked why she had allocated the specific tasks that way, she explained that she figured the men would be good with tools and the women would enjoy doing the decorating. She risked allocating tasks to people who were not skilled and did not have the talent for the task given to them. She also risked leading an unhappy team whose roles were based on their gender rather than their skills.

To resolve the issue, Rika revised the plan and asked the staff what tasks they thought they were most capable of doing.



Respond to diversity: physical characteristics and abilities

People come in all shapes and sizes and choose to present themselves in all sorts of different ways. Pointing out someone's physical or mental characteristics or appearance in a negative light, as if this characteristic represents some fault or failing on the person's part, is a form of discrimination. You should never treat internal or external customers unfairly because you have personal issues about the way they look or think. Here are some ideas for working with people with physical characteristics or abilities that are different from your own.

Things to consider when working with other people

- Don't assume people lack ability.
- Avoid feeling awkward or embarrassed.
- Be conscious of people's physical needs.
- Be aware of people's physical and mental limitations and make allowances.
- Be aware of the learning styles of others.
- Be patient.

Respond to diversity: social differences

In the workplace, treating colleagues or external customers differently because of prejudices you have about their social differences is not appropriate. Treat all people with the same amount of respect and dignity, and they will be able to display and use their actual talents and qualities.

Confronting and overcoming prejudices and stereotypes can be difficult.

Remember:

- Everyone is different.
- Everyone has a right to be different.
- Everyone has a right to be treated fairly.

The most effective action you can take to overcome prejudice is to form relationships with people. Listen to what people tell you about themselves, not what others tell you or what you have gathered from social stereotypes.



Overcoming fears and prejudices that prevent effective working relationships and accommodating the diversity you find in your workplace is an important part of being a successful employee.

Practice task 2

1. Research a culture and find out how people of this culture prefer to be addressed and how you might respect their culture as you interact with them.

2. Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

Carla works in a health centre and understands that people are nervous when they come in. Because the centre is in a very multicultural suburb, it has a lot of clients who do not speak English very well and are unaccustomed to Australian medical practice.

Carla makes sure she speaks slowly and clearly to her clients and provides written information to them in a number of languages. She asks them if they need an interpreter or family member present. She asks how to pronounce their names properly and how they prefer to be addressed, and records the information for future reference. She asks them whether they have any religious or cultural beliefs she should know about, and their attitude to medication and diet.

She explains that the doctors need to know all this so that they can treat patients in the most effective way possible, and not prescribe medication or suggest foods that might be contrary to the patient's beliefs.

During all discussions, Carla avoids medical jargon and asks her clients to explain any terms they use that she doesn't understand. After treatment has been prescribed, Carla makes sure that her clients understand what has been said and what they need to do. She needs to know that any advice given is appropriate for her clients.

List all the things that Carla does to respect the diversity of her clients.

1C

Comply with legislation and guidelines

Organisations within Australia must comply with a variety of federal Acts and national standards. Organisations must also comply with the anti-discrimination legislation that applies within their state or territory of registration and operation, and with training industry standards, such as standards addressing access and equity issues.

For example, the organisation you work for, or the training organisation you study with, must act in accordance with a number of Commonwealth Acts, which are explained below.

Age Discrimination

Age Discrimination Act 2004

The *Age Discrimination Act 2004* is a law that is especially important with regard to Australia's ageing population. It protects people who are discriminated against because of their age and states that, regardless of age, everyone has the same rights before the law.

The Act also allows appropriate benefits to be given to people of a certain age, particularly younger and older people, according to their circumstances. Objectives of the Act also include removing barriers to older people participating in society and changing negative stereotypes about older people.

Exemptions include stipulations regarding youth wages, health care and voluntary work.

Disability

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* gives a broad definition of disability and prohibits direct or indirect discrimination based on disability. It also prohibits discrimination against those associated with people who have disabilities; these may be friends, relatives, carers and co-workers. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate in the areas of:

- employment
- education
- access to public premises
- purchase of house and land
- provision of goods, services and facilities
- administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs.

Exemptions to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* include when a potential employer would be placed under unjustifiable hardship in order to employ a person with a disability, although the employer is expected to make reasonable adjustments. An example of an unjustifiable hardship might be the cost of extensive renovations to allow for wheelchair access to and throughout a small, second floor studio owned by a small business.

Racial Discrimination

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* covers all of Australia and prohibits racial discrimination and offensive behaviour based on racial hatred. It covers discrimination based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. It also protects those who may be discriminated against based on their association with people of a particular ethnicity. The Act applies to everyone in Australia and all organisations.

The *Racial Hatred Act 1995* (Cth) was added to the *Racial Discrimination Act* in 1995 and provides an avenue for people to complain about racist behaviour that offends, insults, humiliates or intimidates others in public. Exceptions to the law include when the behaviour is a matter of public interest (such as a newspaper report on racially-based violence), or is part of an academic discussion which is not malicious or spiteful. These exceptions often involve rights to free speech.

Sex Discrimination

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* explains that it is unlawful to discriminate against someone based on their sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy. It sets out laws against sexual harassment as well as dismissal from work based on family duties including pregnancy.

According to the Act, it is unlawful to refuse to provide goods or services, education or employment based on a person's sex. The Act also covers discrimination within awards and enterprise bargaining, insurance and superannuation, Commonwealth laws and programs, and accommodation.

Sexual harassment is included in the Act because it is a form of discrimination to treat a person unfairly because of their sex.

An exception to the Act includes when goods or services can only be applied to one sex, for example female or male-specific health care. Another exception covers employing a person to look after a child in the child's home. Sexual discrimination in the training and ordination of religious ministers is also not covered under the Act.

Human Rights

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986

The Australian Human Rights Commission (initially called the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) was established in 1986 to deal with breaches of anti-discrimination laws and to promote human rights education.

The legal section of the Australian Human Rights Commission administers federal laws to do with discrimination including the *Age, Racial, Sex and Disability Discrimination Acts*, as well as the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth) (formerly known as the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* (Cth)). This Act only covers actions or policies of the Commonwealth.

The Act promotes human rights for all people, and covers most forms of discrimination not already covered in the other Acts, including discrimination on the basis of:

- criminal records
- marital status
- medical record
- political opinion
- religion
- sexual preference
- social origin
- trade union activity.

Privacy

Privacy Act 1988

If your organisation is in the habit of collecting information about customers or clients, its operations will come under the auspices of this Act. This Act deems personal information about individuals to be sensitive, such as information about:

- criminal records
- health
- membership of a professional or trade association
- membership of a trade union
- political affiliations or opinions
- racial or ethnic origin
- religious affiliations or beliefs
- sexual orientation or practices.

This information about a person could be used by others to discriminate against them or identify them although they may wish to remain anonymous. Your organisation should inform you of your responsibilities regarding your customers' privacy. It should also inform you of its responsibilities with regards to your privacy. It is always advisable to take any information provided to you about any individual as confidential.

People generally have a right to see and correct, if necessary, files of personal information kept about them by organisations. Individuals are usually only denied access to files about them if their own or another person's safety is at risk, or if there are other legalities involved.

Example: sex discrimination



V1082

Mark goes to a job interview where he is asked about his plans to have a family. He tells the interviewer, Marjorie, that it is illegal to ask him questions about his private family life and intentions. His interviewer terminates the interview shortly afterwards and tells Mark that there is little chance of him getting the job because he is obviously uncooperative and the company won't be able to rely on him.

Mark believes he has been discriminated against because he refused to tell them about any family plans he had, and complains to the Equal Opportunity Commission.

Workplace health and safety (WHS)

Each state and territory also has workplace health and safety legislation that applies to every workplace. Organisations are obliged to provide a safe workplace for employees, just as employees must work in a safe manner. In addition, workplaces must have procedures for reporting and dealing with safety issues. One of the challenges for organisations with a diverse workforce is to ensure that all employees understand and follow safety requirements at all times.



Breaches of the Acts

When a person thinks that an organisation has breached a federal or state Act, that person can complain to the federal, state or territory Equal Opportunity Commission. The Commission will investigate the complaint and try to come to some arrangement that will reconcile the problem. Equal Opportunity Commissions can administer conciliation between the complainant (the person who is complaining) and the respondent (the person or organisation accused of discrimination). If the conciliation is not acceptable to either party, further action can be taken.



State and territory legislation

Anti-discrimination, equal opportunity and human rights legislation can vary between states and territories. Below are the agencies that deal with discrimination legislation in each state or territory.

State/Territory	Agency
Australian Capital Territory	Human Rights Commission
New South Wales	Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales
Northern Territory	Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission
Queensland	Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland
South Australia	Equal Opportunity Commission
Tasmania	Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner
Victoria	Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
Western Australia	Equal Opportunity Commission

Ethics and the workplace

Ethics provide guidelines for the behaviour of every human group. To be ethical is to be morally right, honourable and fair. Ethics should be the same in the workplace and in our personal lives.

Ethical behaviours may not always feel good or seem like they benefit you, but they are the right behaviours. They are the behaviour choices that are examples of model citizenship; they are choices for the common good.

Following ethical principles in a workplace helps the achievement of both the organisation's and the group's goals. Workplace ethics issues are increasingly important for workplaces. More and more companies are incorporating ethics into their training. Periodic re-evaluations are suggested in ethics training as well, since time changes many things that affect ethical considerations.

By dealing with challenges and issues in an ethical manner, a workplace will comply with the law, increase staff motivation, gain community support and maintain a pleasant working environment.

Ethical issues may be a factor involved in:

- unlawful or unfair dismissal
- discrimination, harassment and bullying
- accidents and injuries
- stress and work overload
- compensation.

Code of ethics

A code of ethics offers guidance and/or direction on a range of ethical issues that you may confront in your day-to-day work or study. A code of ethics is a statement of the ethical principles, values and behaviours of an organisation. A code of conduct is based on the principles, values and behaviours outlined in the code of ethics. These ethical principles may include principles such as:

- equity and justice
- diversity
- honesty
- integrity
- respect for others
- personal and professional responsibility.



Codes of conduct in the workplace

A code of conduct is a collection of policies, rules or guidelines that define the specific actions or procedures applicable to a particular organisation or workplace. It offers guidance and/or direction on a range of ethical issues that you may confront in your day-to-day work or study. A code of conduct applies to all employees, visitors and others who may conduct business with the organisation or workplace. It will be informed by a variety of federal Acts and national standards, and state or territory legislation.

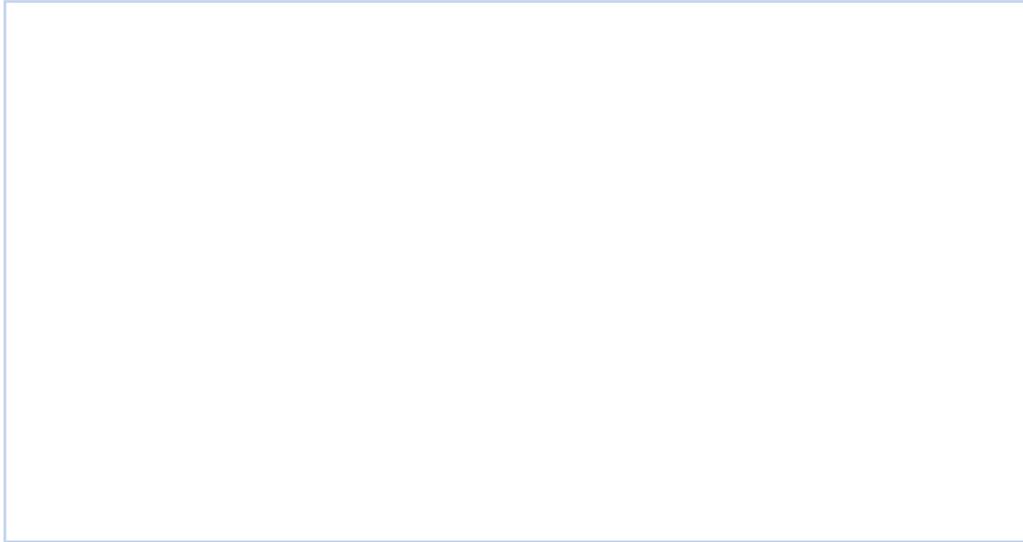
A code of conduct is a reminder of our responsibilities to our co-workers at all levels of an organisation. All staff should be involved in developing a code of conduct which should be consistent with the vision and branding of the organisation. It may include all or some of the items listed below.

A code of conduct may deal with standards of behaviour relating to:

- personal behaviour
- lawful orders
- honesty and integrity, fairness and equity
- performance of duty
- conflicts of interest
- acceptance of gifts and benefits
- outside employment and voluntary work
- public comment
- use of facilities and equipment and intellectual property or copyright
- use of computer, intranet, internet and email services
- bullying, harassment and discrimination
- criminal record checking and disclosure of criminal charges, convictions and misconduct findings
- corrupt conduct, maladministration and serious and substantial waste of public or organisational resources
- workplace health and safety
- breaches of code of conduct, and privacy and confidentiality.

Practice task 3

1. Look up the website of your state or territory's anti-discrimination agency and find out what steps are needed to make a complaint to them about discrimination.



2. Locate a copy of a code of conduct from your trainer, your workplace, the web or from another organisation. Identify the ethical principles that the code of conduct is based upon. What does the code of conduct say about diversity, equity and discrimination?



1D

Consider diversity when communicating

The complexity of communicating at work depends on the complexity of diversity in the workplace. The most important thing to remember is to keep communication neutral. Don't describe, point out or highlight a person's personal characteristics and differences unless they have a direct bearing on the topic at hand. For instance, don't refer to someone as a single woman or a divorced man when you are discussing their commitment to their work. Such references are irrelevant and their marital status does not and should not define them.

Be familiar with the aids you can use to assist people when communicating with them. People with sight impairments may need text in larger print or braille or provided by an audio equivalent. People with low-level English language skills may need an interpreter. They may also need text simplified or explained to them. If they can lip-read, speak to people with hearing impairments face-to-face and clearly. They may need written instructions, subtitles or special telephones, and they may need to be informed about loudspeaker announcements or alarms.

Your organisation should have policies and procedures in place for communicating with people with special needs, especially where safety issues are concerned.

Tips for communicating appropriately with a person with special needs

- Don't make the person's differences the focus of discussion unless they raise the issue or it is necessary.
- Speak to the person you are addressing, not their carer, interpreter, employer or other person.
- Ask the person about their requirements and preferences.
- Don't assume that a person's difference is a hindrance to them.
- Telling people how much you sympathise with them or how terrible things must be for them can make them feel just as uncomfortable as directly discriminating against them.

Example: improve accessibility of website



Some technology companies use a service called Web Adaptation Technology, which lets people with a disability make standard web pages more accessible. Users access standard websites through a host computer and a downloaded program on their desktop systems that adjusts pages to make them easier to read.

Users can set and store personal settings, adjusting colours, background, font size, text style and line spacing. They can also eliminate banner ads and other images and modify keystroke timing. The service is free to not-for-profit organisations to distribute to computer users who are older or have a disability.

Inclusive and exclusive language

Inclusive language is when what you say includes everyone regardless of their age, race, status, gender and abilities. Inclusive language is sometimes referred to as politically correct language. It involves avoiding expressions that may be regarded as excluding, marginalising or insulting people who are socially disadvantaged. For example, 'Parents can arrange for carer leave' is not inclusive language as it assumes that only fathers or mothers may wish to take such leave.

Exclusive language leaves people out. This discriminatory language is often very subtle, for example, automatically addressing letters, reports or other correspondence with 'Mr' where the receiver's gender is unknown and excludes the possibility of the receiver being female.

Any stereotyping of gender characteristics or reference to gender where that reference is irrelevant can also be considered sexist language. For example, 'He fits in just like one of the girls', rather than 'He fits into the team very well', is exclusive.

Four ways you can use inclusive language:



Appropriate language terms

As language and society changes over time, terms that are deemed acceptable at one time may no longer be acceptable at another. This can be either because the language itself has changed or because the communities referred to have objected to the terms used to describe them. Working with diversity means you have a responsibility to refer to people with respect and consideration, and this means using terms that are acceptable to them. For example, the best general reference for Indigenous Australians is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

When referring to a person with disability, the good rule of thumb is to refer to the person first, then the disability: for example, a person with a hearing impairment.

Gender-specific terms can be neutralised to include the possibility of both male and female subjects.

Objectionable terms

- The elderly or the aged
- Disabled people
- Handicapped, unfit, incapacitated
- Diabetics
- Epileptics
- Wheelchair-bound people
- HIV victims
- Mentally handicapped person
- Mankind
- Mr and Mrs Gerald Pareda
- Chairman, foreman

Appropriate terms

- Older/senior people
- People with a disability
- Disabled
- People with diabetes
- People with epilepsy
- People using wheelchairs
- People with HIV
- Person with a learning difficulty
- Humanity
- Mr and Mrs Pareda
- Chairperson, foreperson

Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication includes body language and eye contact as well as touching. Body language is different the world over and many cultures have different ways of interpreting nonverbal communication.

Some people avoid eye contact as a sign of respect; others urge eye contact as a sign of honesty. Many people smile when they are nervous or embarrassed, others when they are



comfortable and happy. People also use different head movements to signify yes or no. It is easy to become confused and 'misread' people, even unconsciously, by focusing on their body language. When receiving communication from others, don't rely on nonverbal messages. Seek confirmation in speech or writing.

As with spoken language, you can exclude people in a number of ways. For example, making eye contact only with the man rather than the woman, only with the older person rather than the younger person, or only with the manager rather than the floor worker, could result in someone feeling offended or excluded.

Visual images

Visual imagery can be inclusive, exclusive and also discriminatory. Visual material such as posters, pictures, cartoons, material displayed on computer screens or transmitted to others, video, television and signs displayed in the workplace should be inclusive of all the organisation's employees as well as any external customers. This means that they should not represent only one type of employee but include employees of different ages, physical characteristics, abilities and so on.

Pornographic, obscene or demeaning material is discriminatory and can be means for complaint to relevant government agencies.



Example: removal of inappropriate posters

During the formation of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws, many male-dominated workplaces were asked or compelled to remove posters from workplace walls that were demeaning to women. Both internal and external customers were offended and/or intimidated by visual imagery displaying women in sexual poses. This sort of material is now frowned upon in most organisations, and can be grounds for sexual harassment.

Practice task 4

1. Find out what communication tools can be used to help people who have the following disabilities:

- Hearing
- Intellectual
- Physical
- Visual

2. Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

An organisation's leave policy states the following: when a single parent's child is ill she can request leave to stay at home and care for her child. She can also take the child to a general practitioner, and if he provides the child with a medical certificate the staff member can use that day as part of her own sick leave. The staff member must consult with her manager so that he can authorise the appropriate leave.

a) What is the exclusive language in the case study?

b) How would you reword it so that the language used is inclusive?

Summary

1. Most Australian workplaces have a very diverse workforce.
2. All workers have a responsibility to recognise, respect and respond to individual difference and diversity in a sensitive manner.
3. Diversity includes differences in language, culture, customs, religion, physical ability, gender, education, age and personality.
4. Responding appropriately requires some knowledge of the differences and an understanding of why people behave in different ways.
5. Appropriate responses might include acknowledging the need for people to wear specific garments or eat particular food. It might require adjustment to work stations to accommodate physical, sight or hearing impairment.
6. Working effectively with diversity means not allowing prejudices, stereotyping and discrimination of any kind in the workplace.
7. Behaviour towards difference is enshrined in Australian law, especially in the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth), and in other federal and state laws.
8. Many workplaces have a Code of Conduct based on ethical principles that reflect the particular enterprise and are informed by a variety of federal Acts, Codes of Practice, standards and state and territory legislation.

Learning checkpoint 1

Recognise individual differences and response appropriately

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in recognising individual differences and responding appropriately.

Part A

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

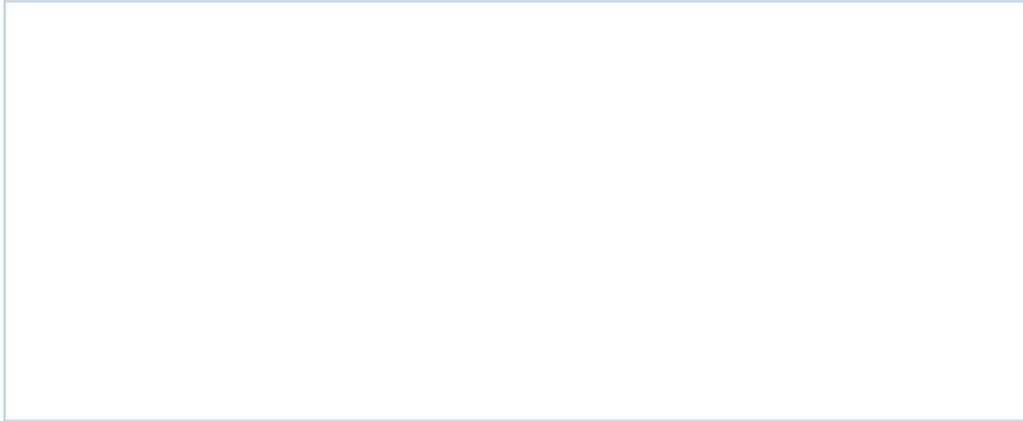
Keiran and Bella have received a grant from the government to help them establish their small catering business, Fantastic Foods. In the area where they live and do business there is a wide range of ethnic groups including Vietnamese, Chinese, Italian and Chilean. They would like to target festivals and special religious days as occasions on which they could be employed to cater.

The grant will enable Keiran and Bella to undertake a three-month marketing campaign, part of which will involve a market research phase to ensure they understand the diversity of the area they live in, particularly the needs of these potential client groups.

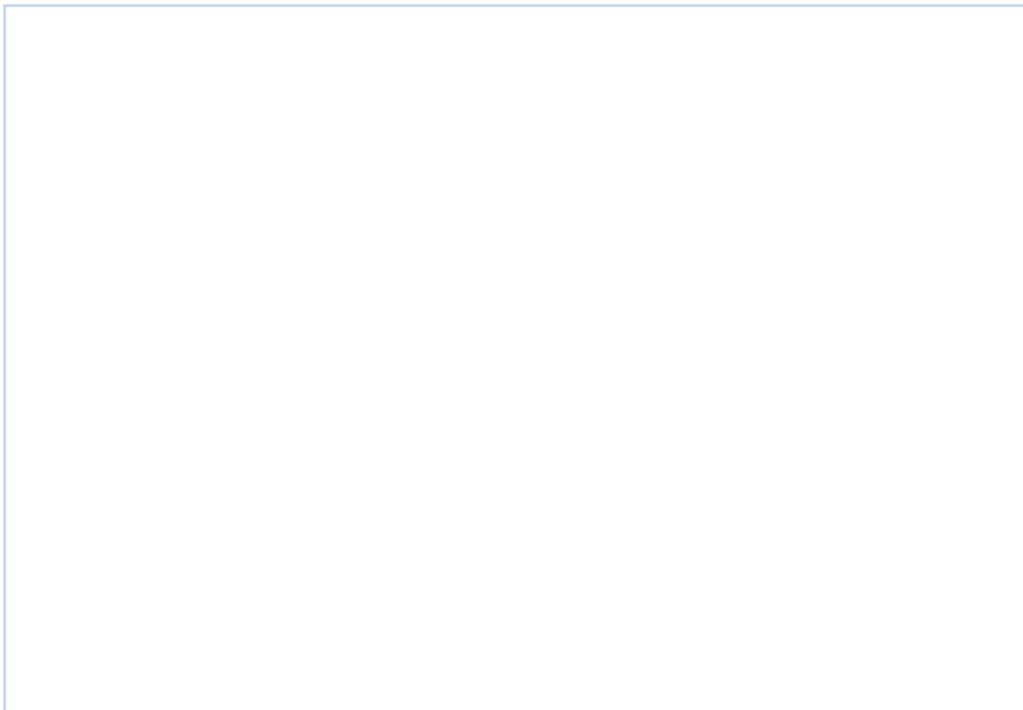
1. Identify the information that Keiran and Bella need to gather regarding this diverse community. Outline the strategies you think would be most effective in gathering this information.

2. Explain how the information you have identified will assist Keiran and Bella to develop appropriate marketing strategies for their business venture.

3. The way you treat people at work is not just a matter of individual choice, but is governed by organisational and government rules and regulations. Explain why this is so.



4. Use the internet to research one anti-discrimination law in your state or territory. Summarise the main issues the law covers and explain how this law impacts upon the behaviour of staff in the workplace.



5. Explain your understanding of the importance of using inclusive language in the workplace.

Part B

Read the case study, then give some advice about what could be done and said in this situation.

Case study

Josh has a hearing impairment and is unaware of how noisy he is when it comes to putting down the phone, adjusting his chair, speaking on the phone and closing the office door. Vlad shares an office with Josh and finds all the noise quite disturbing.

Part C

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Sasha was offended because every time she passed Jim's desk at work he made some comments about her appearance – her short skirts, her small waist, or her 'sexy' figure. She did not regard the comments as flattering, but as sexually offensive and discriminatory. She told her manager, but he said she should accept Jim's remarks as 'compliments'. He also said she might be better off not wearing such short skirts.

1. Did Sasha's manager resolve Sasha's concerns appropriately? Give reasons for your answer.

2. Explain what Sasha could do to ensure that she works in a harassment-free environment.

Topic 2

Work effectively with individual differences

Every organisation needs to be able to work effectively with the individual differences of its staff members and its external customers. All members of a team, department or branch of an organisation are working toward the same goal: to achieve the team's objectives. They need to be able to relate to one another regardless of age, gender, social or cultural background.

The whole organisation, including work teams, customers and clients benefit when individual differences and strengths are recognised, valued and shared. This recognition ensures each person is allocated tasks best suited to their skills and experience; the skills of the whole team are strengthened when qualities, skills or backgrounds are shared and work objectives are better achieved.

In this topic you will learn how to:

- 2A Recognise and document diversity in skills to enhance teamwork
- 2B Encourage colleagues to use and share their skills and talents with team members and clients
- 2C Demonstrate that diversity is valued by your organisation

2A

Recognise and document diversity in skills to enhance teamwork

Every person can do a number of things to develop effective working relationships. When dealing with a diverse group of people, the most important thing to remember is not to make assumptions about a person, their differences or their preferences. Also remember that everyone has something to offer.

As you read this checklist of things to do, see how well you rate yourself as someone who can work effectively with people from a range of backgrounds. Are there any gaps? Do you have any areas where you could make improvements?

Guidelines for developing effective working relationships:

- Advise others of what is expected in the Australian workplace. Ensure everyone in your team or group is included and valued.
- Have patience with people with physical, intellectual or communication problems.
- Don't assume that a person's differences limit their capability.
- Realise that excluding people because of their differences is a waste of human resources and adds to everyone else's workload.
- Effectively engage the skills and talents of everyone in your team.
- Try to remove or overcome barriers where you see them and encourage a solid and cooperative team. Identify those who assume, generalise and stereotype.
- Make sure other relevant people understand the needs of your colleagues and customers and investigate any assumptions made. If in doubt, ask colleagues how they would like to be referred to.
- Respect people's privacy and treat everyone with equal consideration and courtesy.
- Make an effort to present views that do not assume, generalise or stereotype. Support everyone's right to be different.
- Report discriminatory behaviour to your supervisors or managers. Support colleagues who are being discriminated against.
- Ask your colleague if there is anything they would like you to know about their religion, culture, beliefs or needs that might help you work better with them.

Use diversity to benefit the team

Your work team may be made up of people who are different from you in a number of ways. It is useful to understand how this diversity can benefit the work of your team, and how you can harness the different qualities, skills and experience of the people around you to accomplish goals and meet any challenges set for the team.

In using diversity to benefit the team you need to support rather than simply tolerate, and create trust rather than resentment. Look at the best person for the job, regardless of what they look like, where they are from or what status they have inside or outside of the organisation. By building team relationships and getting to know people on a personal level you will come to understand each person's individual talents and skills.

Analyse team objectives and identify opportunities to use individual differences

The team's work plan sets out the aims, goals, targets or objectives of the team's work. From the objectives, tasks can be determined and allocated to individual team members depending on their talents, skills, experience and expertise. Analyse what skills are needed, and identify and document opportunities where the team members' individual differences can be best used. Often the very existence of the person's difference from others will show you how to assess their strengths. Understand and take advantage of the diversity of skills and knowledge within your organisation and your team will maximise the effectiveness of the team, and eventually the whole organisation will benefit.

When identifying opportunities to use diversity, acknowledge and remember the features of the person's character that make them valuable to the organisation and the team. Some examples are below.



Work effectively in a diverse team environment

Here are some strategies that you can use when working with a diverse group of people in a team situation:

- Provide opportunities for team members to discuss team objectives as they are allocated or formulated. This will help everyone understand how and why the objectives are set, what is expected of the team, and give people a chance to contribute and to express their opinions.
- Encourage team members to outline what needs to be done to meet the team objectives.
- Identify the team member/s that could best carry out each task.
- Encourage each team member to make an effort to negotiate differences and recognise and respect others' expertise, working and interpersonal style and work practices. This will help the team to work effectively together and avoid disruption within the team.
- Encourage the team to plan and work around the qualities exhibited by individual members. Think of the characteristics that are the basis for differences between people. What challenges have people had to overcome to accept their own differences from other people, or have their differences accepted by others? What skills or qualities have been gained from overcoming these challenges and experiences that can contribute to a more effective workplace?

Example: work with the qualities exhibited by colleagues

Olga is new to Red Tile and has been asked to put together a new catalogue for her company's tiling products. She needs someone experienced in the company who can describe all of Red Tile's products. Olga also needs people who are good at written communication and graphic design, and someone with attention to detail who can edit and proofread the drafts. She also needs to know about the local market so that she can determine who the company is marketing towards, and adapt the catalogue to suit them.

Red Tile doesn't have a publishing department so Olga needs to see who in the company already has these skills.

After making an effort to build a friendly relationship with her colleagues, Olga is able to discuss their experiences and backgrounds with them. She finds there are lots of people with hidden talents at Red Tile.

Leif, the secretary, knows how to organise and budget, so Olga asks him to help plan the project. Kay, who comes in on Fridays to do the filing, has a great eye for graphics and visuals, so Olga asked her to help with the design of the catalogue.

Essam has an interest in the local community and can tell Olga about the area's demographics. Olga uses the written communication skills she learnt through a writing course to create descriptions of the products. Most of Red Tile's clientele are men, so Olga asks the male employees for a male point of view.

Olga gives a draft copy of the catalogue to a number of colleagues and asks them to look at it to make sure it is easy to read.

She asks Brett, who normally processes orders and has a reputation for having an eye for detail, to proofread the final copy before it goes to print.

The final result is that Red Tile now has a product catalogue that is informative, accurate and visually exciting to look at.

Practice task 5

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Noel works at an organisation that caters to the needs of disadvantaged older people. The organisation, Adults in the 'Hood, tries to provide access to food, clothing, housing and health care to financially disadvantaged and homeless older people. Noel's team consists of volunteers who come into the centre to work on a fortnightly basis. They take turns serving at the centre's lunchroom, working in the second-hand clothing store and working within the hostel that provides overnight shelter to the homeless. Sometimes the people who come into Adults in the 'Hood just need someone to talk to, someone who will listen and understand. Often these people have serious health issues and a history of family and social problems.

Many staff members have been complaining that they are dissatisfied with the tasks they have been allocated and are bored or are finding the tasks far too difficult to handle because of their lack of experience or expertise, even though they still want to help.

Noel wants his team to:

- reallocate staff so that everyone is undertaking tasks appropriate to their individual talents
- teach two newcomers about the activities of Adults in the 'Hood and what they can expect from their clients
- make the workplace more accessible to the increasing number of disabled clients who have started coming in for lunch
- provide classes for their clients in literacy, language, budgeting and art.

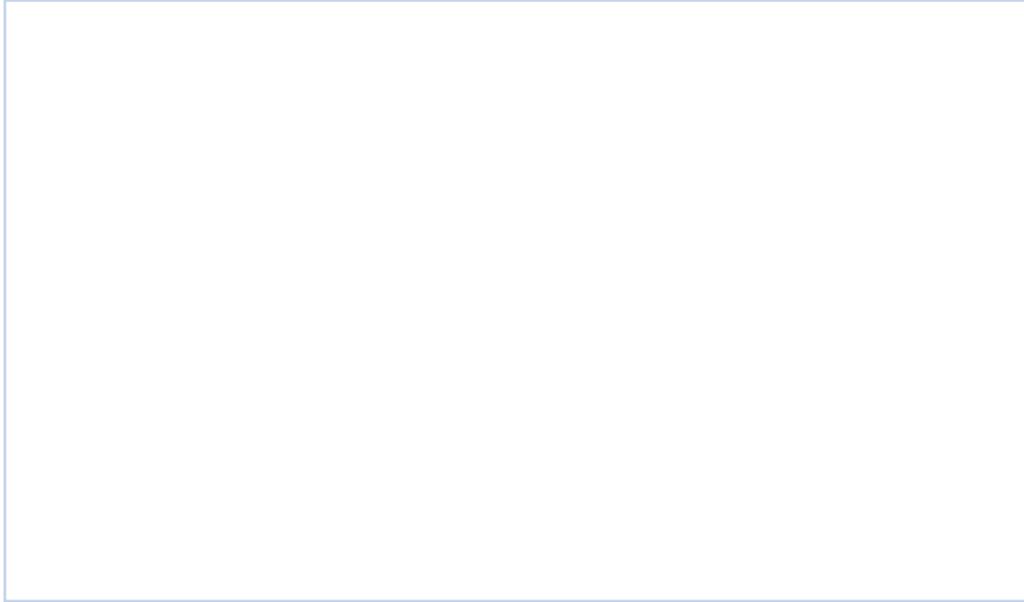
The volunteers at Adults in the 'Hood come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have many different experiences and skills. However, after some team discussion about their experience, skills and interests they are able to allocate appropriate tasks to each person.

1. What sort of people would be appropriate to undertake each task in Noel's list of objectives?

continued ...

... continued

2. What experience or expertise might each person need to successfully fulfil the tasks?



2B

Encourage colleagues to use and share their skills and talents with team members and clients

Teams need a mix of skills, personalities and attitudes to work effectively, so everyone should be encouraged to use and share their special qualities, skills or backgrounds to enhance work outcomes. The best way of encouraging others to use and share their individual skills is to value and make use of them yourself.

Letting people know they belong and are valued members of the team helps to build trust. This helps people to be more open about their experiences and personal characteristics, so they are more comfortable about displaying and using their differences in the workplace. This creates a more effective team.

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth anything.

To show diversity is valued in the team, you can also:

- encourage participation in discussion and interaction
- emphasise the advantages of having a diverse range of people in your team
- celebrate everyone's team contributions
- focus on positive outcomes and strengths
- show interest and ask questions as appropriate
- ask others to mentor or teach a skill in which they are proficient to another team member
- encourage sharing of knowledge at team meetings
- demonstrate respect
- not tolerate discrimination.

Be inclusive

It is important to always try to be inclusive of everyone in your workplace and allow people to contribute in the best way they know how. If you know a newcomer is shy or having trouble fitting in, let them know they are valued and that the team is looking forward to finding out about them and what they can do.

Stereotyping and allowing prejudices can stop people from seeing the qualities and attributes a person has that might be useful to their team. Bias can also undermine team cohesiveness and cooperation, especially if it leaves people feeling alienated or forced to work in a hostile environment. An under-achieving team cannot hope



to reach its objectives or provide quality outcomes. Stereotyping, prejudice and bias should always be challenged, whether directly aimed at a certain person or group of people, part of the dominant culture. Challenging bias in all areas is important, since many people will be put off expressing their own differences if they feel differences are not tolerated, and that everyone is expected to conform to the 'norm'.

Commonality

One of the most effective ways of countering work disruption caused by bias or discrimination is to demonstrate the common links between people otherwise considered 'different.'



Finding points of commonality involves recognising the links that already exist between people as well as recognising links that bring people together. Commonality means creating an 'us', rather than an 'us and them' attitude. Remember that the link that brings everyone together in the first place is a common work goal. Encouraging employees to think in this way encourages them to bring the best of themselves to the task at hand.

Example: counter discrimination using points of commonality

Jason is a young Anglo-Saxon male who has just started working in a team of male employees very similar to him in ancestry, age and training. Many of them share the same interests and see each other in social groups that reflect the characteristics of the work team. At the same time, the organisation hires Dominica, a female supervisor for the team. Dominica is older than the male employees, has more experience and higher qualifications, has recently migrated from England and is a single parent.



Jason notes that the other members of the team appear resentful. They make derogatory comments about Dominica that refer to her gender, age, race and family status and make speculations about her sexual preference. They try to make work difficult for her so that she will leave and, perhaps, be replaced with someone more like them.

At first, Jason doesn't want to incur the discrimination of his team-mates and so doesn't tell them about his relationship with his Asian partner who has two children of her own. He lets them believe he is single and that he shares their beliefs about women, single parents and racism. Suppressing his true feelings makes him very uncomfortable and Jason begins to dread coming in to work to face the team and Dominica, who is also suffering from the team's attitude.

To turn the situation around, Jason uses the common points he has with Dominica, such as their connection to children and single-parenthood to connect with her. He also tries to focus on many common links between him and his team-mates to build the relationship and at the same time starts to open up about his own preferences and beliefs. Instead of joining their derogatory comments, he gradually relates Dominica's situation to his own or voices his opinion objectively to encourage others to be up-front about their differences.

Practice task 6

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Stella has been assigned to a team with three other people in it.

Rose is 35 and five months pregnant. She is an outspoken environmentalist who loves the beach and football. She converted to Judaism when she married her husband, David.

Sarafina is 22 and from Kenya. She has basic English skills but a high level of business training. Sarafina is very dedicated to and disciplined in her work and is very interested in other people. However, she is also very patriotic and tends to devalue the social systems, education and people from European countries. Sarafina is Muslim.

Graham is 25 and was in a motorcycle accident that caused him to lose the use of both of his legs. He comes from a small country town and hasn't adjusted to city life. He can be disorganised and unreliable but he can also be creative and is good at liaising between the team and others in the organisation. He is an atheist.

1. What common points could Stella find between the different members of her team?

2. If the team starts to separate because of religious issues, how could Stella pull them back together?

3. What personal differences do the team members have that can enhance the work outcomes of the team?

2C

Demonstrate that diversity is valued by your organisation

Organisations can show employees that they value their differences by celebrating them. For this to work successfully, people need to see it in action and working effectively. These people are within your organisation, such as managers, supervisors and employees in different departments, as well as external customers in the form of suppliers, patrons, consumers and clients and anyone else who can influence the reputation of the organisation.

Showing your manager and other members of your organisation that you can communicate with colleagues and use their experience, skills and talents effectively, whatever their background or circumstances, demonstrates that you value diversity and that you are able to work effectively within the culture of your organisation. If you and your team can work effectively with diversity, you will provide an example for others in your organisation, and attract the talents of others who can contribute to your team's goals as shown below.

Ways of encouraging team participation

- Show you value all individual members of the team by making sure their contribution is sought and including them in group sessions or activities.
- Bring up any ideas you may have with your manager and team to show your initiative and encourage participation.

Example: a team that values differences attracts talents



The members of Lana's marketing department were asked to split into teams and told that they would be assessed on their approach to a new project. Lana wanted to form a diverse team. She knew that if the team could have as many different points of view and methods of problem-solving as possible, they would be able to tackle the project more effectively. Lana's manager, John, was impressed with Lana's sensible approach and gave the project to her team.

Later, when a new employee joined the department, he also wanted to be on Lana's team. He could see that Lana's team valued differences and would therefore be a more interesting and productive group to work with.

External customer relations

It is extremely important that your organisation shows external customers that it recognises and appreciates the diversity of its clientele. As a representative of your organisation, you should make an effort to reflect your commitment to diversity in all your dealings with external customers and display your knowledge of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination policies.

Often experiences of good – and poor – customer service are spread by word of mouth. Part of an organisation's customer satisfaction assurance involves ascertaining whether the client feels valued and has their differences catered to where necessary.

Remember that, even if your organisation has no policies or programs regarding diversity, diversity is a business as well as a social issue. The organisation's reputation and business will grow, along with your own individual reputation as a valuable employee, if you make an effort to value diversity. Some of the ways in which you can demonstrate good customer service are shown below.

Ways to demonstrate good customer service:

- Acknowledge and recognise the client's differences (if necessary).
- Treat every customer as an individual and try to meet their individual needs and preferences.
- Be approachable, genuine, patient and tolerant when dealing with customers in any form of communication.
- Check if your customer is satisfied and offer further assistance if needed.

Example: demonstrate to customers that diversity is valued

Nail and Co is a funeral company that implements a strict diversity policy and program for all customers. Its customer service representatives are trained to cater to the diverse needs of their customers by doing their best to accommodate the wishes of the bereaved in any matter regarding funeral arrangements and the funeral service.

Employees ask clients whether they understand the documentation that needs to be processed, and offer to help where necessary. They tactfully ask about payment arrangements, and offer plans for payment for those on low incomes. Employees enquire about religious and cultural traditions and conventions, and make no assumptions about a client's preferences based on the deceased's religious or cultural status.



Clients are asked what language they would prefer the service to be read in, and asked about the interests, values and beliefs of the deceased so that appropriate additions to the service and final details can be suggested.

All of Nail and Co's clients are appreciative of the interest the company takes in their loved ones as well as the respect the company obviously has for the diversity of its clients.

Your organisation's reputation

Reputation can make or break a business. If your organisation has a reputation for intolerance of difference it will inevitably receive negative publicity as society grows less and less receptive to discrimination and prejudice. Organisations that embrace diversity very often receive public tributes and admiration in addition to business success. It is worthwhile for your organisation's reputation to publicly acknowledge its commitment to diversity, as demonstrated in the following example.



Example: promote diversity through a community event

Mudrain Council received a request from members of the public to expand International Food Day into an event that would bring the community together and benefit everyone in the area.

The Council decided to turn International Food Day into a community event and organised a day where a street could be blocked off and, invited restaurants to participate.

Musicians of different ethnic backgrounds were invited to play and traditional art and craft stalls were set up. There was a general invitation for all members of the public to attend and buses were organised for those who had difficulty with transport. Everyone was encouraged to dress in a 'traditional costume' of their choice and a soapbox was established so that people could speak publicly about matters of national and cultural significance. Media representatives were invited to participate or become involved in the event.

The Mudrain Intercontinental Carnivale has subsequently become the highlight of the year for the community and the public appreciate the effort the Council makes with respect to supporting and organising the carnival each year.

Stories about the Mudrain Council have appeared in the local newspaper, radio and television. This has prompted other councils in the area to adopt similar programs, and also encouraged new migrants, Australians of ethnic minorities and other Australians who valued diversity, to move to the area.

Understand the value of diversity

Diversity is an ongoing issue. Society and the people who make up different societies and communities continue to change. The skills and technology that people find necessary today may not be relevant in 50 years. Young people grow older, politics and social values evolve and consumer trends cannot be predicted. It is worth investing time and energy into learning how to accommodate and adapt to different people and different practices. Working effectively with diversity brings many advantages to organisations and their employees.

Diversity:

- maximises the use of the Australian workforce
- increases awareness of other cultures and the competitive advantage of an organisation
- promotes greater access to markets in a global economy
- encourages open, innovative approaches to change – differences are the basis for business innovation and growth
- improves social justice and equal opportunity – which are legislated under Australian law
- ensures that a variety of ideas, skills, knowledge and talents is demonstrated for others to learn by
- capitalises on the array of skills, expertise, values and perspectives in the Australian population
- uncovers opportunities
- helps to prevent ‘group think’, which can lead a project into stagnation and ignore more effective alternative approaches to the work
- can help avoid conflict between colleagues.

Practice task 7

1. What are some things you could do so no-one in your team feels unappreciated or undervalued because of their differences from ‘the group’?

2. Can you think of events that might show employees, customers and clients that their workplace values their diversity?

Summary

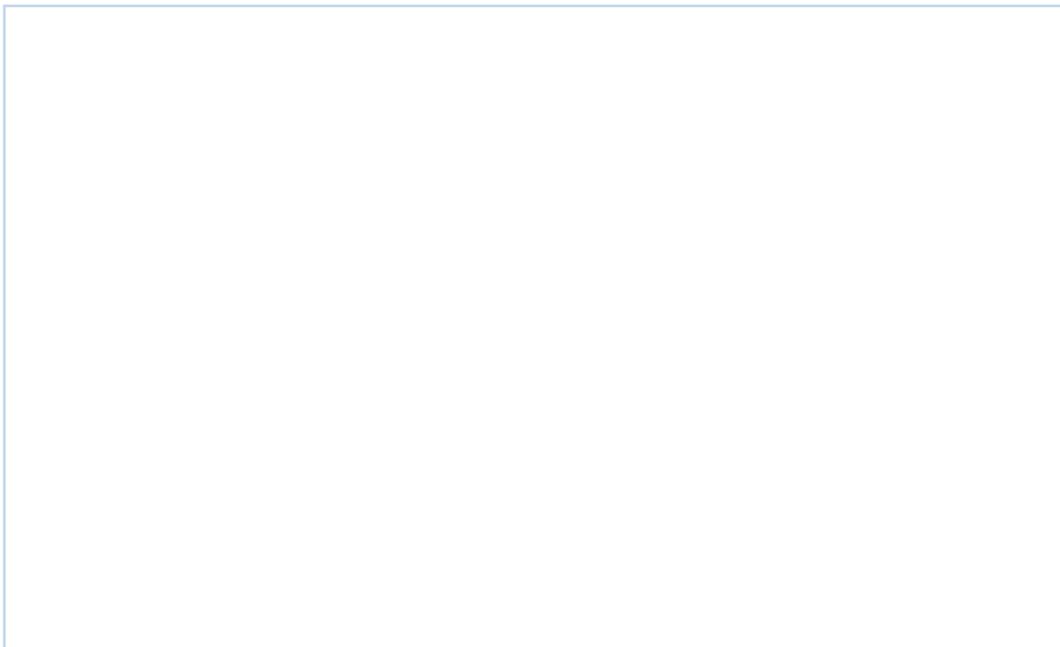
1. When colleagues value the diversity in their team it leads to a harmonious and vibrant workplace.
2. Teams need to set goals and analyse the tasks and roles required to meet them.
3. Analysis of the roles should be looked at alongside the diverse skills and knowledge of individual team members.
4. Recognition of diversity in a team will result in better problem-solving strategies.
5. When diversity is respected, every team member can confidently take part in team planning and teamwork.
6. When an organisation values diversity in its workforce, this will be reflected in its relationship with its external customers.
7. Customer diversity needs to be recognised in domestic (Australian) and international customers. Recognition and appropriate response to such diversity helps in international trade.

Learning checkpoint 2 Work effectively with individual differences

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in working effectively with individual differences.

Part A

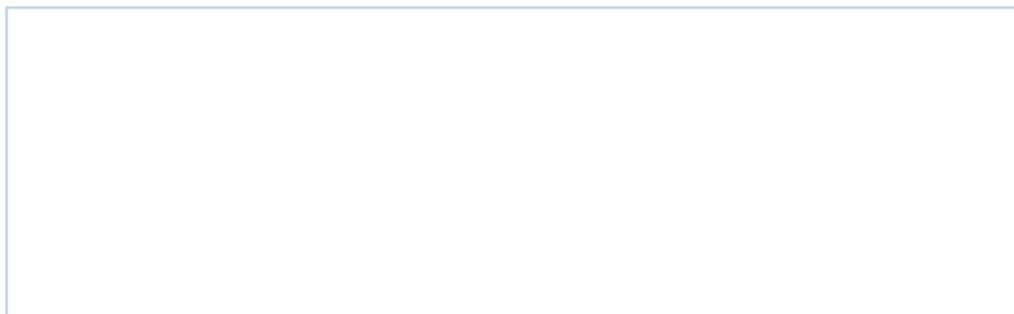
Imagine you are a member of the local Chamber of Commerce in your area. The organisation wants to attract more diverse customers into their shopping centre or mall. List at least 10 strategies or services they could put in place and advertise, to encourage customers with disabilities and special needs to shop there.



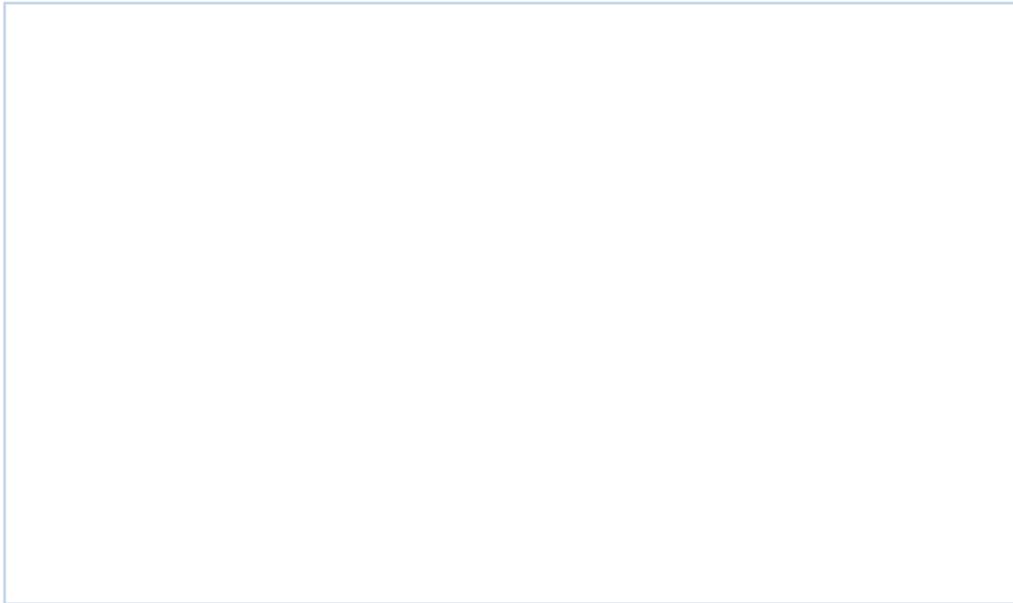
Part B

Think of a situation where your class has/had to organise an event or complete a team project. Alternatively, identify an event or project in your workplace or local community that you were, or are, a part of.

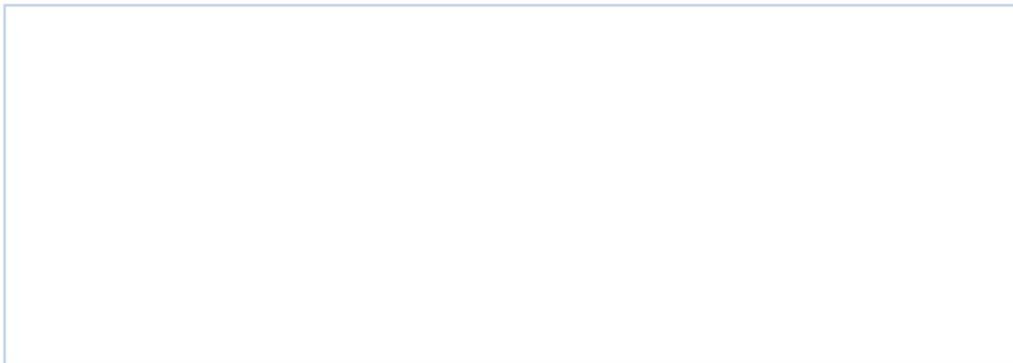
1. Identify the goals of the event or project.



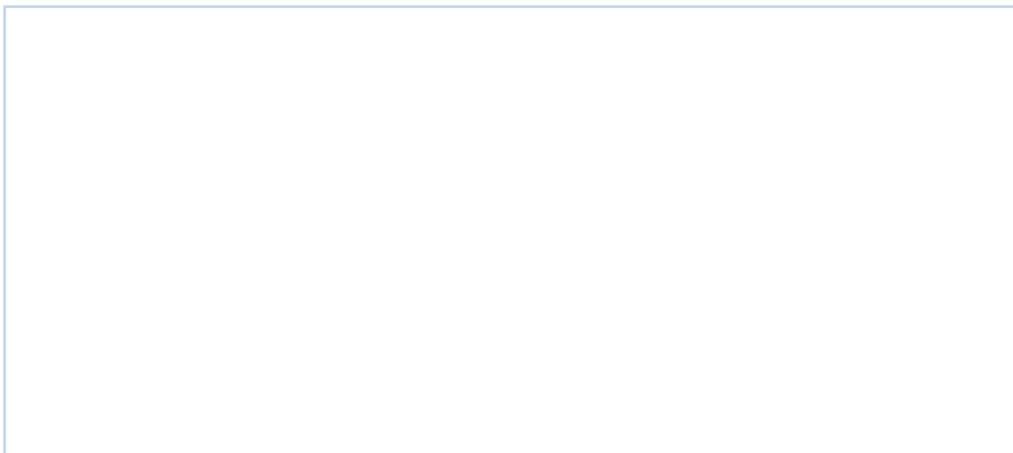
2. Identify the tasks required to meet those goals.



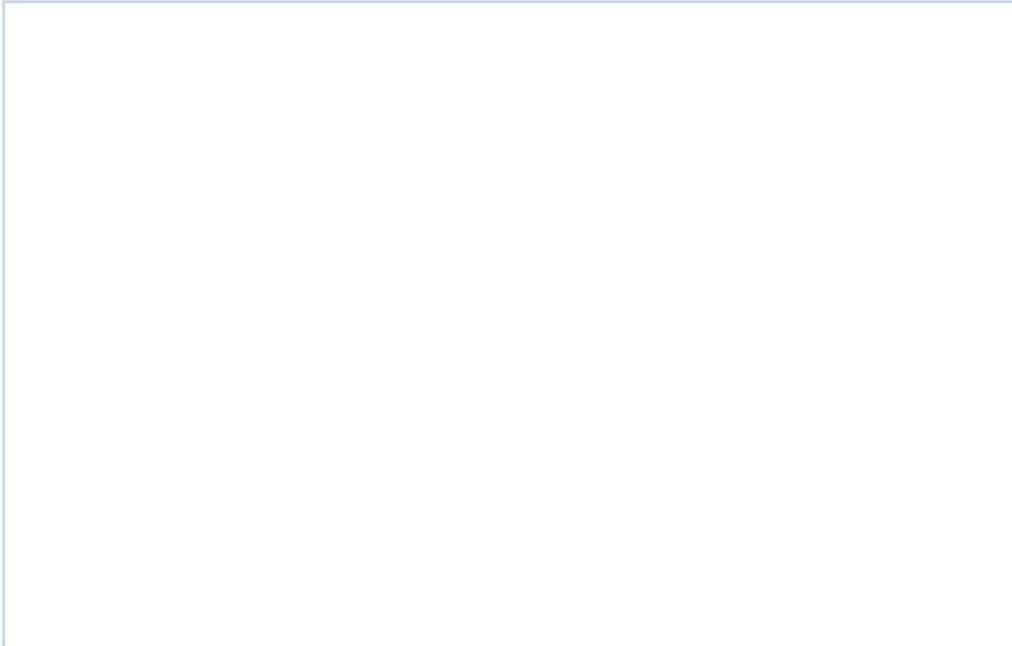
3. Identify the teams required to carry out the tasks.



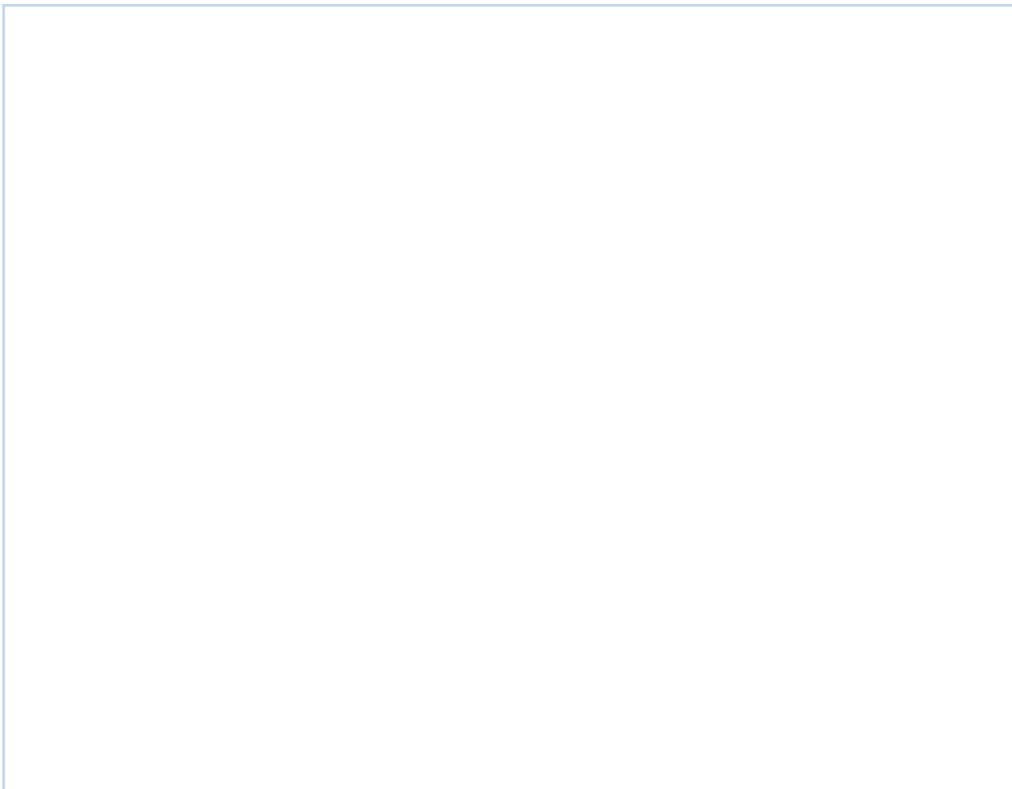
4. Identify the team where you think you would be/were most useful. Put forward the reasons why you are/were suited to a particular role in the team.



5. Describe the backgrounds and skills of team members and explain how they could/did contribute to the success of the team's undertaking.



6. Following the completion of the process of negotiating tasks in teams, describe how well you understood your team members' abilities to contribute and how they supported your own strengths.



Part C

Analyse the activities of any team in your workplace or a team in a local community with which you are familiar. Explain in a report:

- the work undertaken by the team
- how the team defines its objectives
- how planning is carried out
- how roles are assigned.

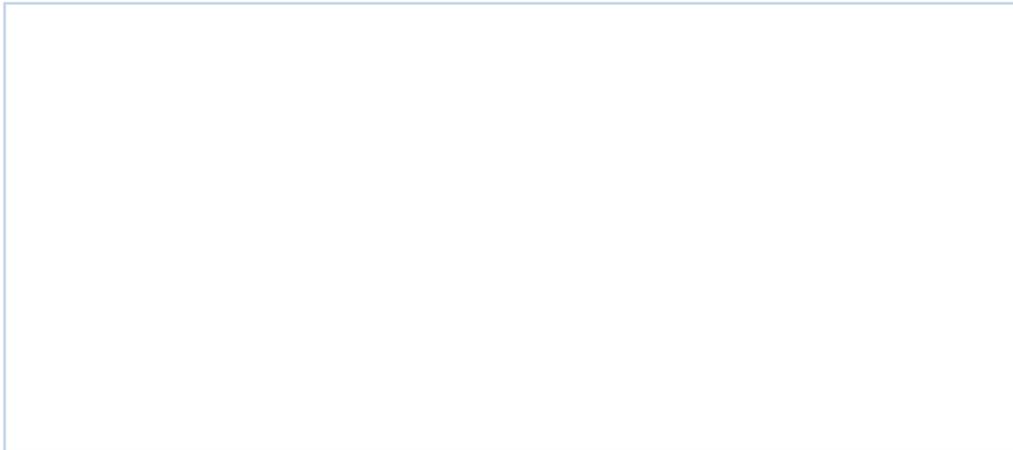
Comment on whether full advantage is taken of the range of skills and knowledge held by the team members.

If you feel this diversity is well utilised, explain how this is managed. If not, explain what measures you would take to improve the use of people's talents.

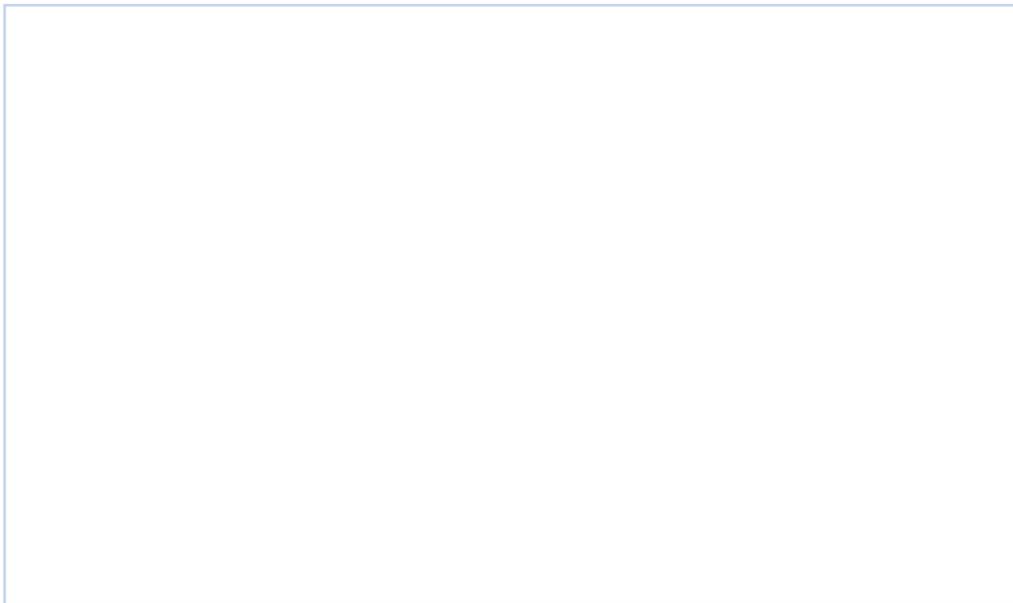
Part D

Think of a group that you belong to. It may be a group of colleagues, your classmates or a sports or social group. Think about how people in that group communicate with each other.

1. What kinds of communication techniques are helpful for encouraging each person to use their skills and knowledge and to take part in discussions or activities?



2. Give five examples of helpful communication techniques or practices, and five examples of unhelpful practices.



Part E

Imagine you are a consultant who has been employed by a large department store to:

- help staff members appreciate the value of their colleagues from diverse backgrounds
- improve access and support in-store for customers from diverse backgrounds.

You are to deliver a training session to all staff. Your main topics are as follows:

- The value of diversity to the organisation
- Actions to be taken when interacting with customers who are struggling with English
- Ways of supporting customers with mental and physical disabilities.

Prepare six or more key points on each topic. Create overhead slides or notes to support your delivery.





Part F

Use the internet, a library or do some research at your local council to select two countries with which Australia has trading relations. Choose countries whose major language is not English.

Create some tips for businesses wanting to trade in those countries, including information on:

- methods of greeting and showing respect
- how to address people (use of family and other names)
- protocols about presenting and receiving business cards
- attitudes to conducting business in formal and informal settings
- customs and attitudes about personal space and touching
- language/s spoken
- religion/s observed
- festivals/public holidays
- dress
- customs – ways of dealing with each other and their customers
- any other information that would help businesses to trade and to socialise in the marketplaces.

