



Australian Government  
Australian Skills Quality Authority

**ASQA**

# ASQA Diversity and Inclusion Strategy



**2019 - 2022**

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# ASQA Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-2022

## Our Commitment

The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) is committed to creating a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian community. We value the skills, differences and diversity of our people. We recognise that harnessing employees' skills and experiences increases innovation and improves our service to clients.

## Purpose

ASQA is developing a workplace culture where all employees understand the contribution they make to ASQA's success as the national regulator for the vocational education and training (VET) sector. ASQA seeks to ensure that the sector's quality is maintained through the effective regulation of:

- vocational education and training providers
- accredited vocational education and training courses
- Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) providers including those delivering English Language Intensive Courses to Overseas Students (ELICOS).

The purpose of the ASQA Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-2022 (the Strategy) is to acknowledge the value of our employees and highlight how their differences can improve the workplace for both the organisation and the individual.

## Workplace diversity in ASQA

Workplace diversity refers to the range of individual differences between people at work relating to age, gender, social background/experience, race, culture, disability, LGBTQI+ status and family responsibilities. ASQA understands that workplace diversity builds on the principles of equal opportunity to welcome, support and harness the differences of each employee in the workplace to achieve both individual and business goals.

## The benefits of workplace diversity

ASQA has identified benefits to cultivating and supporting a diverse workforce, including:

- enhanced job satisfaction, morale and commitment through a greater understanding of cultural differences
- improved creativity and innovation that comes from people with different perspectives
- stronger decision-making capability as a diverse workforce provides a broader range of ideas and insights
- reduction of issues relating to harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

## Diversity at ASQA

### Diversity Statistics

As at 30 June 2019, ASQA had a total of 217 employees, with the following breakdown:

- 195 full- time (89.86 per cent) and 22 part time employees (10.14 per cent)
- 186 ongoing employees (85.71 per cent) and 31 non-ongoing employees (14.29 per cent)
- 143 female employees (65.89 per cent) and 72 male employees (33.18 per cent) and 2 employees (0.93 per cent) were unknown
- 0 employees who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 4 employees (1.8 per cent) who have identified as having disability
- 26 employees (11.98 per cent) speak a language other than English.

### Actions

In order to encourage a culture of diversity and inclusion, our leaders must take responsibility for the achievements against the Strategy, and actively model behaviours which shape and enable a culture that values diversity and inclusion.

Alongside this, we must promote opportunities for employees from all areas within ASQA to be able to participate in the delivery of diversity actions and report on the outcomes, to effectively embed a culture of diversity and inclusion in our operating environment. To do this, we will:

- Appoint a Diversity Champion who will be supported by Strategic Leadership Committee (SLC).
- Trial the establishment of a Diversity Working Group to promote awareness of the workplace diversity initiatives identified in this Strategy.
- Deliver a leadership training program to employees (particularly employees with people management responsibility), with a focus on addressing themes relating to unconscious bias, discrimination and confidently managing diverse teams.
- Continue to promote and support ASQA's Flexible Working Arrangements Framework, noting that many employees may require access to flexible working arrangements at various times and for various reasons.
- Action the deliverables of the five key priority areas of the ASQA Diversity Strategy.
- Report achievements against the Strategy to SLC.

### Timeframes

November 2019

December 2019

September 2020

Biannually

2022

Biannually

## Priority areas

Through the Strategy, ASQA will develop actions to promote awareness of general diversity issues, address employment gaps and create a safe and inclusive work environment for employees, based on one or more of the following identified priority areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people with disability
- gender and sexual orientation
- intergenerational workforce
- Cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD)



## Aboriginal and Torres Islander people

### Diversity Statistics

ASQA's Annual Report for 2017-2018 shows ASQA did not employ any ongoing or non-ongoing employees who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. By comparison, at 30 June 2018, 2.9 per cent of the total Australian Public Service (APS) Workforce identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. These figures indicate that ASQA must implement significant strategies to position itself as a preferred employer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to move closer to the Commonwealth Government's Indigenous employment target of 3 per cent.

### Actions

ASQA will implement diversity initiatives with an aim to increase the attraction, retention and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and promote awareness of their history and culture throughout our agency. We will:

- Promote awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through targeted promotion of relevant Learnhub e-learning modules.
- Identify strategies for promoting ASQA's employment opportunities to a broader audience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and overcome barriers to increasing our representation.
- Develop and launch an ASQA Reconciliation Action Plan.
- Commemorate significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander occasions including National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

### Timeframes

November 2019,  
promoted biannually

March 2020

April 2020

Annually

## People with disability

### Diversity Statistics

People with disability are underrepresented in the Australian workforce with only 50 per cent of working-age people with disability currently in employment. ASQA currently relies on employees voluntarily disclosing information about their disability status on commencement of employment. As at 30 June 2019, **1.8 per cent** of ASQA's employees have provided information indicating they are living with disability, however people living with disability often choose not to disclose this. For this reason we need to understand the types of disability that people experience, to better support our workforce and remove the barriers to employment for people with disability.

### Actions

ASQA is committed to fostering a diverse workplace by increasing access to employment opportunities for people with disability as well as by providing training, education and support to current employees. To do this, we will:

- Strive to be a mentally health aware workplace by promoting disability and mental health awareness through targeted promotion of relevant Learnhub e-learning modules.
- Increase manager's knowledge and understanding of mental health to better equip them to support employees experiencing mental health issues.
- Develop guidance material on *RecruitAbility* to ensure selection panel members are aware of their responsibilities.
- Promote awareness to increase confidence in new and current employees with disability to disclose this information in the Equity and Diversity section of HUB, to develop a more accurate snapshot of our disability representation and to identify ways to provide support if and when required.
- Implement strategies to minimise or eliminate risks to mental health, promote awareness of positive mental health practices and support employees who are experiencing mental health problems.
- Develop a toolkit of resources and information so that employees and managers understand accessibility issues and are confident in implementing reasonable adjustments and flexible working arrangements to support people with disability or health concerns.
- Commemorate significant occasions including R U OK? Day, Mental Health Month and International Day of People with Disability.

### Milestones

December 2019, promoted biannually

July 2020

December 2019

November 2019

March 2020

July 2020

Annually

## Gender and Sexual Orientation

### Diversity Statistics

As at 30 June 2019, our employment data shows that nearly 66 per cent of the ASQA workforce is female which is significantly higher than the current APS average of 55 per cent. This balance is also reflected in ASQA's Executive cohort, with 65 per cent of EL 1 – SES roles being performed by women.

ASQA recognises that gender is non-binary and that employees may identify as having more than one gender, having a gender that is neither male nor female, or having no gender at all. ASQA will ensure that there are strategies in place to support all employees with respect to gender identity and sexual orientation.

### Actions

ASQA will implement strategies to ensure that no discrimination or disadvantage occurs with respect to any ASQA employee on the basis of any aspect relating to their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. To do this, we will:

- Develop an Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation Policy and a Sexual Harassment Policy and provide training to all employees on the application of these Policies.
- Provide information and guidance to ensure employees are aware of options to help them balance work and personal responsibilities, and to help employees to maintain their work and life balance and responsibilities while developing or maintaining a career.
- Implement practices to ensure employees on maternity and parental leave stay informed of career development and promotional opportunities, as well as maintaining a connection with the workplace.
- Maintain workforce planning activities to ensure that ASQA's gender balance remains proportional and that relative gender balance is maintained in each business area.
- Support employees who undertake gender transition or gender affirmation in the workplace, and their managers and colleagues.
- Commemorate International Women's Day.
- Commemorate LGBTQI+ days of significance including International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

### Milestones

December 2019

Ongoing

December 2019

Ongoing

Ongoing

Annually

Annually

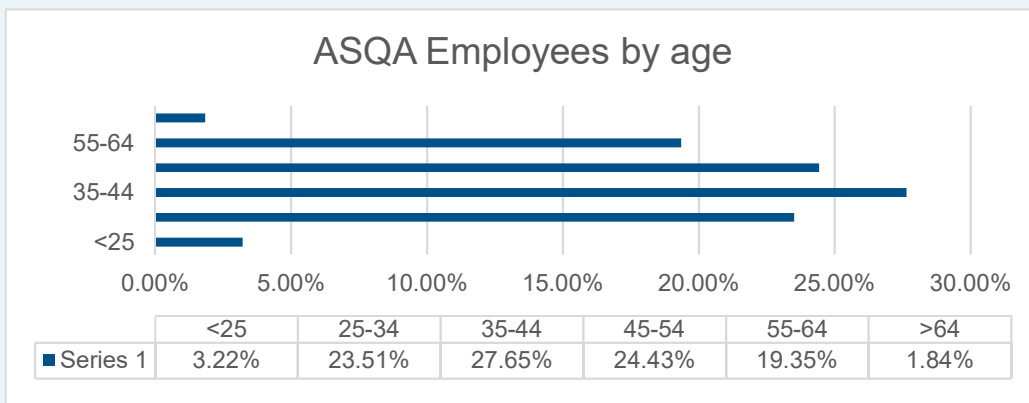


## Intergenerational workforce

### Diversity Statistics

ASQA recognises the challenges that employers face in managing the diversity of an intergenerational workforce with the table below representing the breakdown of ASQA employees across the different age groups.

**Table 1** - ASQA employees by age (as at 30 June 2019).



The age range of ASQA employees is well distributed with the 35–44 age group being the largest.

Almost 20% are in the 55-64 age group and it is reasonable to expect that a number of employees in this age group may be considering retirement.

### Actions

In understanding and responding to the differences of our intergenerational employees, ASQA will benefit by creating a more sustainable workforce which successfully captures and retains specialist skills and experience and the valuable corporate knowledge of our people. To do this, we will:

- Continue Workforce Planning and Succession Planning activities to ensure successful capture and retention of specialist skills, experience and corporate knowledge of employees nearing retirement.
- Encourage employees considering retirement to discuss their plans with their managers and SEC members to enable more effective workforce planning and to retain skills and expertise of key employees for as long as possible.
- Establish programs and identify opportunities to develop younger employees under the guidance and mentoring of ASQA employees transitioning to retirement.

### Milestones

2019-2022

As requested

2019-2022

## Cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD)

### Diversity Statistics

Approximately 26 per cent of Australians were born overseas and 21 per cent of Australians speak a language other than English at home<sup>1</sup>. At ASQA 26 employees (11.98 per cent) reported that they speak a language other than English at home.

### Actions

ASQA's role as the national regulator for the VET sector means that our employees must be aware of the cultural and linguistic diversity of their co-workers and the stakeholders they interact with. Our employees must have the appropriate skills to manage these interactions with respect and capability. To do this, we will:

- Promote Cultural awareness and address instances of cultural bias through targeted promotion of relevant Learnhub e-learning modules.
- Deliver face-to-face training that targets cultural awareness and aims to minimise unconscious bias for all employees.
- Commemorate Harmony Day.

### Milestones

December 2019,  
promoted biannually

July 2021

Annually

<sup>1</sup>. Australian Public Service Commission – State of the Service Report 2017-18.

## Measures

In the 2019 APS Employee Census, 70% of ASQA participants responded positively to the question:

*"My agency supports and actively promotes an inclusive workplace culture".*

Further to this 60% responded positively to the question:

*"My agency is committed to creating a diverse workforce (e.g. gender, age, cultural and linguistic background, disability, Indigenous, LGBTQI+)"*

Both of these responses were lower than the average positive responses for the APS overall. A positive variance in response to these questions in future APS Employee Census may be an indicator to assess the success of the Strategy.

Other indicators for evaluating the success of the Strategy include:

- an increase in representation of employees from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage over the duration of the Strategy
- an increase in representation of employees with disability over the duration of the Strategy

- maintained or increased results in the Australian Public Service (APS) Employee Census for all questions relating to Diversity and Inclusion
- feedback received from employees with disability reflects a high level of satisfaction with the support and reasonable adjustments made to enable them to perform their roles
- feedback received from employees that they have been supported to access flexible working arrangements when required.

## Supporting legislation

The following federal and state legislation covers workplace diversity and equal opportunity in Australia, and underpin the actions identified in this Strategy:

*Public Service Act 2009*

*Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*

*Age Discrimination Act 2004*

*Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

*Fair Work Act 2009* and National Employment Standards (NES).

*Sex Discrimination Act 1984*

*Racial Discrimination Act 1975*

*Racial Hatred Act 1995*

*Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*

## Supporting frameworks, policies and procedures

The following frameworks, policies and procedures support the delivery of this Strategy:

*The Australian Public Service (APS) Values, Employment Principles and Code of Conduct*

*ASQA Flexible Work Arrangements Framework*

*ASQA Home Based Work Procedure*

*ASQA Performance Development Framework*

*ASQA Reasonable Adjustment Policy*

*ASQA Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, Harassment & Victimisation Policy (draft)*

*ASQA Sexual Harassment Policy (draft)*

*ASQA Bullying, Stalking, Cyber-Bullying & Violence Policy (draft)*

*ASQA Workplace Issues and Complaints Management Policy (draft)*

*ASQA Recruitment and Selection Policy*

## Document control

Most recent version	Operative date	Summary of changes from last version	Approved by
1.3	25/2/2021	Update template and reference to Senior Executive Committee (SEC) replaced with Strategic Leadership Committee (SLC).	Cathy Daly, Manager People and Capability
1.2	25/5/2020	Amended wording of RAP deliverable.	Cathy Daly, Manager People and Capability
1.1	16/4/2020	Update template and reference to Senior Management Group (SMG) replaced with Senior Executive Committee (SEC).	Cathy Daly, Manager People and Capability
1.0	09/12/2019		