



VSTET – 6665

Self-evaluation: Compliance with The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021

VSTET Background

VSTET was registered in December 2019. VSTET as a tertiary registered institution, is required to be compliant with The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 (Code).

The primary purpose of VSTET is to care for the students who enrol and support them to improve their personal current and future situations. Therefore, the requirements of the Code are 'front and centre' of daily practice.

In April of 2022 – this year – VSTET underwent its first External Evaluation and Review. For the Key Evaluation Question "How effectively are students supported and involved in their learning" VSTET was awarded an Excellent for Performance and an Excellent for Self-assessment. The 'Findings and Supporting Evidence' provide an explanation of the support, and the conclusion states "*Pastoral care is a standout feature of the learner's experience at VSTET. An open, respectful and supportive learning environment builds learners' confidence and fosters success.*"

1 Strategic Goals and Plans

VSTET has strategic goals and plans for the health and well-being of learners. These are reviewed annually each year to ensure they remain appropriate. The well-being of current learners, and an analysis of issues which have arisen, are used to confirm strategic goals and plans. NZQA requires an annual return for the Code and this provides a timely point in time for VSTET to synchronise a review.

Staff is encouraged to be well-informed about matters which may impact the well-being of learners. This includes such themes as: mental health, sexuality, suicide risks, anxiety, and healthy lifestyles, among others. Being informed involves: personal readings, attendance at workshops, formal study, among other things. Staff frequently discuss various themes which impact, or which may affect, learners, and share articles and websites where these are considered to be helpful resources.

Strategic Goals and Plans

Vision	Everyone who enrolls with VSTET will be safe, and will be supported with their general well-being.
Outcomes	Minimum accidents, incidents, complaints through having an appropriate strategy, policy and procedures, appropriately communicated, and reported. Actions enable the learner voice to be heard. Actions are taken to support learner wellbeing.
Strategy	Organisation-wide actions which involve – # wellness by design – i.e. deliberate actions # participation in the process by all relevant stakeholders
	Continuous improvement in wellness systems - # policies and procedures to support wellbeing # education of staff in strategies to identify and support wellbeing # resources available to support wellbeing.
	Embedding wellness systems and practices to be 'business as usual'.
Policy	1-09 Incident and Emergency Response Policy

PLAN

Outcomes	Do	Done '22
Strategy is appropriate	Review the Wellbeing Strategy to ensure it remains current January	✓
	Ensure the Wellbeing Strategy is appropriately communicated in the Handbook, the main noticeboard, and the website. January	WIP
Wellbeing report is available	Review, analyse and summarise wellbeing activities to align with the code self-review deadline. November	✓
	Ensure the most recent Wellbeing report is available on the website as per NZQA requirements November	✓
Actions enable student voice to be heard	Process learner evaluations as per Evaluations Policy Twice per annum	✓ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Informally note and discuss learner conversations – and if issues require changes they are made. Note in Issues, Incidents, Complaints Folder. On-going	
	Ask learners how to improve the learners' voice – during the evaluation process. Twice per annum	✓ <input type="checkbox"/>

	Add a “leave a note” process whereby learners can leave a note by office door, or give to tutor, if they have a particular matter of concern. October	✓
Actions are taken to support wellbeing	Make available to learners, a list of organisations who can provide wellbeing help and support– checked in the Handbook, Noticeboard. January	✓
	Add link in VSTET website to NZQA Code December	WIP
	Check Complaints and Appeals Policy - Triennial review – next is 2024 - In Handbook January	✓
	Check Issues, Incidents, and Complaints folder is being used effectively June / December	✓ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Check all incidents and complaints are summarised to spreadsheet December	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Evaluate learner incidents and complaints to identify trends - Issues, Incidents, and Complaints folder. December	WIP
	Evaluate support for staff re learner wellbeing – e.g. workshops, team discussions, mentoring, counselling) December	WIP
	Confirm spreadsheet list of learner emergency contacts (in the Learner Profile spreadsheet) Quarterly	✓✓✓ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Confirm each learner has been advised of relevant policies as documented in Handbook which is gone through at enrolment – 5-01 Learner Support, 5-03 Learner Code of Conduct, 5-04 Learner Complaints, Discipline and Appeals, 5-06 Learner Literacy Support. June / December	✓ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Evaluate the portion of learners who have completed the topics on: discrimination, alcohol and other drugs, assertiveness, support services, health and safety, employment and career options – which feature in the level one and two programmes. December	WIP
	Confirm LNAAT literacy and numeracy tool has been used routinely for/by each learner at levels one and two. Quarterly	✓✓✓ <input type="checkbox"/>
	Confirm an Individual Learning Profile (ILP) – i.e. interests, needs, preferences, etc - has been completed by each learner, and checked by their tutor/s. Quarterly	✓✓✓ <input type="checkbox"/>

	Evaluate expenditure on transport, food, and personal resources (e.g. toiletries, etc), for learners August	✓
	Evaluate the range of activities which have occurred throughout the year on the “Tuesday outings”. Amend or add to the list of options. January	✓
	Establish a process for formally contacting caregivers if there are matters of concern. September	✓

An analysis of well-being activities helps to identify any emerging concerns. In 2022 an emerging concern is that of youth who have been long-term disengaged from a learning environment and who have developed an interest in gangs and the associated bullying tactics inherent in gang culture. There is a risk that socially disenfranchised youth will implement bullying tactics on other learners, many of whom struggle with social anxiety which has been shown to be an increasing issue among youth particularly since the occurrence of Covid-19.

2 Learner Voice

Learner Voice

VSTET works to build effective relationships with all learners to not only be more alert to health and wellbeing of learners, but also for learners to feel confident to talk with staff and express any concerns they may have, at a personal level, or at a group level. Staff work closely with learners, and break times are usually taken in shared spaces – not in separate kitchens and staffrooms.

The classroom is an open forum for sharing knowledge, observations, wants, and needs.

With a very small cohort of learners VSTET is readily able to talk with each learner several times a day and thereby gauge if there are any matters of a personal nature which may need an intervention. Individual staff have many ‘informal’ conversations with every student regarding the student’s well-being and progress. It is a known fact that learners will engage if they feel recognised and acknowledged by the adults around them. Staff routinely assist students to resolve issues – e.g. appointments, contacting people on behalf of the student, driving students home when they become sick.

If/when learners have queries about why things are the way they are with reference to health and safety, questions are able to be asked at any time of the day in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere.

Thus, while VSTET doesn’t have extensive document trails regarding conversations with specific learners, the small cohort of learners and the close engagement with each learner means VSTET is very aware of well-being issues which arise for each individual.

Complaints by students

VSTET has the complaints procedure in the Handbook and in the Programme Guidebooks which are provided to each student. This procedure shows what to do in the event of wanting to lodge a complaint, and how to move it forward. The Handbook and Guidebooks also advise the Appeals process.

Thus far no student has lodged a formal complaint, nor indeed, a semi-formal verbal complaint. It is felt that any potential causes for complaint are identified at the source by the open environment at VSTET where conversations between and among staff and students are casual and frequent.

There has been one appeal against not being accepted for re-enrolment, and one appeal for being withdrawn from a programme for extremely unacceptable behaviour.

3 Safe, inclusive, supportive, and accessible physical and digital learning environments

Safe learning and engaging communal environments

Learners need to have a positive frame of mind, strategies to be resilient, a sense of self-satisfaction with their learning progress, successful relationships through effective socialisation, and positive experiences which enhance their frame of mind and sense of satisfaction. The need to feel healthy and secure.

The small number of learners share the same learning environment and small staff team. The tutor ensures that there is a supportive culture in the classroom.

The small number of learners ensures VSTET can mitigate issues of discrimination, racism, bullying, harassment, and abuse.

The Handbook, and some of the topics in the programmes, provide information on services which learners may access if they are seeking wellbeing support.

Learners are encouraged to work together with learning activities, and there are occasions within each week to share recreational activities which will support cohesive and communal environments and relationships.

Staff aren't qualified counsellors, and nor is VSTET a provider of social wellbeing solutions; there are organisations with professional expertise set up to provide counselling and wellbeing support and it is the responsibility of VSTET staff to refer learners in need through to the appropriate organisations. Youth workers, Oranga Tamariki, Otago Youth Wellness Trust, and Youth Justice, undertake regular visits to see their clients. VSTET appreciates their availability and responsiveness to any matters of concern.

VSTET has an 'open door' policy. The office door is kept open unless there is something confidential happening, and the main wall of the office is a window which ensures staff and learners are 'within range' of each other. Students are comfortable with walking in for conversations.

Support with studies

Prospective learners are provided with the opportunity to look around the learning environment before enrolling, and to discuss programme content and expectations.

The Handbook and the Programme Guidebooks describe rules and guidelines for behaviour and performance, and the Guidebooks in particular, provide information on the requirements for success.

Rolling enrolments mean that learners are moving forward through their learning at different speeds to suit their personal capabilities and are often working on different topics. Assistance is always available for the learning, and no assessments are undertaken until the tutor feels that the learner is ready to do the assessment and likely to succeed.

There is support for literacy and numeracy, recognising that this can be problematic for many learners. Such support takes the form of deliberate acts of teaching specific skills, and also reader/writer support available for routine classroom work and for assessments.

Learners are each given a document which has a summary detail of their programme content and this is able to be used to monitor progress toward qualification achievement. The small classes and individual learning programmes, mean that tutors and learners daily discuss progress, these discussions being centred around progress and which topic in the programme the learner wishes to do next when they have completed a previous topic/assessment – i.e. the programmes are designed to enable an element of learner choice in the what and when.

There are topics within the programmes which provide an opportunity to explore employment and education pathways.

Physical and digital spaces

VSTET is constantly upgrading facilities. VSTET makes changes to the learning environment in consultation with the learners, and with the objective of making the environment better suited to learner interests and preferences.

There have been some issues with learners accessing websites, such as gaming, which are a distraction from learning

4 Learners are safe and well

Information for learners: basic needs

Information about rights, responsibilities, opportunities, and support services, are provided to learners in the Handbook and Guidebooks. There is opportunity to reinforce this information during various topics in each of the level one and level two programmes.

Physical and mental health

Staff pick students up in the morning and transport them to course. This is usually a very good opportunity to chat with students, and an excellent opportunity to identify if there are any issues with wellbeing, making sure that learners are safe and well.

VSTET keeps a close eye on each learner's wellbeing and facilitates the opportunity to meet with the Health Nurse who attends each week.

Food is provided to which learners have easy access to help themselves. It's basic but sufficient to fill hungry tummies. A shared meal is provided on Fridays, mainly as a communal activity.

On Tuesday afternoons there is usually a physical activity involving an outing to various destinations around Dunedin. This involves ball games, beach walking, hill climbs and similar – with a focus on different spaces, places, and paces.

Monitoring and responsiveness

VSTET obtains contact information during the enrolment process, available for use where there are concerns or potential emergencies with learners.

A risk schedule is maintained as a mechanism for reflecting and evaluating potential risks.

Supporting wellbeing can happen only if the student is turning up to class. Routine and consistency are two important factors to immediate and future wellbeing and success, and this includes regular attendance. Developing habits of regular attendance is a pathway forward to employment for VSTET learners. There is close monitoring of attendance patterns and staff speak with students who are developing haphazard attendance patterns.

Programme evaluations provide an opportunity for students to formally and confidentially comment on their programmes and learning environment.

This past year, VSTET has installed CCTV cameras. These are visible in all locations where they are installed, and the screens can be seen by everyone, albeit not the finer detail – i.e. everyone knows there are cameras, and that these are installed for safety and wellbeing reasons. Originally installed for the safety of staff (e.g. if there was an alleged incident), they have become increasingly useful to monitor classroom behaviour of specific learners when concerns have arisen. Cameras have been checked to ascertain if bullying has occurred and/or if there have been incidents of petty theft. This additional evidence-based source of information has proven useful when establishing individual behaviour contracts for specific youth.

Specific New Actions to Support Wellbeing: 2022

As a result of activities in 2022 a number of actions have been taken to improve learner health and wellbeing, which weren't in the Plan.

- 1 As a result of the appearance of youth interested in joining the gang culture, VSTET has amended the Enrolment policy, the Withdrawal policy, and the Eligibility for Enrolment working document, to include specific reference to gang interests and associated behaviour attributable to these interests.
- 2 As a result of an increase in enrolled learners who have a passion for gaming, steps have been taken to install software to restrict access to a range of sites.
- 3 As a result of the need to be able to provide evidence-based confirmation of inappropriate and/or bully behaviour, CCTV cameras have been installed.

In summary, from the EER Summary of Results: "Pastoral care is a standout feature of the learner's experience at VSTET. An open, respectful and supportive learning environment builds learners' confidence and fosters success".