What is Discrimination?

Discrimination is broadly defined as treating one person unfairly over another according to factors unrelated to their ability or potential. It occurs when someone receives less favorable treatment on the basis of characteristics or stereotyped assumptions. For example it is wrong to assume that a woman with children cannot take on a job that involves travel or overtime. Or that a disabled person cannot perform as well as a non-disabled person.

What is Equal Opportunity?

Equal opportunity means that all people, regardless of age, sex, ethnic background, an impairment or due to other attributes, are given equal opportunities in employment, education, accommodation, services etc are not discriminated against and have the right to fair and equitable treatment.

Will I lose my job or fail if I complain of discrimination or sexual harassment?

State and federal laws and RMIT protects all persons who make a complaint of discrimination or sexual harassment from victimisation. Victimisation is a most serious act and will not be tolerated at RMIT. Any student or member of staff has the right to make a complaint, and co-students or co-workers have the right to assist a person so making a complaint without retaliation.

RMIT University has a legal responsibility to prevent unlawful discrimination, otherwise it can be held liable for the behaviour of its employees and, in some instances, its students. In addition to this legal responsibility, RMIT considers that all forms of unlawful discrimination are incompatible with its desire to be one of the world’s great universities and incompatible with its view that all people should be treated equally with respect, dignity and courtesy.

All staff and students have a responsibility to: "comply with this policy; and" maintain complete confidentiality concerning any complaint or investigation. All staff have a responsibility to model appropriate behaviour and promote a climate of mutual respect.

Staff who are managers, supervisors, academics and teachers have the following additional responsibilities: "monitor the working and studying environment to ensure that acceptable standards of conduct are observed at all times and to take action if they observe unacceptable conduct; "promote this policy within their sphere of influence and to ensure that all persons have an
understanding of the policy and its requirements;“ensure that students and staff are aware of RMIT’s commitment to assist them should they experience unlawful discrimination on work or study placement; and”ensure that students and staff on work or study placements are provided with adequate information about the policies and practices in existence at that site.

Managers are accountable for the conduct of staff and students under their management. It is integral to a manager’s responsibilities that s/he identify, prevent and redress potential problems in the workplace or in the study environment before these become the subject of complaints.

Therefore, any manager, academic or teaching staff who observes inappropriate behaviour has a duty to raise it with the person so behaving and to take further action if the behaviour does not cease. This duty exists even in the absence of a complaint.

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