

Student Handbook

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1 Introduction

Welcome to MDS Training. The information contained in this student handbook is part of the orientation and enrolment process for this course.

Please read this information carefully and refer to it as you need to. Further information is available from your trainer, MDS Training support staff, MDS Training Coordinator or the Community Training and Development Manager.

Every attempt has been made to ensure the information contained in this book is correct at time of printing; however some sections may be amended without notice by MDS Training in response to other issues or circumstances.

MDS Ltd has over 25 years experience in the disability sector and understands the need for professional and effective training. MDS Training was originally in partnership with two registered training organisations. However, a decision was made to attain independent status as a registered training organisation. It was considered with the experience gained from the partnerships and skills and knowledge of staff it was a transition which could only improve our service delivery.

2 Orientation and enrolment

Before you begin your training, it is important that you understand what you will be learning about, and how you will be assessed. The Training Coordinator and the MDS Training support staff will provide you with this information.

This student handbook is provided as part of the orientation and enrolment process. It is important students read this handbook and seek additional information prior to enrolling if you are unsure of any aspect of the information contained in this book.

This handbook will provide you with information about the way MDS Training operates, and your rights and responsibilities as learners. It will also inform you of what to do if you require additional support during your training, or other issues, such as applying for Recognised Prior Learning (RPL), or making a complaint.

3 General information

Students, as part of the enrolment process, will be required to complete an enrolment form. This form enables MDS Training to accurately record and store information you provide. Information provided will be used for the purpose for which it has been collected only. This means information is to

assist in administration of your course requirements, reporting to regulatory authorities and if relevant, your employer.

Information is also collected in order to provide individual support to students and reasonable adjustments.

Through its student record management system MDS Training will ensure all information collected and stored is accurate. A component of this will be accurate record keeping regarding assessment results.

Students should refer to the MDS Training Course Progress policy (insert Link) which is available on our website, or in hard copy, at your request. This policy covers the following areas: achieving competence, monitoring progress, extensions, support strategies and access to results.

Students should refer to the MDS Training policy entitled Training Policy. This policy outlines the key responsibilities of MDS Training staff, access and equity, assessment practice, feedback methods, privacy and confidentiality, completion of qualifications, recognition of qualifications, professional development of staff and graduation.

Please note that 80% attendance across your course is required. You may be incomplete in a course if you do not attend all of the sessions.

4 Equity and access

All students have a right to access MDS Training in order to undertake study. Students will be treated fairly and without discrimination in their dealings and relationship with MDS Training and its staff.

MDS Training acknowledges the diversity of its students and will endeavour to meet any and all of the individual needs of the students. MDS Training will provide reasonable adjustments for students who require adjustments which will enable successful study and assessment outcomes, or support the person in the achievement of successful study and training outcomes.

Students are asked to provide as much detail on the support required on the enrolment form and work in a consultative mechanism with MDS Training staff to ensure their needs are met.

All students are welcome to complete a course utilising the resources and support of MDS Training and its staff. Bullying and harassment of students by students, or staff, including contract staff, will not be tolerated. Grievances can be lodged and action will be taken which could include removal from a course of enrolment.

5 Course fees and refunds

This section applies to those who have paid to attend a course. If your course attendance is part of a traineeship or other funding arrangement, other

contract fee arrangements apply. This information is also contained in MDS Training's Training Policy.

1. MDS Training will accept a payment of no more than \$1000 from each individual student prior to the commencement of the course
2. Once the course has commenced MDS Training will collect additional fees in advance
 - 2.1. The collection of the additional fees in advance will comply with Condition Five of AQTF in that at any given time, the total amount required to be paid which is for services not yet delivered will not exceed \$1500
 - 2.2. Students will also be provided with other payment options including but not limited to:
 - 2.2.1. A deposit and regular payments
 - 2.2.2. Fifty percent of course costs and the balance paid within the course (section 2.2.2 cannot breach section 1.0 or section 2.1)
 - 2.2.3. A deposit and mid payment and end payment of course costs
 - 2.3. Once an enrolment form is received and processed, credits, transfers or refunds can only be applied in the following cases:
 - 2.3.1. A course is cancelled or the date is changed by the training centre
 - 2.3.2. A written request is received ten days prior to the course commencement
3. It is possible to substitute a replacement into most long courses and any short course which has not commenced
4. Administration fees apply to all requests for refunds, unless condition 2.3 above applies. The administration fees are as follows:
 - 4.1. \$50 fee for a short course of one or two days duration
 - 4.2. \$200 fee for a long course scheduled to run weekly, fortnightly or monthly or other over a period of time
5. Refunds will not be issued for:
 - 5.1. Long courses, other than 2.3 above, once the course has commenced and resources issued and the person has attended one session
 - 5.2. A refund will be calculated on a pro-rata basis dependent on:
 - 5.2.1. Fees paid
 - 5.2.2. Length of course
 - 5.2.3. Administration fee
 - 5.2.4. Resources or other tools supplied
6. Non attendance or substitution of a short course
7. A fee of \$10 or \$20 will apply if students require an additional or replacement copy of their resource materials and/or assessment tools.
 - 7.1.1. \$10 will apply for any resource or assessment tool of less than 50 pages
 - 7.1.2. \$20 will apply for any resource or assessment tool with more than 50 pages
 - 7.1.3. If information can be emailed, dependent on size limits from MDS or at the receiving end, these will be free and there is no limit on receiving a replacement resource or assessment tool using this method

8. A student who is a trainee and studying a nationally recognised qualification as part of a traineeship does not generally pay any fees. The exception to this can be an administration fee which is equivalent to the current NSW TAFE fee. In some cases the employing organisation may pay this fee. This fee is payable within three months of commencement of the traineeship, this fee is non refundable. No cancellation fees apply if the person determines they want or need to cancel the traineeship.

6 Recognised Prior Learning (RPL)

MDS will be able to offer recognition of prior learning. RPL involves the assessment of knowledge or skills a learner already has, prior to the delivery of training. If you wish to apply for RPL, you will be required to provide evidence that you have the skills identified in all or part of the course you are enrolled in.

The evidence you provide could have been acquired in a variety of ways e.g.: formal study, work experience or 'life' experiences, and may include other course information and certification, or evidence collected from a work environment.

If you wish to apply for RPL, you must follow these procedures:

- Complete an RPL/CT application form. This can be obtained by contacting the MDS Training Coordinator.
- Discuss your application with the MDS Training Coordinator, who will assist you in understanding what type of evidence you may be required to collect.
- You will be provided with the relevant RPL tool, for your selected units or qualification, to assist you to gather evidence and then you will be required to attach evidence to demonstrate your competency to the application.
- Hand the application form and evidence in and your application will be assessed by the MDS Training Coordinator.

You may be required to attend an interview with the designated assessor to discuss the evidence provided. If this occurs, you are able to bring a support person with you.

You will be advised of the results of the RPL assessment. If the information or evidence provided clearly shows you have the skills or knowledge outlined, credit will be given and recorded for the equivalent units of competency.

If your application for RPL is unsuccessful, and you disagree with this decision, you may request a review of assessment. This can be submitted in writing within five (5) working days of the result being issued.

An assessment panel will re-examine the evidence (or request new evidence) and come to a decision. The trainer/assessor will use additional peer support in reviewing the decision. You will be notified of the results of the re-assessment.

Fees are charged for RPL in line with the course costs and whether you require RPL for one or more units or an entire qualification. The fee will be negotiated prior to commencement.

7 Credit transfer from other Registered Training Organisations

MDS will be able to offer credit transfer. If you wish to apply for credit transfer you can follow the procedures below:

- Complete an RPL/CT application form. This can be obtained by contacting the MDS Training Coordinator.
- Attach a copy of your statement of attainment or certificate. Ensure the appropriate national unit codes are included.
- The Training Coordinator will need to sight the original for verification purposes or you can provide a certified copy.
- Hand the application form and copy in for assessment by the MDS Training Coordinator.

You will be advised of the results of the RPL/CT assessment. If the information or evidence provided clearly shows you have the skills or knowledge outlined, credit will be given and recorded for the equivalent units of competency.

No fees are charged for the credit transfer process.

8 Assessment

All assessment services provided by MDS Training will be conducted by qualified assessors, and your assessment will be conducted in accordance with the Training Package Assessment Guidelines.

Information relating to the method of assessment and number of assessment tasks for the qualification you are undertaking is provided to you by the trainer, generally in the form of a timetable, and in some cases (such as traineeships), a Training Plan. You have the right to have this information before you commence your training. All assessment tasks delivered by MDS Training will be valid, reliable, flexible, fair, authentic and current.

Records of your assessment results will be kept by MDS Training. You will receive a copy of all of your assessment outcomes. Students will receive notification of competent or not yet competent and appropriate feedback for all submitted tasks. Students can request a course progress report at any stage during their qualification study.

All candidates have the right to appeal an assessment result and request re-assessment, and the process for appeal is discussed in the next section of the handbook.

Training and Assessment tools and tasks can be adjusted by MDS Training to provide reasonable adjustment to the assessment tasks and tools. Students can approach the Training Coordinator to discuss the need for reasonable adjustment at any time during the course of study.

All assessment results will be recorded in the student records management database.

The Assessment Policy covers submission of tasks, record keeping and appeals process.

It is essential you keep a copy of your work and follow up with the assessor and check they have received your task. If you post items in for marking we suggest using registered post so items can be tracked. If you email, attach a read receipt or send an email requesting confirmation the assessor has received the work. If you hand it in to the assessor, you can sign off against the attendance sheet as having handed in an assessment task.

9 Assessment Appeal Process

If you wish to appeal the result/s of an assessment MDS Training utilises an internal appeals process. Please refer to the Assessment Policy for details on the appeals process (insert link). The request for extension form is available online or in hard copy at request.

10 Evaluation and Feedback

To assist MDS Training to continually improve the training and assessment services it provides we will collect feedback from students.

You will be asked to complete an evaluation from at a midpoint of your course, at the conclusion of your course and approximately three months after completing your nationally recognised qualification. These evaluations will be handed out by your trainer or training coordinator. In the case of the post evaluation, this will be emailed or posted to you.

You can provide feedback at any time to any staff of MDS Training.

You may also be asked to provide feedback if you are provided with individual support or access other support services. All feedback is collected in line with privacy principles and confidentiality is maintained. Feedback is used to make improvements to ensure students are provided with quality training and assessment.

Feedback is also part of MDS Training's continuous improvement.

11 Making a Complaint

MDS Training has an established procedure to deal with complaints and/or grievances. If you wish to make a complaint, you should discuss the complaint with the MDS Training Coordinator initially.

If no resolution is achieved then you can request an interview with the MDS Training Community Training and Development Manager. At this point the complaint becomes a formal grievance, and you will fill in a Training Participant Complaint Form to record your concerns. All formal grievances are to be recorded on the available form.

If no resolution can be achieved at this level, you will be advised of the appropriate external body where you can access further assistance. All grievances will be handled professionally and confidentially in order to achieve a speedy resolution.

If you have literacy difficulties, you may request assistance from another person to complete the complaint form.

The complaint and grievance form is used to:

- Lodge appeals against assessment decisions
- Lodge complaints about issues which occur in the classroom
- Lodge appeal against a meeting outcome (as per the course progress policy)

12 Support Services

The enrolment form provides an opportunity to indicate you may require additional support. However, you can discuss individual needs and support at any time during the course.

If during the course of study, you feel you are having difficulties with learning or assessment tasks, please contact the MDS Training Coordinator, who will either provide you with additional support, or refer you to external supports to assist you.

If you are experiencing personal problems, or issues which you feel may be affecting your participation in the training program, please contact your Training Coordinator, who will refer you to external welfare services.

13 Professional development

MDS Training provides professional development opportunities for all its staff including contract trainers.

During these sessions staff will review assessment tools and tasks, discuss classroom, training or assessment issues.

This is considered essential to continuous improvement regarding student outcomes.

14 Graduations

MDS Training would like to celebrate your achievements by providing a graduation opportunity. These will be held twice a year, in May or June and November at MDS Ltd AGM. Students will be invited to celebrate their awards at the relevant function.

Students who do not wish to attend or are unable to attend will have their qualifications posted to them, or they can pick them up.

Students who wish to can have a black and white photocopy made of their certificate or statement and then attend the relevant graduation. There will be no charge for black and white copy of the qualification to enable the person to receive their qualification at a ceremony.

15 Occupational Health and Safety

Employers and employees have a duty of care to all people in NSW workplaces with regard to health, safety and welfare at work. This duty of care is outlined in the NSW OHS Act 2000. The OHS Act describes the responsibilities of employers, employees, owners, designers, manufacturers and suppliers, in relation to staying safe at work. MDS Training takes its responsibilities as a provider of training seriously and, as part of its OHS obligations, ensure the health and well being of students.

Occupational Health and Safety covers onsite at any MDS controlled premises and off site at premises controlled by other organisations.

Health and well being refers to general OHS such as safety in the classroom from hazards, however it also includes bullying and harassment concerns.

On occasion, the content in some courses can be challenging such as some topic content in the Certificate IV Mental Health. All courses of this nature will offer an opportunity for the student to leave the room or receive tuition independently if the content is harmful to their health and well being. Students

are also offered an opportunity to debrief with MDS Training staff, and its contractors, if they find the content challenging.

All students, staff and contractors are to maintain OHS standards at all times.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Following all OHS instructions
- Reporting all hazards
- Wearing PPE when directed
- Use equipment appropriately
- Follow emergency procedures if directed
- Being provided with OHS information such as evacuation procedures, and general housekeeping

16 Study tips

- ❖ Set up a quiet place
- ❖ Allocate a regular study time
- ❖ Ensure you have regular breaks
- ❖ Set a study goal. For example, complete part A or a number of questions
- ❖ Read and re read the questions
- ❖ Circle the key words
- ❖ Write in draft form first
- ❖ Re read your answer to see if it responds or addresses the question
- ❖ See the MDS Training Coordinator if you experience difficulties or if any aspect of your assessment is unclear
- ❖ Discuss with your trainer or MDS Training Coordinator handing in partial completions. This can sometimes help a student who finds they go over work which has already been responded to and changing the work. This way you can receive a result for that component and this can enable you to move on in the task.
- ❖ Accept feedback as a positive mechanism for reassuring you and demonstrates you are moving forward in your course
- ❖ MDS also has available, subject to availability, a communication room with computers
- ❖ Contract trainers and the MDS Training Coordinator will comment on drafts