**Section 1: Introduction**

**IPLS Pastoral Care Strategic Plan**

**Oct 2023**

**Definition**

The term ‘student wellbeing’ includes the physical, mental, and emotional, social and spiritual dimensions of a student’s health. *Ministry of Education*

**Context**

The Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS) was established by the New Zealand Council of Legal Education (the Council) in 1987 to provide a practical legal-skills training course for law graduates. NB: *At IPLS learners are called ‘trainees.’*

Trainees attending the IPLS Professional Legal Studies (Profs) course have typically spent four-plus years at a New Zealand university completing a law degree. IPLS does not provide accommodation, therefore only outcomes 1-4 and 8-12 of the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 (the Code) apply.

Since March 2020, IPLS has been operating in a near 100% remote environment with all learning undertaken online and via Zoom (except for one 13-week course which runs onsite in Auckland and Wellington from late January to mid-April each year), with an instructor alongside small groups of trainees at all stages of the course. Prior to this, the majority of the IPLS course had been delivered as a blended course for quite some time, therefore this change involved only three seminars. It has however introduced a third cohort of trainees (in addition to domestic trainees and International trainees) – those learning from an overseas location. (‘Offshore trainees’)

Given the relatively short length of the course (13 weeks or 18 weeks) and the fact it is fully remote, IPLS has selected online anonymous surveys as the key method for ‘listening to the trainee voice’, however we also incorporate other ways of doing so as appropriate.

**Learner groups:**

1. Domestic trainees – New Zealand citizens and Permanent Residents
2. International trainees – International citizens who hold a study visa
3. Offshore trainees – those completing Profs online from a location outside New Zealand

IPLS offers four NZQA-approved variations of its Profs course:

1. 13 weeks fulltime onsite in Auckland and Wellington from January to April each year
2. 13 weeks online with Zoom sessions during business hours
3. 18 weeks online with Zoom sessions during business hours
4. 18 weeks online with Zoom sessions during some evenings and on Saturdays

**Objective**

To provide an inclusive, safe and healthy learning environment

**Goal**

IPLS is committed to supporting the wellbeing of its trainees and takes practical action towards this goal with a range of policies, processes and support services designed to foster a positive learning experience and outcome for all.

**Target Audience**

1. Trainees
2. Instructors
3. National Office employees
4. Compliance partners – NZCLE, NZQA

**Key Performance Indicators**

1. Positive feedback on their learning experience with IPLS from all trainees
2. Zero complaints from trainees
3. Zero incidents or accidents (relating to IPLS study and/or being onsite)
4. Timely and appropriate resolution of trainee issues
5. A high rating from international and offshore trainees and those with a disability/health condition in their end-of-course survey
6. Trainees demonstrate a clear understanding of the Code and IPLS’ commitment to honouring its requirements by successfully completing the Orientation quiz
7. Excellent NZQA rating in the EER and other monitoring activities
8. All actions in the Action Plan are completed in a timely manner
9. Key documents reviewed annually as part of the self-review process

**Section 2: Achieving the NZQA Outcomes**

**Outcome 1: A safe and supportive learning environment**

*Students experience a physically safe and mutually supportive learning environment that responds to the needs of all students.*

**1. Strategic goals and strategic plans**

This strategic plan outlines IPLS strategic goals and KPIs

**2. Self-review of learner wellbeing and safety practices**

Our continuing improvements and adherence to the Code are reviewed annually via the Self-assessment process due 1 November each year.

In addition:

* IPLS Manuals and Handbooks are reviewed annually. This includes the Trainee Handbook and its accompanying policies and procedures.
* Annual Moderation reports and Completion Statistics analysis along with Quarterly and Annual reports to NZCLE also provide opportunities for self-review.

**3. Publication requirements**

Copies of the Code in English and Te Reo as well as a link to the NZQA ‘information for learners’ section of its website is published on the IPLS website in the Trainee Wellbeing section.

**Website**

The IPLS website has a section focused on trainee wellbeing and the FAQ page is also continuously improved in response to trainee queries.

**IPLS Trainee Handbook**

IPLS’ commitment to the Code is outlined in the Trainee Handbook available to all trainees via the Learning Management Platform. The Trainee Handbook contains a summary all IPLS policies and procedures from how to transfer or withdraw from the course to how to make a complaint.

**4. Responsive Wellbeing & Safety Systems**

IPLS has put in place a range of services to ensure the wellbeing and safety of trainees, including:

* **Wellbeing Hub –** provides arange of wellbeing resources and is available to all traineesin the Learning Management Platform.
* **Wellbeing Policy –** outlining supportfortrainees with disabilities, health conditions and other challenges
* **Wellbeing Coordinator -** to support trainees who need additional support throughout the course
* **Trainee Wellbeing Support Team** – IPLS has a dedicated team, that meets weekly, who are responsible for ensuring trainees access the support they require in a timely fashion. This team provides support both reactively and proactively.
* **External wellbeing support** – where required, the Wellbeing Team, can provide specialist support for trainees via an independent counsellor or other specialist.
* **Personal Management Seminar** – this seminar is part of the course and enables trainees to learn about wellbeing methods and tools that they can use while on the course and into the workplace. As part of this seminar we provide information and materials that specifically address the issues of lawyers in practice.
* **Staff training** – all IPLS instructors have undertaken specialised training to assist them in providing appropriate and relevant care to their trainees.

**Outcome 2**: **Learner voice**

*Providers understand and respond to diverse learner voices and wellbeing and safety needs in a way that upholds their mana and autonomy.*

1. **Learner Voice**

We recognise that IPLS trainees are all adults who have already been at university for several years and who are often already employed in the legal profession. We are committed to continuous improvement and seek feedback on an ongoing basis from our trainees to inform this process.

Trainees complete a number of surveys throughout the course and also an end-of-course survey which includes specific wellbeing questions. This feedback is reviewed regularly with clear processes for implementing action as a result of feedback.

We also conduct one-off surveys or focus groups where appropriate. For example, in 2022, trainees completed a one-off wellbeing survey and the results of this survey provided insight for improvements to trainee policies, processes, and procedures.

**2. Learner complaints**

The Trainee Handbook contains the formal Complaints Policy for trainees.

**3. Compliance with the Dispute Resolution Scheme**

Information for domestic and international trainees is contained in the Trainee Handbook, including information about a trainee’s right to access the Education (Domestic Tertiary Student Contract Dispute Resolution Scheme) Rules 2021.

**Outcome 3: Safe, inclusive, supportive, and accessible physical and digital learning environments**
*Providers must foster learning environments that are safe and designed to support positive learning experiences of diverse learner groups.*

**1.Safe and inclusive communities**

The Code requires providers to foster safe and inclusive learning environments that support learner participation and engagement. At IPLS, this starts at the very beginning of a trainee’s journey, where our enrolment form recognises diversity and engagement flows through the course with our participant process and wellbeing hub.

We have clear policies on discrimination and bullying that can be found in the Trainee Handbook and all instructors are recruited and trained to be always respectful of the individual trainee and their unique perspective. The legal transactions and scenarios throughout the course reflect the diversity of our trainees as well as the general public who, of course, may become clients.

We also have a range of support services for international and offshore trainees and trainees with a disability or a health condition.

There is equal access to the course for all trainees who complete the course online. Trainees do not have the logistical and financial challenges of traveling to a site and there are no security issues. Our fulltime onsite trainees are onsite between 9 and 4.30pm and we lock the premises outside of those hours. Trainees are supervised all day onsite by their instructor and there is a fulltime receptionist in Wellington and National Office staff onsite in Auckland.

**2. Supporting learner participation and engagement**

Zoom meetings provide trainees with an opportunity to collaborate with each other and get to know each other and their instructors. We have an initial ‘getting started’ Zoom in the first 2-3 days of the course and then Zoom meetings throughout three seminars. Trainees who study with IPLS have been at law school for four to five years and often find they already know other people on the course.

Instructors work closely alongside all trainees throughout the course, providing feedback on tasks and ensuring all work is submitted on time. There are submission dates for tasks or assessments every few days and if a trainee does not submit their work the instructor will follow up with them immediately. The wider wellbeing team is also available to support the trainee as required.

**3. Physical and digital spaces and facilities**

Trainees are not currently required to come onsite unless they are in the fulltime onsite course that runs in Auckland and Wellington.

The fulltime onsite course includes an orientation which covers site-related matters such as:

* Evacuation procedures
* What participation is required where a trainee is unwell with cold or flu like symptoms

In terms of digital spaces, trainees can study from wherever they choose – the minimum requirement is a good wifi connection and a laptop or PC with Zoom capability. For those who choose to base themselves offshore we discuss with them upfront the importance of considering Zoom meeting times, which are in NZ times. Where there is a time zone difference our instructors will work with the trainees to ensure they book suitable times wherever possible.

**Outcome 4: Learners are safe and well**

*Providers must support learners to manage their physical and mental health through information and advice and identify and respond to learners who need additional support.*

**1. Information for learners about assistance to meet their basic needs**

See Outcome 1 above for details of the IPLS Wellbeing Hub and range of Wellbeing Support Services.

1. **Promoting physical and mental health awareness**

Trainees are encouraged to discuss any existing health conditions or disabilities with us part of their enrolment process so that we can put support in place before they start the course. Where they indicate this on the enrolment form, we will be in touch with them proactively to provide further information and support. With their consent this information is passed on to their instructor/s to ensure continuity of care.

All trainees are made aware of the Wellbeing Hub at the beginning of the course and there is a focus on resilience and wellbeing as part of the Personal Management seminar.

We have a dedicated Wellbeing Coordinator that instructors can talk to for advice and input or refer trainees to.Further to this, we have a counsellor/psychologist that trainees can be referred to as necessary.

1. **Proactive monitoring and responsive wellbeing and safety practices**

Instructors are advised if a trainee in their class:

* Has a disability or health condition and what accommodation has been approved for their care. (This information is only passed on with the trainee’s written consent.)
* Is an international student
* Is based overseas
* Any other relevant information (with the trainee’s consent)

Our Trainee Services Coordinator and/or the Wellbeing Coordinator will proactively reach out to all trainees who indicate any of the above on the enrolment form or at any stage throughout the course. Once support has been agreed, they will proactively check in via email with the trainee throughout the course. Further to this, we ask for feedback at the end of the course and keep any feedback received in our feedback register.

Instructors are also trained to be aware of things to look out for in trainee behaviour as well as follow up immediately if any of the regular tasks/ assessments are not completed by a trainee. This process is outlined in our Participation process and supported closely by the National Director.

A critical incident definition and process has been included as of 2023, alongside our complaints process which was already in place.

**Outcome 8: Responding to the distinct wellbeing and safety needs of international tertiary learners**

*Signatories must ensure practices under this code respond effectively to the distinct wellbeing and safety needs of their diverse international tertiary learners.*

1. **Understanding the wellbeing and safety needs of diverse international tertiary learners**

Providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all trainees is a key tenet of IPLS’ philosophy.

Many of our International learners have already completed their LLB in New Zealand and for those that haven’t, they will have been through a process with NZCLE requiring them to study and sit specific NZ law exams prior to being able to start Profs.

Our Trainee Services Coordinator contacts all International trainees proactively before they start the course and provides full information to them as well as an ongoing contact, outside of their instructor, should they need assistance. They also proactively follow up with them by email during the course. This has been very well received by our International students who are appreciative of the support.

Instructors are made aware of which trainees are international students by way of their class list.

**Outcome 9: Prospective international tertiary learners are well informed**

*Signatories ensure that prospective international tertiary learners receive clear, accessible, accurate and sufficient information, and make informed choices about the study and services a signatory provides before they begin their study.*

**1: Marketing and promotion**

IPLS does not market to International students.

1. **Managing and monitoring education agents**

IPLS does not work with education agents.

**Outcome 10: Offer, enrolment, contracts, insurance and visa**

*Signatories must have practices for enabling learners to make well-informed enrolment decisions in relation to the educational outcomes being sought by the learner and ensuring that all relevant parties are clear about their interests and obligations prior to entering into the enrolment contract.*

The IPLS enrolment process covers the following processes:

* Offer of educational instruction
* Information to be provided before entering contract
* Contract of enrolment
* Disciplinary action
* Insurance
* Immigration matters
* Student fee protection and managing withdrawal and closure

Trainees enrol online and indicate on the form they are an international trainee. The Enrolments Manager sends the trainee a Welcome email confirming their enrolment and outlining the documentation required.

**Outcome 11: International learners receive appropriate orientations, information and advice**

*Signatories must ensure international tertiary learners have the opportunity to participate in well-designed and age-appropriate orientation programmes and continue to receive relevant information and advice to support achievement, wellbeing and safety.*

1. **Provision of information**

The IPLS website provides international trainees with information relevant to their specific needs. This includes details on how to transfer and withdraw from the course, what documentation is required and how to make a complaint. We also provide access to information on non-study needs such as accommodation and other services.

The Orientation seminar introduces trainees to the course and the regulations governing the successful completion of the course.

The Trainee Handbook and Wellbeing Hub provide information specific to international trainees.

**Outcome 12: Safety and appropriate supervision of international tertiary learners**

*Signatories ensure that international tertiary learners are safe and appropriately supervised in their accommodation and effectively communicate with the parents or legal guardian of learners under 18 years.*

This outcome is not applicable to IPLS. Our trainees have already completed a law degree so are over 18 and have their own accommodation.