



Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2024-26

Vision

The University of Wollongong (UOW) is a leader in empowering staff and students with a disability to fully participate in and contribute to the workplace and learning environments.

Disability Inclusion at UOW

The UOW Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) aims to identify and reduce barriers to enable people living with a disability to fully contribute to the University. It outlines the actions that UOW will take over the **next three years** to transform the culture of the University through the application of a co-created program of actions and initiatives. UOW is committed to ensuring the talents and perspectives of people living with a disability are recognised and seen as vital to our university's learning, teaching, research activities and its physical, digital, living and communication environments.

At UOW we use the United Nations definition, "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". As per the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) this includes persons with a physical disability, intellectual disability, mental illness, sensory disability, neurodiversity, neurological disability, learning disability, physical disfigurement, or immunological disability.

The University strives for a proactive capacity-building stance on the provision of services and opportunities for people with disabilities. Therefore, effective approaches that are strengths-based, rather than those that seek merely to minimise deficits, are embraced by the University. Every member of the UOW community is responsible for the implementation of the DIAP and will be led by the EDI Team, the Student Equity and Success Team and supported by the Disability Inclusion Network (DIN) Working Group.

The UOW Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2024-26) is supported by the following principles:

- Uphold a human rights-based approach, recognising, and reinforce that our actions are fundamentally ensuring people's human rights are met.
- Create a culture of accountability and responsibility for implementing our DIAP actions.
- Co-design disability related strategy, policy, initiatives, and programs with key stakeholders with disability, respecting the voice of people with lived experience.
- Develop the capability of the UOW community to embed universal design & embrace inclusion.
- Treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect and support them to realise their individual capabilities at UOW.
- Ensure people with disabilities have access to the full range of educational and employment opportunities at UOW, to maximise their learning and career development.
- Recognise that people with disabilities have rights to privacy, confidentiality, and individual choices about disclosure.
- Create work and study environments that are free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.
- Enhance competitive advantage by attracting the best students and staff regardless of (dis)ability.
- Ensure compliance with relevant disability related legislation.

The DIAP has five key goals to guide the University to uphold its access and inclusion principles and responsibilities as a leading education provider. These align with the goals in the [UOW Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Framework](#) and with the [Equity Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).



The late Professor Justin Yerbury (AM)

"My husband, Professor Justin Yerbury, was a disabled academic at UOW for many years. Justin fought with courage and dignity to find a cure to the disease he himself lived with. He showed the world what a completely paralysed person on life support could achieve. But he didn't only fight for himself and against the disease, he relentlessly fought against inaccessibility and discrimination. UOW stood with Justin against ableism and inequity, but in the wider world, this wasn't always so. We experienced discrimination in lots of ways and places, and in 2020, Justin took the NHMRC to task over the fairness of their policies of achievement relative to opportunity, who subsequently changed their policies and funding criteria. Together, we authored a paper in Trends in Neurosciences called "Disabled in academia: To be or not to be, that is the question" highlighting the challenges of academics living with disability and neurodiversity. In developing this DIAP, UOW has considered our call for a reframing and normalising of disability in the context of inclusion and diversity. Justin was a true fighter in so many ways and I hope his advocacy for disability rights will form part of how he is remembered". **Dr Rachel Yerbury**

Goal One - Provide an inclusive learning experience and promotes disability inclusion and accessibility principles in research, teaching and learning

#	Action Item
1.1	Provide guidance and implement accountability processes to ensure that teaching staff comply with the University's legal obligations around provision of educational adjustments.
1.2	Develop resources and source training for staff to enable them to work and engage effectively with both staff and students with a lived experience of disability.
1.3	Design and implement approaches to improve accessibility of digital assets, curriculum and assessment, and the design of learning resources through broader adoption of inclusive pedagogies (e.g., Universal Design for Learning (UDL)).
1.4	Develop an approach to support researchers, HDR students, & staff with a lived experience of disability to engage in research on an equitable basis with their peers.
1.5	Develop a quality assurance monitoring approach for digital accessibility within the online learning environment, to ensure consistency of support for students.

Goal Two – Provide equitable opportunity to obtain and maintain employment at UOW through best practice barrier-free recruitment and supports for people living with disability.

#	Action Item description
2.1	Develop centralised processes and procedures, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requests for Workplace Adjustments, and a Workplace Adjustment Access Plan; - Workplace Adjustment Procedures for Staff Members with lived experience of a disability; - Exploring budgetary mechanisms to support provision of workplace adjustments for staff with lived experience of a disability; - Guidance for managers on their responsibilities regarding workplace adjustments
2.2	Increase the capability of staff to ensure that disability related enquiries received from staff and students are monitored and managed appropriately.
2.3	Engage with a Disability Employment Agency to increase the percentage of job applicants with a lived experience of disability. Following the implementation of Reasonable Adjustment procedures.
2.4	Promote and proactively support career progression and promotion for all staff with a lived experience of disability.



Goal Three - The University's communication and digital environment is accessible to people with disabilities

#	Action Item description
3.1	Implement accessibility service standards and disability awareness training for all staff in a student facing environment.
3.2	Enable all academic and teaching staff to complete training on Universal Design for Learning and to embed principles of accessibility and inclusion.
3.3	Audit university-level digital and online resources and systems against Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 and establish a plan for prioritising and addressing non-compliance.
3.4	Digital accessibility training for staff responsible for digital assets, website content, marketing, and communications.
3.5	Update guidance for brand, templates, marketing and communications, and social media to include accessibility advice and content.
3.6	Review People and Culture policies, procedures, and guidelines to improve disability inclusion and access, prioritising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment: Ensure that candidates with a lived experience of disability are not disadvantaged through unconscious bias, and instead are proactively supported and lived experience is recognised in selection criteria for roles Flexible work: Specify availability of adjustments for people with a lived experience of disability, and carers. Workload: Guide and facilitate determination of staff workloads to accommodate additional activities undertaken by staff with a lived experience of disability.

Goal Four - The university has a culture that is safe, welcoming, supportive, and engaging for students, staff, and visitors with disability

#	Action Item description
4.1	Audit and creation of online resources with accessibility lens, including guidance for managers to support their staff with lived experience of disability; a support package for staff with a lived experience of disability; and the use of close captions in videos/recordings
4.2	Celebrate people with a disability by acknowledging days of significance, research and innovation, and individual achievements of students, staff, and alumni.
4.3	Support for DIN Advisory Group to further develop and enable an agile, staff-led, supportive community for people with a disability at UOW
4.4	Require all staff across all areas of the University to complete disability awareness training, including first aid officers, customer or student support & teaching roles.

Goal Five - Provide an accessible environment, ensuring that people with disability have equitable opportunities to access buildings and facilities

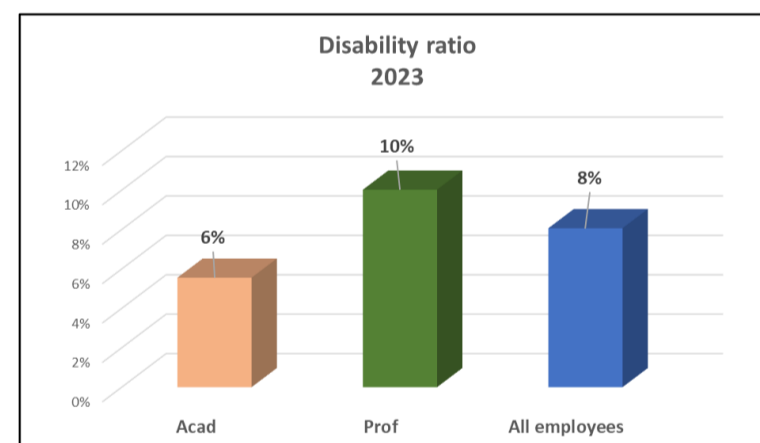
#	Action Item description
5.1	Review process for continuous improvements to existing buildings and facilities to comply with the principles of universal design.
5.2	Development of sensory and quiet spaces for staff and students at UOW
5.3	Develop new template and guidance for Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), accompanied by a communications strategy to increase uptake by those requiring a PEEP.
5.4	Demonstrate the University's commitment to creating inclusive accessible campuses, by committing to an audit for compliance for at all UOW campuses. With a focus on clear and consistent signage (e.g., font size and colour contrast, braille, etc.), guidance on accredited assistance animals, accessible parking.
5.5	Reporting on progress of accessibility infrastructure works to the University community.
5.6	Review and improve current use and awareness of SafetyNet to report physical accessibility issues on campus and implement communications to raise awareness of the process.

UOW Demographics and Targets

In Australia, 15 per cent of Australians of working age have a disability. At UOW our 2023 data shows us as above average for the higher education sector, with Academic (6%) having a lower representation than Professional (10%) staff. However, the aim is for the UOW workforce and student population to reflect the general community, and so our targets for 2028 have been set to make a strong move towards 15 per cent.

Staff Living with a Disability Ratios

UOW	2023 (March)	Proposed 2029 Target
Academic	6%	9%
Professional	10%	12%



The content in this action plan is subject to resourcing and context, and as such may be adapted accordingly. The Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2024-26) will be complemented by an implementation plan and a tracking and reporting database.

EDI Workforce Team

People & Culture, University of Wollongong

EDI-Team@uow.edu.au

[Equity Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\)](#)