



THE UNIVERSITY  
of ADELAIDE

The University of Adelaide

# Disability Action Plan 2014 - 2019



## Dear Colleague

The Disability Action Plan 2014-2019 reflects goals and intentions which underpin and guide the day-to-day teaching, learning, research and other activities that make us a university. It aligns with our vision in the University's Strategic Plan, Beacon of Enlightenment, to enable all staff and students to participate, whatever their background or circumstances.

By developing this Plan, we demonstrate our commitment to making the University's vision real for students and staff with a disability. The Plan reflects the philosophy that each Faculty, School and Department should be as inclusive of students and staff as possible, and adjustments made for those affected should reflect as closely as possible conditions for students and staff who do not have a disability or medical condition. They should neither be overly advantaged nor disadvantaged and marginalised.

The Plan has been designed in accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Education Standards (2005) and supports our obligations under relevant State based legislation. It will be lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Individual supports can only ever be regarded as secondary to the proactive removal of barriers to full participation. It is the removal of barriers at the point of delivery of an academic program and during the course of employment that is the most effective and equitable approach to providing quality services to university students and staff with disabilities.

Responsibility for implementation of the plan is spread across the University, as all members of the University community have an obligation to the values of equal opportunity for people with a disability. I look forward to your cooperation in achieving our goals.

**Professor Warren Bebbington**  
Vice-Chancellor and President



# University of Adelaide Disability Action Plan 2014-2019

The University of Adelaide is committed to building and supporting a diverse and inclusive community and to the principles of equal opportunity and social justice.

A focus on the quality, visibility, impact and involvement of a diverse range of people will enable the University to utilise the skills and experience of its entire staff so that the total University community benefits from this diverse intellectual resource.

## Legislative Context

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) provides protection to people with a disability by making it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their disability. Within higher education it places an obligation on institutions to provide services and facilities in such a way as to ensure that students and staff with disabilities can participate on the same basis as those without including the requirement for the organisation to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate this participation.

The DDA makes discrimination on the basis of disability unlawful in a number of areas applicable to universities. These include:

- > education;
- > employment;
- > sport;
- > access to premises used by the public;
- > provision of goods, services and facilities;
- > residential accommodation, clubs and associations; and
- > administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs.





The definition of 'disability' in the DDA is very broad. It encompasses physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and aural disorders and also physical disfigurement and the presence in the body of an organism causing disease. The definition covers both temporary and permanent disability and includes:

- > people who have had a disability in the past (such as an episode of mental illness);
- > people who may have a disability in the future (for example, where there is a family history of disability); and
- > people who are believed to have a disability (for example, if someone is thought to have HIV-AIDS).

The Act describes both direct and indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favourably because of a disability. Indirect discrimination occurs where there is a requirement or practice that is applied equally to persons with and without disabilities, but more severely impacts on a person with a disability, and that requirement or condition is unreasonable. Whether unlawful discrimination has occurred can only be decided with reference to all the circumstances of the case.

The Disability Standards for Education (2005) were formulated under the DDA to clarify the rights of students and responsibilities of education providers. The intention and effect of the Standards is to give students with a disability the same rights as other students.

The Standards require that universities meet certain obligations in the following areas:

- > enrolment;
- > participation;
- > curriculum development, accreditation and delivery;
- > student support services; and
- > elimination of harassment and victimisation.

Under the Standards, the University is required to make reasonable adjustments to enable a person with a disability to participate at University on the same basis as other persons without a disability, if that person meets the essential entry requirements for admission to a course. This includes undertaking due diligence when engaging agents to deliver education services. However, the Standards do not require the University to make adjustments which would compromise the academic integrity of a course or program.

As an employer, the University's obligations to people with a disability extend to recruitment and selection processes, terms and conditions and access to benefits such as promotion and training. The University is obliged to provide reasonable adjustments for a staff member with a disability to enable him or her to carry out the inherent requirements of the job.

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## Making Reasonable Adjustments

### Students

The University is committed to the provision of reasonable adjustments, in consultation with the student, within a reasonable time after notification of the need for adjustments.

Reasonable adjustments are measures taken to enable students to participate fully and equally in areas of the University's operations on the same basis as a student without a disability. These include:

- > admission and enrolment,
- > academic activities,
- > curriculum development, assessment and certification requirements,
- > physical access to buildings and facilities
- > information access
- > a safe learning environment

### Staff

The University will provide staff with reasonable workplace adjustments, to ensure that all staff have equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of workplace life, especially in regard to the following:

- > recruitment processes
- > performance of duties
- > employment benefits and conditions
- > professional and career development
- > physical access to buildings and facilities
- > information access
- > a safe working environment



## Exceptions

The University will implement all necessary measures and reasonable adjustments to enable equal access and opportunities for students and staff with disabilities except in the following instances:

### Students

- > where provision of adjustments or measures would impose unjustifiable hardship on the University;
- > where, even with the provision of all reasonable adjustments, the student remains unable to fulfil the inherent requirements of a course of study;
- > where the provision of adjustments or measures would compromise the academic integrity of the course of study, assessment or accreditation process; and
- > where the student with a disability has an infectious disease or other condition that requires isolation in order to protect their health and welfare or the health and welfare of others and the course can not be made available on-line.

### Staff

- > where provision of adjustments or measures would impose unjustifiable hardship on the University;
- > where, even with the provision of all reasonable adjustments, the staff member remains unable to fulfil the inherent requirements of the position.
- > where the staff member with a disability has an infectious disease or other condition that requires isolation in order to protect their health and welfare or the health and welfare of others.

In determining 'unjustifiable hardship', all relevant circumstances of the particular case will be taken into account, as prescribed by the DDA.

'Inherent requirements' can be defined as:

- > the ability to perform the tasks or functions which are a necessary part of the course/ job;
- > productivity and quality requirements;
- > the ability to work effectively in the team or other type of work organisation concerned;
- > the ability to study/work safely.



## Disability Action Plan Purpose

Under Section 61 of the DDA institutions are invited to develop an *Action Plan*, which includes:

- > development of policies and programs to achieve the objectives of the Act;
- > communication of these policies and programs;
- > review of practices;
- > measures to assess and evaluate the success of the plan; and
- > appointment of persons responsible for implementation.

The Disability Action Plan provides a framework that sets goals and strategies that intend, in a systematic way, to identify and remove barriers to full participation in University activities by current and future staff and students of the University who have a disability and develop new strategies for further improving resources. The Plan reflects the University's stated commitment to provide a supportive and inclusive educational and employment experience for people with a disability.

In 2001, the University responded to the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 by lodging its first Disability Action Plan with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Since the University's first Disability Action Plan was developed:

- > DDA case law has developed, relevant state based legislation i.e. the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 has been significantly amended and strengthened in 2009, and obligations on institutions are now better understood.
- > There has been a significant increase in numbers of students with a disability attending all universities and in the service expectations of these students.
- > Students are more frequently resorting to formal complaints both within Universities and under anti-discrimination legislation.
- > There has been a significant shift in institutional response to disability issues, with most universities now having professional disability services in place.
- > The *AVCC Guidelines on Information Access for Students with Print Disabilities* were developed in 2004.
- > The Disability Standards for Education, which clarified both the obligations on universities to provide accessible educational services to all students and the rights and responsibilities of students, were introduced in 2005 and reviewed in 2010.

Since the University's Disability Action Plan of 2008-2013 was lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission, progress has been made towards achieving the goals of the Plan.

The latest review of the Plan in 2013 has found that enabling an inclusive educational and employment experience for people with a disability into a range of projects and processes has progressed, including embedding access as a key consideration for staff involved in planning, design and construction projects on campus as well as for those who provide a range of services to staff and students.

Regular evaluation mechanisms have been improved over the past few years, such as *Our Voice* staff survey, the Student Disability Service survey, and the Student Experience of Learning and Teaching Survey (SELTS) to facilitate feedback on our performance in enabling a learning and work environment that takes account of and is inclusive of diversity. This feedback continues to inform planning to achieve the goals of this Plan.

Specific key achievements over 2008-2013 include:

- > A Physical Access Review to inform priorities in the Infrastructure and Investment Plan;
- > An Accessibility Review to better facilitate compliance of the website with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines;
- > Introduction of ADAPT, a key IT project enabling 'any time, any place' access to software for students;
- > Installation of an Adaptive Technology Suite in the University's new Learning Hub;
- > Annual updating of campus maps to indicate access points to buildings, accessible car parking and toilets with universal access;
- > Implementation of a Reasonable Adjustments to Teaching & Assessment for Students with a Disability Policy;
- > Development of customised Disability Access Plans (Support plans for tertiary students) in negotiation with Faculty staff;
- > Development of a Workplace Management policy suite that aims to foster inclusivity, diversity and equitable access for staff, including a Workplace Modifications Procedure;
- > Introduction of mandatory on line Equal Opportunity training as part of induction for all new managers;
- > Highlighting inherent requirements as part of student enrolment information, for example, in the University's Medical Program.

Building on these achievements and expanding and improving our capacity to build and support a diverse and inclusive University community is an ongoing process, with opportunities for improvement and specific targets aligned with goals identified in the Plan.

## Disability Action Plan Communication, Implementation and Review

The 2013 review of the University of Adelaide's Disability Action Plan and development of the Disability Action Plan 2014-2019 demonstrates the University's ongoing commitment to positively support cultural and social diversity in its staff and student body. The plan aims to provide an environment that promotes the principles of Equity and Diversity and zero tolerance for unlawful discrimination on the grounds of disability as set out in the University's Fair Treatment Policy and associated procedures and guidelines. It will focus on identifying improvement targets against the Plan's goals for achievement in 2014-2015. Based on a review including consideration of student and staff feedback, new or revised targets will be set for the next 2 years, to be achieved prior to the next full Plan review in 2019.

### Communication

It is imperative that all students and staff of the University are aware of the Disability Action Plan and know their rights and responsibilities in relation to it. The DAP will be available on the University website on the Student Services, Teaching and Learning, and Human Resources sites and communicated through a range of mechanisms including reference in:

- > Future student publications and website
- > Student enrolment information
- > Staff induction including the Guide for new teaching staff

It will be lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission and uploaded to their website.

Copies (hard copy and/or electronic) will be made available to Faculties and Business Units and updates and achievements against the DAP will be periodically promoted to the University Community.

### Implementation

Responsibility for implementation of the Disability Action Plan is to be shared by many staff of the University, including managers, teaching staff and staff providing services to students. Student Support Services, Information Technology Services, Property Services and Human Resources will have leading roles in developing policies, procedures and supporting tools as well as implementing specific projects that facilitate achievement of the Plan's goals. Teaching staff in Faculties and Schools will be involved in ensuring the rights of students with a disability to education.

### Monitoring

Overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Disability Action Plan will rest with the University's Gender, Equity and Diversity (GED) Committee. Alignment of the DAP 2014-2019 with the University's Strategic and Operational Plan, *Beacon of Enlightenment*, means that implementation and monitoring of the DAP will occur in line with the University's Cycle of Accountability.

A working group with representation from key areas of the University that deal with physical access, information and communication, education, and employment will be established to set and review biannual targets that form an Implementation Plan aligned with the DAP's goals. The working group will report to the GED Committee on an annual basis.

## University of Adelaide Disability Action Plan 2014-2019

### The overall goals of the Plan are to:

- 1 To ensure University and local level planning and evaluation processes consider implications for people with a disability and identify relevant policies and strategies aligned with the University's strategic directions, relevant legal obligations and the intent of the University's Disability Action Plan.
- 2 To create and maintain a learning experience that is inclusive of the needs of students with a disability and optimises the participation, retention and success of students with a disability through accessible and equitable enrolment, learning, teaching, assessment and research practices.
- 3 To enable equitable access to information and communication resources for students and staff with a disability including ICT, Library services, and information published by the University.
- 4 To create and maintain an inclusive physical environment that enables the safe and equitable participation of people with a disability.
- 5 To ensure the University's employment and development policies and procedures are free of discrimination toward people with a disability and that they enable their recruitment and development in an equitable and inclusive manner.

Achievement of these overall goals is facilitated by an implementation plan as follows, with targets and strategies that are set and reviewed every 2 years within the life span of the DAP.

## For further enquiries

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