

Disability Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) This policy supports the University's provision of a physical, working, learning and social environment that enables and enhances the educational and employment experience of students and staff with a disability on the same basis as other members of the University community, in an environment that values diversity, is free from harassment and unlawful discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity.

(2) Western Sydney University is committed to promoting and implementing the principles of the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cwlth\)](#), the [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cwlth\)](#) (the Standards), the [Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 \(NSW\)](#), the [Disability \(Access to Premises - buildings\) Standards 2010 \(Cwlth\)](#), the [Fair Work Act 2009 \(Cwlth\)](#) and the [Disability Services Act 1993 \(NSW\)](#).

(3) This policy outlines the rights and responsibilities of staff and students in relation to:

- a. staff and students who have a disability, either temporary or permanent; and
- b. associates of staff and students who have a disability, including carers;
- c. the University's application of the principle of reasonable adjustment to ensure fair and inclusive treatment for staff and students who have a disability.

Section 2 - Definitions

(4) For the purposes of this policy the following definitions apply. Note that the definitions of disability, discrimination, associates, reasonable adjustments and unjustifiable hardship are based on the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#).

- a. Assistive technology - is any device, system or design, whether adapted or commercially available, that allows someone to perform a task that they would otherwise be unable to do, or increases the ease with which a task can be performed.
- b. Associates - includes people who are a partner, carer, friend, family member, business/sporting associate or work colleague. The [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#) also makes it unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis that their associates have, or may have, a disability.
- c. Carer (within the meaning of the [Carer Recognition Act 2010](#)) is a person who provides personal care, support and assistance to another person because of their disability and aged-related needs This excludes care, support or assistance provided as part of paid or unpaid work, a service provision contract, and/or education or training program. A person is not inherently considered a carer solely on the basis of their family and/or domestic relationship to the person in need of care.
- d. Disability - is defined very broadly under the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#) as any physical, sensory, neurological, intellectual, psychiatric or learning disability, and includes physical disfigurement, the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms and total or partial loss of part of the body or a bodily function. It also includes a temporary, permanent, current, past or future disability, and chronic health conditions which may not commonly be considered disabilities.

- e. Disability Action Plan - is an organisational plan for the removal, as far as possible, of discrimination against people with a disability. The Disability Action Plan identifies actions that the University does and will take to ensure that employment and education, services, premises and facilities are accessible and non-discriminatory to people with a disability.
- f. Flexible work arrangements - are arrangements in which the supervisor and staff member jointly decide on changes to hours, location and/or the way work is carried out. Requests for flexible work arrangements can be made under this and the [Workplace Flexibility Policy](#). Decisions are based on achieving outcomes which benefit the University while allowing the staff member to better balance their personal and professional lives, for example, in order to accommodate staff who:
 - i. need to attend regular medical appointments;
 - ii. need to work irregular hours or take frequent breaks;
 - iii. find it more appropriate to work in their home environment;
 - iv. have fluctuating periods of health;
 - v. need to reduce travel.
- g. Harassment on the grounds of disability occurs when someone is made to feel intimidated, insulted or humiliated because of their disability.
- h. Indirect discrimination — on the grounds of disability occurs when a person with a disability is expected to meet criteria, rules or policy that apply to everyone, but that have an unfair effect on people with disabilities. For example, making the only entrance to premises by stairs, which means the premises are inaccessible to people with mobility disability, or the provision of information in forms that are inaccessible to people with a print disability.
- i. Inherent requirements - are the essential components of a job or a program or subject that must be carried out in order to fulfil the purpose of a job position or demonstrate the abilities, knowledge and skills to achieve the core learning outcomes of the program or subject. They do not refer to all of the requirements of a job or learning outcome, but rather contrast with the more minor or non-essential elements, which may be negotiable and flexible. Inherent requirements relate to results, or what must be accomplished, rather than how it is accomplished. Students must meet the inherent requirements of the individual compulsory subjects to complete the program.
- j. On the same basis - means that a person with a disability must be able to seek admission, participate in programs, and use University facilities and services on the same basis as a student without a disability, so that the person has choices and opportunities that are comparable to those of other students without a disability.
- k. Reasonable adjustments - are administrative, environmental or procedural alterations in the employment or learning situation which remove barriers for people with a disability so that they can perform the inherent requirements of the job or program of study. For staff this could mean adjusting access to buildings and rooms, modifying equipment, re-designing jobs or work areas and implementing more flexible work practices. For students it could mean adjustments to the mode of delivery of lectures or written material or the assessment process and timeframe. An adjustment is reasonable if it takes into account the requirements of the person and balances the interests of all parties affected. Consideration needs to be given to:
 - i. the effect of the adjustment on the person's ability to meet the inherent requirements of the job or successfully achieve the inherent learning outcomes of the subject or program;
 - ii. the costs and benefits of making the adjustment; and
 - iii. the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student or staff member with the disability, the University, staff and other students or colleagues.
- l. Staff Workplace Adjustment Fund - is a centralised University fund designed to meet the non-salary costs of the implementation of Reasonable Adjustment Plans for staff. It funds the specific physical adjustments to equipment and workstations required by staff with disabilities to undertake their duties. The fund is designed to meet non-salary adjustment costs to reduce any financial impact to employing units, and is administered by Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing.

- m. Universal design - is the design of products, communications and built environments, to be usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost without the need for adaptation or specialised design. A universal design approach to curricula is student centred, inclusive and enables students with a disability to demonstrate equivalence in learning outcomes.
- n. Unjustifiable hardship - is an exception that allows an organisation to refuse to make an adjustment because the cost involved and the impact on the organisation and/or other people would be too great. In determining whether an adjustment would involve unjustifiable hardship, all relevant circumstances of the situation must be taken into account. The organisation must prove that an adjustment would cause it unjustifiable hardship, taking into account:
 - i. the benefits or disadvantages that would be caused by making the reasonable adjustment;
 - ii. the effect of the disability of the student or staff member;
 - iii. the costs of making the reasonable adjustment in the context of the organisation's financial situation.
- o. Unlawful discrimination - is defined as:
 - i. treating or proposing to treat a person with a disability less favourably than a person without a disability in circumstances that are the same or not materially different (the circumstances cannot be considered materially different because of the fact that different accommodation or services may be required by the person with a disability);
 - ii. requiring a person with a disability to comply with a requirement or condition with which they are unable to comply because of their disability which is not reasonable in the circumstances; or
 - iii. treating a person with a disability less favourably because they are accompanied by or possess a palliative or therapeutic device or an auxiliary aid, or an interpreter, assistant, carer or an assistance animal (e.g. a guide or hearing dog).
- p. Victimisation —refers to threatening or less favourable treatment of a person or people for their participation in making, supporting or resolving a complaint, whether that participation was actual, intended or presumed.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(5) Western Sydney University is committed to developing and supporting an inclusive and diverse environment which provides equal opportunity for all staff and students with a disability to access, participate and enjoy the benefits of education and employment. The University strongly supports the right of people with disabilities to work and study on an equitable basis with other members of the University community.

(6) The University, its staff and students are expected to comply with the provisions and intentions of the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#) and other relevant Commonwealth and State anti-discrimination legislation. Harassment, discrimination and vilification of people with disabilities are not tolerated and the University expects that all staff and students will work together in the spirit of the legislation.

(7) The University has a range of policies, services and programs to enable staff and students with disabilities to fully participate in University life and realise their academic or employment potential. The University's [Accessibility Action Plan](#) outlines its strategic priorities, objectives and actions in support of its continuous commitment to inclusive practice for all staff and students with a disability. See the [Discrimination, Harassment, Vilification and Victimisation Prevention Policy](#).

(8) The University is committed to ensuring the integration of the principles of equal access, participation and opportunity for people with a disability in University policies, procedures, decisions and operations.

(9) The University embraces in its planning, the principle of universal design, i.e. embedding in the design of the environment, services, work, curricula development, study design and content, the capacity to provide access to a diverse range of users, including people who have a disability.

(10) The University also seeks to apply the principle of reasonable adjustment to remove barriers to participation in work or study by people with a disability, and to carers of people with a disability, including parents, spouses, partners and those with caring responsibilities for parents with a disability.

(11) The University will support and foster positive and informed behaviour and attitudes among its staff and students towards people with disabilities and will assist staff to develop the disability-confidence skills to help meet the learning and support needs of students and staff with disabilities.

(12) The University will provide resources for appropriately accessible and supportive learning and working environments, including assistive technologies and other reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities and, whenever reasonably possible, will provide access to any service provided by the University to staff and students.

(13) The University will ensure that the academic integrity of programs offered is maintained at the highest standards and will ensure students with a disability are provided with appropriate and reasonable adjustments to enable access and participation to all educational classes and written material on the same basis as other students.

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Disability Discrimination Act and Education Standards

(14) Western Sydney University is required to comply with the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#) (Cwth) as amended 2009 and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (the Standards). These legislative provisions make it unlawful for tertiary institutions to discriminate against people, in the provision of educational and employment opportunities, services and facilities, on the basis that they have, or may have, a disability. Students and prospective students with a disability must be able to access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cwth\)](#) and [the Standards](#), and aims to give full effect to the objectives of the relevant legislation outlined at Clause 2.

(15) Western Sydney University has in place a [Disability Action Plan](#) prepared in accordance with Section 61 of the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#). This Plan is a working document which sets out the University's goals and strategies to achieve access and inclusion for people with a disability. Responsible functional areas of the University are required to report regularly against the objectives of the Disability Action Plan. The [Disability Action Plan](#) is available for viewing on the Western Sydney University web site and is available in alternative formats on request.

Part B - Confidentiality and Disclosure

(16) The University acknowledges that information that is provided to it about a person's disability or health status is personal and private and will respect the confidentiality of all such information in accordance with the University's [Privacy Policy](#) and [Privacy Management Plan](#).

(17) Confidentiality of information related to students and staff with disabilities will be protected and access to information will be restricted to staff with a legitimate need to know; for example, Disability Service staff, Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing staff, direct supervisors or managers, Program Coordinators, Examinations Officers or Deans where significant resourcing implications are to be considered in order to make reasonable adjustment. Personal information relating to disability is treated in confidence and only used legitimately in carrying out the educational and operational functions of the University. In these cases, the relevant information required by staff is simply the work/study impact of the disability and information about the adjustments required. Medical and diagnostic specifics of the nature of the disability or condition are usually not relevant to supervisors or teaching staff and may only be conveyed where the nature of the disability is relevant and then only with the written consent of the person with the disability or health condition.

(18) Staff and students are not required to disclose their disability unless:

- a. an Academic Integration Plan (for students) or a Reasonable Adjustment Plan (for staff) is required to be developed and implemented;
- b. the disability or chronic health condition is likely to affect the staff or student's capacity to meet the inherent requirements of the job or the subject or program.

(19) In order to assist in the planning, provision of services and timing of implementation of adjustments, prospective or current students and staff with disabilities are encouraged to identify any alternative requirements as soon as practicable. Failure to declare specific requirements at the earliest opportunity may lead to a disruption of a student's study program, or a delay in service provision or of a staff member's induction/return to the workplace and/or their capacity to maintain reasonable productivity at work.

Part C - Making Reasonable Adjustments

(20) Reasonable adjustments are available to staff and students and will be developed and implemented to enable:

- a. a staff member with a disability to undertake the inherent requirements of the position; or
- b. a student with a disability to access and participate in academic studies and to meet the academic standards and inherent requirements of the program.

Reasonable Adjustment Plans for Staff

(21) The process for staff to formalise their adjustment requirements is by way of a Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP). The University is committed to ensuring that the workplace provides reasonable adjustments to meet the specific requirements of staff with a disability through the provision of adjustments, including:

- a. flexible work arrangements;
- b. modifications to work premises;
- c. changes to job design, working hours and schedules or other work practices;
- d. modifications to equipment;
- e. provision of training or other assistance.

(22) The requirement to provide adjustments for staff with a disability applies to all areas of employment, including:

- a. recruitment, selection and appointment;
- b. training and career development;
- c. study and conference leave;
- d. performance management; and
- e. promotion, transfer or any other benefit.

(23) Adjustments may be permanent or temporary, depending on the nature of the disability or condition and the requirements of the individual. The degree and nature of the disability may also change over time and require regular review of additional or alternative adjustments. Reasonable adjustments in the workplace may be required when a person has:

- a. a pre-existing or established condition or disability;
- b. an acquired condition or disability, whether temporary or permanent; or
- c. a non-work-related injury or illness, which may be temporary or permanent.

(24) In the first instance, compensable injuries and their management in the workplace are dealt with separately under the University's [Injury Management Policy](#) and the provision of a Return to Work Plan.

(25) In instances where an injury results in an ongoing disability, a Reasonable Adjustment Plan may be appropriate to support a staff member in the workplace following the completion of a Return to Work Plan. Injury Management Coordinators will refer staff to the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing in these situations and facilitate the transition in supporting the staff concerned.

Staff Requesting and Initiating a Reasonable Adjustment Plan

(26) A request for reasonable adjustment in the workplace may be made by a staff member (or a potential staff member) or their supervisor, with the consent of the staff member concerned. Disclosure of a disability can be to the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing, Office of People, or the staff member's supervisor.

(27) Staff and prospective staff with a disability, or carers, are encouraged to seek advice and assistance from the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing. Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing staff are responsible for assisting supervisors and the person requesting adjustment to determine the most appropriate reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

(28) New staff are encouraged to complete the staff Equal Opportunity Survey on the Staff On-Line portal and indicate if they have a disability for which they require an adjustment. Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing staff will be advised of a staff member's request if the person indicates on the Equal Opportunity Survey that they have a disability for which they require an adjustment. Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing staff will then contact the staff member to offer assistance in developing appropriate and reasonable adjustments. Existing staff who acquire a temporary or permanent disability are also encouraged to review their entry on the Equal Opportunity Survey database at the time they seek adjustment, to ensure that effective measurement and resourcing of disability services to staff can be maintained.

(29) A member of staff who requires an adjustment because of an existing disability should request reasonable adjustment as early as they feel comfortable to in the employment process. Opportunities for enquiring about and/or requesting adjustments may most commonly arise:

- a. during the selection/interview process;
- b. at orientation or induction processes;
- c. when planning for organisational change;
- d. in developing Workload Agreements; or
- e. at any stage of the performance management cycle.

(30) A staff member having disclosed a disability may, with their consent, also be referred by other members of staff, e.g.

- a. a supervisor;
- b. Office of People staff who are involved in inducting a new staff member or who are working with a supervisor in an organisational change process;
- c. Work Health, Safety and Wellbeing staff assisting with an injury management /rehabilitation issue;
- d. other staff assisting with a grievance or complaint issue etc.

(31) Opportunities for new staff to formally disclose a disability should be made available after an employment contract has been finalised, including during induction processes. Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing staff are available to assist staff and students in making disclosure decisions. The Disability Service will also assist students with disclosure decisions and may work with the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing to meet the needs of staff who are also students of the University, e.g. Higher Degree Research students.

Documentation for Staff

(32) People seeking reasonable adjustments in the workplace are required to provide current (no more than 6 months old) documentation of assessments from a recognised medical or other recognised professional specialist, to confirm their disability/health condition and provide recommendations on the most appropriate type of workplace adjustments.

(33) Medical documentation is required to:

- a. help assess the reasonableness of the request for adjustments on the circumstances; and
- b. ensure that only ergonomically/medically appropriate adjustments are provided.

(34) Documentation in support of a Reasonable Adjustment Plan may be required more or less frequently, depending on the nature of the disabilities/conditions affecting the staff and their impact in the workplace, as per Clause 35. Medical documentation must remain up-to-date and relevant to the current requirements of the person's position.

(35) Staff with a temporary, degenerative and/or episodic condition may need to provide documentation more frequently, whereas staff with a permanent and stable disability not likely to change over time may be required to provide documentation at longer intervals. This will be determined at the discretion of the Senior Staff Disability Advisor.

(36) The documentation will include information on the disability and the functional limitations it involves and, as far as possible, provide recommendations on the appropriate type of workplace adjustments which are required to support the disability.

(37) Reasonable adjustments may include flexible work practices and reduced hours if appropriate.

(38) A staff member with a disability may request that the medical documentation is only submitted to the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing, and that the information provided to supervisors relates solely to the appropriate adjustments required in the workplace.

(39) Medical documents provided by the staff member for the purpose of a Reasonable Adjustment Plan shall not be placed on the Office of People file of the staff member with a disability (unless requested in writing by the staff member with the adjustment), but shall be kept on file in the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing.

(40) The University may refer the staff member to a medical practitioner, psychologist or other relevant health professional of its choosing for assessment of the staff member's disability and to recommend adjustments required in the workplace. Any medical assessments of this nature shall be intended only for the purpose of determining the need for, nature of, and possibility of making any reasonable adjustment required.

(41) Where some period of working from home is required as a component of a Reasonable Adjustment Plan, the staff member with a disability will complete a Working from Home Checklist Agreement, to be retained on file by the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing as an appendix to the Reasonable Adjustment Plan.

(42) Medical documentation must be provided to the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing at the time of the formal request for adjustment being made to the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing, or the development of a formal Reasonable Adjustment Plan shall lapse. A Reasonable Adjustment Plan Request Form can be downloaded via the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing webpage.

(43) In some cases, more detailed advice from medical specialists will be subsequently provided which may refine the adjustments required. A Reasonable Adjustment Plan cannot be developed without supporting medical evidence.

Action on Staff Adjustments

(44) On receiving a request from a staff member about the provision of an adjustment/s the staff member's supervisor should make every reasonable effort to act on the request in a timely manner. Actions taken by a supervisor may include:

- a. seeking advice from the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing and referring the staff member for advice;
- b. requesting information about staff entitlements or relevant policies from the Office of People and/or the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing;
- c. ensuring that arrangements are made available for required adjustments, often in consultation with their School or Unit/Division managers;
- d. ensuring that relevant administrative staff make the necessary arrangements for the implementation of the required adjustments, e.g. timetabling or staffing changes.

(45) On receipt of a request for the development of a Reasonable Adjustment Plan, the Staff Disability Advisor will consult with the staff member on the following matters as relevant:

- a. the nature, severity and duration of the disability, injury or illness;
- b. the functional limitations placed on the staff member by the disability or condition;
- c. whether the disability or condition is likely to change over time and the most relevant and appropriate review timeframe;
- d. what specific adjustments, if any, have been suggested or can be identified by the staff member; and
- e. whether further specialist evaluation is required to identify and implement appropriate adjustments.

(46) The development of a Reasonable Adjustment Plan will be prioritised on a needs basis, as determined by the Senior Staff Disability Advisor.

(47) The Senior Staff Disability Advisor will open a confidential Reasonable Adjustment file to record the information outlined above. The Reasonable Adjustment file, including the completed Plan, will be kept on file in the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing, separate from the staff member's personnel records which are held within the Office of People. The Reasonable Adjustment file will only be accessible to the staff member and relevant Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing staff members, except with the written permission of the staff member having the Reasonable Adjustment Plan.

(48) If further evaluation is required, information will be sought from additional sources, as appropriate and in consultation with the staff member, from:

- a. a specialist medical practitioner;
- b. an occupational therapist or other allied health provider;
- c. a disability service provider;
- d. an external workplace assessor, if adjustment funding is being sought through the Federal Government funding sources.

(49) The adjustment required will be determined on the basis of the particular needs of the staff member. The Senior Staff Disability Advisor will consider the preferences and views of the staff member, in conjunction with medical advice, in negotiating and determining the most appropriate and efficient approach to making reasonable adjustments.

(50) Any claim of unjustifiable hardship made by staff responsible for implementing adjustments will be referred to the Director, Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing.

Administration of Staff Adjustments

(51) Once an assessment has been made, the implementation of the adjustments will be discussed at a meeting convened by staff from the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing, involving the supervisor and the staff member. The supervisor, as the 'Responsible Officer', will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the adjustment in the workplace. Every effort will be made to implement adjustments in a timely, effective and efficient manner.

(52) The supervisor responsible for signing the Reasonable Adjustment Plan and implementing adjustments should be the staff member's immediate supervisor where possible. This University delegated officer (the 'Responsible Officer') should have sufficient seniority to ensure that the required adjustments are implemented with the greatest possible efficiency and confidentiality.

(53) Where alterations are required to buildings or facilities, the relevant School or Division will negotiate with the Division of Infrastructure and Commercial and the Senior Staff Disability Advisor to carry out the alterations. A record of alterations or plans in progress should be forwarded to the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing to be held on the Reasonable Adjustment Plan file.

(54) A University Reasonable Adjustment Plan will be deemed finalised when a copy of the Reasonable Adjustment Plan record, signed by both the staff member and the responsible supervisor (on behalf of the University) has been received by the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing for file. All parties are required to participate in the timely and effective completion of adjustment arrangements.

(55) Records of all costs incurred in making adjustments for individual reasonable adjustments, other than those costs associated with additional salaries/staffing costs or funded by Job Access, will be recorded against the Staff Workplace Adjustment Fund cost code for the purposes of monitoring the costs of the Program.

(56) Where a concern is raised about the reasonableness of an adjustment which cannot be resolved by the Senior Staff Disability Advisor in the context of facilitating the Reasonable Adjustment Plan, the matter should be referred to the Director, Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing. A final decision on whether adjustment is reasonable will be made by the Vice-President, People and Advancement.

Costs of Staff Adjustments

(57) The costs of making reasonable adjustments are an obligation for the University as a whole. Wherever practicable, the Senior Staff Disability Advisor will seek to access funding for adjustments through available external funding sources. Otherwise, the costs of implementing workplace adjustment (e.g., further medical or work health assessment, provision of assistive equipment, individual workplace modifications or flexibility in ways of working) will be funded by the Staff Workplace Adjustment Fund, administered by the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing. Non-salary costs are not borne by the employing Unit.

(58) Adjustments involving alterations to buildings, grounds or facilities will be met by Division of Infrastructure and Commercial, where external funding is not available or practicable.

(59) Personal aids or equipment that are required by the staff member for private, non-work related purposes will not be funded by the University.

Monitoring Staff Reasonable Adjustment Plans

(60) Reasonable Adjustment Plans shall be reviewed on a needs basis, as agreed by the parties, in consultation with the Senior Staff Disability Advisor.

(61) Where a staff with a disability's circumstances change in relation to their health, working arrangements, allocated supervisor, office location, and/or other considerations, they and their supervisor shall advise the Equity, Diversity and

Wellbeing team.

(62) The Director, Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing, has responsibility for evaluating, monitoring and reporting on the Staff Workplace Adjustment Program and associated funding, and consulting with relevant parties on any recommended changes.

(63) Resource documents and further information on the provision of workplace adjustments for staff and carers of people with a disability can be provided by Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing and on the website.

Reasonable Adjustments for Students

Selection, Admission and Enrolment of Students

(64) Applicants with a disability will be admitted as students to the Western Sydney University subject to meeting the academic entry requirements which apply to all students enrolling in the same program. Students with a disability will also be able to apply for admission under the range of Special Admission Schemes available within the University. Such Schemes allow students to be considered for admission by the University where the student's disability has disadvantaged them in meeting the usual academic requirements.

(65) To be approved for admission under these Schemes, the student has to have the academic and functional ability to complete the chosen program of study and meet the inherent requirements of the program, subject to the provision of any reasonable adjustments and support services required to eliminate barriers to access and inclusion.

(66) Western Sydney University offers all students an orientation program. This program includes information on available support services and policies relating to disabilities. Information on services to assist students with disabilities will be publicised on the University web site.

Support for Students with a Disability

(67) As part of academic support services, the University offers a range of specialised services and programs to students with disabilities. These include but are not limited to: pre-enrolment advice and assistance with enrolment; academic note-taking services; personal readers; academic practical assistants and Sign Language interpreters; relocation of lectures where necessary for access and liaison with teaching staff in relation to reasonable adjustments.

(68) Disability Advisors are employed to assist students with disabilities. The Disability Advisor is the nominated contact person responsible for ensuring that a student with a disability is provided with appropriate support and services. Students with disabilities are strongly encouraged to make contact with the Disability Service prior to enrolment or before the commencement of semester. This allows sufficient time to identify the students' requirements and for the Disability Advisor to organise and implement appropriate reasonable adjustments.

(69) Students are required, at the time of registering with the Disability Service, to submit relevant documentation of an assessment from an accredited health or educational professional. The documentation is to include confirmation of the disability and recommendations on the type of adjustments required. Recommendations will be considered but may not be implemented as recommended. Documentation is not acceptable if more than two years old. Students may be requested to renew documentation every two years.

(70) In the event that appropriate documentation is not available at the time of registering, the Disability Advisor can accept an interim medical certificate or educational report. The interim certificate/report will be for a four-week period, valid from the date of registering.

(71) An individual plan, known as the Academic Integration Plan, will be developed for each student with a disability or chronic health condition registered with the Disability Service. The Academic Integration Plan will not disclose the nature of the student's disability or chronic health condition. The Academic Integration Plan will set out the specific

reasonable adjustments required by the individual. The University, within a reasonable time frame, will implement the Academic Integration Plan. Academic Integration Plans will be reviewed periodically.

(72) Students are required to give written approval for the Academic Integration Plan to be distributed to Academics and relevant staff for implementation. Students are required to sign an Academic Integration Plan Distribution Consent form prior to an Academic Integration Plan being distributed.

(73) Western Sydney University will appoint School Disability Coordinators across the University. The School Disability Coordinator will be a contact point for the Disability Advisors, students with disabilities and teaching staff within each School. The School Disability Coordinator will act as a resource to other academics on implementation of adjustments set out in the Academic Integration Plan in relation to teaching and assessment. School Disability Coordinator will assist with the organisation of individual student examination arrangements and appropriate methods of assessment. School Disability Coordinator will meet regularly with Disability Service staff.

Curriculum Development, Accreditation and Delivery

(74) Before a subject is approved by Academic Senate the inherent requirements of the subject must be identified and included in the subject handout. It must be demonstrated that reasonable requirements of students with disabilities, in relation to curriculum, field work, laboratory work, practicum, teaching practices and assessment, have been taken into consideration in the program design. Wherever possible, inclusive teaching and assessment practices will be incorporated into curricula, program delivery and assessment.

Reasonable Adjustments in Teaching and Assessment

(75) Western Sydney University will develop guidelines for the adjustments to be provided in relation to teaching practices and assessment. Examples of appropriate adjustments include but are not limited to: lectures which make use of formats and approaches suitable for students with vision or hearing impairments; individual exam conditions such as scribes, extra time or enlarged print papers; alternative forms of assessment such as oral exams; appropriate adjustments to field work, laboratory work and practicum according to the nature of the disability.

(76) Wherever possible and appropriate, the Disability Service will provide registered students with program material in an accessible alternative format. A student may be required to purchase an electronic version of a text book rather than print copy.

(77) Where appropriate, a student with a disability or chronic health condition may be approved to have a Notetaker, Reader, Practical Assistant, or Sign Language interpreter who must follow specific instructions provided by the Disability Service.

(78) While students are required to meet subject/program assessment requirements as determined by the University, provision will be made for reasonable variations in assessment in order to meet the requirements of the student with a disability. All subjects in the [Online Handbook](#) will contain a statement informing students that:

"Any student with a disability who may require reasonable adjustments in this subject are requested to seek advice and assistance at the commencement of the term, or soon thereafter, from the Disability Advisor or School Disability Coordinator."

(79) Students will be permitted to use aids or assistance appropriate to their disability or chronic health condition during examinations. Examination adjustments will be stipulated in the Academic Integration Plan. Notification of exam adjustments will be provided by the Disability Service not less than thirty working days prior to the commencement of the main exam period.

(80) Students with a disability or chronic health condition will be permitted to use aids appropriate to suit their

disability during lectures, tutorials, assessments, examinations and during work experience or educational practicum/placements.

Non-Academic Student Activities

(81) Autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies associated with Western Sydney University such as student accommodation, child care services and food and book outlets will be assisted by Western Sydney University to develop Action Plans of their own and to ensure continuous improvement in the area of disability access. Western Sydney University will aim to ensure consistency between these Action Plans and the University Disability Action Plan.

Action on Adjustments - Academic Integration Plan Procedures

(82) More detailed information on the Disability Service guidelines, policies and procedures in relation to the provision of reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities is available on that Subject's web pages.

(83) The Disability Service, in conjunction with a student with a disability or chronic health condition, will undertake a comprehensive assessment at the time of registration. The assessment will be underpinned by the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992- Amended 2009](#), [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cth\)](#), the [Disability Policy](#) and the [Universities Australia Guidelines relating to Students with a Disability](#) and Guidelines on Information Access for Students with Print Disabilities.

(84) This assessment will form the basis of the Academic Integration Plan. The plan will set out the academic, practicum, examination, library, security and information technology requirements the student will need whilst studying at Western Sydney University. Where appropriate, a student undertaking a professional placement may require the development of an additional Placement Integration Plan that includes adjustments specific to the placement/work experience.

(85) The Academic Integration Plan will be sufficiently flexible to enable modification or additional adjustments to be incorporated into the plan to reflect changes in circumstances or health status. Students need to negotiate changes to the Academic Integration Plan with the Disability Service.

(86) Students are required to sign the 'Academic Integration Plan Agreement' plus the 'Academic Integration Plan Distribution Consent' form prior to the Academic Integration Plan being finalised and distributed to the Subject Coordinator and other relevant University staff for implementation. The distribution and implementation of the Academic Integration Plan to relevant academic staff is the responsibility of the Subject Coordinator. The Academic Integration Plan is to be implemented by the relevant Academics within five working days of the Academic Integration Plan being sent electronically to the Subject Coordinator.

(87) An electronic copy of the Academic Integration Plan will be sent to the student's University email account within two working days of the Academic Integration Plan being finalised. Students are encouraged to discuss the plan with the Subject or Practicum Coordinator, lecturer, School Disability Coordinator and/or tutor in a timely period after receiving their Academic Integration Plan.

Academic Integration Plans (AIP) Procedures

(88) Academic Integration Plans will be issued to Subject Coordinators not less than ten working days prior to the commencement of the term. New or amended Academic Integration Plans developed after this period will be issued within two working days. Subject Coordinators are responsible for ensuring all the adjustments stipulated in the Academic Integration Plan are implemented by the lecturers and tutors teaching in the nominated subject within five working days of receiving the Academic Integration Plan. Practicum/Placement Coordinators are responsible for ensuring the appropriate adjustments are implemented in the teaching/work environment.

Academic Assistance

(89) The Subject Coordinator is responsible for both reviewing the provisions and ensuring the implementation of the academic 'reasonable adjustments' included in the Academic Integration Plan.

(90) The School Disability Coordinator is to liaise directly with campus Subject Coordinators concerning any recommendations that may have significant impact on the teaching or assessment of the subject. Where implementation of the reasonable adjustments set out in the Academic Integration Plan is withheld, the Subject Coordinator must notify the Disability Advisor in writing within five working days from date of receipt of the Academic Integration Plan indicating rationale for the decision.

(91) If necessary, the School Disability Coordinator will convene a meeting between the Subject Coordinator and/or Academic, the Disability Advisor and/or the student, within five working days of notification of non-approval of the plan, to resolve the difficulties.

(92) If there is no objection to the Academic Integration Plan, it is to be distributed to relevant academics and implemented within five working days from the date of receipt.

(93) The Academic Integration Plan will state the reasonable adjustments required by the student for in-class tests and formal end-of-term examinations. The Examination Officer, Examinations, Office of Student and University Planning, will be responsible for ensuring that all coordinated examinations, including deferred examinations requirements, are implemented for students registered with the Disability Service.

(94) The School Disability Coordinator and the Senior School Administrative Officer are responsible for assisting academic staff with the implementation of examination provisions for students with a disability for all non coordinated examinations (exams occurring outside of the official coordinated Examination period).

(95) Where appropriate, School Disability Coordinators will assist staff in the development of individual examination arrangements and alternative methods of assessments (e.g., oral examinations/presentations) to accommodate students with particular disabilities (e.g., hearing or hand/arm impairment). The Disability Service will provide and fund, where appropriate, a scribe, reader or practical assistant. Specialised equipment required will be supplied by the Disability Service.

Part D - Rights and Responsibilities of Staff and Students

(96) The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all staff and students of the University. Some areas and positions within the University community have specific responsibilities that are outlined in the University's Disability Action Plan and the Disability Services Principles and Procedures.

(97) The University may attract legal liability for the actions and omissions of staff and students in meeting the statutory obligations of State and Federal anti-discrimination legislation.

(98) All staff take responsibility to provide equity for students and other staff with disabilities and undertake their duties in a non-discriminatory manner. Staff have a right to expect staff and students seeking reasonable adjustments to the workplace or the learning environment will discuss their specific requirements if adjustments are to be developed and implemented and to share responsibility in negotiating solutions and provision of information.

(99) Staff:

- a. are expected to undertake development activities and staff development training to gain knowledge, skills and awareness of disability issues and the requirements of students and staff with a disability;
- b. who are Managers and Academic Supervisors will ensure that people with a disability are not discriminated against or harassed in the workplace. This includes acting to ensure that there are no attitudinal or other

barriers which result in less favourable treatment of people with disabilities;

- c. will assist in the implementation of Academic Integration Plans and Reasonable Adjustment Plans and provide equal access in all areas of employment and teaching and learning;
- d. will implement all the reasonable adjustments stipulated in the Academic Integration Plan and the Reasonable Adjustment Plan for staff and students who have a disability;
- e. are responsible for creating a climate in which students and other staff are encouraged to discuss issues arising from the impact of the disability on their studies or work;
- f. must have due regard for each person's right to privacy and confidentiality when seeking information for the purpose of making reasonable adjustments;
- g. with a disability will determine whether they declare their disability and will liaise appropriately with their supervisor to establish the most effective implementation of adjustments and the degree of assistance or adjustment which is required.

(100) Student's Responsibilities:

- a. Prospective or enrolled students with a disability are required to familiarise themselves with the inherent requirements of their chosen program before enrolment.
- b. Prospective students and/or enrolled students are to familiarise themselves with the eligibility criteria for registration with professional registration boards before enrolling in the program.

(101) In order to obtain specific adjustments, it is necessary that people with a disability declare the nature of their disability in a timely manner and provide medical evidence to staff of the Disability Service (students) or to the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing (staff).

- a. Students with a disability have the right to not declare their disability. Implementation of reasonable adjustments to the educational program is only possible if the student declares their identity, the nature of their disability to the Disability Advisor, Disability Service.

(102) Students with a disability who are enrolled in a program where practicums are an essential component may be requested to undertake, at no cost, an additional assessment to ensure the student is able to meet the inherent requirements of the practicum and OH&S.

Part E - Physical Access

(103) Western Sydney University is committed to ensuring that all University buildings and facilities are accessible to students, staff and the wider community. The University will achieve this through an ongoing program of review and improvements to the physical access of existing buildings and facilities and ensuring that new buildings are accessible and compliant with the most current version of the Access to Premises Standards and be consistent with the requirements of the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#).

Part F - Information Services

(104) Western Sydney University's Libraries and Information Technology Centres will make available resources in accessible format, services and professional assistance to support the information and research requirements of students and staff. The University's Libraries and Information Technology Centres will assist students and staff with a disability to ensure equitable access to information and technology services, including assistive technologies.

(105) The University will progressively ensure that all new website content complies with [W3C Guidelines to AA level or above](#).

Part G - Equity in Staff Selection and Conditions of Employment

(106) People with a disability will be encouraged to apply for positions at the University. All recruitment and selection processes will be inclusive of the requirements of people with a disability. This includes processes such as advertising, job design, interviewing and medical assessments. Interview processes will be adjusted where the candidate has made a relevant disclosure within a reasonable period of the interview.

(107) People with a disability will have the same terms and conditions by which employment is offered as people without a disability.

(108) Staff with a disability will have equal opportunities for promotion and career development. The University will provide appropriate assistance for staff with a disability to attend University approved work activities such as staff training, study and conference leave.

Work Health and Safety

(109) Western Sydney University recognises its obligations and responsibilities under the guidelines of the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) and associated Regulations and Codes of Practice. The University is committed to ensuring a safe work environment and to ensuring that Work Health and Safety planning and activities also incorporate the requirements of people with disabilities. Students with a disability must meet the Work Health and Safety requirements when working in science labs or using electrical or manual tools and equipment.

Part H - Budget Allocation

(110) The University will, as part of its cyclic budget process, determine an appropriate allocation of funding to resource disability support services to students and staff. The funding will be allocated as a budget to the areas responsible for administering disability policy and it will be the responsibility of those areas to develop a detailed budget plan and to report on expenditure of funding against that budget plan, income performance, output and appropriate performance measures. In determining the annual allocation, the University needs to take into account the requirement that funding should be available for the provision of physical access, and reasonable workplace and teaching and learning accommodations and other support requirements of students and staff with disabilities.

Part I - Appeals, Grievances and Complaints

(111) Staff and students who believe they have been treated unfairly on the grounds of disability are encouraged to use the University procedures on appeals, grievances and complaints. Western Sydney University is committed to accessible, fair and confidential processes for the resolution of complaints based on allegations of discrimination on the grounds of disability.

(112) Any questions or concerns on matters pertaining to disability discrimination may be referred to the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing or to the Disability Service in the first instance.

(113) Complaints may also be made externally to the [Australian Human Rights Commission](#), the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board or to the Federal [Fair Work Ombudsman](#).

Section 5 - Guidelines

(114) For further guidance on issues relating to the implementation of this policy, please refer to the web pages of the Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing and the Disability Service.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	1st January 2023
Review Date	2nd January 2023
Approval Authority	Director, Governance Services
Approval Date	15th December 2022
Expiry Date	13th March 2024
Unit Head	Michelle Falconer Director, Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing 96787370
Author	Michelle Falconer Director, Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing 96787370
Enquiries Contact	Michelle Falconer Director, Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing 96787370

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Program" - A program of study consisting of at least four subjects or 40 credit points leading to an award of the University (Foundation Studies Program, Undergraduate Preparation Program, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Undergraduate Certificate, Associate Degree, Bachelor Degree, Bachelor Honours Degree, Graduate Certificate, Postgraduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters by Coursework Degree) which when successfully completed is conferred on the graduand by the Board of Trustees.

"Subject" - The subject of study in a program in which a student enrolls.

"Term" - A session at the University that runs for a set length of time during which teaching and assessments occur.