

Students with disabilities procedures

POLICY SUPPORTED

C-7: Students with disabilities policy

PURPOSE

The University of South Australia aspires to create an inclusive and equitable environment that promotes and supports full access and participation for all students.

This document outlines the specific procedures and mechanisms that the University will implement to support the successful participation of people with disabilities and unpaid carers of people with disabilities in university study.

SCOPE

Unless specifically indicated otherwise, the procedures contained in this document relate to all students enrolled with the University of South Australia irrespective of campus or study mode.

Support services and reasonable adjustments may relate to a wide range of areas related to study at the University of South Australia including but not limited to, physical access to buildings, access to specialist technology resources, adaptation of teaching materials, adjustments to teaching methodology and assessments.

For the purposes of this document:

- The term “disability” is a broad term that includes a range of impairments, medical conditions, chronic illnesses, and injuries which have an ongoing impact on a person’s daily function or activity. It includes all disabilities as defined within the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
- The term “unpaid carer” refers to an individual as defined in the Carer Recognition Act 2010 and includes an individual who provides significant unpaid personal care, support and assistance to another individual who has a disability, medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness), mental illness, or is frail and aged. A person is considered an unpaid carer when the needs of the person they care for are significant, regular and above what is considered to be general parenting or family duties.
- Where an unpaid carer or student with a disability is undertaking study in a partner organisation within Australia, the University will work in conjunction with the partner organisation to consider and apply reasonable adjustments as per Australian legislative obligations.
- In the case where an unpaid carer or student with a disability is studying in an off-shore location, the University’s policy and procedures will be viewed in the context of in-country legislation.
- Student mobility (exchange arrangements and study tours) will require specific negotiation to determine necessary supports prior to departure.

PROCEDURAL DETAILS

1. Prospective students

- 1.1 The University recognises that people may have experienced educational disadvantages as a result of their disability or unpaid caring roles and will implement and monitor a flexible range of entry pathways to encourage greater participation of these groups in higher education.
- 1.2 The University will ensure information about services and reasonable adjustments are provided to prospective students in a variety of accessible formats.
- 1.3 All marketing and promotional information, activities and events will comply with recognised accessibility guidelines.

2. Admission and enrolment

- 2.1 The University will ensure that all aspects of admission and enrolment processes are inclusive and enabling through a process of continual review, identification and removal of systemic barriers.
- 2.2 Early enrolment opportunities can be made available for unpaid carers or students with disabilities to assist with managing and planning timetables to meet their individual needs. This provision must be assessed and approved by an Access and Inclusion Adviser as part of an Access Plan (refer to Section 6).
- 2.3 All students are given the option to indicate they have a disability, medical or health condition during the enrolment process. This is a confidential national dataset that all Australian universities are required to collect and report on. A student may elect to change or update this field at any time during their program of study.
- 2.4 Selecting the disability indicator during the enrolment process does not initiate any further disclosure to other parts of the University, nor does it lead to the automatic provision of reasonable adjustments, supports or services by the University.
- 2.5 If a student selects the disability indicator during the enrolment process, they are subsequently asked if they wish to be contacted about university support services. If a student elects not to be contacted, no further action will be taken. Contact details for those students who select “yes” will be referred to the Access and Inclusion service.
- 2.6 A student who elects not to select the disability indicator during enrolment may choose to update these details at any later stage during their studies. Consequently, the provision of Access and Inclusion services is not dependent on a student selecting the disability indicator during or post enrolment.

3. Services and disclosure

- 3.1 The Access and Inclusion service will have specific responsibility for the assessment and approval of services for individual students who identify they may be impacted by a disability or unpaid caring role. These approved services and individual adjustments will be documented in a formal plan, referred to herein as an [Access Plan](#) (refer to Section 6).

- 3.2 Responsibility for identifying the elements of a program or course that affect an individual's ability to participate on the same basis as others is shared between the University and the student. The University will not be required to implement individual adjustments unless a student has an approved Access Plan in place (refer to Section 6). Correspondingly, an Access Plan will not be approved and implemented without the consent of the student.
- 3.3 Students do not need to provide evidence or formally disclose a disability, medical or health condition in order to discuss or receive advice from the Access and Inclusion service.
- 3.4 Students will only need to provide formal evidence of their unpaid caring role or disability to the Access and Inclusion service if seeking funded supports or formal academic adjustments as part of an Access Plan (refer to Section 6).
4. Evidence of impact/supporting documentation
- 4.1 Students and unpaid carers who request funded supports or academic adjustments as part of an Access Plan will be required to provide evidence of their condition or unpaid caring role and its likely impact on studies. This requirement for evidence is not intended as a barrier to services but is designed to protect the integrity of the eligibility process and ensure equitable and ethical allocation of resources to students.
- 4.2 For all conditions other than Autism Spectrum Disorder, Specific Learning Disabilities and unpaid caring roles (refer to clause 4.4), students must provide the Access and Inclusion Adviser with documentation from a registered medical or health professional which includes:
- evidence the student has a condition that meets the definition of disability as defined in the *C-7: Students with Disabilities* policy; and
 - a description of the current functional impact of the condition on their ability to study and any specific recommendations for adjustments and services that may be required.
- 4.3 Students may elect to provide copies of relevant medical reports already in their possession or they may request their relevant treating practitioner to complete an [Access and Inclusion Health Practitioner Form](#).
- 4.4 The following conditions require separate, specific documentary evidence to ensure consistency and compliance with nationally recognised criteria:
- 4.4.1 Autism Spectrum Disorder:
- an ASD specific clinical diagnostic report that was completed at the age of 12 or over; or,
 - if diagnosis occurred prior to the age of 12, a letter from a registered medical/health practitioner confirming the date of diagnosis and describing the current functional impact for the student. This letter may be written by a GP, Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist, Psychologist or other health professional with recent and relevant knowledge of the student.
- 4.4.2 Specific Learning Disability:
- a psychometric educational assessment report undertaken by a registered clinical psychologist or speech pathologist completed at the age of 12 or over; or,

- b. evidence of a diagnostic assessment completed before the age of 12 with a letter from the student's high school confirming that learning adjustments were required throughout the student's secondary education; or,
 - c. a statement or letter from the SACE Board specifying the accommodations and adjustments permitted during examinations.
- 4.4.3 Unpaid Carers:
- a. Students who have primary unpaid care responsibilities for a person with disability, medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness), mental illness, or who is frail and aged will need to provide evidence of their caring role by way of:
 - i) current entitlement to Commonwealth Carer Payment or Carer Allowance; or,
 - ii) a current letter from a relevant medical/health practitioner confirming the diagnosis of the person for whom they provide care and a description of the impact on the student's capacity to engage in tertiary study.
5. Confidentiality
- 5.1 Disability, medical and any other personal information provided by students to the Access and Inclusion service will be treated in accordance with the University's [A-46: Confidentiality of Students' Personal Information](#) policy. Information will not be disseminated without the student's explicit consent. Information will only be disclosed without the student's consent if there is a legal requirement to do so.
6. Access Plan
- 6.1 The [Access Plan](#) (AP) will be the primary method by which the University documents and approves the individual services which have been agreed and the details of reasonable adjustments required in relation to assessment, teaching practice and resources for students with disabilities and unpaid carers.
- 6.2 An Access Plan can only be created, approved and issued by an Access and Inclusion Adviser, in consultation with the student. An Access Plan will not be approved or issued until the student has provided appropriate supporting documentation (refer to Section 4).
- 6.3 It is not expected that students with short term medical conditions will usually require an Access Plan as provisions for these circumstances are governed by the [Assessment Policy and Procedures Manual](#). A short-term condition refers to a temporary injury or medical condition (including pregnancy) that is expected to last for a period of days or weeks, for which treatment/support is being sought and which is not expected to have an ongoing functional impact on a person's capacity to study.
- 6.3.1 An exception to Clause 6.3 may occur when a student requires access to the alternative exam venue during a major exam event due to an unforeseen medical condition, injury or late pregnancy complication. In such circumstances, a temporary Access Plan will be created by the Access and Inclusion Adviser, who will subsequently notify Student and Academic Services. Final allocation and approval of access to the alternative exam venue rests with Student and Academic Services.
- 6.4 In the case of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students a plan outlining any services and adjustments should be established in consultation with the student, the Access and Inclusion

Adviser and the Research Degree Coordinator and/or Supervisor. Access Plans should be developed to support both the proposal and research components for the degree.

- 6.5 In recognition that a student's Access Plan may not be relevant to every course throughout their study, the Access and Inclusion Adviser will email a copy of the approved Access Plan to the student and their relevant Program Director only. Access Plans will not be automatically distributed to any other university staff.
 - 6.6 Students are expected to provide copies of their Access Plan to individual teaching staff if/when appropriate.
 - 6.7 Wherever possible, students are encouraged to advocate on their own behalf, informing teaching staff about the adjustments they require and using their Access Plan as a basis for negotiation. Upon request, Access and Inclusion Advisers can provide students with assistance in discussing and negotiating their disability related needs with university staff.
 - 6.8 Students are required to make any requests for disability related services and adjustments to academic staff in a timely manner, such that academic participation can be planned over the duration of a study period.
 - 6.9 Academic staff are expected to use the information contained in the Access Plan as a basis for discussion with the student about their individual requirements. Further information and advice may be sought from the Access and Inclusion service in relation to understanding and exploring the impact of adjustments on particular course content.
 - 6.10 Students will not need to provide additional medical certification to academic staff for approved reasonable adjustments as outlined in their Access Plan. Additional supporting evidence may be required for extensions and/or variations beyond those included in the Access Plan.
7. *Reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment*
 - 7.1 Adjustments to teaching and assessment will be made to accommodate the impact of disability without compromising the academic standard or inherent requirements of a program or course.
 - 7.2 The University will provide a pool of funding for the purchase of reasonable disability-specific equipment, technology and support services to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to curriculum.
 - 7.3 *Teaching practice*
 - 7.3.1 Academic staff are required to make reasonable adjustments to teaching methodology to enable the full participation of students with disabilities in-class learning activities.
 - 7.3.2 Students are responsible for advising teaching staff about their individual needs as soon as possible, using their Access Plan as a basis for this discussion. Students must allow teaching staff reasonable time to organise and implement any adjustments that are required.
 - 7.3.3 The Access and Inclusion service will liaise with Course Coordinators to identify and organise the conversion of teaching materials and resources to certain alternative formats if required

as part of an individual student's Access Plan. Examples of alternative formats include braille, large print, audio transcriptions and video captioning.

- 7.3.4 The Access and Inclusion service will fund the costs of transcription, braille and captioning by external providers for individual students only. Academic staff should contact the Teaching and Innovation Unit for assistance with embedding universally accessible course content within the University's Learning Management System.
- 7.3.5 Course Coordinators are responsible for reviewing the relevant course content that requires conversion and subsequently uploading converted materials to course sites within the Learning Management System. This applies to all hard copy and digital resources that are utilized throughout a course such as slide notes, books, e-readings, online quizzes, video clips, etc.

7.4 *Continuous assessment*

- 7.4.1 Students are responsible for advising teaching staff about their individual needs as soon as possible, using their Access Plan as a basis for this discussion. Students must allow teaching staff reasonable time to organise and implement any adjustments that are required.
- 7.4.2 It is the responsibility of the Course Coordinator to arrange and implement required adjustments to in-class tests and assessments as outlined in a student's Access Plan, such as the provision of hard copy test papers in enlarged font or any other changes to the physical layout or methodology of the test or task.
- 7.4.3 It is the responsibility of the relevant Academic Unit to arrange and supply suitable alternative rooms and individual invigilation for in-class tests or tasks if required as part of a student's Access Plan.
- 7.4.4 If, as part of their Access Plan, a student requires access to a computer and/or specialist software for in-class tests or tasks, the Course Coordinator must contact the Access and Inclusion service **at least two weeks prior to the date it is required**. The Access and Inclusion service will maintain a pool of laptops with specialist software that will be available for loan to students exclusively for this purpose.

7.5 *Final assessments and examinations*

- 7.5.1 Students are responsible for advising teaching staff about their individual needs as soon as possible, using their Access Plan as a basis for this discussion. Students must allow teaching staff reasonable time to organise and implement any adjustments that are required.
- 7.5.2 If variations to examinations or final assessment tasks are required as part of a student's Access Plan, these must be applied to all on campus, program-based and centrally managed events.
- 7.5.3 The Access and Inclusion Service and Student Academic Services will be responsible for arranging and implementing adjustments for students attending centrally managed exam events.
- 7.5.4 The relevant Academic Unit will be responsible for arranging and implementing individual adjustments for on-campus or program-based examinations and final assessment tasks. This

- includes the provision of hard copy test papers in enlarged font, organizing individual supervision in a smaller venue, or arranging access to a computer for a student who requires specialist software to complete the exam or assessment task.
- 7.5.5 If a student requires access to a computer and/or specialist software for an on-campus or program-based exam or assessment task, the Course Coordinator must contact the Access and Inclusion service at least two weeks prior to the date it is required. The Access and Inclusion service will maintain a pool of laptops with specialist software that will be available for loan for this purpose.
- 7.5.6 Where a student requires modification to examinations or assessment tasks which impact on the content or assessment method, this will be documented in the Access Plan and details negotiated between the student and Course Coordinator, with assistance from the Access and Inclusion service if required. The Course Coordinator must approve all modifications to an exam and confirm this in writing to the student and Student and Academic Services.
- 7.6 *Practice-based learning*
- 7.6.1 Practice-based learning is an important part of the student experience at the University of South Australia. For students who have an Access Plan and are likely to require reasonable services or adjustments to participate in practice-based learning, a proactive and consultative approach should be taken involving the student, Course Coordinator, Program Director and Access and Inclusion Adviser.
- 7.6.2 Where negotiations regarding reasonable adjustments involves host organisations, the University may need to discuss specific information pertaining to the impact of the student's condition with the external host provider. Student consent will be gained before any disability related information is provided to or discussed with a host placement provider.
- 7.6.3 Issues regarding 'fitness to practice' and 'suitability' which arise in the context of practicum, field and clinical placement will be attended to by the University in accordance with the [Assessment Policy and Procedures Manual](#). The relevant Program Director must inform the Student Engagement Unit as soon as possible of any breaches involving a student with an Access Plan, so that appropriate support measures can be put in place for the student.
8. Responsibilities
- 8.1 *Promulgation, Monitoring and Review*
- 8.1.1 Overall responsibility for the review of this procedure resides with the Responsible Officer.
- 8.1.2 All Academic and Central Units have a responsibility to promulgate and monitor the implementation of this procedure.
- 8.2 *Education and Training*
- 8.2.1 The Student Engagement, Teaching Innovation and People, Talent and Culture Units will work together to identify and lead appropriate training and education initiatives for staff and students that improve disability awareness and understanding of inclusive practices.

8.2.2 All staff have a responsibility to participate in training and education in order to understand and fulfil their obligations and embed a culture of inclusion across the University.

9. Resolving concerns should they arise

9.1 Should concerns arise with the implementation of this procedure, staff and students are encouraged to resolve matters locally in the first instance whenever possible. This will usually involve relevant staff such as the Program Director, Dean of Programs and Access and Inclusion Adviser.

9.2 If a problem escalates to a complaint, students should refer to the University's [C-17: Student complaints resolution](#) policy.

9.3 Assistance in understanding and navigating the complaints procedure can be sought from USASA, the Student Ombud or external advocacy agencies.

10. Definitions

10.1 **Access Plan** is a formal document which outlines the agreed services and reasonable adjustments that will be provided by the University. The Access Plan is created in consultation with the student and outlines the impact of a student's disability, impairment, mental health condition or chronic health issue on their studies.

10.2 **Carer of a person with disability** is an individual as defined in the Carer Recognition Act 2010 and includes an individual who provides significant unpaid personal care, support and assistance to another individual who has a disability, medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness), mental illness, or is frail and aged. For the purposes of this procedure, a person is considered a carer when the needs of the person they care for are significant, regular and above what is considered to be general parenting or family duties.

For the complete definition refer to the [Carer Recognition Act](#).

10.3 **Disability** is a broad term that includes a range of impairments, medical conditions, chronic illnesses and injuries which have an ongoing impact on a person's daily function or activity, including their capacity to fully access and participate in university life. This procedure incorporates all disabilities as defined within the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) including:

- Physical
- Intellectual
- Psychiatric
- Sensory
- Neurological
- Learning disabilities
- Physical disfigurement
- The presence in the body of disease-causing organisms.

For the complete definition refer to the [Disability Discrimination Act](#).

- 10.4 **Discrimination** happens when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain personal characteristics. This is known as 'direct discrimination'. It is also discrimination when an unreasonable rule or policy applies to everyone but has the effect of disadvantaging some people because of a personal characteristic they share. This is known as 'indirect discrimination.'
- 10.5 **Inherent requirements** are the capabilities, knowledge and skills that must be demonstrated to achieve the core requirements of a course or program. The onus is on the University to prove objectively that inherent requirements exist in a program, based on substantive, defensible academic rationale and not merely compulsory requirements or traditional practices.
- 10.6 **Partner organisation** is an organisation, in conjunction with whom the University offers a program of study or a component of a program of study. The organisation may be onshore or offshore, a private provider, a professional or industry association, a university or a college.
- 10.7 **Reasonable adjustments** are measures or adjustments taken by the University which enables a student with a disability to participate in their studies on the same basis as a student without a disability. Adjustments are considered reasonable when they balance the interests of all parties affected and do not cause unjustifiable hardship.
- 10.8 **Unjustifiable hardship.** In accordance with the DDA, there are a range of factors that need to be considered in determining unjustifiable hardship. These include but are not limited to:
- the benefits/detriments that might accrue to others including the person with disability;
 - other options/alternatives that could be considered or canvassed;
 - the cost and benefits to the University; and
 - the impact on the academic integrity of a course or program.

For further information see the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(DDA\)](#).

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS/LINKS:

[A-18: Selection and entry to programs](#)

[A-46: Confidentiality of student's personal information](#)

[Assessment Policies and Procedures Manual \(APPM\)](#)

[C-17: Student complaints resolution](#)

[C-1: Inclusive language](#)

[C-10: Car parking](#)

[Carer Recognition Act 2010](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#)

[University of South Australia Disability Action Plan 2014-2018](#)

Student Involuntary Medical Leave (in development)