

# **Academic Adjustments for Students with Disabilities Policy**

## **Section 1 - Preamble**

(1) The University's aim is to assist those students who have a disability to engage in academic life as fully as possible recognising that students do not all come to University equally equipped to cope with its challenges.

(2) Both New South Wales and Federal legislation make it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability in education. The University recognises that people with a disability can need adjustment in order to enable them to engage in academic life equitably.

(3) Once the existence of a disability has been established, and the support needs confirmed by the relevant Student Equity and Disability Officer, the University staff are required to provide the support specified [see clause (13)].

(4) Adjustments provided to students will comply with the intellectual integrity and academic standards of the University.

(5) This Policy may not apply to persons with a temporary disability, as such situations may be addressed under the University's Special Consideration Rules. Students requiring assistance in this regard should contact the University Counselling Service or the Student Representative Council.

## **Section 2 - Policy Statement**

### **Part A - Policy Description**

#### **Objectives**

(6) The objectives of this Policy are:

- a. to ensure the provision of services necessary to assist students with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential as members of the University community.
- b. to ensure the provision of services that:
  - i. further the integration of students with disabilities in the University community and complement services available generally to such persons in the local community;
  - ii. enable students with disabilities to achieve positive outcomes, such as increased independence and integration in the University community; and
  - iii. are provided in ways that promote in the University community a positive image of persons with disabilities and enhance their self-esteem.
- c. to encourage innovation in the provision of services for students with disabilities.
- d. to ensure that approved services for students with disabilities are developed and reviewed on a periodic basis through the use of forward plans.

## Part B - Principles

(7) Students with disabilities have the same inherent rights as all members of the University community with respect to:

- a. their human worth and dignity;
- b. the realisation of the student's physical, emotional, social and individual development; and
- c. participation in the decisions which affect their lives.

(8) The University aims to provide services to students with disabilities which will result in the attainment of a quality experience at University, and to ensure the services are delivered in a manner which incurs the least restriction of their human rights and opportunities.

(9) The University aims to raise the awareness of the University community regarding the needs and rights of people with disabilities.

(10) In providing support programs to students and prospective students with disabilities, the University endeavours to respect their rights to privacy and confidentiality.

## Part C - Content and Implementation

### Administration of this Policy

(11) The Policy on Academic Adjustments for Students with Disabilities will be administered by the Student Equity and Disability Officer.

(12) Students who believe they may be able to benefit from the application of this Policy to their situation will contact the Student Equity and Disability Officer. If students contact another University staff member, they will be referred to the Student Equity and Disability Officer.

(13) The Student Equity and Disability Officer will, after substantiation of the student's claim to adjustment (as outlined in section four of this Policy), inform the relevant academic staff. Where appropriate, the Student Equity and Disability Officer will then consult with the relevant academic staff and the student and others to discuss the most effective way of meeting the student's need for adjustment.

(14) Students who believe that their needs are not being met will have recourse to the Head, Equity and Diversity. In all cases the final decision in the adjustments that shall be provided will be determined by the Vice Chancellor.

### Substantiation of Disability

(15) The University recognises at all times the right to privacy of students.

(16) Notwithstanding the right to privacy it is recognised that the University has the right to require evidence of a student's disability before any assistance can be given under this Policy.

(17) Students who seek adjustments under this Policy are required to provide documentary evidence to the Student Equity and Disability Officer as to the existence of the said disability and the functional limitations this involves. This evidence may be provided by a medical practitioner, psychologist and/or other relevant professionals. If possible, this evidence will also contain recommendations as to appropriate adjustments to provide the students with equal opportunity.

(18) The student who is seeking assistance under this Policy may also provide information to assist in assessing appropriate adjustments. This information may include:

- a. the functional limitations placed on the student by this disability;
- b. whether the disability is likely to improve or worsen in time;
- c. prosthetic devices and equipment necessary to assist the student in dealing with their disability; and
- d. adjustments requested.

(19) Documentation will be retained by the Student Equity and Disability Officer and made available to relevant staff on request, if the student gives authorisation.

## **Provision of Adjustments**

(20) The type of adjustment to be given to a student shall be determined after consultation between the Student Equity and Disability Officer and the student concerned, review of any recommendations from specialists, and agreement by the relevant academic staff member responsible for the unit. Practical suggestions for the form that this assistance may take may be provided by School Disability Contact Officers or other University staff.

(21) The level of assistance that shall be provided to a student shall be finalised where possible within four weeks of a student first contacting the Student Equity and Disability Officer to seek adjustments. Relevant staff (normally as agreed between the Student Equity and Disability Officer and the students) will be notified in writing of the adjustments to be provided.

(22) Adjustments provided to any student may be reviewed each semester and advised to relevant staff.

(23) If students do not receive the adjustments, which have been negotiated, they should immediately report to the Student Equity and Disability Officer who will investigate.

(24) The provision of adjustments under this Policy does not include assistance in understanding content. Students who need assistance with study skills should be referred to the Learning Assistance Centre.

## **Admission and Enrolment**

(25) Where it may be necessary to provide special needs, the University encourages applicants or prospective students with disabilities to disclose the nature of their disabilities and their special needs during the admission and enrolment procedures. The enrolment form seeks disclosure of a disability.

(26) Prospective students with disabilities are encouraged to discuss any possible problems they may have with the Student Equity and Disability Officer at any stage during admissions and enrolment processes.

## **Academic Staff**

(27) Each academic staff member with responsibility for a unit shall be responsible for ensuring that students within their Units (who have been notified to them as having a disability by the Student Equity and Disability Officer ) shall have access to adjustments [as detailed in (28) to (29)] that they require to enable them to be given equal opportunity in that unit. This assistance is to redress disadvantage to individual students and must not act so as to lower the academic standard required to pass that unit.

(28) The type of assistance to be given shall be determined in consultation with the student concerned, the relevant Unit Examiner and the Student Equity and Disability Officer. Practical suggestions for the form that this assistance may take will be provided by the University.

(29) The academic staff member responsible for the unit shall also be responsible for ensuring that students with disabilities are not disadvantaged by the format of assessment items. Whilst it is acknowledged that one academic standard must prevail for all student there can be flexibility in the arrangements made to assess these standards in order to ensure that all students are dealt with equitably. Information on alternative forms of assessment can be

sought from the Head, Equity and Diversity, and the Director, Teaching and Learning.

## **Cultivating a Culture of Non-discrimination**

(30) The University shall provide relevant information regarding students with disabilities to relevant staff.

(31) The University will provide staff development and training opportunities to all staff members, to enable them:

- a. to competently meet the educational, support and vocational needs of students with disabilities; and
- b. to raise the awareness and responsiveness of staff to the needs of students with disabilities.

(32) Everyday usage of the English language includes a number of derogatory and discriminatory terms for people with disabilities. Many of these terms have evolved through the misuse or colloquial use of terms ascribed to particular disabilities. The University has guidelines on non-discriminatory language use, and does not condone the use of discriminatory language relating to people with disabilities.

## **Physical Access**

(33) New buildings will be designed for access and use by students with disabilities in accordance with the University's plans and the Disability Action Plan in particular. The University aims to improve access to older buildings which do not meet current standards and will undertake modifications.

(34) The Disability Access Committee will monitor physical access matters, which impact on people with disabilities.

(35) The University will continue to provide adequate special parking facilities for persons with disabilities.

(36) The University will continue to provide a resting room for the use of persons with disabilities.

## **Examinations**

(37) Where examination adjustments have been agreed to by the relevant academic (usually the Head of School responsible for the course) and where examination adjustments do not affect the examination paper nor the making scheme, then these adjustments are applied to all units.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	13th August 2012
<b>Review Date</b>	13th April 2015
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Academic Board
<b>Approval Date</b>	10th August 2012
<b>Expiry Date</b>	16th May 2016
<b>Head of Work Unit</b>	Andrew Rose Chair, Academic Board +61 2 66203189
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