THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING MANUAL
SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

CONTENTS

2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OTHER RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

– United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006
– Equal Opportunity Commission, Government of South Australia
– Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW
– Australian Human Rights Commission
– *Disability Discrimination Act*, 1992
– Disability Standards for Education, 2005
– Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards, 2010
– *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW)
– Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)
– The University of Sydney Privacy Management Plan 2013
– The University of Sydney Disability Action Plan 2013-2018
– SANE Australia
– Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)
– Australian Bureau of Statistics
– Black Dog Institute
– Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)
– Creating Accessible Teaching and Support (CATS)
– Faculty Handbook online resource, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (2014).
– Toolkit for Staff online resource, James Cook University, 2013
– Accessibility Tips online resource, Access Ability Services, University of Waterloo, Canada, 2014
– Instructor's Handbook: Accommodating Students with Disabilities, Queen's University, Canada, 2014.

WELCOME

At the University of Sydney we pride ourselves on our diverse student population and commitment to meeting legislative obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Disability Standards for Education 2005. To demonstrate this commitment, the University lodged its third Disability Action Plan with the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2013.

The Disability Action Plan 2013-18 reflects our focus on becoming a world leader in the social and economic participation of people with disability. It provides us with a plan of action for delivering best-practice teaching, learning and working environments for students, staff and visitors. One of the six key objectives of the plan states "the University of Sydney is a tertiary education provider of choice for all students".

This Disability Awareness Training Manual is a valuable reference for all staff of the University who are working to achieve this objective in the coming years. I encourage all staff to put this valuable training resource to active use.

Professor Tyrone Carlin
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar)

FOREWORD

Students with disability are an integral part of our community. Their learning opportunities and the services available to them need to be assured in the same way they are for other students.

The University of Sydney Disability Services Office aims to raise awareness and understanding of disability issues and provide support, training and expert advice to academic and administrative areas of the University.

The University of Sydney 2013-18 Disability Action Plan ("the plan") is focused on building an inclusive University environment that promotes equal opportunity in study and employment through training, planning and resource allocation.

The Disability Awareness Training manual ("the manual") was developed in response to a University-wide consultation phase conducted as part of the development of the plan. The plan revealed a strong need for disability awareness training for all staff, to ensure they have confidence in the teaching and learning environment.

The manual is a key support resource that aims to increase awareness of issues relating to students with a disability and provide a clear understanding of the University's legislative obligations and information regarding inclusive teaching and assessment practices.

While the manual's focus is primarily on students with disability, the development of more inclusive practices will benefit all students. The manual encourages exploration of work practices and urges the reader to create a more inclusive learning environment.

This manual is not designed to be read all at once. You can dip in and out of the information and look up the sections that are most relevant to your work. There are activities to assist with testing your own learning and development.

I am very excited to launch this training resource and I hope you find it useful and informative in your work.

Dagmar Kminiak
Manager, Disability Services
August 2014

SECTION 1
LEARNING MODULES

LEARNING MODULE 1
DISABILITY

"The only disability in life is a bad attitude." – Scott Hamilton (retired Olympic gold medallist, cancer survivor, Special Olympics Global Ambassador)

INTRODUCTION

One in five Australians has a reported disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics). However, the definition of disability in the *Disability Discrimination Act* is so broad that one could assume that this number could be much higher. Our experience shows us that many students are reluctant to register for support through the Disability Services Office due to the fear of stigma, discrimination, and being treated differently. It is our attitude towards people with disability that may determine whether they succeed or fail.

Learning outcome: to have a better understanding of the barriers that people with disability may experience.

WHAT IS DISABILITY?

The definition of disability in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (refer to Learning module 2 – Legislation) is very broad and includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, psychological, neurological, sensory, learning disabilities, physical disfigurement, and the presence of disease-causing organisms. This definition covers both long-term and short-term issues, and also whether the potential for disability exists. Due to its breadth, almost anyone could claim they have a disability. However, it is how a disability affects an individual and their participation in everyday life that ultimately may disable them.

The Preamble of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states: "Disability is an evolving concept", and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. It also states that "disability results from an interaction between a non-inclusive society and individuals". For instance, a person using a wheelchair might have difficulties gaining employment not because of the wheelchair, but because there are environmental barriers such as inaccessible buses or staircases that impede access.

To enable equal access to education, we need to break down as many of the barriers as possible – both physical and attitudinal.

ATTITUDES, MYTHS AND MISINFORMATION

It is perhaps easier to imagine, and therefore understand, the potential physical barriers for someone with an obvious physical disability than it is to imagine and understand, for instance, the barriers someone with a mental health condition may experience. This difficulty is often compounded by myths and long-held prejudicial attitudes about disability. Attitudes towards people with disability are often based on misinformation and assumption. Reviewing our perceptions and attitudes is the first step in including all students.

It is useful to compare some common myths about the education, training and employment of people with disability with the reality.

MYTH	REALITY
Equal opportunity means that everyone should be treated the same – so students with disability are not entitled to support services.	Equal opportunity means all people should be treated in a way that enables them to achieve their potential. Support services assist students with such tasks as reading and processing information, conducting library research, preparing assignments, photocopying and performing manual procedures.
Students with disability are more likely to drop out of courses than other students, even when given support.	Students with disability may withdraw from study or training courses for the same range of reasons as other students, but they are no more likely to do so. Statistics from research conducted by the University of Tasmania, demonstrate that students who have access to required services are less likely to withdraw than students who do not have a disability.
Students with disability are too time consuming and their needs are too difficult to cater for in a university, institution or training environment.	Students with disability are highly motivated to attend tertiary education and training and overcome any barriers they may encounter. They are usually very well organised and experienced in finding solutions to problems that may initially appear daunting to staff.
Science, medical, technological, business and applied science courses are not suitable for students with disability.	This statement stems from preconceived ideas about people's capabilities, accommodating their course needs and future employment options. Students with disability have the same right as others to aim for careers consistent with their goals, interests and abilities and should not be denied opportunities because of such preconceptions.
Students with disability create substantial costs through the need to provide extra equipment and additional staff time.	Confinement to external study alone can restrict opportunities for interaction in a stimulating social, intellectual and learning climate. Many students with disability want to study on campus – they should have that option.

It is important to maintain a positive attitude towards students with disability. Key features of a positive attitude include:

– treating all people as equals
– focusing on what people can do
– recognising individuality
– consulting with the person directly about issues that affect them
– fostering participating and inclusion
– using information free from bias
– respecting rights and confidentiality
– providing access to services
– displaying attitudes and actions that recognise people with disability are in charge of their own lives, and have abilities and rights
– focusing on the person rather than the disability
– ensuring provisions are made so that a disability does not become a handicap
– using appropriate language and refraining from labelling people or situations.

The first step in teaching students with disability seems obvious: treat them as students. They are motivated to attend university for the same reasons as other students and they bring with them the same range of intelligence and academic skills. In addition, their life experiences may bring unique and creative ideas into the classroom, and help to change their peers' perceptions. Revising our perceptions and attitudes is the first step in accommodating students who present, learn or perform in ways that are different from others. It is vital to remember that their similarities with others are much more important: we are dealing, first and foremost, with students.

BUT YOU DON'T LOOK DISABLED

It can at times be difficult discussing the needs of a student with disability while remaining non-disclosive. This can lead to some misconceptions about the extent of the student's difficulties and the avenues for 'solving the problem'. Here are some common responses from teaching staff:

SITUATION	RESPONSE	REALITY
A student with severe social anxiety is not able to undertake a class presentation.	"Most students are nervous about talking in front of the class. I suggest that with a little practice at home beforehand he'll get through it OK."	A disability such as this cannot be rectified through task practice.
A student with a speech impairment is unable to lead a class discussion during a tutorial.	"It's important that she undertakes this task as it is a skill all graduates will need in the workplace."	Not all graduates will undertake the same career path. Many may choose research (for instance) rather than professional practice.
A student with a reading and writing disorder requires extensive examination adjustments – extra time, a computer, use of dictionary and thesaurus, and reader.	"I don't think the student needs any such adjustments – they are very active and articulate in class and it's clear that they are capable."	The disability affects the student's reading and writing skills, not their participation, enthusiasm, and ability to discuss the concepts being taught.
A student with attention deficit disorder who experiences severe distractibility needs to be seated in a separate room when undertaking exams.	"I don't have the time to book a separate room and supervisor, so I will seat the student at the back of the room where it will be less distracting."	The exam environment hasn't changed and would still be extremely distracting.
A student with chronic fatigue syndrome who is unable to sustain mental and physical energy for prolonged periods needs breaks during her exam or to undertake an alternative assessment.	"I don't understand why this student cannot do the exam like everyone else – I see her in class every week and she doesn't look sick."	A lot of the students registered with Disability Services may not look 'sick' – it is how their disability impacts on them in certain situations that needs to be addressed.

It's important to remember that you may not have been given all the information you think is required to respond appropriately, and referring to the recommendations and suggestions presented by Disability Services will help you understand the student's needs better.

LANGUAGE, TERMINOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR

The words we use about people influence our attitudes and the attitudes of others towards those people. Words create images. Sometimes they create myths. This is certainly the case in the disability field, which abounds with labels that stem from ignorance and suspicion.

Words change, both in meaning and use. For example, the term cripple (from the old English crypel, meaning one who can only creep, or whose body and limbs are contorted) was once in common and respectable use. It appeared in the name of a national organisation, the Crippled Children's Society. Today its use for a person with a disability is unacceptable. Stereotypes such as victim, sufferer, and confined to a wheelchair – each conveying a negative connotation – are also being relegated to the cliché-heap.

Language is a major vehicle for expressing prejudice or discrimination. Some of the main forms of discriminatory language are:

Stereotyping

A stereotype is a generalised and relatively fixed image of a person or persons belonging to a particular group. This image is formed by isolating or exaggerating certain features (physical, intellectual, cultural, occupational etc) that seem to characterise the group. Stereotypes are discriminatory in that they take away a person's individuality. Portraying people with disability as helpless, mindless, suffering beings deserving the sympathy and attention of the non-disabled is one of many powerful stereotypes that leads to discriminatory treatment of people with disability.

Depersonalising or impersonal reference

Often people with disability are referred to collectively as the disabled, the handicapped, the mentally retarded, the blind, the deaf, or the paraplegics, spastics, epileptics etc. These terms depersonalise people by equating them with their disability. Such impersonal references to people with disability should be avoided.

Derogatory labelling

The discriminatory nature of derogatory labels used to describe members of minority groups is often obvious. However, in the case of people with disability, labels such as 'cripple', 'deaf and dumb', or 'retarded' are still commonly used and should be avoided.

Imposed labelling

A characteristic often shared by minority groups is a lack of power to define themselves – the names and labels by which they are known, whether derogatory or not, have been imposed on them. Imposed labelling may be inaccurate and may also be alienating for the groups it supposedly describes. Language is not fixed and static, but constantly evolving and changing as society's attitudes and practices change. Be aware of the development of new forms of expression that seek to describe our diverse society in non-discriminatory ways.

Your language should reflect a positive, straightforward and sensitive approach to people with disability. The use of derogatory words that focus only on one aspect of a person can be rude and offensive. For instance, the term 'disabled people', which is still often used, defines people as 'disabled' first and 'people' second. The preferred term 'a person with disability' recognises that the disability is only one characteristic of the person and avoids objectification. The following terms have also fallen into disuse and should be avoided:

– handicapped
– retarded
– able-bodied
– physically challenged
– differently abled
– victim
– sufferer
– wheelchair-bound.

Remember: person first; disability second.

Along with appropriate language is the issue of appropriate behaviour. Everyone wants to feel welcome and important, and receive good service and respect. There are some obvious behaviours and actions that can readily be identified as inappropriate, but sometimes even with the best intentions, our behaviour can be perceived as patronising, stereotypical, or offensive. The following are some common concerns that people with disability have identified:

Inappropriate behaviour

– talking down; assuming people are stupid or ignoring them altogether
– assuming people want or need charity
– using emphasised or loud speech
– making little eye contact or staring
– allowing too little or too much personal space
– doing everything for people, treating them as children or victims
– assuming you know what people need without asking
– not allowing enough time for communication.

Appropriate behaviour

– acknowledging people as equal human beings
– respecting people: assume they are in control of their lives and can make decisions and don't need pity
– speak normally: same lip movements, pitch and volume; a little slower for people with a hearing impairment
– allowing the same, not greater or less personal space – wheelchairs should be considered part of the person
– being perceptive about problems but not making assumptions and not taking charge
– asking first "Is there any way I can help?"
– allowing enough time for communication

General communication strategies

– be friendly, smile and make eye contact with people with disability
– speak directly to the person with disability rather than talking to them through their companion
– ask if any assistance is required; people with disability have quite different capabilities and like to be as independent as possible
– provide up-to-date and accurate information when asked about accessible facilities such as parking, telephones and toilets
– encourage better communication between staff and consumers by making sure all areas specifically designed for customer information and complaints are accessible to people with disability
– be flexible; if the system does not fit the requirements of a person with disability, adapt the system to meet individual needs.

LEARNING MODULE 1
ACTIVITY

Do you know the appropriate terms to use in place of the offensive terms listed below?

Check your answers in the Activity solutions section – *Section 2 – Disability Services.*

AVOID	APPROPRIATE
The disabled	
Victim of; suffering from; crippled by	
Wheelchair bound	
Invalid	
Mental handicap; retardation	
Disabled toilet	
Lame; handicapped	
Spastic	
The blind	
The deaf	
Mute; dumb	
Special needs	

LEARNING MODULE 2
LEGISLATION

"Prejudice is a far greater problem than any impairment; discrimination is a bigger obstacle to overcome than any disability." – Paul K Longmore (disability activist, co-founder of San Francisco State's Institute on Disability)

INTRODUCTION
There are a number of guidelines, laws, plans and policies that inform how we work with students with a disability.

Learning outcome
To have a better understanding of the law that supports students with disability and of the University's legislative obligations.

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?
Discrimination incorporates the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people. Discrimination occurs when a person or people are treated less favourably than other members of the community.

Discrimination is not always wrong but some discrimination is unfair and can be against the law. Discrimination can be quite obvious but it can occur in less obvious and subtle ways too. It is unlawful to discriminate against people because of their personal characteristics or because they belong to a certain group. Equal opportunity is a positive way of describing the absence of discrimination. People are provided with equal opportunity if they are not discriminated against because of irrelevant characteristics.

Disability discrimination
Disability discrimination is the unfair treatment of people because of their disability.

A disability includes a physical, hearing, visual, learning, psychological, neurological, intellectual disability, medical conditions, a genetic predisposition to develop a particular illness, and the state of having or carrying an infection, whether or not it is symptomatic. It also includes a disability that a person had in the past or may develop in the future.

Changing community attitudes is vital in eliminating discrimination. The rising number of persons with disability and the transition of people with disability into the community has helped to increase the understanding and acceptance of people with different needs.

This is reflected in legislation that helps to protect the rights of all people with disability to participate in all aspects of community life.

When is discrimination against the law?
Only certain types of discrimination are unlawful in Australia. Discrimination is against the law when:

– the discrimination is based on a personal characteristic
– the discrimination happens in an area of public life
– the discrimination causes loss or humiliation.

It is important to be aware of the different types of discrimination and when or if discrimination has occurred.

Types of discrimination
Discrimination can be *direct* or *indirect.*

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated unfairly and is disadvantaged because of a personal characteristic or behaviour that is protected under Australian law. Direct discrimination occurs when a person or group is harassed or excluded because of a personal characteristic, or treated less favourably than another person in the same or similar circumstances.

Examples of direct discrimination:

– a selection committee is refusing to consider applicants with family responsibilities
– a company or educational institution is refusing to employ or enrol Aboriginal people or people whose first language is not English
– making an assumption that a person with a disability would not be capable of undertaking a course of study because of their disability
– refusing to employ someone because of their gender.

Case of direct discrimination

A performing arts school offers a course for people who want to learn to critique plays. The course requires students to watch and make comments on several plays. A vision-impaired man, James, wants to participate in this course, but his application is declined because he cannot physically see the plays. This is an example of direct discrimination as James is being excluded due to his disability.

Outcome

James points out that many vision-impaired people enjoy attending plays and would benefit from reviews from another vision-impaired person. He provides examples of his experiences from listening to plays and following what is happening with help from a script that has stage directions. After consultation, the school apologises and agrees to adjust its policy. The school acknowledges that theatre can be experienced and reviewed on many different levels and that the experience of a person with disability is as important and relevant as those of people who are not disabled.

Indirect discrimination occurs when treating everyone the same way disadvantages someone because of a personal characteristic. It occurs where a rule, work practice or decision is made that applies to all people equally and appears to be non-discriminatory, but which in practice substantially reduces the chances of a particular person or group of people from complying with it.

Indirect discrimination appears to be equal treatment but is unfair on certain people because of a particular personal characteristic. This is sometimes called systemic discrimination.

For indirect discrimination to be unlawful, it must also be unreasonable.

Examples of indirect discrimination: A recruitment or promotion based on seniority or length of service may indirectly discriminate against women applicants, because women are more likely to have taken career breaks to accommodate family responsibilities. Selection criteria requiring a specific number of years of previous experience may also constitute indirect age discrimination.

Case of indirect discrimination

Grant is interested in undertaking a business course run by a private college. Grant has dyslexia and he is having difficulty filling out the enrolment forms. He contacts the college to seek support with the application forms and to ask if he can have an extension of the submission date. The college refuses his request and Grant misses out on enrolling in the course.

This is an example of indirect discrimination as the application process (how and by when) is the same for all applicants, but disadvantages Grant.

Outcome

Grant makes a complaint to the Human Rights Commission saying that the college did not meet its obligation to allow him the opportunity to enrol like other students. In this case the college made no attempt to meet this obligation.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1992

The *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992* ("the Act") provides protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability, and is primarily administered through the Australian Human Rights Commission ("the commission"). The Act came after Australia signed the United Nations' Declarations on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and the Rights of Disabled Persons.

The Act states that it is unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability across many areas, including education. The Act covers people with a disability at all stages of the education process including enrolment (or making enquiries about enrolment), students who are currently studying at the institution, and people who are no longer studying at the institution or have been expelled from the institution.

This Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against people because of their disability.

The Act specifically states that disability is:

– total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions or
– total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
– the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness or
– the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness or
– the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body or
– a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction or
– a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour

and includes a disability that:

– presently exists or
– previously existed but no longer exists or
– may exist in the future or
– is imputed to a person.

The Act protects people with a disability against discrimination in education in the following areas:

Admission
– refusal or failure to accept an application for admission from a person with a disability
– accepting a person with a disability as a student on less favourable terms or conditions than others; for example, asking a person with a disability to pay higher fees.

Access
– denying or limiting access for people with a disability; for example, not allowing a person to attend excursions or join in school sports, delivering lectures in an inaccessible format, inaccessible student common rooms
– expelling a person because of a disability
– subjecting a person with a disability to any other detriment.

Harassment
– humiliating comments or actions about a person's disability such as insults, or comments or actions that create a hostile environment.

Exceptions to the Disability Discrimination Act
There are four main exceptions to the Act and Education Standards. They are:

– unjustifiable hardship
– protection of public health
– exceptions for special measures
– exceptions for court orders and special laws.

Unjustifiable hardship
An education provider does not have to carry out an obligation under the Education Standards if that obligation would cause it unjustifiable hardship. Some reasons that may constitute unjustifiable hardship include:

Cost

– Sometimes the cost of an obligation is so high that an education provider cannot do it; for example it might cost so much money that the education provider would go bankrupt.

Safety

– Sometimes carrying out an obligation might put other people at risk. It may mean that other people taking part in the course are unsafe.

An education provider should be wary of using this exception without proper consultation and research. If an education provider wants to use this exception, the education provider has to prove that the obligation would cause it unjustifiable hardship. This may mean the education provider has to prepare and show financial reports, bank account details, impact statements and quotes to prove it is fair to use this exception.

The exception of unjustifiable hardship does not apply to the obligation to eliminate harassment and victimisation. People should never be harassed or victimised and an education provider should always do everything possible to make sure that it does not happen.

Protection of public health
Under the Education Standards, discrimination may be allowed if a person has an infectious disease or other condition and it is reasonably necessary to discriminate to protect the health and welfare of that person or others. The education provider must show how discriminating against a student with an infectious disease or other condition actually protects that student or other people against that disease or condition.

Exceptions for special measures
Discrimination that helps or assists people with disability is not against the law. This is sometimes called positive discrimination. For example, a school that gets a grant for a program specifically designed to help students with intellectual disability will not be discriminating if it refuses to provide the same funding for a person with a physical disability.

Exceptions for court orders and special laws
Court orders and some other special laws can allow discrimination. These special laws are called 'prescribed laws'. If a person follows a prescribed law or a court order when they are doing something, they will not be breaking discrimination laws. The government needs to tell the public which laws are prescribed laws. Currently there are not many prescribed laws.

DISABILITY STANDARDS FOR EDUCATION 2005
The *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992) allows for the Commonwealth Government to implement Disability Standards in particular areas of life, including education. The Disability Standards for Education ("the standards") were introduced in 2005 as subordinate legislation to explain the Act in more detail. They outline the obligations of organisations and institutions such as schools and universities in relation to students with a disability to ensure these students have access to the same opportunities and choices as other students. As well as outlining the rights of a student with a disability and the education provider's obligations, the standards also affirm that universities are entitled to maintain academic standards and requirements.

The Disability Standards for Education assist the University to determine whether adjustments are reasonable. The University and students with a disability can use these standards as a guide to negotiating adjustments in particular circumstances. It is important to note that a student can make a formal complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission if the University does not fulfill its obligations under the standards.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

The University of Sydney has historically lodged a Disability Action Plan ("the plan") with the Australian Human Rights Commission ("the commission"). The University has used the plan to assist University alignment and compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 ("the Act") and the accompanying Disability Standards for Education 2005 ("the standards").

The plan enables the University to demonstrate its commitment to supporting students and staff, adherence to the standards, and to allow it to monitor and guide developments in support of staff and students with disability.

The University of Sydney Disability Action Plan (2013-18) focuses on building an inclusive university environment that actively promotes equal opportunity in study and employment through training, planning and resource allocation.

LEARNING MODULE 2
ACTIVITY

Read each of the statements below and decide whether there is an act of discrimination involved.
Is it direct or indirect discrimination?.

Check your answers in the Activity solutions section – *Section 2 – Disability Services.*

ACTION	EXAMPLE	DIRECT OR INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION?
Refusing or discouraging a student's enrolment	1. Saying: "There are no places left" when there are still vacancies. 2. Saying: "We already have a lot of students with learning difficulties and our resources are stretched. Maybe XX School would be a better option."	
Setting terms or conditions on which the institution is prepared to admit the student	3. Saying to a student: "We will need a volunteer to provide you with extra help – do you know of anyone?" 4. Saying: "If we get funding, you can come here."	
Denying or limiting a student's access to opportunities available	5. Discouraging enrolment in language courses (for example, French or Italian) as the student has limited verbal skills (such as cerebral palsy). 6. Telling the student that they cannot go on an excursion or field trip as the destination is not accessible.	
Suspending and/or excluding a student whose disability affects their understanding of the behaviour policy	7. Suspending and/or excluding a student for infringing the standard school behaviour guidelines or policy	

LEARNING MODULE 3
DISABILITIES AND THEIR IMPACTS

"Don't judge me until you walk a mile in my shoes or live a day in my life." – Unknown

INTRODUCTION

There are many different types of disability. Some are obvious and some are hidden. Some people may have more than one disability. Different disabilities will impact a person's involvement in study or work in different ways. People who have the same type of disability will not experience their disability in the same way. It is important to remember that every person with a disability is an individual who will have their own specific experiences and disability-related needs.

Learning outcome: to have a better awareness of the types of disabilities and the impacts that some students at the University of Sydney may experience.

TYPES OF DISABILITIES

In this module we will review the basics about the following disabilities:

– vision impairments
– hearing impairments
– learning disabilities
– physical disabilities
– psychological and
  psychiatric conditions
– autism spectrum disorders
– neurological and
  cognitive impairments
– brain injuries
– medical conditions.

It's important to remember that some conditions impact or cause impairment in a different part of the body; for example, cerebral palsy is a neurological condition that can cause physical impairment; diabetes is a medical condition that can cause cognitive impairment. It is the impact of the condition and not the condition itself of which we need to gain a better awareness.

Disclaimer: the following information about disabilities is not definitive and is only intended to serve as an introduction to your learning.

VISION IMPAIRMENTS

VISION IMPAIRMENTS

What is vision impairment?

Vision impairment refers to some degree of sight loss. It includes any diagnosed condition of the eye or visual system. This can include a range of difficulties up to and including complete sight loss. A person may be born with a vision impairment, or acquire it through an accident, disease or the ageing process.

Types of vision impairment

Vision impairment may mean a person has some degree of vision. This could include loss of central vision that makes it difficult to focus on faces, print or fine detail. The person's vision may be blurred, patchy, wobbly or distorted.

Totally blind refers to a condition whereby a person has no vision at all.

Legally blind refers to a condition whereby a person cannot see at six metres what someone with normal vision can see at 60 metres, or their field of vision is less than 20 degrees in diameter (normal vision is 180 degrees).

Low vision refers to a severe vision loss in distance and near vision.

Colour blindness is a condition that means a person can see some colours, or see them differently to other people. The most common colours that people with colour blindness have difficulty with are greens, yellows, oranges and reds.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

Signs indicating difficulty

A student may show the following signs that a vision impairment exists and may be experiencing difficulty (this is not a definitive list):

– not taking notes
– not looking directly at you or the board
– asking you to repeat what you just said
– asking whether the information you are teaching is available online or in written form
– asking for copies of lecture notes before the lecture
– asking to record your lectures
– asking for more time to complete assessment work
– not participating fully in class
– squinting or rapidly blinking
– holding written material very close to their face
– using a white cane or accompanied by a guide dog
– late to classes or lectures.

Impacts

A student with a vision impairment may experience some of the following impacts to their studies (this is not a definitive list). They may:

– be unable to read printed material and access visual aids and will therefore have difficulty following along in lectures and classes, difficulty managing study materials, difficulty taking notes, and completing exams in expected timeframes
– have significant gaps in their lecture notes leading to poor understanding of the material and poor preparation for exams
– have difficulty following along in lectures and classes, and will need to 'redo' their lectures in their own time (reviewing other students' notes or recordings), adding substantially to their study requirements and reducing the time they have available to undertake assessment work
– fall behind in class while awaiting subject material to be reproduced in alternative formats
– experience headaches, eyestrain, sensitivity to light, and sensitivity to screen glare that may disrupt their ability to study efficiently and complete exams in expected timeframes
– use assistive technology to manage reading material, which adds substantially to the time it takes to review the material
– take longer to read through study materials and have difficulty meeting deadlines
– be unable to complete all pre-tutorial readings before class, and therefore be unable to participate fully in classroom discussion
– feel isolated and have limited social contact, leading to reduced interest in university
– constantly worry that there is information they are not getting
– have difficulty navigating the campus, leading to injuries, and arriving late to classes or lectures.

ADJUSTMENTS, SUPPORTS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Support provided by Disability Services
– lecture support – notetaking, loan of recording device
– assistive technology
– alternative formatting of materials
– captioning of audiovisual material

Adjustments recommended by Disability Services
– Assessment adjustments
  – extensions of time
  – permission to submit written assessments in softcopy only
  – alternative formatting of online quizzes.

– Examination adjustments
  – additional time
  – use of assistive technology
  – exam paper in alternative format
  – scribe and reader.

Teaching strategies for academic staff
– record lectures
– provide electronic material in advance
– provide advance notice of class schedule and/or room changes
– provide syllabi and reading lists as early as possible
– read aloud lecture material from whiteboards, handouts, and any graphical information
– recap key discussion points
– one-on-one assistance as required
– remember that guide dogs have 'access all areas'.

More general information about adjustments and teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

Working with someone who is vision impaired
Be aware that someone who is vision impaired may not have the same awareness of their environment that you do and may need some guidance about their surroundings, such as providing concise directions and instructions, pointing out the location of furniture in the room, ensuring that they know where the exit is, pointing out potential hazards, and orientation to new environments.

HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

HEARING IMPAIRMENTS

What is a hearing impairment?
A hearing impairment can range from mild hearing loss to profound deafness. People with hearing impairments may use hearing aids, cues from lip-reading, sign language, or a combination to assist with communication.

Many people with impaired hearing experience a delay between hearing or reading information, processing it, and responding. So, for many students it is not just a case of better communication or having appropriate access to course material, but how much time they are given to process this information.

A note on sign language
It is important to understand that sign language is not equivalent to English. It is a visual, spatial language with its own syntax and grammatical structure. People who communicate predominantly through sign language consider it their first language, and English (or other language) as their second. As such, students who sign may experience similar learning difficulties to students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Types of hearing impairments
Conductive hearing loss is caused by blockage or damage in the outer and/or middle ear. A conductive hearing loss leads to a loss of loudness and can often be improved by medical or surgical treatment.

Sensorineural hearing loss is caused by damage to, or malfunction of, the cochlea (sensory part) or the hearing nerve (neural part). Sensorineural hearing loss leads to a loss of loudness as well as a lack of clarity. The quantity and the quality of sound are affected and sometimes may limit the benefit of a hearing aid.

Mixed hearing loss results when there is a problem in both the conductive pathway (in the outer or middle ear) and in the nerve pathway (the inner ear). An example of a mixed hearing loss is a conductive loss due to a middle-ear infection combined with a sensorineural loss due to damage associated with ageing.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

Signs indicating difficulty
A student may show some of the following signs that a hearing impairment exists and may be experiencing difficulty (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

– not be taking notes
– be watching your face intensely
– not react as expected to other noise in the room
– ask you to repeat what you just said
– seem to lean closer to a speaker
– request to record your lectures
– ask you to record your lectures
– ask you to put detailed notes online
– ask you to wear an additional microphone (FM system)
– not participate fully in class
– have altered speech patterns
– ask for more time to complete assessment work
– be wearing hearing aids
– use a sign interpreter.

Impacts
A student with a hearing impairment may experience some of the following impacts to their studies (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

– have decreased access to information, leading to gaps in their knowledge
– have difficulty following along in lectures and classes, and will need to 'redo' their lectures in their own time (reviewing other's notes or recordings), adding substantially to their study requirements and reducing the time they have available to undertake assessment work
– miss important details leading to misunderstandings about deadlines, concepts, and learning outcomes
– have difficulty communicating and participating in class
– have difficulty with speech, reading and writing skills given the close relationship between language development and hearing
– take longer to read through study materials and have difficulty meeting deadlines (information-processing delay)
– struggle to perform in an environment where essential information is delivered verbally
– experience anxiety about performing in front of others that may affect participation
– have difficulty working within groups
– feel isolated and have limited social contact leading to reduced interest in university
– worry constantly that there is information that they have missed.

ADJUSTMENTS, SUPPORTS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Support provided by Disability Services
– lecture support – notetaking, loan of recording device
– communication aids – FM systems, hearing loops, live remote captioning, interpreting
– captioning of audiovisual material.

Adjustments recommended by Disability Services
– Assessment adjustments
    – extensions of time
    – alternatives to group work
    – alternatives to presenting to the class.

– Examination adjustments
    – additional time
    – seating at the front with direct instruction from the supervisor
    – alternatives to oral / viva voce exams
    – transcripts or captioning of audio-visual material used in exams.

Teaching strategies for academic staff
– record lectures
– provide handouts electronically in advance
– use microphones when available
– don't walk around the room when speaking, always look forward
– control classroom discussion – ask students to raise their hand before speaking; one person to speak at a time; repeat questions asked before answering
– when students are required to undertake group work, educate group members about strategies for effective communication
– avoid putting a student on the spot by targeting them for questions or reading aloud in classes (unless the student has indicated their willingness to participate, for example, raised their hand).

More general information about adjustments and inclusive teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

Working with someone who is hearing impaired
Be aware that someone who has a hearing impairment may not have the same awareness of their environment that you do; they may need some direct guidance, such as ensuring they are aware of any emergency alarms and understand what they need to do in the event of an evacuation.

LEARNING DISABILITIES

LEARNING DISABILITIES

What is a learning disability?

A learning disability is neurologically based and may interfere with the acquisition and development of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning and/or mathematical skills. It affects the manner in which people process and/or express information.

A learning disability may be characterised by a marked discrepancy between intellectual potential and academic achievement resulting from difficulties with processing information.

It has a significant effect on learning but is not an indicator of intelligence.

Diagnosing a learning disability

Diagnosing a learning disability is a lengthy process that requires hours of neuropsychological testing. This testing can also highlight associated issues that may require further testing and treatment. Individuals with a learning disability are often required to repeat testing at intervals throughout their childhood and adolescence as the person's strengths and weaknesses may change, as their environment and exposure to learning strategies also change.

It is important to note that although some individuals may respond positively to specific learning strategies and personal tuition, a learning disability cannot be 'fixed' or 'cured'. The inherent dysfunction will always exist to some extent and the individual will continue to experience difficulties throughout their life.

Types of learning disabilities

A learning disability can appear by itself or along with other disabilities. Some of the most common learning disabilities are listed below. Please note that this is a brief overview of learning disabilities – they are in fact very complex.

LEARNING DISABILITY	CHARACTERISTICS	ASSOCIATED DIFFICULTIES
Dyslexia	This is the most commonly recognised name for a learning disorder typically characterised by difficulty in learning to read words, letters and other symbols. However, it is now considered more of an umbrella term for learning disorders relating to reading and writing, with a more descriptive diagnosis being provided.	
Reading disorder	Below average reading skills; poor recognition of written words; poor comprehension of what has been read.	Slow reading speed; simple spelling and grammar mistakes; poor comprehension; difficulty reading aloud.
Disorder of written expression	Below average writing skills; difficulty transferring thoughts into written form	Poor or illegible handwriting; poor written expression; simple spelling and grammar mistakes.
Dyspraxia (oral, verbal and motor)	Difficulty with fine motor skills; difficulty of the body to undertake a required action.	Difficulty with physical coordination, hand-to-eye coordination, balance and manual dexterity; difficulty planning and executing non-speech sounds, speech sounds, and physical actions.

LEARNING DISABILITY	CHARACTERISTICS	ASSOCIATED DIFFICULTIES
Dyscalculia	Difficulty with mathematics skills; difficulty understanding the meaning of numbers; inability to apply mathematical principles.	Difficulty judging time and speed, distance and proportions; difficulty understanding time and using money; lacking effective counting strategies; inability to undertake simple mathematical processes; confusion over printed symbols and signs.
Dysgraphia	Poor handwriting skills, slow and laborious writing; inconsistent handwriting; ineffective pen grip or posture; difficulty organising thoughts on paper.	Difficulty expressing thoughts in writing, spelling, organising ideas and composition. Inability to produce handwritten work.
Developmental dysphasia	Inability to acquire normal expression and comprehension of language.	Difficulty understanding spoken language and poor reading comprehension.
Dysphonetic or auditory dyslexia	Inability to distinguish individual letter sounds within words.	Difficulty understanding verbal instructions or directions; slow to respond in conversations; speech problems; poor spelling.
Auditory processing disorder	Poor recognition, discrimination, separation, grouping, localisation, or ordering of speech sounds.	Poor listening skills; difficulty remembering information presented orally; difficulty following directions given orally; reduced information-processing speed; language difficulties; difficulty with reading, comprehension, spelling and vocabulary.
Visual processing disorder	Difficulty interpreting visual Information.	Difficulty undertaking visual tasks such as reading and writing; difficulty interpreting symbols such as in mathematics, charts, and pictures.
Non-specific learning disability	Delays in reading, writing, spelling, maths, or memory that do not strictly meet the criteria for a specific learning disability.	
Learning disorder not otherwise specified	Mild deficits in two or three areas (reading, writing, maths) that individually fall short of diagnostic criteria, but together can be considered a significant impairment.	

There are many other subsets of learning disabilities, and there is much discussion regarding the defining and diagnosis of learning disabilities. Some aspects of learning disabilities cross over with other disorders such as autism spectrum disorders and attention deficit disorders.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

Signs indicating difficulty
A student may show some of the following signs of a learning disability and may be experiencing difficulty (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

– not take notes
– not look at the board or screen
– avoid talking, reading or writing in front of peers (for example, writing on a board in front of them)
– appear frustrated and confused when given information
– not be able to read aloud with confidence, or may avoid requests to do so
– consistently fall behind with pre-tutorial reading requirements
– not seem able to produce written work in expected timeframes

- submit work that does not seem to have been checked for spelling or grammatical errors
- submit work where parts of words and sentences are missing
- submit work of a lesser quality than expected
- ask you to clarify details already provided
- ask you to review their work before submission
- ask to submit work in another format, such as a presentation instead of a written piece
- produce illegible exam answers
- have difficulty communicating by email
- indicate difficulty finding information online.

Impacts

A student with a learning disorder may experience some of the following impacts to their studies (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

- be unable to manage their weekly reading requirements and come to class underprepared
- have difficulty reading and copying the information on a screen or board and therefore have gaps in their notetaking and understanding of the lecture material, leading to poor preparation for exams
- have difficulty comprehending and processing complex information, which may conflict with their academic ability, leading to frustration and enrolment withdrawal
- avoid attending classes in which they may be expected to read aloud or refer to written information to demonstrate appropriate participation
- experience cognitive fatigue due to the increased effort of trying to manage reading materials and written requirements
- be unable to complete exams in expected timeframes and risk not passing
- produce illegible exam answers and risk not passing
- not be able to produce written work that clearly demonstrates their understanding of the material and concepts and therefore receive a grade that does not reflect their true academic ability
- demonstrate a severe difficulty grasping mathematical concepts, calculations and reasoning
- misinterpret directions or instructions and miss key deadlines or submission requirements, for instance
- exhibit heightened anxiety levels in test or performance situations.

ADJUSTMENTS, SUPPORTS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Adjustments and supports from Disability Services

- lecture support – notetaking, loan of recording device
- assistive technology
- alternative formatting of materials and exams
- academic adjustments – assignments and exams.

Adjustments and supports from academic staff

- record lectures
- provide detailed lecture notes to supplement notetaking
- consider a multi-sensory approach and offer a variety of instructional modes
- provide an opportunity for one-on-one discussion to review course material and answer questions
- provide explicit feedback regarding performance
- repeat, emphasise and summarise the main points.

More general information about inclusive teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

What is a physical disability?

Physical or mobility impairments can range from the loss of fine motor coordination (that is, in the hands) to partial or total paralysis. Physical disabilities can affect a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina. Sometimes a physical disability is the result of another type of disability, such as neurological or medical.

Types of physical disabilities

These include:

– paralysis – partial or total, characterised by muscular paralysis, sensory loss, nervous system damage, and loss of function (for example, paraplegia, quadriplegia)
– congenital malformations – abnormalities of the structure of a body part
– degenerative diseases – degeneration of muscles and joints leading to reduced or loss of function (for example, arthritis, muscular dystrophy)
– movement disorders – damage to the motor control area of the brain, affecting muscle tone and voluntary movement (for example, cerebral palsy).
– spinal cord injuries – traumatic injury to the spinal cord resulting in fractured or dislocated vertebrae and nervous system impairment; impairment will depend on the site of injury
– neurological or nervous system conditions – impaired signals from the brain to the body resulting in involuntary movements or poor physical responses
– physical injuries – injuries to joints, limbs or muscles resulting in impairment or loss of function. Pain can be a significant factor here.
– amputation – loss of a limb or digit resulting in impaired or loss of function.

Many of these conditions are also neurological impairments. For the purpose of developing your awareness regarding physical disabilities, in this section we will focus on the impacts of the physical disability alone.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

Signs indicating difficulty

A student may show some of the following signs that a physical disability exists and may be experiencing difficulty (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

– arrive late to a class or lecture
– be unable to stay seated for the length of a lecture or class
– not take notes
– seem tired and distracted during class
– ask for more time to complete work
– be unable to attend class due to poor access (for example, stairs)
– have an obvious impairment or use assistive equipment.

Impacts

A student with a physical disability may experience some of the following impacts to their studies (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

– need to alternate between sitting and standing during lectures or classes. This may lead to gaps in their notetaking and understanding of the lecture material.
– be unable to type or write for prolonged periods, which may lead to gaps in their notetaking and understanding of the lecture material
– be unable to write or type lecture notes at all so will not have revision material for assignments and exams
– be unable to write or type and require additional time to produce written work with assistive technology
– miss the beginning of class when there is limited time to move between classes and may miss important information
– have difficulty retrieving books in the library, photocopying, and lifting objects in labs or out on placement
– need a wheelchair or crutches or a walking aid and may be unable to attend class if there is no lift access
– have difficulty communicating appropriately if they are unable to raise their hand owing to paralysis
– experience high levels of physical fatigue that may impact on concentration
– experience high levels of pain that may impact on concentration
– experience frequent absences from class due to hospitalisations, rehabilitation and/or treatment programs
– experience social isolation due to being 'different'.

ADJUSTMENTS, SUPPORTS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Adjustments and support from Disability Services
– recommendations for timetable adjustments
  (due to building accessibility)
– recommendations for accessible study spaces
– ergonomic furniture and specialised equipment
– lecture support – notetaking, loan of recording device
– assistive technology
– academic adjustments – assignments and exams.

Adjustments and support from academic staff
– record lectures
– provide detailed lecture notes to supplement notetaking
– provide electronic material
– consider accessibility when booking rooms
– consider storage needs for specialised equipment
– provide a classroom layout free from obstructions
– be aware that students may need to manage their
  condition by alternating between sitting and standing,
  moving about the room, and leaving the room periodically
– provide direct assistance in the lab
– consider physical hazards in the field.

More general information about inclusive teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 –Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS

What are psychological and psychiatric conditions?

Psychological and psychiatric conditions (mental health conditions) are hidden disabilities. They comprise a varied group of conditions that substantially affect how a person feels, thinks, behaves and interacts with other people. Mental health conditions can impair a person's ability to think, feel and behave in a manner that allows optimum functioning in day-to-day life. Mental health conditions may range in type and degree from relatively minor to severe illness that requires ongoing medical treatment.

With the right support, most people recover well from a mental health condition and the first episode may be the only one they ever experience. For others, however, these conditions can interfere with their everyday functioning in the long term or episodically.

It is estimated that close to 1 in 5 Australians will have a mental illness in any year.

There are many misconceptions about mental illness and these can make it difficult for an individual experiencing mental illness to reach out for help and receive the support and consideration that anyone experiencing ill health would expect. The portrayal of mental health in the media is not kind; often only the extreme version of an individual with mental illness is represented, giving the public a picture of violent and scary people who should be avoided. In addition, there are many who feel that some mental health conditions don't exist, making it even more difficult for an individual to seek support and understanding.

Types of psychological and psychiatric conditions

According to SANE Australia (sane.org; the national mental health charity), the main mental health diagnoses are:

- anxiety disorder
- bipolar disorder
- borderline personality disorder
- depression
- eating disorders
- obsessive-compulsive disorder
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- psychosis
- schizophrenia.

Factsheets are available for download at:
www.sane.org/information/factsheets-podcasts

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

Signs indicating difficulty

A student may show some of the following signs that a mental health condition exists and may be experiencing difficulty (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

- demonstrate difficulties with concentration – difficulty keeping up in lecture and class
- consistently seem unprepared for class
- have irregular attendance
- consistently miss activities at specific times of day
- have difficulty communicating effectively and participating in classroom discussion and group activities
- demonstrate reduced organisational and time-management skills
- appear panicky or anxious in specific situations (exams, presentations)
- consistently submit work after deadlines
- not display expected facial expressions and body language
- submit many special consideration applications to their faculty.

Impacts

A student with a mental health condition may experience some of the following symptoms (this is not a definitive list):

- cognitive impairments – concentration, attention, focus, memory retention, information processing speed, thought processes, motivation, perception, confusion, paranoia, fluctuating moods, executive functioning (organisation, planning, prioritisation, time management)
- behaviours – withdrawal, avoidance, procrastination, impulsiveness, rituals, anti-social behaviour, lack of confidence, fear, phobic behaviour, inappropriate responses
- stress reactions – panic attacks, avoidance, aggression, obsessive behaviours, rituals
- disrupted sleep and fatigue.

A student with a mental health condition may experience some of the following impacts to their studies (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

- lose time – to symptoms, medical appointments, hospitalisations, periods of illness; ritualistic behaviour, medication side effects, the effect of cognitive impairment
- have difficulty meeting deadlines
- appear inconsistent in their application to their work
- have difficulty undertaking specific types of assessments (presentations, exams)
- have difficulty undertaking more than one task at a time

– have difficulty responding appropriately to stressful situations
– have difficulty getting involved in specific types of activities
– have difficulty processing lots of information in large blocks.

ADJUSTMENTS, SUPPORTS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Adjustments and supports from Disability Services
– lecture support – notetaking, loan of recording device
– assistive technology
– academic adjustments – assignments and exams.

Adjustments and supports from academic staff
– record lectures
– provide an opportunity for one-on-one discussion to review course material and check understanding
– repeat, emphasise and summarise main points
– a student with a mental health condition may not be comfortable disclosing the specifics of their disability; if the student does disclose, be willing to discuss how the disability affects the student academically and what accommodations would be helpful.

More general information about inclusive teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

Additional considerations for students with mental health conditions

Students with mental health conditions may commonly experience exacerbations due to a reduced capacity to cope with stress. Disability Services may be unable to implement a reasonable adjustment to address the severe impact of an exacerbation, and the student may need to use the University's special consideration procedure to meet the assessable requirements of their studies.

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

What is an autism spectrum disorder?
Autism spectrum disorders are lifelong developmental disabilities. 'Spectrum' is the term used to encompass the range and severity of the difficulties people with this disorder experience. This condition affects people in many different ways and in varying degrees.

Autism spectrum disorders are determined by impairments in:

– social interaction (social skills and relationships)
– communication
– restricted and repetitive interests and behaviours
– sensory responses.

Individuals with autism spectrum disorder can also have intellectual and learning difficulties.

Types of autism spectrum disorders
– autistic disorder
– atypical autism
– Asperger Syndrome
– childhood disintegrative disorder
– pervasive developmental disorder.

Causes of autism spectrum disorders
The exact cause of this disorder is unknown and is still under investigation. However, research suggests it may be a mixture of genetic and environmental factors that may cause an abnormality in brain development and function. Research in this area is growing.

ASPERGER SYNDROME

In the University environment, the most common form of autism spectrum disorder is Asperger Syndrome.

Asperger Syndrome is a high-functioning form of autism. It is a lifelong disability that affects how a person makes sense of the world, processes information and relates to other people. While there are similarities with autism, individuals with Asperger Syndrome may have fewer problems with spoken language and are often of average, or above average, intelligence. This is a complex condition that commonly exists in conjunction with specific learning disorders such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and other conditions such as attention deficit hyperactive disorder and epilepsy. Anxiety and depression are also common.

The three main areas of difficulty for individuals with Asperger Syndrome are:

– social communication
– social interaction
– social imagination.

People with Asperger Syndrome may also exhibit:

– a love of routines
– special interests
– sensory difficulties

Common characteristics of an individual with Asperger Syndrome:

– difficulties with reciprocal social interactions and communication
– conversation can be as difficult as understanding a foreign language
– difficulty understanding gestures, tone of voice and facial expressions
– difficulty choosing appropriate topics of conversation and knowing when to begin and end a conversation
– can use a variety of complex words and may not fully understand what they mean
– difficulty understanding jokes, metaphors and sarcasm
– takes literal meanings from statements
– can have difficulty making and maintaining friendships
– difficulty understanding 'social rules' and may say inappropriate things
– can find others confusing and unpredictable
– can appear withdrawn and uninterested in people at times
– can behave inappropriately
– difficulty predicting what may happen next and difficulty imagining alternative outcomes
– difficulty understanding and interpreting other's feelings, thoughts and actions

Common co-morbid issues:
– anxiety
– depression
– learning disorders
– ADHD.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

Signs indicating difficulty
A student may show some of the following signs of an autism spectrum disorder (this is not a definitive list). They may:

– seem to be socially isolated
– use a variety of complex words and may not fully understand what they mean
– not understand jokes, metaphors and sarcasm
– take literal meanings from statements
– behave inappropriately
– appear anxious or hyper-focused on sitting in a specific spot or undertaking a task in a specific way
– be disorganised
– display concentration issues

- display difficulty coping with stressful situations
- have difficulty working in a group situation and communicating with others
- appear anxious, displaying repetitive behaviours or continually questioning

Impacts

A student may:

- make mistakes with assessment work as they can misinterpret non-literal sayings and non-verbal language
- have difficulty knowing what to talk about and with whom, when, where and in what manner, leading to social isolation and poor contributions in class
- have difficulty understanding or communicating feelings
- tend to interrupt people inappropriately, leading to misunderstandings and social isolation
- feel isolated and uncomfortable in social situations, leading to attendance issues
- have difficulty with organisation, planning and time management, leading to assessment issues and non-completion of homework tasks
- have difficulty learning in group contexts
- have difficulty coping with change
- experience high anxiety leading to the adoption of disruptive coping mechanisms such as repetitive behaviours, panic, or continual questioning.

ADJUSTMENTS, SUPPORTS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Adjustments and supports from Disability Services
- lecture support – notetaking, loan of recording device
- assistive technology
- academic adjustments – assignments, exams, group work, presentations
- timetabling modifications
- access to quiet space in Fisher Library
- one-on-one assistance with planning and organisation
- referral to transition tutors and other mentoring programs
- direct liaison with teaching staff
- orientation support
- workshops to develop key skills

Adjustments and supports from academic staff
- record lectures
- provide materials in advance
- provide important information in hardcopy
- facilitate group work
- avoid putting the student on the spot by targeting them for questions or reading aloud in class
- provide the opportunity for one-on-one discussion, review

of course material, clarification of understanding, and feedback on performance and behaviour
- provide advance notice of class schedule and/or room changes
- be aware of using metaphors, sarcasm, colloquial expressions, and implied meanings (a student may not understand these fully)
- emphasise and summarise key points of discussion
- seek advice from Disability Services on how to manage behaviour in class.

More general information about inclusive teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

What is a neurological condition?

A neurological condition is a disorder or the body's nervous system. Neurological conditions are disorders of the brain, spinal cord and nerves throughout the body. Together these control all the workings of the body. When something goes wrong with a part of the nervous system, a person may have difficulty moving, speaking, swallowing, breathing or learning. There can also be problems with memory, senses or mood. Symptoms vary greatly depending on the area of the nervous system that is affected by a disease or condition.

Types of neurological conditions

There are more than 600 neurological diseases.
Major types include:

– Huntington's disease
– cerebral palsy
– multiple sclerosis
– muscular dystrophy
– spina bifida
– Parkinson's disease
– Alzheimer's disease
– stroke
– injuries to the spinal cord
– seizure disorders, such as epilepsy
– cancer, such as brain tumours
– meningitis.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

Signs indicating difficulty

A student may show some of the following signs that they have a neurological condition and may be experiencing difficulty (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

– have disrupted attendance
– be constantly tired and fatigued
– use a wheelchair or other assistive equipment
– have difficulty mobilising around campus and arrive late to class
– display difficulty concentrating
– have difficulty articulating thoughts
– process information slowly and provide delayed responses to questions
– experience seizures
– have poor memory retention and ask similar questions repeatedly
– have nausea and dizziness
– seem generally unwell.

Impacts

A student with a neurological condition may experience some of the following impacts to their studies (this is not a definitive list). A student may:

– be late to class constantly and miss important information discussed earlier
– struggle with lack of access (for example, to rooms, toilets, library and student services)
– experience fatigue when travelling around campus and poor concentration in class and lectures, leading to poor notetaking and memory retention
– be unable to retrieve books in the library, handle equipment in labs, or carry heavy loads
– experience functional difficulties, such as the inability to hold a pen, reduced writing speed, or difficulty turning pages and using a computer
– experience frequent absences due to hospitalisations, rehabilitation and/or treatment programs, leading to gaps in study materials and learning
– experience difficulty completing assignments and exams as their time for study is reduced by fatigue, medical appointments and reduced concentration.

ADJUSTMENTS, SUPPORTS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Adjustments and supports from Disability Services

– lecture support – notetaking, loan of recording device
– assistive technology
– ergonomic furniture and specialised equipment
– alternative formatting of materials and captioning of audiovisual material
– recommendations for timetable adjustments (including accessing buildings)
– recommendations for accessible study spaces

Adjustments and supports from academic staff

– record lectures
– provide handouts and visual aids
– provide the opportunity for one-on-one discussion, review of course material, clarification of understanding, and feedback on performance
– consider accessibility when booking rooms
– consider storage needs for specialised equipment
– provide a classroom layout free from obstructions
– discuss any concerns raised by information in a Disability Notification Letter with the student or Disability Services

More general information about inclusive teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

BRAIN INJURIES

BRAIN INJURIES

What is a brain injury?

A brain injury can occur in many ways – trauma (typically an accident); acquired through damage caused by other medical conditions; insufficient oxygen to the brain; stroke; poisoning or infection.

Brain injuries are one of the fastest growing types of disability, especially in the age range of 15 to 28 years of age.

The nature and extent of impairment varies due to the location and severity of the brain injury. As such, an individual with a brain injury may develop various medical, physical and neurological disabilities.

TYPES OF BRAIN INJURY

Type	Results from	Examples
Traumatic	Damage to brain tissue from an external force	– motor vehicle accident – acts of violence – falls – sports and recreational injuries – lightning strike – electric shock – blow to the head
Acquired	Damage to the brain from other medical conditions	– stroke – tumour – anoxia or hypoxia (inadequate oxygen supply) – toxins – degenerative disease – near drowning – conditions not necessarily caused by external force
Severe head injury	Crushing or penetrating blows to the head that crush, rip or shear delicate brain tissue	– motor vehicle accident – acts of violence – falls – sports and recreational injuries – severe blow to the head

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

As a person with a brain injury may experience a variety of disabilities (medical, physical, neurological, behavioural), the signs and impacts of a brain injury could mimic those already outlined in previous sections.

Adjustments, supports and teaching strategies

The teaching strategies and adjustments also reflect those outlined in previous sections.

More general information about inclusive teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

There are many medical or health-related conditions that are not readily recognisable but may cause difficulties for a student and interfere with their activities of daily living and their studies. Sometimes these are known as 'invisible disabilities'. Conditions can be transient, chronic, triggered by an internal or external factor, or fluctuating. Each person and condition is different and impacts can vary, so varying types and degrees of support are needed.

Many conditions require a moderate to high level of drug therapy to control or alleviate symptoms, and the side effects of medication can cause difficulties for the student.

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND IMPACTS

As a person with a medical condition may experience a variety of disabilities (medical, physical, neurological, behavioural), the signs and impacts of a condition would mimic those already outlined in previous sections.

ADJUSTMENTS, SUPPORTS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

The teaching strategies and adjustments reflect those outlined in previous sections.

More general information about inclusive teaching strategies is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

LEARNING MODULE 3
ACTIVITY

1. The unsupported student
Using the blank flow chart below, 'track' the progress of a student with disability who is not receiving the support they need to address the impacts of their condition on their studies. Choose any disability previously noted, and, referring to the information in this module, fill in the blanks.

Choose a type of disability
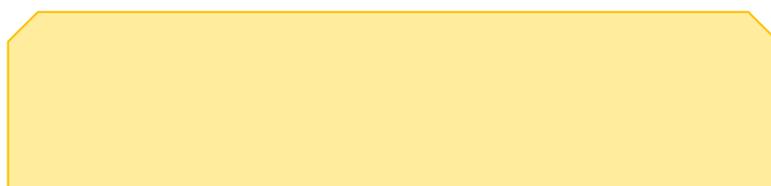
Choose three possible impacts or symptoms this student may experience
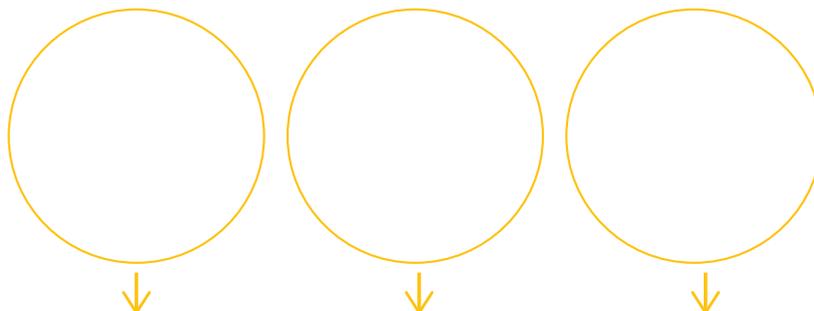
How might these affect the student's participation at university?
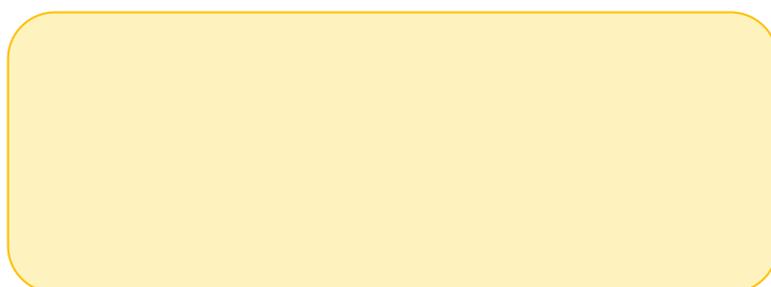
Indicate three negative impacts this could have on the student's management of their studies
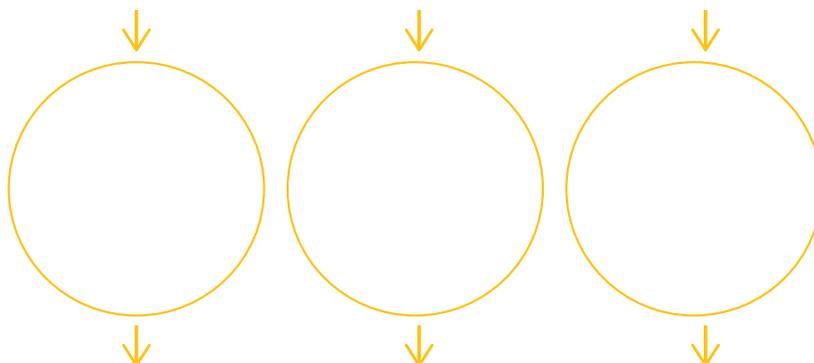
What are the possible academic outcomes for this student?
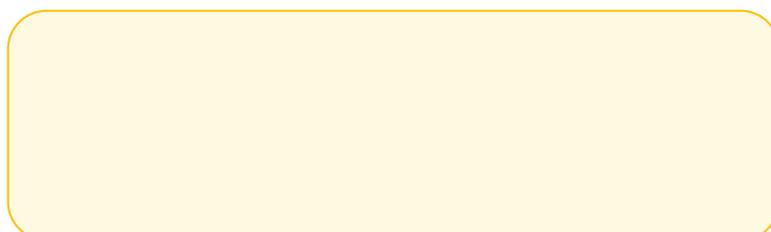
2. The supported student

This time, 'track' the progress of a student with disability who is receiving the support they need to address the impacts of their condition on their studies. Choose the same disability as above, and start with the same three impacts as above then, referring to the information in this module, fill in the blanks.

Choose a type of disability (same as above)

Choose three possible impacts or symptoms this student may experience (same as above)

Indicate one adjustment for each impact that could be implemented to lessen the affect it has on the student's participation at university

What positive affect might each adjustment make on the student's ability to manage their studies?

What are the possible academic outcomes for this student?

LEARNING MODULE 4
REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The University has the responsibility to "evaluate students on their abilities not their disabilities" (Faculty Handbook, University of Nebraska-Lincoln).

INTRODUCTION

Academic ability is the primary basis for participation in tertiary education and students with disability are expected to meet typical admission and academic standards. However, adjustments may be required to ensure that such students are provided with equal opportunities to achieve their academic potential, sometimes referred to as 'levelling the playing field'. The Disability Standards for Education (2005) subordinate legislation to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, seek to clarify and elaborate on the legal obligations in relation to education, and to this end "reasonable adjustments" is defined. Under section 32 of the Act, it is unlawful for a person to contravene a disability standard. This means that reasonable adjustments must be made in the teaching process.

Learning outcome: to better understand why students with disability are provided with 'adjustments' and how these are determined.

ADJUSTMENTS

An adjustment is one or more actions taken by an education provider to assist a student with disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students.

An adjustment is defined as a measure or action (or a group of measures or actions) taken by an education provider that has the effect of assisting a student with a disability:

(i) in relation to an admission or enrolment — to apply for the admission or enrolment;

(ii) in relation to a course or program — to participate in the course or program;

(iii) in relation to facilities or services — to use the facilities or services;

on the same basis as a student without a disability, and includes an aid, a facility, or a service that the student requires because of his or her disability.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

An adjustment is reasonable in relation to a student with a disability if it balances the interests of all parties affected.

(1) In assessing whether a particular adjustment for a student is reasonable, regard should be had to all the relevant circumstances and interests, including the following:

(a) the student's disability;

(b) the views of the student or the student's associate

(c) the effect of the adjustment on the student, including the effect on the student's:

(i) ability to achieve learning outcomes

(ii) ability to participate in courses or programs

(iii) independence

(d) the effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including the education provider, staff and other students

(e) the costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

(2) In assessing whether an adjustment to the course or program in which the student is enrolled, or proposes to be enrolled, is reasonable, the provider is entitled to maintain the academic requirements of the course or program, and other requirements or components that are inherent in or essential to its nature.

UNJUSTIFIABLE HARDSHIP

If an adjustment is reasonable the education provider has an obligation to make it, unless it causes unjustifiable hardship. Some reasons that might constitute 'unjustifiable hardship' include:

– cost: sometimes the cost of an obligation is so high that an education provider cannot meet it. For example, it may cost so much money that the education provider would go bankrupt.
– safety: sometimes carrying out an obligation may put other people at risk. It may mean that other people taking part in the course are unsafe.

An education provider should be careful not to use this exception without proper consultation and research. If an education provider wants to use this exception, the education provider needs to prove that the obligation would cause it unjustifiable hardship. This may mean the education provider needs to prepare and show financial reports, bank account details, impact statements and quotes to prove it is fair to use this exception.

Working out if something causes 'unjustifiable hardship' is similar to working out whether an adjustment is 'reasonable'. It requires an education provider to think about all the circumstances of a particular case. For example, it must think about:

– any benefits or disadvantages that will be caused by carrying out the obligation
– the effect of the disability on the student
– its financial position and any costs that it will arise in carrying out the obligation.

This means an education provider must think about how to remove discrimination as far as possible and how to respect the rights and interests of all people involved.

Although the process of working out reasonable adjustments and unjustifiable hardship is similar, they are not one and the same. On the one hand, working out whether an adjustment is reasonable looks more at whether the adjustment will adequately meet the needs of the student with disability without impacting too much on the needs of other people. On the other hand, working out whether an obligation will cause unjustifiable hardship looks more at whether the obligation would cost the education provider or other people so much that it would be unfair to force the education provider to carry it out.

HOW REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS ARE DETERMINED

According to the Education Standards, in deciding whether to make a particular reasonable adjustment for a student, the University must:

(a) assess whether there is any other reasonable adjustment that would be less disruptive and intrusive and no less beneficial for the student

(b) assess whether the adjustment may need to be changed over the period of a student's education or training.

At Sydney, this primary assessment is undertaken by Disability Services. Students who register with Disability Services attend an initial consultation where they discuss the implications of their disability with a Disability Services Officer. The officer assesses the student to identify the reasonable adjustments they may require to minimise their disability's impact on their studies and equal access to education. Reasonable adjustments are then determined based on the consultation with the student, the supporting documentation provided by their health practitioner or treating specialist, and the officer's professional assessment.

Review and reassessment is ongoing. Students are required to provide updated documentation and meet with an officer to discuss changes to their disability and their support needs as required.

Many of the adjustments recommended at the University of Sydney are considered 'standard' and are common across most educational institutions. However, as each student will have individual needs and each program of study will

be different, there will be instances where a second level of consultation will need to be undertaken with academic staff to review the need for non-standard adjustments, where the standard adjustments and support options available do not sufficiently address the impact of the specific disability or remove the barrier to education.

To receive a reasonable adjustment, students are required to demonstrate that a disability exists in accordance with the *Disability Discrimination Act*, and treating specialists are required to make initial recommendations to Disability Services for adjustments and support services. Implementing reasonable adjustments ensures the University is meeting its legal obligations as well as providing equal access to education.

TYPES OF ADJUSTMENTS

There are two types of adjustments:

– **academic adjustments**: adjustments to how an assessable piece of work is completed or undertaken (assessments, exams, placements), or to how the student is assessed; and
– **support services:** practical support that enables the student access to education through building and facility accessibility, timetable adjustments, sign-interpreting, equipment loans, access to assistive technology, the provision of lecture notes and reading lists ahead of time, permitting the use of digital recorders or allowing access to lecture recordings, or arranging for notes and readings to be transferred to an accessible or alternative format.

It is important to remember that these adjustments and provisions do not create an advantage for students with disability – they aim to offset or mitigate the impacts of their disability.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Reasonable adjustments are not matters of special consideration.

Special consideration is the process by which disruptions arising from short-term illness or injury, issues of misadventure and unavoidable circumstances are accommodated where it is deemed appropriate. Applications for special consideration are handled by the faculty concerned and specific outcomes are determined based on the information provided in the application.

Reasonable adjustments, on the other hand, are managed by Disability Services, where long-term supports and adjustments are determined based on medical documentation, consultation with the student and professional standards. Reasonable adjustments are provided to address ongoing issues of impairment that may prevent a student with disability from demonstrating their academic ability. For this reason, students with disability are not required to submit an application for special consideration to have their reasonable adjustments implemented.

Reasonable adjustments are managed by Disability Services rather than the faculty to ensure that a student with disability is not required to submit sensitive documentation to their faculty, and to ensure that students with disability are provided with consistent support across the University that meets the University's legislative obligations.

To ensure that the adjustments recommended by Disability Services are reasonable, there may be circumstances when a student with a disability is directed to submit an application for special consideration to their faculty. This may be due to an unrelated issue, or when an exacerbation of a disability prevents the reasonable adjustments already in place from meeting the student's needs effectively. There may also be other considerations that are not under the remit of Disability Services that can only therefore be addressed directly by the faculty.

Disability Services does not facilitate applications for special consideration. Applications for special consideration need to be lodged directly with the faculty, not through Disability Services.

LEARNING MODULE 4
ACTIVITY

CASE STUDY 1: ACCESS TO LEARNING

Dan has a hearing impairment. He wears bilateral hearing aids and can follow a face-to-face conversation providing the environment is quiet and there are only one or two people present. This can pose a difficulty in lectures when there is background noise and the lecturer turns away while speaking, as well as in classes when many students sometimes speak at once.

Dan is concerned he is missing important information during lectures and he has to work hard to keep up with class discussion, which often means he is unable to contribute. Dan also experiences an information-processing delay, which is not uncommon for people with hearing impairments. This can disrupt his ability to complete work on time.

Dan disclosed his hearing impairment to Disability Services and has been open with his teachers about his needs.

To ensure that Dan captures all lecture information, his lecturer has agreed to wear a microphone and to face the room when speaking; she has agreed to record her lectures and make them available to Dan via eLearning; and she has extended an invitation to review lecture concepts with Dan at a convenient time if he has any concerns. To assist in the classroom, Dan's tutor has directed the class to raise their hand before speaking, and has agreed to repeat questions and answers to ensure that Dan has heard and can contribute. The tutor will also monitor group-work situations to ensure that Dan does not experience any communication difficulties with his group. The tutor is also aware that Dan may need additional time to complete readings, assessments and exams, and will take direction from Disability Services as required.

CASE STUDY 2: ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS

John is enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree. He has a mental health condition and when exacerbated he can experience disrupted concentration and focus, preventing him from studying and reading for extended periods; physical fatigue and lethargy, which affects his motivation; difficulties with memory recall and comprehension; and disordered thinking. John seeks assistance through Disability Services for academic adjustments.

John was experiencing difficulty meeting a deadline for an assignment worth 20 percent of the overall grade (due in four days). John contacted Disability Services who sent the unit of study coordinator a request for a one-week extension.

The coordinator contacted the Disability Services Officer to discuss the request: she could not approve it as she was planning to discuss the assignment with all students in the next lecture when assignments were returned, allowing for immediate feedback and to inform the next written assessment. If any student had an extension they would have a significant advantage over other students, access to the feedback, and they would be delayed in starting the next task.

What options were available?

– **An alternative question**. However, John was near completion of the task, having made a draft answer. To start a new question would mean additional research and John would need further time. The coordinator felt that offering an alternative assessment at this late stage would be difficult and John would not receive the same feedback provided to other students.

– **Reweighting the assessment to a subsequent assessment or exam**. There was concern that reweighting the assessment to a subsequent assessment or exam could place a lot of additional strain on John, and that to reweight completely would undermine the academic integrity of the course.

– **Oral assessment.** This would enable John to present his first draft as an oral assessment – potentially a very good option as he would be able to convey his argument, research and knowledge; however, there wasn't enough time for John to restructure his work or for the lecturer to assess it prior to the next lecture.

– **Partial reweighting.** The coordinator asked if John could attempt the assignment as best he could, submit it on the original deadline and attend the feedback lecture; then the coordinator would reweight the assignment down to only 10 percent and add the remaining 10 percent to the final exam. The coordinator indicated that if John felt this was not a fair solution, she would reconsider the other options.

Outcome

John accepted the final option and submitted the assignment on the deadline.

Was this a fair solution? This option was the best alternative given the circumstances and the relatively short time available. Importantly, Disability Services, John and the lecturer had discussed, proposed and agreed upon the best possible option. There were several other options that could also have been considered had there been more time.

LEARNING MODULE 5
INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING

"The severity of someone's disability does not determine their level of potential. The greatest barriers that people with disabilities have to overcome are not steps or curbs, [but] expectations." – Karen M Clay (disability activist)

INTRODUCTION

The *Disability Discrimination Act* tells us that appropriate adjustments to the learning environment have to be made to lessen the impact of the disability. This applies not only to physical access barriers and the provision of support services, but also to teaching and learning strategies, assessment methods and administrative policies. As an educator, you may accept the legislation in principle, but finding locations, resources and time to meet the needs of a diverse student population is not so easy. While this module cannot detail all possible teaching and training situations, it provides you with ideas for practical inclusive strategies that can be applied readily in your teaching environment. This module encourages you to examine your practices to work in a more inclusive way. While our focus here is primarily on students with disability, more inclusive policies and practices benefit all students.

Learning outcome: better understanding of the concepts of inclusion and responsibility to provide equal access to education.

WHAT IS INCLUSION?

Inclusion in education is about all students having the right to belong. It is the practice of developing a barrier-free environment so that all students have access to learning. This takes into account the diversity of student needs, their individual learning styles and use of a variety of teaching methods appropriate to the group. Inclusion is not about focusing on individual impairment, but about creating an environment in which access is built into systems. In an ideal inclusive model, individual students would not be singled out for special accommodations as full access would be built into the framework of teaching.

Inclusion in education is the recognition that all students have different learning styles, regardless of whether they have a disability, and that inclusive teaching practices ensure that all students have every chance to maximise their learning opportunities. Inclusive teaching practices may remove the need for students to have to identify as a 'person with disability', and may go a long way to creating a learning space free from stigmatism.

The Disability Services Office can provide many students with accessible support (academic adjustments, assistive technology, accessible formatting of materials), but there is much that we cannot do that falls to the student's direct teaching staff.

INCLUSIVE TEACHING

Reworking the way you teach to become more inclusive may result in students making fewer demands on your time and resources. By challenging existing practices and processes you can develop more inclusive ways of designing and delivering your curriculum. You may find alternative ways for students to achieve equivalent learning outcomes, competencies or academic standards.

Three key areas to consider when reviewing your teaching practices are:

– teaching style
– course materials
– assessments.

Factors to consider
When I am teaching, could one of my students experience difficulty with any of the following:

– *hearing what I say or hearing the audiovisual material I use*
– *seeing the information on screen*
– *focusing during my class or lecture*
– *keeping up with the pace of my class or lecture?*

Can all of my students use their course materials with ease? Could they experience difficulty with any of the following:

- *seeing visual teaching aids (blackboard, whiteboard, PowerPoint presentations, audiovisual material, handouts)*
- *seeing, reading, or using printed material*
- *hearing what I say or audiovisual material used*
- *taking good notes*
- *sustaining attention for the duration of my class or lecture*
- *understanding the material as presented*
- *focus during my class or lecture*
- *attendance.*

Will any of my students experience difficulty with one of the following, and will that hinder their ability to demonstrate their skills and knowledge through their assessment:

- *reading, comprehending and writing large pieces of written information*
- *organisation and prioritisation*
- *working without structure*
- *reading aloud or speaking*
- *working with or communicating with others*
- *meeting deadlines*
- *being productive in short periods of time*
- *sustaining attention over prolonged periods of time*
- *applying manual dexterity or physical skills.*

EXAMPLES OF GOOD INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES

- A teacher wears a lapel microphone and repeats or paraphrases comments made by students during lectures and tutorials so a student in the class who has a hearing impairment and uses an FM system will have access to the information.
- A lecturer verbalises the content of all visually displayed materials for a student who has difficulty reading the board and overheads because of vision impairment.
- A lecturer minimises movement while talking, enunciates clearly and talks at a reasonable speed using plain English to minimise the complexity of communication.
- Audiovisual material is captioned to ensure that a student with a hearing impairment has access to the information.
- Overhead transparencies are provided in hardcopy format to a student who experiences difficulty seeing overheads due to a vision impairment.
- A lecturer releases their notes to a student who has irregular attendance due to a chronic and fluctuating medical condition.
- A lecturer becomes aware that his facial hair poses a communication barrier for a hearing-impaired student who relies on lip-reading, and makes a conscious effort to turn to the student when communicating important information.
- Consider developing and following a clear format to deliver your lecture or class: stay on topic; demonstrate; use concrete examples; use a variety of teaching methods and presentation styles to engage all students.
- Consider providing class notes by email to a student who has difficulty preparing for class (getting through all readings) because of a specific learning disability.
- Consider converting class handouts and exercises into electronic format and emailing them prior to class to a student who is blind and uses text-to-speech software.
- A course convenor organised for all course materials to be converted into electronic format and provided a full reading and material list to students and the Alternative Formatting Officer before semester commenced.
- A lecturer booked recordings of their lectures before semester commenced, and released the recordings to a student with concentration difficulties at the request of Disability Services.
- The Faculty Disability Liaison Officer at the Conservatorium of Music organised a list of sheet music to be used over a semester to the Alternative Formatting Officer for conversion to Braille for a new student with profound blindness.
- A student with diabetes is granted permission to eat during workshops and labs to assist in maintaining her health.
- Consideration is given towards incorrect spelling, poor grammar and essay structure during the assessment process for a student who has a learning disorder.
- A teacher makes arrangements to conduct tests at different times or on different days if the student needs extra time so as not to draw attention to the student while in a classroom situation.
- The assessment format is changed to allow a student who experiences extreme exam anxiety the option of completing additional assignments to fulfil the essential requirements of the course.
- In an accounting course, a student who is blind and cannot write up calculations and bank reconciliations is given permission to use a computer-based bookkeeping system to achieve these tasks.
- A student with physical impairments cannot perform physical examinations of large animals in a veterinary course. The student is allowed to explain the examination and what they would be looking for to another person to demonstrate understanding of the purpose of the task or skill.
- A unit coordinator reviewed whether a group presentation was an inherent skill of the course as it posed a difficulty for a student with a mental health concern. An alternative assessment was approved after taking into consideration that demonstrating the learning outcomes and the knowledge attained were the core purposes of the assessment.
- A student with a learning disorder is encouraged to undertake oral examinations rather than produce individual pieces of written assessment – a method the student would find difficult to use to demonstrate their understanding and knowledge.
- Rather than undertaking an oral presentation, a student with a complex learning disorder is encouraged to produce an interactive PowerPoint and multimedia presentations; she records her part as a voiceover which is then played to the class.

– A unit coordinator of a law course offers three distinctly different types of assessment and all students are allowed to choose which style of assessments they will complete to make up the required 100 percent assessment mark.
– A student with Asperger Syndrome is unable to participate in group work (four or more members) and is offered the option of working with one other person or individually; this allows the student to choose whether to do the work themselves or share it with another person who would be sensitive to the student's difficulties.
– In conjunction with grounds maintenance staff and the timetabling team, a student with low tolerance to environmental irritants has classes and lectures organised at safe times when spraying is not scheduled.
– Ask students how you can best support them and what meets their needs; communicate early and allow time for effective strategies and adjustments to be put in place.
– Implement academic adjustments as recommended by Disability Services.

ACCESSIBLE LEARNING

"Access" and "accessibility" are commonly used terms that can mean different things: access to premises, access to study materials, access to learning.

Access to premises

Under the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010, the University has an obligation to provide a campus that is physically accessible to students and staff. A work schedule is in place to upgrade as much of the University as possible to allow this, including accessible buildings, facilities and parking.

Disability Services offers registered students who have physical access needs assistance with timetabling and parking.

We all share responsibility in addressing issues of access. Try to think of access more broadly than ramps, lifts and toilets. Some other factors requiring consideration include:

– signage and visual indicators of emergency situations
– facilities such as vending machines and counter tops
– switches and lighting
– hearing augmentation systems in classrooms and theatres.

Also consider:

– how accessible your classroom, lecture theatre, laboratory or workshop is
– physical adjustments that could be made to the facility and equipment
– seating arrangements that maximise all students' ability to see and hear
– what attitude you would adopt if you were asked to move your class to a more accessible venue
– provisions you would need to make for field trips, workplace training, practicals and workshops.

Assistive technology

Some students may need to use specific technology (software and hardware) so they can access written materials, whether to read or write or to process information. Some examples include:

– software that manipulates written text – size, colour or background
– software that reads written information aloud (text-to-speech)
– voice-recognition software that allows dictation of written work
– software that reads information on screen aloud (for example, from the internet)
– hardware to magnify materials
– Braille readers.

While assistive technology is extremely helpful, it can be time consuming to use and may add considerable additional study time to a student's week. This can cause stress for a student who needs to 'redo' lectures once they get home in order to access written information. Students using assistive technology may still find it difficult to manage the reading materials and written assessment requirements.

Students registered with Disability Services who need assistive technology have access to the assistive technology lab in Fisher Library.

The term assistive technology can also refer to other types of equipment that may assist a student to manage the impacts of their disability, such as ergonomic furniture, digital recorders, FM systems, hearing aids etc.

Factors to consider include:

– technology is an assistive aid, not a cure, and assistance from teaching staff is often more important
– one piece of equipment may work well for one student but not for another
– a student may not be skilled at using technology or may have unrealistic expectations of its capabilities; allow time for a student to become proficient in its use.

Accessible or alternative formatting

Some students need information and study materials in a format that best suits their needs. The importance of making materials available in electronic format cannot be overstated because it renders information accessible to almost everyone at very little cost. Accessible materials include:

– electronic formats – material can be converted to meet any kind of requirement (reformatting for use with assistive technology; enlarging of text or picture size; reformatting of font and colour requirements; conversion to Braille)
– recordings of lectures
– captioning of audiovisual material.

Accessible formats can take time to prepare so planning ahead is important. For instance, if you use a textbook to support your teaching, a student who is blind will need to contact the publishers to find out if the textbook is available in a soft-copy format. If it isn't, the hard-copy textbook

will need to be scanned page by page and converted into a suitable format. For a textbook of 400 pages or more this could take a long time and may be costly. It may take several weeks before the student has the textbook in a usable format; in the meantime they may have fallen behind in their studies, which in turn may lead to them withdrawing from the subject.

What can you do in this situation? Find out from the publishers if the text is available in soft copy. If it isn't, let your student know well ahead of time so they can purchase the text and get started on the conversion. It may be helpful to indicate ahead which chapters you will be teaching from each week so the student can focus on getting those chapters converted first.

This would also be necessary if you are developing a reader to support your teaching. If there is online access to the articles in your reader, indicate this in the reader so students can access them online, or scan the material and make this information available through eLearning.

Again, any other written materials that you use during the course (handouts, worksheets, etc) should be available in an electronic format.

Disability Services can help students with converting their study materials to an accessible format. The sooner the student knows which materials they need, the better. The more notice we have, the less strain on our resources so we can avoid delays in getting materials to the student.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
– inclusive teaching strategies for specific disabilities: **sydney.edu.au/stuserv/disability/staff.shtml#6**
– Inclusive teaching strategies and support – Sydney Institute for Teaching and Learning: **www.itl.usyd.edu.au/projects/inclusiveteaching/**
– Checklist for inclusive teaching practices – James Cook University: **www.jcu.edu.au/accessability/public/ groups/everyone/documents/form_download/ jcuprd_050783.pdf**

LEARNING MODULE 5
ACTIVITY

Which actions would you take in the situations described below? Check your answers in the Activity solutions section – *Section 2 – Disability Services*.

SITUATION	WHICH ACTION WOULD BE APPROPRIATE? (TICK ONE OR MORE)
Robin has a hearing impairment and uses hearing aids. During your lectures he sits in the front row to hear as well as possible and read your lips. You use PowerPoint slides that provide an overview of the key points of your lecture, which are then posted online after each lecture. Robin has emailed you indicating that he needs help with missed lecture material and the PowerPoints are not detailed enough to address this. Robin reports that he cannot hear clearly much of what you say during the lecture as you talk rather fast and often look down at your notes. He tries to take notes of what he can hear, but once he takes his eyes off you to look at the page he cannot follow you, knows he has missed information and finds the rest of the lecture a struggle. Robin reports leaving lectures confused, frustrated and anxious that he is not learning and will not be able to pass the subject.	☐ Organise for an honours student to help Robin understand the concepts better. ☐ Provide Robin with more detailed overviews of each lecture. ☐ Set up Echo360 and make recordings accessible to Robin via email or online. ☐ Rewrite lecture slides to incorporate more detail or link to key points. ☐ Adjust your presentation style – slow your speech, look directly at the audience, and ask the audience if they missed any points before moving on. ☐ Advise Robin that you will take this into consideration when reviewing his marks at the end of semester. ☐ Encourage Robin to make contact with Disability Services to ensure that he has access to all available supports and reasonable adjustments.
Julie has a learning disorder that affects her ability to read and assimilate large blocks of written material. She needs to complete a literature review of 15-20 articles in 3000 words and this task is weighted at 70 percent. Julie knows that this will be a challenge for her, so she contacts Disability Services to have the deadline adjusted to allow her an extra two weeks. Julie knows it will take her several days to read each piece of literature, then she will have to reread each while taking notes, then have her tutor read her notes to ensure she has understood the concepts and identified the key points. It may therefore take her a week or more to review each piece of literature. With 15-20 pieces of literature, it could take longer than the entire semester. To add to the complexity, Julie has three other assessments due at the same time. She becomes anxious and approaches you to discuss her difficulties.	☐ Encourage Julie just to do her best and request special consideration which will be reviewed in light of her performance. ☐ Offer Julie an alternative assessment. ☐ Ask Julie what she thinks you can do to help her complete the assessment. ☐ Contact Disability Services for advice. ☐ Offer to reduce the assessment weighting, reduce the number of articles to be reviewed and the word count; and increase the weighting of another piece of assessment, or offer another small piece of assessment to make up the remaining weighting. ☐ Refer Julie to the Learning Centre to enrol in a workshop about literature reviews.

SITUATION	WHICH ACTION WOULD BE APPROPRIATE? (TICK ONE OR MORE)
Craig has a speech impairment (stutter and delayed articulation of thoughts) and experiences situational anxiety because of this. Each week in your tutorial you choose a student at random to lead class discussion on one of the readings required before class, which is worth 10 percent of the final grade. Craig has difficulty participating in classroom discussion as his speech impairment causes him embarrassment and he has experienced situations in the past where he has taken so long to provide an answer or contribute to discussion that he has been cut off by other students or the teacher. Craig is highly distressed by having to lead class discussion, especially as he does not know when he may be called upon. Craig becomes so anxious about this that he stops attending your tutorials. You note his absence from the last three classes and email him to ask if he has withdrawn. Craig replies indicating that he is still attending lectures but he cannot get to class because of this issue.	☐ Tell Craig to request special consideration to address his absences and advise him that any future absences may lead to an absent-fail grade. ☐ Offer to tell Craig in advance when he will be expected to lead the class discussion so he can prepare beforehand. ☐ Offer to waive the requirement to lead class discussion, and substitute with an alternative assessment. ☐ Refer Craig to the Learning Centre to enrol in a workshop about public speaking. ☐ Ask Craig what he thinks would be an appropriate adjustment. ☐ Encourage Craig to make contact with Disability Services to ensure he has access to all the support and reasonable adjustments available to him.

LEARNING MODULE 6
DISABILITY AWARENESS FOR CUSTOMER-SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

"The world worries about disability more than disabled people do." (Warwick Davis, actor, founder of the Reduced Height Theatre Company)

Customer-service professionals come into contact with people of many cultures, ages and abilities and may need to adapt their skills accordingly to provide the required assistance.

FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY

Difficulties can arise when interacting with customers who may have a disability, due to fear and uncertainty:

– fear of the unknown
– fear of being politically incorrect, insulting, patronising or condescending
– fear of 'getting involved'.

You can ease this uncertainty by increasing your awareness of your environment and how it may impact on your interaction with someone with a disability. You can also pay attention to your style of communication.

YOUR ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACTION

In a customer-service environment, you need to be most aware of physical, sensory, and neurological disabilities. Consider the following:

Physical disabilities
– access (stairs, lift, room to move, obstacles, seating)
– toilets (where are they, accessibility)
– physical ability (holding items, opening doors)
– mobility aids (wheelchairs, scooters, crutches, canes)
– safety with hot food and drink
– safety and mobilisation in an emergency

Hearing impairment
– communication (listening and speaking)
– use of interpreter or communication device
– communicating directions and safety announcements
– safety and mobilisation in an emergency

Vision impairment
– seeing and finding materials, items, furniture
– physical obstacles
– safety with hot food and drink
– entering and leaving a room or building
– use of a guide dog and/or cane
– safety and mobilisation in an emergency

Neurological disabilities
– communication style (speech and understanding)
– delayed communication
– use of technology
– physical ability and obstacles
– safety and mobilisation in an emergency

At the University of Sydney, guide dogs and accredited assistance animals have access to all areas on campus. An accredited assistance animal is one that has been trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability and meets the standards of hygiene and behaviour acceptable for a public place. Staff are permitted to request proof of accreditation if there is a concern about the health and safety of staff, students and affiliates.

For more information about accreditation evidence and procedures see Section 2 – Disability Services at Sydney: Access at Sydney.

BASIC TIPS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE
– Ask, don't assume.
– Use eye contact and smile.
– Don't be surprised by different or unusual requests.
– Be patient – some customers may need a little longer to speak, finish their transaction, pick up their purchases or move away from the counter.
– Be honest – if you don't know how to help, just say so.
– Get help if you need it.

LEARNING MODULE 6
ACTIVITY

Review your interactions with others and ask yourself the following questions:

1. How do I interact with customers (body language and speech)?

_____

_____

_____

How can I improve?

_____

_____

_____

2. How will customers need to interact with me?

_____

_____

_____

3. What are the considerations I need to make about my environment?

_____

_____

_____

Check your answers in the Activity solutions section: _Section 2 – Disability Services_.

SECTION 2
DISABILITY SERVICES

1. DISABILITY SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

INTRODUCTION

Each educational institution will support students with disability a little differently, depending on the resources available and the specific culture of the institution. Disability Services at Sydney has a history of promoting an independent and forward-thinking approach to study and disability management, while also providing a supportive environment for students who may not yet be confident of advocating for themselves.

HOW STUDENTS REGISTER FOR SUPPORT

To register with Disability Services, a student needs to provide proof that a disability exists (according to the definition of disability in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*). They also need to meet with a Disability Officer to discuss in detail how their disability affects their participation on campus and their academic study before reasonable adjustments and support services can be approved and put in place. Specifically:

1. The student begins the registration process by creating an online profile through the Disability Services website, through which the student also obtains a copy of the supporting documentation form to be completed by their treating specialist.

2. The student calls Disability Services to make an appointment to meet with a Disability Officer to review their needs.

3. The student attends this appointment with the completed supporting documentation form.

4. Reasonable adjustments and support services are then approved, and the student is provided with training to use the online service request system.

Once registered in full:

5. The student submits requests online for adjustments or support services as required and within expected deadlines.

6. The student makes follow-up appointments with a Disability Officer, as required to review changes to their needs, disability or program of study.

A few notes about registration:

– Students can register with Disability Services at any time during the year – there is no deadline; however, there may be deadlines for submitting specific types of service requests.
– Registration with Disability Services is voluntary. Students with disability are not required to register with this service, and the University cannot place stipulations on students to do so in order to fulfil the conditions of an appeal or show cause process.
– Registration can lapse if the supporting documentation falls out of date, and students may lose access to adjustments and support services unless they provide renewed documentation.

DISABILITY SERVICES LIAISON

Students are responsible for contacting Disability Services to request access to the required adjustments and support as early as possible each semester. Disability Services then contacts the appropriate staff (academics or other service providers – see diagram below) with recommendations and advice. These staff are then responsible for organising and providing the adjustment or support service and making contact with the student about it.

```
                        Student
                           |
                    submits request
                           |
                           v
                   Disability Services
                           |
             contacts appropriate personnel
                      /          \
                     v            v
          Academic staff        Service providers
   (academic adjustments /   (eg library, technology specialists,
      in-class support /         exams office, notetakers)
    one-on-one assistance)
            |                        |
            v                        v
    Organisation and         Organisation and
   provision of support     provision of support
       /      \                 /      \
      v        \               v        \
  Liaise with   If further  Liaise with   If further
  student       advice      student       advice
  directly      required    directly      required
                   |                         |
                   v                         v
           Refer back to            Refer back to
          Disability Services      Disability Services
```

How will I be made aware that a student has a disability?
You may be teaching students with disability and not be aware of it – Disability Services does not automatically provide direct notification to faculty or teaching staff when a student registers with this service. Many students may not need direct assistance from their teachers.

To maintain as much privacy as possible, Disability Services will contact academic staff about a student's disability only when direct support or an adjustment is needed.

You may become aware of a student's registration with Disability Services in one of the following ways:

– the student tells you directly, either in person or by email
– the student sends you a disability notification letter
– Disability Services sends you a disability notification letter
– Disability Services sends you an academic plan
– Disability Services sends you a service referral (for example, for library assistance)
– Disability Services contacts you for information about the learning materials you will be using
– Disability Services sends you an assessment or examination adjustment notice
– the Exams Office send you advice regarding adjustments applied to a final exam
– you receive a call or email from a Disability Services Officer regarding a specific concern, or requesting a specific service
– you see a note about the student's registration or there is additional supporting documentation regarding a disability attached to the student's special consideration or appeal application.

Ultimately, it is at the student's discretion as to whether notification occurs.

Communicating with faculties
Disability Services will communicate with academic and general staff mainly via email and phone. Disability Officers may also attend face-to-face meetings with academics to support students, or to consult regarding non-standard adjustments and support needs.

DISABILITY OFFICERS AND THEIR ROLE
Disability Services Officers may have backgrounds in health sciences, education, social work, psychology or rehabilitation and are skilled at understanding the impact a disability may have on a student's ability to undertake and manage the academic requirements of tertiary study.

Disability officers are not counsellors – they liaise with faculty and staff to provide services and adjustments for students with disability.

An officer acts primarily on behalf of the student, reviews their needs and determines the support they require. They also help general and academic staff to navigate their responsibilities under the law and raise disability awareness in the wider University community.

ACCESS AT SYDNEY

Access to premises
Under the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010, the University has an obligation to provide a campus that is physically accessible for students and staff. The University has a work schedule in place to upgrade and provide accessible buildings, facilities and parking.

If you are aware of an access issue, or have concerns about the safety of individuals with reduced mobility on campus (for example, a cracked footpath, a poorly lit stairwell), you can raise the issue with Campus Infrastructure Services directly.

More detailed information about access is available in Learning module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.

Assistance animals
An assistance animal is a dog or other animal that has been trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability. It is required to meet the standards of hygiene and behaviour acceptable for a public place.

Accredited assistance animals have access to all areas of the University campus.

Students who require the assistance of an animal when on campus will need to provide evidence of the animal's accreditation as an assistance animal. It is unlawful for a person to discriminate against another person because they are accompanied by an assistance animal; however, the University is allowed to require that a person provide documented evidence that their animal is an assistance animal, and to determine whether it would pose a threat to the health and safety of University staff, students and affiliates.

Identifying an assistance animal
Staff can confirm that an animal is an assistance animal if one or more of the following is visible on the animal:

– an assistance badge or permit (visible on its collar, lead, harness or vest)
– an assistance dog harness
– a coat or vest identifying it as an assistance animal.

If the above items are not visible on the animal, the University may lawfully require the person to provide evidence that the animal is an assistance animal. The following items would qualify as evidence of an assistance animal:

– an assistance animal accreditation (such as a permit, identity card or pass) issued by a state or territory assistance animal training provider
– a state/territory government issued transport pass or permit
– other evidence that shows the animal has been trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability and meets the standards of hygiene and behaviour acceptable for a public place.

Where evidence is required, a staff member needs to follow these procedures:

– Ask the person who is accompanied by the animal whether their animal is an assistance animal. If the person does not use this description, explain its meaning.
– If the person has no form of documentary evidence, they may still be able to demonstrate that the animal is trained and responds to their commands – a person in control of an assistance animal should be able to demonstrate that they can keep the animal under control, or that another person who is also present can keep the animal under control on their behalf.
– Be respectful in seeking evidence. For example, it would be acceptable to ask "Would you tell me how this animal is trained to assist you?" It would not be appropriate to ask for details of the person's disability.
– It would be appropriate to inform the person that it is their responsibility to ensure that the animal meets appropriate standards of hygiene and behaviour while at the University.

PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCLOSURE

Privacy
Personal information, including health information, about students is protected by the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW) and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002* (NSW).

How the University complies with its obligations under these Acts is explained in the University of Sydney Privacy Management Plan: **sydney.edu.au/arms/privacy**

The University is conscious of the private nature of the information provided by students about their disabilities, and uses, manages and discloses it only in accordance with the NSW privacy legislation. Disability Services staff are committed to the secure management and maintenance of personal and health information. All personal information held by Disability Services is managed separately from all other student information held by the University.

Students have a right to access and correct personal information about themselves, subject to some exceptions allowed by law. Further information about accessing personal information can be obtained from the University's Privacy Officers: **sydney.edu.au/arms/privacy**

Confidentiality
It can be hard to know what information can be shared with relevant parties in the course of determining support for a student with disability.

Discussions between the student and Disability Services
Discussions between the student and Disability Services are in general confidential, unless the student is providing details to support the consideration of an adjustment or provision of a support service. The Disability Officer would determine what information, if any, may need to be passed on to a third person. In general, if the information is not related to the student's studies, there should be no need to disclose.

Discussions between Disability Services and teaching staff
When recommending or negotiating an adjustment with teaching staff, the Disability Officer may disclose approved information, and unless otherwise indicated, this information is not to be passed on to other parties. If you are unsure, check with the Disability Officer to clarify.

Teaching staff can expect that the nature of their discussions with a Disability Officer in regards to concerns raised about a student with disability will not be passed on to the student unless this has been requested.

Discussions between the student and teaching staff
A student may not be aware whether a conversation they are having with their teacher will be considered confidential, so it is the teacher's responsibility to clarify this directly with the student before taking any action.

Disclosure
Every time a student enters a new work or study setting, they may need to make decisions about disclosing personal information. Disclosure in the University may be about ensuring that students can access support that the University offers students with disability.

Disclosure could be:

– telling someone you have a disability or impairment
– telling someone about aspects of your disability or impairment.

For students, disclosure may mean:

– educating someone about their disability or impairment
– telling someone about the impact of their disability or impairment on study and how they do things successfully
– telling someone about their learning style
– providing documentation about their disability or impairment
– talking to another student about their disability or impairment.

It is not necessary for students to disclose to the University that they have a condition or impairment unless they require education-related adjustments (reasonable adjustments) or support.

To access reasonable adjustments or support, students will need first to register with Disability Services. This requires the student to provide supporting documentation that discloses the nature and duration of their disability or impairment and the functional impact it has upon their ability to participate and perform in the academic environment (course content, delivery and assessment). Such documentation is used solely for the purpose of providing adjustments.

Disability Services does not disclose the details of a student's disability to academic or general staff; rather, details of the impact of the disability on the student's study can be provided in the context of negotiating reasonable adjustments.

2. ABOUT OUR STUDENTS

The students registered with Disability Services are a diverse cohort covering various demographics: undergraduate, postgraduate, high-school leavers, mature-age, local, international, study abroad and exchange, long-term and temporary conditions. These students are found in all faculties.

Our current student disability profile looks like this:

DISABILITY	STUDENTS WHO HAVE REGISTERED AS HAVING THIS CONDITION (% OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY)
Mental health	54.7
Physical	18.9
Medical	18.1
Learning	10.8
Neurological	6.7
Vision	3.6
Hearing	3.3

Notes:
– Data gathered at the end of Semester One, 2014.
– Many students have more than one registered disability.
– The disability type refers to the condition, not the impact of the condition.

3. UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE

INTRODUCTION

All members of staff have a role in ensuring all students have equal access to education. Disability Services is responsible for determining reasonable adjustments and students are ultimately responsible for requesting these adjustments and accessing the support services available to them. However, academic and administrative staff also play an integral part in minimising the barriers to accessing education and have a responsibility to provide direct support to students with disability. We all have a part in make changes to ensure that students with disability feel supported and understood and are given the opportunity to participate in university life and perform to their potential.

WHAT IS MY ROLE?

Your role is to:

Offer understanding

Lack of understanding is the central barrier to establishing an equitable environment in which students with disability can access education. Educate yourself and your colleagues in disability awareness by:

– reviewing this manual
– seeking advice from Disability Services
– discussing a student's support needs directly with the student.

Understanding ensures you will be better prepared to respond positively when asked to implement adjustments or offer solutions.

Work with Disability Services

– To ensure that the University acts in accordance with disability legislation, we all need to work together. We need your trust and cooperation to ensure that students with disability are treated respectfully and without discrimination.
– Reasonable adjustments are not recommended lightly, and we ask that you have faith that we have undertaken due process. To register with Disability Services, students are required to demonstrate that a disability exists in accordance with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992.* They need to provide detailed documentation of their disability, including specific recommendations from their treating specialist in regards to the adjustments and they will need to access education without limitations.
– Students with disability do not have to disclose their diagnosis to anyone, and may decide not to inform their teaching staff. Staff need to remember that the student has already had to discuss their disability at length with Disability Services, so further review by individual staff members is not warranted or acceptable. Please offer your support and understanding, regardless of whether you are informed of a specific diagnosis. Once again, your trust in Disability Services' recommendations will enable the student to receive the support they require without a breach of confidentiality.

Consult with the student

– The first step is making contact with the student with a disability to discuss their support needs. It is important to offer opportunities for the student to communicate with staff – they are the best source of information regarding their disability and necessary adjustments.
– Making an announcement in the first lecture or tutorial is the easiest way to start this process. Let all students know that if they have a disability or health condition that requires reasonable adjustments in a lecture or tutorial or to assessments, they need to register with Disability Services who can identify reasonable adjustments within this environment. Encourage students to make contact with you after the lecture or via email (remember that they are not required to do so). Assure the class that all information shared with you will be treated with respect and confidentiality.
– When meeting with the student, ask how you can assist them, and let them tell their story. Discuss the format of lectures, tutorials, study materials and assessments and how and if there will be barriers. You can contact Disability Services for advice about how to put these adjustments into practice.
– Most students will have a very clear understanding of their needs. If they have recently attended school or other study, it may be helpful to ask what assistance was provided and how they felt about its effectiveness.

Implement adjustments

– Academic staff will need to implement all recommended adjustments to assessments, examinations, study materials, teaching practices and classroom management. Adjustments may also be needed for placements and other practical environments.
– Accept guidance from Disability Services on assessment adjustments.
– Develop a relationship with the student to understand their individual support needs and capabilities.
– If you are concerned about a recommended adjustment, contact Disability Services to discuss and review options.

Implement inclusive teaching practices
– Refer to Module 5 – Inclusive teaching and accessible learning.
– It is important to review your course delivery regularly (the way you teach, the materials you use and your assessment methods) to ensure that it is accessible and inclusive.

Encourage social integration
– It is important to model social acceptance in class to overcome and erode subtle and unconscious forms of exclusion. You can achieve this by ensuring students have opportunities for sustained interaction.
– Monitor group work situations – talk to groups separately at regular intervals to ensure students are on track and that there are no difficulties developing.

Seek advice and guidance from Disability Services
– Disability Services Officers are trained professionals with experience in assessing students for reasonable adjustments, discussing concerns and reviewing options with academic staff.
– Disability Services Officers provide advice and support to students and to the University in accordance with the *Disability Discrimination Act* to establish an equitable environment ensuring all students have access to education.
– Disability Services works to ensure that the student with disability, the student body and the academic integrity of the course are all considered equally when recommending adjustments or guiding academic decisions.

Signpost to Disability Services and other services
– Some students may not identify themselves as having a disability and thus they may not be aware of the support to which they are entitled. Subsequently, students may be assessed unfairly and not given the opportunity to perform to their potential.
– Students need teaching and other faculty staff to help them become aware of the support services available to them
– Disability Services needs the support of all staff to minimise the stigma associated with the term disability and to raise awareness of the support we provide.
– Make yourself aware of the services and support available at Sydney so you can direct students to the right service: **sydney.edu.au/current_students/student_services**

WHEN A STUDENT APPROACHES YOU FOR HELP
You are not expected to become an expert in disability, but the following tips may help you to feel more confident in your dealings with students with a disability.

– Communication is crucial; listen with an open mind
– Understand that the student may not provide you with details – they may be guarded, and they do not have to disclose
– Accept that you may never know the specifics of the student's disability

– Don't make assumptions – some disabilities are hidden, and the nature of the disability may not impact all aspects of a student's studies, so you may not be aware of a difficulty until you are approached by the student or Disability Services
– Understand that some students may have difficulty communicating their concerns – they may already be experiencing a heightened level of anxiety about their studies. Be patient, and consider that behavioural issues may be related to the disability
– A student may not ask for help until it is too late, and they may not understand that you cannot always resolve academic concerns retrospectively. Provide students with useful advice and guidance
– Understand that the first suggestion or recommendation you make may not be the right one for the student and the situation – the process can involve trial and error
– Approach each situation individually – what worked for one student may not work for the next
– If you are not sure how to proceed, seek guidance from Disability Services.

WHEN DISABILITY SERVICES APPROACHES YOU FOR HELP
There are two avenues of support for a student with a disability:

– recommendations and support provided by Disability Services
– assistance provided by the student's teaching staff.

Disability Services is often unable to provide the specific teaching support that a student may need, as this falls to the student's direct teaching staff.

We can advise regarding the adjustments needed to complete an assessment, but we cannot ensure that the student can hear what you are saying in class or see what you are writing on the board.

We cannot guarantee that a student with a severe hearing impairment will have sufficient support during group work where following discussion may be difficult; that a student with a learning difficulty will receive all handouts on coloured paper; or that a student with difficulty understanding social constructs will experience consideration in classroom participation and group work.

When students with these difficulties are not supported, there is a risk that they will become isolated. Disability Services needs your help to provide this essential level of support.

Taking this extra step to ensure that no student is isolated or excluded is the basis of inclusive teaching. Studies have shown that incorporating inclusive practices into everyday teaching can reduce your workload, as it provides all students with better access to education and reduces their need for more of your time.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Disability Services

Contact Disability Services in the first instance should you need more information about how to implement an adjustment, or if you would like to discuss better ways to support your students.

Disability Services online

The Disability Services website has detailed information for students and staff: **sydney.edu.au/disability**

The 'Information for staff' page guides you through working with students with disability.

Faculty Disability Liaison Officers

Each faculty has a Faculty Disability Liaison Officer. This officer is another point of contact for you and for students in your faculty. These officers assist Disability Services to generate awareness of disability-related issues throughout their faculty (see below).

Faculty Disability Liaison Officer newsletter

Throughout each semester, Disability Services produces a newsletter for the Faculty Disability Liaison Officers to distribute among the staff in their faculty. The newsletter address current concerns and issues, highlights specific disabilities, lists current events and includes interesting items for your review.

4. FACULTY DISABILITY LIAISON OFFICERS

A Faculty Disability Liaison Officer is a staff member nominated and appointed by the dean of each faculty or school to provide support, consultation and liaison between academics, Disability Services and students with disability. These officers provide a link between Disability Services and the faculty. Disability Services may send the officer a referral by email when a student registers with the service. This referral email advises that the student may contact the officer if they require assistance.

Disability Services holds a forum for these officers twice a year, to provide them with regular training so that they can conduct their role effectively.

Faculty Disability Liaison Officers have two main roles:

Liaison and advisory

For these roles they:
– liaise with academics, Disability Services and students with disabilities
– are an initial point of contact in your faculty for students with a disability
– provide advice to students about faculty contacts and procedures
– advise other staff on inclusive teaching practices
– are your faculty's link with Disability Services
– are available for consultation with Disability Services on academic issues that are directly related to a student's disability.
– support and advise staff on teaching and general student disability issues
– participate in disability awareness and information training.

Representation and reporting

For these roles they:
– represent the interests of students with disability at faculty committees
– participate in regular forums and meetings and contribute to discussions on issues and developments in the field
– assist in enhancing the access, participation, success and persistence of students with disability at the University of Sydney
– monitor issues related to students with disability and refer them to Disability Services if necessary
– report to the faculty on issues, initiatives and developments raised at officer forums
– organise disability awareness and information training for faculty staff
– assist Disability Services to formulate strategies and recommendations for improvement in the delivery of services and adjustments for students with a disability

For further information, you may request an overview of this role from Disability Services.

5. ACTIVITY SOLUTIONS

LEARNING MODULE 1

AVOID	APPROPRIATE
The disabled	People with disability
Victim of; suffering from; crippled by	Person who has; person who lives with; person who experiences
Wheelchair bound	Uses a wheelchair
Invalid	Means 'not valid' – use person with disability
Mental handicap; retardation	Intellectual disability
Disabled toilet	Accessible toilet
Lame; handicapped	People with disability
Spastic	Person who has cerebral palsy
The blind	Person who is blind or vision-impaired
The deaf	Person who is deaf or hearing-impaired
Mute; dumb	Speech impairment or non-verbal
Special needs	Individual needs

LEARNING MODULE 2

ACTION	EXAMPLE	DIRECT OR INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION?
Refusing or discouraging a student's enrolment	1. Saying: "There are no places left" when there are still vacancies. 2. Saying: "We already have a lot of students with learning difficulties and our resources are stretched. Maybe XX School would be a better option."	1. Direct 2. Indirect
Setting terms or conditions on which the institution is prepared to admit the student	3. Saying to a student: "We will need a volunteer to provide you with extra help – do you know of anyone?" 4. Saying: "If we get funding, you can come here."	3. Direct 4. Direct
Denying or limiting a student's access to opportunities available	5. Discouraging enrolment in language courses (for example, French or Italian) as the student has limited verbal skills (such as cerebral palsy). 6. Telling the student that they cannot go on an excursion or field trip as the destination is not accessible.	5. Indirect 6. Indirect
Suspending and/or excluding a student whose disability affects their understanding of the behaviour policy	7. Suspending and/or excluding a student for infringing the standard school behaviour guidelines or policy	7. Indirect

LEARNING MODULE 5

Situation 1 – Robin, hearing impaired

☒ *Organise for an honours student to help Robin understand the concepts better*

No. Although this would be a generous offer, Robin has not indicated a difficulty understanding the concepts of your subject. He has indicated a difficulty in accessing complete lecture material.

☑ *Provide Robin with more detailed overviews of each lecture*

Yes. This would be helpful.

☑ *Set up Echo360 and make recordings accessible to Robin via email or online*

Yes. This would be the best way to provide Robin with access to accurate and complete lecture material.

☑ *Rewrite lecture slides to incorporate more detail or link to key points*

Yes. This would be helpful for all students, but may not resolve Robin's issue satisfactorily.

☑ *Adjust your presentation style – slow your speech, look directly at the audience, and ask the audience if they missed any points before moving onto the next slide*

Yes. This would be helpful for all students and would help Robin to keep up; however, it may not resolve the issue completely.

☒ *Advise Robin that you will take this into consideration when reviewing his marks at the end of semester*

No. Robin's grade for the subject should reflect his proficiency with the material and not his ability to manage his disability. All students have a right to equal access to education and Robin should be provided with the resources to ensure this.

☑ *Encourage Robin to make contact with Disability Services to ensure that he has access to all available supports and reasonable adjustments*

Yes.

Situation 2 – Julie, learning disorder

☒ *Encourage Julie to just do her best and submit special consideration that will be reviewed in light of her performance*

No. Julie's grade for the subject should reflect her proficiency with the material and not her ability to manage her disability.

☑ *Offer Julie an alternative assessment*

Yes. This would be an acceptable option.

☑ *Ask Julie what she thinks you can do to help her complete the assessment*

Yes. Julie is the best judge of her weaknesses and strengths and may already have some solutions for you to consider.

☑ *Contact Disability Services for advice*

Yes. A Disability Services Officer will be able to discuss the merits of the assessment with you and provide options to consider.

☑ *Offer to reduce the assessment weighting, reduce the number of articles to be reviewed and the word count and increase the weighting of another piece of assessment, or offer another small piece of assessment to make up the remaining weighting*

Yes. This would be a great option to put to Julie and takes into consideration many of Julie's concerns.

☒ *Refer Julie to the Learning Centre to enrol in a workshop about literature reviews*

No. This does not address the issue at hand. Julie has not indicated difficulty understanding how to undertake a literature review.

Situation 3 – Craig, speech impairment

☑☒ *Tell Craig to submit a request for special consideration to address his absences and advise him that any future absences may lead to an absent-fail grade*

Yes and no. This may be correct advice in addressing the formalities of Craig's responsibilities, but does not offer any solution to the issue.

☑ *Offer to tell Craig in advance when he will be expected to lead class discussion so he can prepare beforehand*

Yes. However, this does not address the issue entirely. Craig will still have difficulty leading the discussion and his anxiety may still be high – potentially leading to another absence.

☑ *Offer to waive the requirement to lead class discussion and substitute with an alternative assessment*

Yes. This would be an acceptable option.

☒ *Refer Craig to the Learning Centre to enrol in a workshop about public speaking*

No. This does not address the issue at hand. Craig's disability cannot be 'fixed' through public speaking workshops.

☑ *Ask Craig what he thinks would be an appropriate adjustment*

Yes. Craig may have experienced similar situations in other classes and is the best person to consult.

☑ *Encourage Craig to make contact with Disability Services to ensure that he has access to all the support and reasonable adjustments available*

Yes.

LEARNING MODULE 6

1. How do I interact with customers?

Eye contact, smile, speed of speech, clarity of speech, accented speech, patience

2. How will my customers need to interact with me?

Talking to me, hearing me, seeing items, handling money

3. What are the considerations I need to make to my environment?

Obstacles, exits, toilets, signage

DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING MANUAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY