

# **Kia Ōrite Toolkit for achieving equity**

Preparing to implement the  
management responsibilities toolkit



**ACHIEVE**  
The National Post-Secondary  
Education Disability Network  
Incorporated

**Tertiary Education  
Commission**  
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua



ACHIEVE and the Tertiary Education Commission © 2021.

Every effort is made to provide accurate and factual content. Achieve and the Tertiary Education Commission, however, cannot accept responsibility for any inadvertent errors or omissions that may occur.

This work is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence](#). You are free to copy, distribute, and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the work to ACHIEVE and the Tertiary Education Commission, and abide by the other licence terms. Please note you may not use any departmental or governmental emblem, logo, or coat of arms in any way that infringes any provision of the Flags, Emblems, and Names Protection Act 1981.

ISBN 978-1-99-115247-3/1 (electronic)

Published by:

ACHIEVE  
New Zealand  
E: [info@achieve.org.nz](mailto:info@achieve.org.nz)  
W: [www.achieve.org.nz](http://www.achieve.org.nz)

Tertiary Education Commission  
New Zealand  
E: [customerservice@tec.govt.nz](mailto:customerservice@tec.govt.nz)  
W: [www.tec.govt.nz](http://www.tec.govt.nz)

# Table of Contents

Preparing to implement the management responsibilities toolkit .....	4
1.1 How to use this implementation toolkit .....	4
1.2 Building a partnership with disabled learners .....	7
1.3 Who should use this toolkit? .....	8
1.4 What do the management responsibilities include? .....	9
Management responsibilities .....	10
2.1 Recruitment, selection, admission and enrolment.....	10
2.2 Funding and withdrawal .....	21
2.3 Complaint and appeal policies and procedures .....	26
2.4 Access to buildings, facilities and infrastructure.....	30
2.5 Policy and planning.....	46
2.6 Monitoring and evaluation.....	51

# Preparing to implement the management responsibilities toolkit

## 1.1 How to use this implementation toolkit

### Preparation

Set aside some time to read this preparation section for the **management responsibilities implementation toolkit**.

#### **Step 1: Choose an area or activity**

Choose an area or activity, for example recruitment, and read through the best practice standards, ideas and resources. Take plenty of time to inform yourself about the area of the tertiary environment you'll be reviewing before using the implementation toolkit.

#### **Step 2: Find resources and build a partnership with disabled learners**

Consult the hot tips, links and other resources on any aspect of practice you're unsure of or need more information about.

Your organisation may have other information, policies, procedures or systems related to the area or activity that may help you complete the questions in the implementation toolkit.

Think about how you will build a partnership with disabled learners with different impairments to review this area or activity, e.g. through a focus or project group, disabled learner group, representatives on a reference group, etc.

You may also identify other staff you need to talk to about this, including disability support services staff.

#### **Step 3: Turn to the management responsibilities implementation toolkit**

Using the management responsibilities implementation toolkit, choose an area or activity to review in partnership with disabled learners. Answer the questions to determine if you have met the best practice standards for that area or activity.

This will determine what actions are required.

#### **Step 4: Identify lack of provision**

Identify any barriers that exist for disabled learners with this area or activity and solutions to resolve these barriers to participation and achievement.

#### **Step 5: Identify further actions**

Identify where a best practice standard has been partially or not met. Using the planning chart, plan the next steps for this area or activity, including the actions required to resolve any gaps.

#### **Step 6: Peer review of your thinking**

Go back to the reference group to peer review your findings.

**Return to step 1:** Choose the next area or activity to review.

The review of these areas or activities will lead to development of your disability action plan. Have some fun and be transformative!

## **This toolkit can be implemented in a variety of different ways**

1. A team, in partnership with disabled learners, gradually works through the toolkit.

Since most people know where the greatest barriers for disabled learners are, start there.

There may also be some simple things that would make a real difference for disabled learners so ask them what they are. Then do some brainstorming about barriers in their learning environments and possible actions for solutions. Use the tools provided as templates and re-use them at future intervals.

### **OR**

2. Those coordinating the development of the disability action plan delegate parts of the toolkit to staff responsible for specific activities, to review in partnership with disabled learners and report back to the disability reference group.

Remember:

- It's essential that you get feedback from disabled learners with different impairments as part of this review process.
- Staff from disability support services can be a resource for this review process.
- To spend time preparing and using the tools provided to chart your progress.

## 1.2 Building a partnership with disabled learners

When reviewing a particular area or activity it's important to get feedback from disabled learners with different impairments from representative disabled learner groups on focus or project teams. For example, those responsible for property or facilities could work in partnership with an ongoing focus group of disabled learners who meet regularly to discuss the design of buildings, facilities and access routes. This group could also have a wider brief and be used by other staff to get feedback about other areas or activities.

Regular engagement surveys with disabled learners is another great way to identify and resolve barriers to their participation and achievement. This will ensure you're getting feedback from the wider learner group, as well as those who are part of reference, focus or project groups.

## 1.3 Who should use this toolkit?

This implementation toolkit covers management responsibilities.

Disabled learners, their family, whānau and support networks should also be active partners in the review and implementation of these management responsibilities.

This toolkit is designed for the following staff within tertiary providers.

- Leaders driving the development, implementation and funding of the disability action plan.
- Policy makers who develop organisational policy and procedures related to it.
- Managers responsible for recruitment, selection, admission, enrolment, withdrawal and appeals, monitoring and evaluation of disabled learners.
- Staff involved with IT and assistive technology for disabled learners.
- Managers responsible for buildings, facilities and equipment.

## 1.4 What do the management responsibilities include?

This implementation toolkit covers management responsibilities including:

- recruitment, selection, admission, and enrolment
- funding and withdrawal
- complaint and appeal policies and procedures
- buildings, facilities, equipment and infrastructure
- health and safety
- new technologies, digital platforms and procurement
- policy and planning
- monitoring and evaluation.

# Management responsibilities

## 2.1 Recruitment, selection, admission and enrolment

### a) Recruitment

---

#### Vision

Disabled learners and taura can access recruitment initiatives and marketing information describes opportunities for them to participate.

---

#### Best practice standards

1. General and specific learner recruitment initiatives are developed that make explicit reference to opportunities and learning support for disabled learners.
2. Disabled learners feature in promotional material, including those with less obvious learning supports.
3. General and specific learner recruitment initiatives assist prospective disabled learners to make appropriate educational decisions by providing information about educational pathways, support systems, entry and professional or vocational course requirements.
4. Promotional material is disseminated in alternative formats to a wide range of relevant community networks that disabled learners can access.
5. Prospective disabled learners are encouraged and assisted to identify their specific support requirements, ideally prior to application for admission.
6. Disabled learners can access online application processes including scholarship applications.

---

Best practice includes transition support in recruitment

“What we do quite well, I think, is transitioning students from school into tertiary. That’s one that we do well, simply because we work really closely with our community partners.”

*Team leader, disability services, polytechnic*

---

## **Ideas and resources to consider**

- Ideally all recruitment and marketing information should be available in accessible formats. Include a section on disability support services and have pictorial representations of disabled learners with other learners.
- Information should include a clear and accurate statement about physical access; general, specialist, and technical support options; and designated contacts.
- Ask all learners in advance whether they have specific requirements so staff can make adequate preparations for any necessary support.

## **What you need to know**

Some key themes from the special interest groups about recruitment:

### *Current disabled learners*

- Assumption: That a prospective disabled learner knows how to find appropriate information online to plan their programme, but not all disabled people can get online.
- Open days: A lot of recruiters don’t sit down with parents and explain what a pathway is so parents don’t think that is even an option. They think their kids should stay at home but the kids may want to go study [computer] games!

### *Disability services staff, universities and polytechnics*

- Best practice includes transition support in recruitment.
- “SENCOs in schools need to know we are here [and] how to connect these learners with us”

- “... learners coming across with very old assessments ... All we can offer is an online screening tool for dyslexia ... Anything more than that, we refer out to SPELD NZ to get a further assessment, but that costs. We can’t afford to do that for every learner ... That also takes time, so it’s a delay in getting services.”

### Engaging disabled learners

- To check out whether all recruitment and marketing information is accessible, work with a group of disabled learners with different impairments who can provide advice and feedback.

### Examples of good practice

- Otago University is currently working on a [Student Voices Project](#) to showcase some learner success stories. This example from the project illustrates the types of stories that can be told and the positive impact that tertiary education study can have on a disabled person’s life.
- “The DSS manager said that all the dyslexic learners who come from the high schools around our area ... come to the university and don’t know what they need. But, she said, the learners who come from [local college] come and say, ‘Right, I need this, this and this and you sort it out.’” She said, they’re miles ahead. And that’s how transition from high school should be.”  
- Disability community staff member
- Increasing awareness of tertiary education for disabled learners may include:
  - Initiatives targeting senior learners in secondary schools, a ‘vacation school’ for those considering tertiary study, and bridging programmes to assist learners to make the transition into tertiary study.
  - A resource and planning guide and video recording for people considering tertiary study.
  - Information brochures that target prospective school age or mature learners, parents and community organisations.
  - Specific recruitment programmes tailored to Māori, Pacific peoples and other diverse communities.
  - Tertiary providers offering scholarships for disabled secondary school learners.

## Useful networks and links

- The Ministry of Social Development is delivering a programme to ensure the public sector is accessible for everyone and inclusive of disabled people.

The [Accessibility Charter](#) provides advice, support, training and resources to assist senior leaders and their staff to understand the standards for providing material in various alternate formats for disabled people. The aim is to improve information and communication access for disabled people across the public sector.

This is supported by the Disabled Persons Organisation's (DPOs) who can also provide advice and support on alternative formats for [people with a learning disability](#), those that are [blind or vision impaired](#), the [Deaf community](#), etc.

Various public sector departments, DHBs and other sector organisations have already signed up. Tertiary providers could do the same.

- For access to community networks contact your disability support staff or your local [disability information service](#).
- [Exploring the retention and success of disabled learners](#).

## b) Selection and admission

---

### Vision

Selection and admission policies and procedures assess a disabled learner or taura competencies and not their impairments.

---

### Best practice standards

1. Selection and admission policies and procedures are relevant to course and professional requirements and do not unjustifiably disadvantage or exclude disabled applicants.
2. Staff involved with selection and admission provide appropriate support to disabled applicants in selection activities, use expertise to assess an applicant's support needs, receive effective guidance and training to prevent disability discrimination, and are able to clearly justify refusing entry to a course on the grounds of impairment.
3. Course selection criteria are regularly reviewed to make sure they are suitable, applied appropriately, and do not discriminate against applicants with impairments.
4. Appeal processes for learners rejected on the grounds of impairment are available and widely publicised.

---

“We have learners who are obstructed from being part of programmes instantly, because they are seen as physically disabled.

We've had, for example, somebody who wanted to be front-of-house, training in a wheelchair, [the hospitality programme] almost immediately found difficulties with that. And [difficulties] that we've encountered in nursing. So some of the obvious [disabilities] are immediately responded to without support.”

*Student advisor, polytechnic*

---

---

“Tertiary providers do not have a culture of reasonable accommodation. They have a culture of one size suits all, and you will be squeezed into the box, no matter how much you aren’t going to fit.”

*Academic staff, tertiary institution*

---

### **Ideas and resources to consider**

- Concentrate on the person’s ability – not their impairment. Ask all learners what support they require and only ask about their impairment if it is relevant.
- Appropriate support in selection activities, such as interviews, can include creating a safe environment to provide personal impairment information, providing information in accessible alternate formats, allowing demonstration of ability using alternative ways to meet selection requirements, and notifying learners about this prior to selection activities.
- Make sure you can justify any decision related to selection and admission. Appeal processes should:
  - Examine the grounds for refusing entry to a course.
  - Investigate support strategies that may allow entry and completion of industry requirements.
  - Seek expert impairment advice.
  - Adhere to relevant legislation.
  - Follow confidentiality protocols.

### **Engaging disabled learners**

- Before any selection, admissions and enrolment processes ask all learners if they have support requirements resulting from an impairment that need to be considered by staff.
- As a result, some of these processes may need to be modified.

## What you need to know <sup>1</sup>

- Refer to Section 1 Part 1.6, Obligations of tertiary providers under the New Zealand Human Rights Act. With all selection, admissions and enrolment it is essential that you can justify any decisions to decline applications on the grounds of impairment.
- Admission arrangements can disadvantage disabled learners in the following ways:
  - Applicants must fill out an application form by hand and cannot type or use support.
  - An applicant with a speech impairment is refused extra time at an interview.
  - A learner with epilepsy cannot enrol unless they have an assistant at all times, when seizures only occur at night.
  - Reviewing applications from disabled learners after other applicants are selected for courses and learner accommodation.
- Insisting on medical checks for disabled learners without justification.
- There may be exceptions. For example, a person who uses a wheelchair applies to do a plumbing course. While training could be made accessible, the adjustments would not be possible in the workplace. In this case, the vocational nature of the course means it would not be appropriate to make adjustments that are not replicable in the workplace.
- Consideration needs to be given to the possibility that a disabled learner is taking a vocational course to lead to a future in design or policy, rather than direct practice. For example, a woman is refused entry to an engineering degree on the grounds she would not be able to be an engineer because of her impairment. This is despite the degree not being directly vocational and that not all graduates become engineers.

## Examples of good practice

- In some instances discretionary entry may be required. Otago University has created a disability impact statement so that prospective learners can tell their stories or the context of why they may not meet the entry criteria.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Disability Rights Commission. (2003). *Code of practice for providers of post 16 education and related services - Legal rights and requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Part 4*. pg.45.

## c) Enrolment processes

---

### Vision

Enrolment, registration and induction processes accommodate the needs of all disabled learners and taura.

---

### Best practice standards

1. Enrolment, registration and induction processes take into account the physical, communication and information access requirements of disabled learners.
2. Information about impairments is collected for relevant purposes only, the purpose of collection is clearly stated, measures to ensure confidentiality are followed, and the information collected does not appear on academic records or graduation documentation.
3. Disabled learners are advised of the services available to assist them.
4. The support needs of disabled learners are identified during the enrolment and induction process and the support confirmed with the learner when in place.

---

Disclosure helps an organisation to anticipate learning support needs

“Just getting learners to disclose their disability is something that we still struggle with. Not everyone wants to identify as having a disability as they enrol. And I think sometimes the academic staff don’t quite pick it up readily either, so it can be way into the year before support can commence.”

*Equity co-ordinator, learner services, polytechnic*

---

## **Ideas and resources to consider**

- All information should be available to disabled learners in alternative formats including enrolment, course and other material.
- Ideally, disabled learners should be able to complete enrolment and other relevant forms with the same level of independence and confidentiality as other learners.
- Under the Human Rights Act it is unlawful to record impairment information on academic records and graduation documentation.
- Orientation activities may include introducing to disabled learners to disability and other support staff, workshops on topics such as note taking, assignment writing, introduction to computers, and peer tutoring for specified subjects.
- As a general rule, it is inappropriate to share a learners' personal disability information unless they have given permission to do so.

## **Engaging disabled learners**

- Before any selection, admissions and enrolment processes ask all learners if they have support requirements resulting from an impairment that need to be considered by staff.
- As a result, some of these processes may need to be modified.

## **What you need to know**

- Refer to Section 1, Part 1.6 Obligations of tertiary providers under the New Zealand Human Rights Act. With all selection, admissions and enrolment it's essential that you can justify any decisions to decline applications on the grounds of impairment.

## Useful networks and links

- [Building Confidence In Enrolling Learners With Disability.](#)

To ensure enrolment and recruitment processes are accessible:

Refer to the earlier section about the Ministry of Social Development [Accessibility Charter](#) programme. The aim is to improve information and communication access for disabled people across the public sector.

Various public sector departments, DHBs and other sector organisations have already signed up. Tertiary providers could do the same.

It's also important that all websites are accessible to disabled people who use screen readers and other assistive technology:

- The Government has developed [digital accessibility standards and guidance](#).
  - The [Web Accessibility Initiative](#) provides internationally recognised standards for providing accessible information and websites.
  - Providing accessibility tools on your website like the tools on the right-hand side of this [website](#) can really help.
- Here are some things to consider to make your websites accessible:<sup>2</sup>
    - Make sure all electronic forms are available in accessible formats. For example, can Acrobat PDF forms be read by screen readers? If not, make sure an alternative form is available in Word.
    - Make sure any coursework and electronic learning materials are fully accessible to disabled learners using, if necessary, alternative hardware and software.
    - Don't get seduced by technology.
    - Organise materials in a simple and logical order.
    - Present an overview at beginning.

---

2 Accessible Curricula - Good Practice For All (2002). Carol Doyle and Karen Robson edited by Simon Ball and David Campy. University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC). Pg. 56.

- Periodically put the current topic into wider context.
- Avoid using image maps.
- Animations or video or audio inclusions can render webpages inaccessible.
- Use alternative text to describe the function of each visual or provide a page link that contains a detailed description.
- Add an audio description or commentary.
- For complex visual animations always give the user an option to access the information provided by the animation in a textual form.
- For videos provide closed captioning – text captions of the soundtrack, including spoken dialogue, other important audio cues and a description of what action is occurring on screen.
- For audio files provide a written transcript or provide the same information provided by the audio in an alternative accessible form.

## 2.2 Funding and withdrawal

---

### Vision

Funds are adequate to provide effective support to disabled learners and taura and flexible withdrawal policies exist that allow withdrawal without academic or financial penalty if learners withdraw because of an impairment.

---

### Best practice standards

1. Clear withdrawal policies and procedures exist, allowing withdrawal without academic or financial penalty if learners withdraw from subjects or courses after scheduled closing dates because of an impairment.
2. Withdrawal policy and procedures are known to all learners and implemented consistently.
3. Adequate funds are generated in the fee structure and/or through other non-operating grant sources to provide effective services to support disabled learners, and disabled learners receive the same services as their non-disabled peers.
4. Funding for disabled learners is used as set out by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

---

“It must be a requirement of the university’s core funding. Nothing to do with specialised funding streams at all ... It’s got to be part of the everyday, core business-as-usual mentality. It’s got to come from the very top.”

*Academic staff and disability services, university and polytechnic*

---

---

"A disabled learner is unwell at the time of their exam and cannot sit. They apply for special consideration and this is granted. A special exam is scheduled but the learner is still unwell and cannot sit. There is no further consideration available. I believe the option should be an exceptional withdrawal or a special exam (right up to the day before the scheduled exam).

In addition, there are instances where learners sustain injuries and on the advice of a GP think they will be well enough to continue. As the semester progresses, they realise that it is unrealistic and/or detrimental to their health to continue. The date has passed to withdraw with a full refund so the learner has to apply for an exceptional withdrawal with a partial refund."

*Disability services staff, tertiary institution*

---

### **Ideas and resources to consider**

- Ideally learners shouldn't receive an academic or financial penalty when they're required to withdraw as a result of an impairment. Staff should have clear guidelines for making decisions about learners withdrawal conditions.
- In the future, the TEC is proposing that learner success plans and disability action plans will encourage and reward the tailoring of learning and support to address learner needs, and build organisational capability to support disabled learners. It is also proposed that the TEC will recognise that accommodating some learners comes at a higher cost by making funding available to TEOs to help cover this.<sup>3</sup>

---

3 Tertiary Education Commission/Ministry of Education. (2020). Unified Funding System Supporting disabled learners through the Learner Success Component. Wellington, New Zealand: Tertiary Education Commission.

## What you need to know

- According to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC):<sup>4</sup>
  - The fees set for international learners are expected to meet the additional cost for services and support provided for domestic learners, including disability support services.
  - [Equity funding for students with disabilities](#) is allocated for initiatives to meet the needs of disabled learners and is focused on domestic learners only.
  - Institutions receiving this equity funding are expected to:
    - Also provide financial support for tertiary disabled learners from other funding.
    - Meet physical access modifications from funding other than that provided as specific support for disabled learners
    - Provide baseline data on enrolment numbers, course participation and completion rates, and graduation or certification rates of tertiary disabled learners.
    - Include appropriate information, where possible in alternative formats, for tertiary disabled learners in marketing, publicity and enrolment material.

Some key themes from the special interest groups about funding and withdrawal:

### *Disability services, tertiary institution – funding*

“A lot of them don’t come from families or places where they have the financial ability to go and get that extra specialised help [for] the diagnosis that they need, so they can actually get the support that they should have.... That’s really concerning for me as well.”

“If a learner doesn’t already have an assessment or diagnosis, it should be up to that organisation to provide money to support this (if they require it)... [They’ve] insisted on people having a full-blown diagnosis, which is a very big financial barrier for most people.”

---

<sup>4</sup> Tertiary Education Commission. (4 April 2003). *Use of the supplementary grant TSD for support of students with disabilities*. Wellington, New Zealand: Tertiary Education Commission. pp. 1-3.

“Funding for interpreters: “I know it’s a really difficult conversation for the Government to have, because its expensive, but the Government needs to see this in the lens of an investment approach. You invest heavily here, and then long term you’ve got more deaf people with qualifications who are contributing more to the economy and the society ... funding for New Zealand sign language interpreters does need to follow the deaf people.”

“Tertiary is the whole system ... [And] there are massive inequities in the private training space, certainly around funding for the deaf community particularly.”

- Community agency

### *Disability services, tertiary institution – withdrawal*

Without a learning assessment, learners are at risk of withdrawing.

“We have a specific budget for ... learning assessments and screenings [for specific learning difficulties] and things like that. On an annual basis, I protect that fiercely, because I’m a firm believer that we need to make sure we’ve got enough learner funds to be able to put them through the assessments.”

### **Engaging disabled learners**

- Like other learners, some disabled learners face financial hardship. Check through focus groups and engagements surveys to find out if these learners think withdrawal policies and procedures are being implemented fairly and effectively, and get their ideas for service improvement.
- Get feedback about the best ways to lessen the financial burden on disabled learners through targeted additional financial support.
- It is critical that focus groups and engagement surveys with disabled learners measure their satisfaction with the learning support they have received, and any ideas they may have for improving their support.

## Examples of good practice

- Tertiary institutions can lessen the financial burden on disabled learners through targeted additional financial support (e.g. scholarships, hardship funds, subsidised accommodation or other support) and by considering the financial status of disabled learners when setting fees.
- Implementation of the Kia Ōrite toolkit does not necessarily mean an increase in cost. For example, the provision of lecture notes to all learners in an accessible electronic format can create savings in terms of staff time and salaries. Staff may no longer be required to photocopy and enlarge information, and the institution may no longer need to employ as many note takers if they use the notes already written electronically by teaching staff. It is also a valuable teaching tool for all learners.
- If we are to create an inclusive teaching, learning and assessment environment for disabled learners, tertiary providers must create the infrastructure that makes it easy for teaching and other staff to support these learners.

For example, institution-wide policies and procedures for providing lecture notes in an accessible electronic format, support for teaching staff with copying, enlarging and transcribing information, tests, exams and other assessments.

## Useful networks and links

- Some universities in Australia have medical leave or medical assistance policies to support learners with a serious health condition.
  - [“Student Wellbeing and Safety Policy”](#) at Griffith University provides another pathway to support learners through managing fitness to study concerns.
  - [Medical Leave Rules 2013](#) from Australian National University
  - [Medical Assistance Policy](#) from Western Sydney University.

## 2.3 Complaint and appeal policies and procedures

---

### Vision

Policies and procedures exist to deal with complaints arising directly or indirectly from disabled learners and taura. These are accessible and communicated effectively to the disabled learners.

---

### Best practice standards

1. Policies and procedures established in relation to learner complaints, appeals, harassment and disciplinary procedures cover impairment issues.
2. Disabled learners receive these policies and procedures in an appropriate manner and format and are aware of their right to have an independent advocate.

---

"Ticked the box for disability, no one is checking in on you to see what support was needed."

"Unless you are really brave and can advocate for yourself time and time again, you just give up in the end."

Some learners fear being punished for making a complaint or asking for help:

"A lot of disabled people don't trust the system because there is that fear of discrimination there, it's always in your mind."

*Current disabled learners*

---

---

“Sometimes a diagnosis can help inform the kinds of support that might be appropriate and the funding arrangements around that. But I think the danger is that we’ve become too tied up in: ‘You must have a medical certificate before you can go to a tertiary institution and get support’ ... Someone’s not going to pretend that they need something. There has to be a degree of trust and respect. And sometimes disabled people don’t get that respect.”

*Disability community staff member*

---

### **Ideas and resources to consider**

- A review of the complaint and appeal policies and procedures should assess whether:
  - Disabled learners are treated in a non-discriminatory manner and receive appropriate impairment support.
  - Issues are resolved in a timely and effective fashion.
  - Disabled learners know that an independent advocate can accompany them.  
For example, a student advocate or one from the local Health and Disability Consumer Advocacy Service.
  - Services are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner for Māori disabled learners, other ethnic and diverse groups, international learners, etc.
  - There is adherence to relevant legislation and protocols of confidentiality.
  - Expert impairment advice has been used appropriately.
  - Staff have sufficient training to fulfil this task in relation to disabled learners.
- Ensure that learners have an outlet to which they may appeal in the event that there are disagreements on the provision of accommodations. Any appeals committee should be knowledgeable on the subject matter and impartial.<sup>5</sup>

---

5 Enhancing Accessibility in Post-Secondary Institutions, NEADS, 2012, pg 11

## Engaging disabled learners

- It is important to check with disabled learners through focus groups and engagement surveys to find out if they think complaints and appeal policies and procedures are being implemented fairly. Ask for their ideas for effective service improvement.

## What you need to know

Key themes from the special interest groups about complaint and appeals:

### *Current disabled learners*

“Would be good to encourage more connection between disabled learners and for student associations to have an advocacy role for disabled learners.”

A new disabled students association is starting up; some (providers) don't actually have disabled learners in their student associations ... they should be encouraged to have learners empowered to engage with them about disability – there will be more buy-in from senior leadership if there is a stronger disabled learner-led awareness.

“Would be useful to have support for helping disabled learners to develop self-advocacy skills.”

“I'm quite strong in my own self- advocacy, but a lot of people aren't.”

## Examples of good practice

- It is important that disabled learners are aware that appeal processes exist and they know where to get this information in an accessible format, and how to seek support with implementing these processes.

## Examples of bad practice

- It is important not to exclude learners on the grounds of impairment, without justification. For example, a learner admits himself to hospital during the holidays because of an ongoing mental illness. Staff hear about this and the tertiary institution excludes the learner because staff fear he may be dangerous. The tertiary institution has no evidence to suggest this and this would be unlawful.<sup>6</sup>

---

6 The Disability Rights Commission. (2003). *Code of practice for providers of post 16 education and related services - Legal rights and requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Part 4.* pg.45.

## Useful networks and links

- [Enhancing Accessibility Guide \(Canadian\)](#)
- A link to a [Current Student Engagement Survey](#) at a Canadian University

## 2.4 Access to buildings, facilities and infrastructure

### a) The physical environment

---

#### Vision

Disabled learners and taura have equitable access to the physical environment within the tertiary institution in which they will study, learn, live and take part.

---

#### Best practice standards

1. All buildings that are required comply with or exceed the standards identified in *NZS 4121:2001: Design for Access and Mobility: Buildings and Associated Facilities*.
2. Physical access audits are completed by trained BarrierFree auditors, in consultation with disability support staff and learners with different impairments.
3. A physical access plan to improve physical access to above the minimum standard *NZS 4121:2001* for learners with different impairments is developed, resources allocated, and an ongoing monitoring and review schedule established and implemented as part of the disability action plan.
4. The annual review of the physical access plan involves learners with different impairments, disability support staff and, where necessary, those responsible for audits.
5. Policies and procedures exist to ensure that the needs of disabled learners are taken into account when any new building work or refurbishment takes place, including consulting with the parties mentioned above.
6. Key access features such as location of lifts, accessible telephones, toilets, routes, entrances, and parking are clearly signed and identified on location maps.

7. Accessible parking and public transport drop-off and pick-up points (e.g. wheelchair taxis, buses), and locational signage comply with or exceed *NZS 4121:2001* and consider the increasing numbers of disabled learners in the learning environment.
8. Disabled learners are aware of recent changes affecting physical access during work on buildings and grounds, and know where to go if they find an access issue and want to report it.

---

“Physical accessibility is still a barrier ... we want to write an accessibility action plan and get agreement on it from the exec down.”

*Disability services staff, tertiary institution*

---

### **Ideas and resources to consider**

- Some tertiary providers have developed [Campus Design for Access and Mobility Policies](#).
- To anticipate physical access requirements:
  - Develop a three to five-year physical access plan and commit funds each year to a prioritised list of physical access provisions. Complete this in consultation with disabled learners and disability support staff.
  - Ensure sufficient flexibility in the budget to reallocate money between departments during the year if physical access provisions are required.
  - Building works staff are trained in physical access provisions.
  - Each time alterations occur an assessment is made of how the building's accessibility can be improved (e.g. repainting using colour contrasts for those with vision impairments, carrying out acoustic audits).
  - Develop internal physical access standards and guidelines for physical access in leased or rented buildings.
  - Create a physical access kit for staff and disabled learners.
  - Those responsible for learner timetables allow those with mobility impairments enough time to travel between classes.

- If physical access is impossible or unreasonably difficult, the institution is flexible regarding where classes are held, including moving teaching from inaccessible areas.
- Procedures are in place to identify disabled learners using inaccessible facilities prior to classes starting.
- Audits and planning should cover the physical access requirements of a range of disabled learners and include buildings, landscaping, parking and public transport.
- Audits take into account:
  - All buildings, including learner accommodation, marae, teaching, learning, administration, general and specialist support, spiritual and recreational facilities.
  - The level of compliance with the minimum requirement of *NZS 4121:2001*.
  - A schedule of improvements to buildings that don't meet the required standards, which is implemented flexibly and based on emerging needs.
- For learners with more complex needs there are new issues such as single-person toilets needing to accommodate support staff and extra equipment owned by the learner that can be set up there for their use.

### **Engaging disabled learners**

- Establish a physical access reference of disabled learners with different impairments to get their user feedback about physical access requirements when completing audits and planning alterations or new buildings.

### **What you need to know**

- Compliance with *NZS 4121:2001: Design for Access and Mobility: Buildings and Associated Facilities* is essential. However, this is a minimum standard and may not provide the level of access required for some disabled learners in a tertiary environment.

For example in health, Canterbury District Health Board also uses the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines because this is more appropriate for health facilities.

## Examples of good practice

- Ideally location signage and maps should be available in accessible formats (e.g. tactile location maps, easy to read wording and good colour contrast).
- Alternative means of participation for disabled learners should be provided where physical access is impossible or unreasonably difficult.
- Trained physical access auditors should be engaged:
  - At the design stage of any new buildings and alterations to existing buildings, including those to be used for learner accommodation.
  - For independent advice and to liaise with the building designers and owners on access requirements. They have specialist expertise that building designers and owners often don't have.
  - At the completion of the building project to check a building is accessible for disabled learners in a tertiary environment.

## Useful networks and links

- In the past [BarrierFree](#) has trained accredited auditors. There may be people in your local community who are trained auditors. Contact your local office of CCS Disability Action to see if they know of anyone locally.
- [Be. Lab](#), formerly known as Be. Accessible, offer an assessment programme that helps businesses and organisations optimise their overall accessibility (including the physical environment, customer service, marketing materials, etc).
- [Lifemark](#) work with designers and builders to offer advice on how to make best use of space in a home, based on the principles of universal design.
- BRANZ takes a system-wide view of the building system in New Zealand to champion and support better outcomes. They partner with industry and government to ensure their research findings are accessible and benefit all New Zealanders. They have produced a [series on universal design for homes](#), some of which is also relevant to commercial environments.
- [Build accessible design - Universal Design Series.](#)

- In Schools Universal Design for Learning (UDL) a research-based framework has been developed that may be relevant to the tertiary sector:
  - [UDL Guideline](#)
  - [UDL Framework](#)
  - [UDL Articles](#)

## b) Facilities, equipment and health and safety

---

### Vision

Learning environment facilities, equipment and events are fully accessible to all disabled learners and taura and allow equitable access to these services.

---

### Best practice standards

1. Facilities and equipment planning incorporates the requirements of disabled learners and occurs in consultation with these learners and disability support staff.
2. Fire evacuation, health, safety and security procedures consider all disabled learners.
3. Information technology systems, computer arrangements and assistive technology maximise access to learning and consider the learning support needs of disabled learners.
4. Arrangements for events (e.g. graduation ceremonies, registration and social events) ensure equal access and amenities for disabled learners.

---

“Sometimes there is a six-hour gap between classes and it is hard to find a quiet room for people who are neurodiverse or who need to rest.”

*Current disabled learner*

---

---

"Are the evacuation needs and wishes of disabled learners taken into consideration and documented?"

"For example, a learner who uses a wheelchair and has brittle bones does not want to be physically lifted and would rather be transferred to an evac-chair."

*Disability services staff, tertiary institution*

---

## Ideas and resources to consider

### Facilities and equipment:

- Facilities include all areas and activities provided to all learners, including libraries, learner accommodation, ceremonies, enrolment, support services, marae, examinations and assessment, administration, spiritual, recreational and teaching facilities.
- Facilities and equipment planning should take into consideration:
  - The height and layout of classroom tables and lab benches.
  - Appropriate signage and information (e.g. large print and Braille notices, tactile maps).
  - Tone/colour contrasting in the interior and exterior of buildings for those with vision impairments. Buildings with a lot of glass and lack of contrasting can be hard to see.
  - Appropriately located accessible toilets and rest rooms across the learning environment. The design needs to consider that disabled learners using power wheelchairs, scooters or personal carers will require more room and compliance with the minimum standard *NZS 4121:2001* may not be sufficient for a tertiary environment.
  - Design, comfort and layout of seating in lecture theatres, computer rooms and labs.
  - Lighting design that supports the needs of learners with vision impairments.
  - Amplification, assistive listening and acoustic systems (e.g. hearing loops or infra-red systems for hearing aid users, acoustic tiles, notification on maps and signs, minimising noise from fans in projection equipment, computers, heating, ventilation).
  - Easy use of equipment for disabled learners in labs, computer and teaching rooms.
  - Alternative safety systems such as flashing light fire alarms.
  - A programme for the ongoing maintenance and updating of facilities and equipment.

## Health and safety:

- The management of the health and safety of disabled learners is a legal requirement of all tertiary providers. Here is an example of how it can go wrong.

### Build environment access example – forgetting disabled learners in evacuations:

A disabled learner who is a wheelchair user lays a complaint with the tertiary provider after they were told to 'stay put' in a classroom when an evacuation signal sounded. The learner was particularly distressed by the fact that no one stayed with them, and no one came back to check on them or let them know if it was a drill or a real evacuation. They now feel unsafe on the campus.

### Example of good practice

All learners who may have access or movement support needs should be identified by the provider, and have a personalised evacuation support plan developed, which covers the learning environments they are in. Plans should be developed in collaboration with the provider's health and safety team to support the evacuation responsibilities staff hold when in the learning environment. Where learners are on-site during irregular hours, plans should be shared with site security.

Curtin University has developed [Evacuation Guidelines](#) relating to disabled learners which may be useful for the development of your own management plan and guideline. In New Zealand, Otago University's Health & Safety and Emergency Management Plan, and Auckland University of Technology's Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan also provide helpful resources. These can be obtained directly from the relevant organisations.

### Engaging disabled learners

- Like earlier sections, establishing reference groups and focus groups to obtain feedback for service improvements.

## Useful networks and links

- Meetings and Events Industry of Australia - [Resource for organising accessible events](#)

## Other ideas

- Library assistance cards to help disabled learners find and transport research materials.
- A card that allows phone access to organise library services such as photocopying, equipment, resource room access, library assistants and loan renewals.

## c) New technologies, digital platforms and procurement

---

### Vision

When using digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment consider the possible impacts on disabled learners and tauira so that pedagogical outcomes are inclusive and equitable to these learners.

---

### Best practice standards

1. The adoption of online tools, technological platforms and device-based software licences for teaching, learning and assessment is undertaken with consultation of disabled learners and is accessible for their assistive technology.
2. The use of online tools, technological platforms and device-based software for learning by disabled learners is supported by academic, teaching, demonstrator and learning support staff.
3. The acquisition of new assistive technologies to assist and be used by disabled learners is discussed with those who require this technology.
4. Teaching, IT and other support staff receive training and other resources so they are familiar with assistive technologies that disabled learners may find useful.

---

Technology should be accessible, usable and user-friendly, and individualised support should be available to teach learners how to use it.

“The software systems across the university are not accessible ... which means they are not accessible to the disabled learners. But the university doesn’t give a [deleted] if it’s accessible, because they don’t have to.”

*Tertiary institution staff*

---

## Ideas and resources to consider

- It is essential that there are institution-wide policies and procedures around the procurement and adoption of online tools, technological platforms and device-based software licences, so that these are accessible for disabled learners.
- IT managers and their staff should be accountable for implementing these policies and procedures and should receive the necessary training to do so.
- The development and use of assistive technology is a fast-paced environment. As well as specialist software for disabled learners, there are now many accessible apps on smartphones that disabled people can use.
- Some tertiary disability support services such as at Victoria, Canterbury, Auckland and Otago Universities, AUT, Unitec and Ara have assistive technology specialists or staff with knowledge in this area. These people are worth contacting if you are looking for a solution.
- [The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training](#) also has an assistive technology group that can be contacted for assistance.
- Talking with disabled learners about their latest apps and other assistive technology should also be considered. Disabled people such as the blind community or those with specific learning disabilities are always on the lookout for new and accessible tools that will assist them and may share their ideas.

## What you need to know

Some key themes from the special interest groups about new technology included:

*Disability services and academic staff, universities and polytechnics*

Not every learner can access new technologies online:

“We have a lot of learners who don’t have equipment at home. So they were reliant on the facilities at Polytech. (During COVID) they didn’t have computers or they didn’t have Wi-Fi or they didn’t have enough money to pay for Wi-Fi. They were trying to do coursework on their phones.”

Software procurement needs to be part of inclusive infrastructure:

“That top-level buy-in needs to include those who are making decisions around the digital environment as well as the physical environment.”

“I want to see a repository for advice and resources ... There’s potential for us to do a bit more about establishing a disability clearing house.”

“I think the thing that would make a lot of difference for me is funding, and particularly looking at funding for things like assistive tech.”

“Is it okay for a disabled learner to turn up without the gear they need, when every other learner that walks through the front door is expected to have the right kit? ... What needs to be done (is) to prepare young disabled people so they have the kit.”

Great idea:

“This year, every learner that’s registered with our service and has requested a note taker, have all been required to see the assistive technology advisor and who has told them about note-taking technology they can use.

Some have grabbed it straight away and loved it. Others needed to have a dual note taker and assistive technology until they got used to it and then we withdrew the note taker. So, we’ve reduced our team of note takers this year ...

Next year we’re going to look at some technology that can be used around exams for reader-writing. So yeah, a big push for us around assistive technology.”

## Examples of good practice

The specialist interest groups, questionnaires and background research have identified the following examples of useful assistive technology.

- Cardiff Metropolitan University developed this great overview of general areas to consider with assistive technology for learners with different impairments:<sup>7</sup>
  - Dyslexia assistance – assistance with spelling, thesaurus and word prediction, scanning text, mind-mapping, speech-to text (user dictation), text-to-speech (screen reader).
  - Those with vision impairments – all Information available electronically to accommodate screen readers, text-to-speech (screen reader), Braille embosser, magnifying and scanning text, text-to-speech (screen reader).
  - Those with mobility impairments – speech-to-text (user dictation), text-to-speech (screen reader), mouse equivalents.
- It is important that disabled learners get their own technology established while studying, because this will assist them with employment and other areas of their life.
- All course materials should be available for the appropriate screen reader and the browser that supports it within the learner’s operating system.
- Browsers and other interfaces for users are tested for accessibility when rendering web content.
- Images and other non-text content used in teaching must be accompanied by a title and text description, also called ‘alternative text’ or ‘alt text’.
- Teaching software widgets must be checked for accessibility.
- Screen-based learning tasks must be accessible by keystrokes at all times for disabled learners who don’t use a mouse.
- Content writing learning tasks, such as blog writing, are accessible to learners with diverse learning support needs.

---

7 Accessible Curricula - Good Practice For All (2002). Carol Doyle and Karen Robson edited by Simon Ball and David Campy. University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC). Pg. 44.

- Encourage staff to use the [Microsoft365 Accessibility Checker](#) for documents, slides, spreadsheets and email in Windows and MacOS operating systems, as well as in apps and platforms using web content.
- Website design:
  - All staff should be aware of the accessibility standards set out by [Digital.Govt.NZ](#).
  - All staff should be familiar with the [international accessibility standards](#) set out by W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) in the Web Content Access Guidelines (WCAG 2).
  - [Web Accessibility Guidelines V.1](#): How to use Screen Readers & Shortcuts.
  - [Web Accessibility Guidelines V.1](#): PDFs and Alternative Document Formats.
  - Testing your apps for accessibility: [The ArcGIS Approach](#).
- Smartphone app and other assistive technology:
  - Office 365 has many accessibility functions that are worth checking out, e.g. a read aloud function that also highlights the text as it goes, Cortana, etc.
  - There is also the Natural reader that will read material aloud to you, and there are voice typing options on Google and with Dragon Naturally Speaking.
  - The easiest way to check if a PDF is accessible is to open it and try and highlight some text with a mouse using read aloud software.
  - Texthelp Read&Write Gold has multiple tools and can handle Word docs, PDFs and inaccessible PDFs.
  - Using a smartphone, Dreamreader allows you to photograph typed but not handwritten text and have it read aloud by the app on your phone. If learners can access the internet from their phone they can download other readings and have them read aloud or you can send something to a Dropbox or Google drive account.

- If a learner is vision impaired they could look at [NVDA](#). This is a free screen reader similar to Jaws for Windows.
- The [Hemingway Editor app](#) is a tool that helps to improve readability. It highlights lengthy, complex sentences and common errors. It may help to make writing simpler.
- Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) can also provide advice and support on alternative formats for [people with learning disabilities](#), those that are [blind or vision impaired](#), the [Deaf community](#), etc.
- There is a Google Chrome extension that improves colour contrast for a vision impaired audience and YouTube has a free closed captions function that slows or stops the video to sync it with what is being typed.
- [Otter for Education - Otter.ai](#) and [Glean](#) are currently being trialled in some universities for transcribing notes in lectures. There are also other systems such as [Rev](#) and [Temi](#) that can convert audio and text files to text.
- E-book readers for multiple textbooks with accessible features across all functionality.
- Scanning C-pen devices (text-activated reader, digital highlighter, text-to-Word scanner).

### **Engaging disabled learners**

- In these [clips](#) learners explain why digital accessibility is so important. They also cover why learners are hesitant to disclose their disability and why creating an inclusive environment is so important.

## Other useful ideas

- Staff working in computer services have the training and time to meet the needs of disabled learners.
- Lecture notes and online recordings of lectures available on the institution intranet in an accessible format.
- Procedures to ensure these notes meet established guidelines, so there is no conflict with specialist software or features that learners with dyslexia, vision impairments or blindness may be using.
- E-texts are helpful and often staff assist learners by liaising with publishers. There is the [Marrakesh Treaty](#) that aims to facilitate access to published works for people who are blind, visually impaired or experience difficulty with print material.
- Some tertiary providers use a library retrieval service and learners can request e-texts to be emailed or books to be delivered to their homes.
- A specific equipment area, often located in the library, containing equipment suitable for disabled learners (e.g. computers with specialist software, ergonomic chairs and desks).

## 2.5 Policy and planning

---

### Vision

All strategic planning, policies and procedures ensure disabled learners and taura have equal opportunities for participation and achievement.

---

### Best practice standards

1. A disability policy to achieve a fully inclusive educational environment for disabled learners, is developed in partnership with disabled learners and disability support staff.
2. A disability action plan to achieve a fully inclusive educational environment is developed in partnership with disabled learners and disability support staff, has measurable goals and targets, and is reviewed and reported on annually.
3. All policies, procedures and planning processes take into consideration the participation and achievement of disabled learners in academic and other areas of the learning environment life.
4. These policies and procedures guide the interaction between staff and disabled learners and are understood by staff.
5. Senior management commitment and accountability for achieving the agreed strategic outcomes in the disability action plan is clearly defined, owned and resourced.
6. Management systems provide accurate information about the participation, progression and achievement of disabled learners and identify barriers that impact on this with a view to continuous improvement.

---

“If you really want to move forward with inclusive practice [and] universal design, you need institutional commitment, you need the top [people] being willing to empower the bottom [people] in that space.”

*Tertiary institution staff member*

---

## **Ideas and resources to consider**

- It is essential that the senior leadership of all tertiary providers at governance and management level identify and resolve barriers to participation and achievement of disabled learners in academic and other areas of the learning environment life. This should occur through strategic planning, development policies and procedures.
- To assist with this, your disability action plan should:
  - Include objectives, performance indicators, accountabilities and timeframes so all involved are clear about what needs to be achieved, who is responsible for achieving it and by what date.
  - Be endorsed by council and driven by senior management in partnership with disabled learners, Māori disabled learners, key staff supporting disabled learners, and community representatives referring and supporting disabled learners.
  - Aim to remove barriers to participation, retention and achievement of disabled learners within the institution and meet their individual support needs.
- Planning any major projects should consider the needs of disabled learners from the start. Planning includes consideration of the accessible journey and the design of buildings, course content, teaching practices, information provision, communication processes and support. This can avoid possible disruption and expense later.
- Designated, trained contact(s) across the organisation can create effective channels for communication with senior managers when developing a disability action plan.

## Engaging disabled learners

- Learners with different impairments should participate in the development and review of the disability action plan and relevant policies, procedures, services and facilities.
- Remember disabled learners may also experience additional barriers arising from membership of other equity groups.
- Therefore wider conversations around diversity are important. For example, disabled learners who are Māori, Pacific people, Asian women, international learners, from LGBTQIA communities, migrants, at-risk youth, older people, etc.

## What you need to know

Some key themes from the special interest groups about policy and planning included:

### *Current disabled learners*

“Inclusion is not just something that should be left to one department. I think it should be focused university-wide.”

“Make awareness of disabling issues and challenges a learner-wide concern because everyone encounters some disabling issues in studying.”

### *Disability services and academic staff, universities and polytechnics*

“There is no systemic thought given to most issues that face disabled learners.”

“What I’d like to see, and it’s probably a longer-term vision, is that there be something from the top down around disability.”

“Many aren’t today’s problems, we were having these problems 20 years ago when the support money first came in, in 1998. The context may have changed but the core fundamentals have not changed – ‘Can I physically get to my lectures?’, ‘Can I access all the information I need?’, ‘Are reasonable accommodations actually possible and being made?’ – that justifies the need for there to be some degree of compulsion.”

“I like that TEC are wanting disability action plans ... I would love to see that happen and that there’d be a celebration of the work that we do, of the learners that we engage with ...”

“Certainly there does need to be more education – or a change in culture, change in attitude – towards disability and towards our learners. And I think they need to be given more priority.”

“A plan makes people outside the institution more aware of what an institution is doing to support disabled learners and what checks and balances are in place.”

*Disability community agency staff*

“There is a lack of commitment at leadership level within the institutions and it is having to be bottom-up [learner-driven]. The learners are having to fight for, effectively, their right to education ....”

“Sometimes it feels like we have to justify ourselves to the system. Whereas, the system is the problem, not us. Fix the system ....”

### **Examples of good practice**

- [The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training](#) includes some good resources.
- The following links provide some good examples of disability actions plans from universities in Australia:
  - [Monash University](#)
  - [University of Adelaide](#)
  - [University of Melbourne](#)
  - [University of New South Wales](#)
  - [University of Queensland](#)
  - [University of Sydney](#)
  - [University of Western Australia](#)

### **Useful networks and links**

- Many of the larger New Zealand universities and polytechnics have a long history of successfully supporting disabled learners through their disability support services. They may be willing to share their already developed policies and procedures.

Contact [ACHIEVE](#) for further advice and support.

- The special interest groups with disability support staff have identified the following tertiary providers who provide innovative policies and practice in their support of disabled learners:
  - [Plymouth University](#)
  - [Cardiff University](#)
  - [Manchester University](#)
- [Institution-level Approaches for Supporting Tertiary Disabled Students - Australia.](#)
- [Strategic approaches to disabled student engagement - UK.](#)
- [AHEAD](#) is an independent non-profit organisation in Ireland working to create inclusive environments in education and employment for people with disabilities.
- Australia also has the Australian Government's [National Disability Coordination Officer \(NDCO\) Program](#) that works strategically with stakeholders to drive change so people with disability have equitable opportunity to access, participate and achieve their goals in tertiary education and subsequent employment.

This programme has developed these [resources](#) and has recently been [reviewed](#).

- [Disability and the Sustainable Development Goals, Resources](#) and the [NZ Review of Progress with These and Other Goals](#).

## 2.6 Monitoring and evaluation

---

### Vision

Effective monitoring and evaluation systems report on the participation, retention and achievement of disabled learners and taura and identify any barriers to these areas.

---

### Best practice standards

1. Institutional barriers and the impact of these on disabled learners are identified and reported by senior management through the disability action plan monitoring.
2. There are a range of monitoring and evaluation systems to measure progress with goals and targets to remove these barriers to participation, retention and achievement of disabled learners.
3. Effective systems are in place to provide a forum to raise, discuss and advocate on issues affecting disabled learners.

---

“One of the things I would like most is for disability to be taken as seriously as Māori and Pacific issues are ... setting down some targets that we have to meet, some reports that we have to provide, and that those are viewed as seriously as our other priority groups. I think that’s really important.”

*Manager, disability support services*

---

## Ideas and resources to consider

- Monitoring and evaluation systems could include:
  - Measuring progress with targets and goals for disabled learners and their support.
  - Climate surveys to assess if staff feel confident creating an inclusive environment and providing learning support for disabled learners.
  - Development of an advisory group to review and advise on disabled learner outcomes and identify and resolve any barriers in the tertiary environment. Ideally this would include disabled learners, disability support services and other staff from all levels of the organisation, and community networks.
  - Ensuring information from complaints and appeal processes is integrated into planning.
- Reporting institutional barriers and the impact of these, this should include:
  - Assessing how staff across the institution comply with the relevant policies, procedures, legislative and government requirements for disabled learners.
  - Recommending strategies to improve learning support for disabled learners.
- These systems should not be punitive so disabled learners come under a microscope:

“Student Success advised me that a learner we work with was at risk. I questioned why! It was because they were tracking at a B - . This was fantastic considering the complex health challenges the learner was facing, so was in my books a success.” - Disability support services staff

## What you need to know

- Of disabled learners enrolled in Bachelors or higher qualifications, 58% completed their qualification. Once in tertiary education, these disabled people are equally likely to complete their qualification as non-disabled people – the difference in completion rates at Bachelors level and all other levels for non-disabled learners is not statistically significant.
- There is a shortage of data around tertiary participation and disabled learners.

## Engaging disabled learners

- Structured focus groups with disabled learners and learner surveys that question whether people are satisfied with the learning support and services they received from staff in relation to their impairments, and institutional barriers that need to be resolved.
- Consultation with disabled learners about specific services (e.g. those with different impairments, Māori disabled learners, other cultural and diverse groups, international learners and those considering tertiary education).
- Ideally tertiary providers should have a recognised voice for disabled learners:
  - One option is to develop a network for disabled learners.
  - Disabled learners should also have an effective avenue for independent advocacy, for example, within learner associations and bodies.
  - Having disabled learner advocacy networks or independent advocacy as part of disability support services may create conflicts of interest that make it hard for these learners to raise issues with the staff responsible for their learning support.

## Useful networks and links

This is a useful link on [Collecting Data](#).