

# **Kia Ōrite Toolkit for achieving equity**

Preparing to implement the  
Learning support  
responsibilities toolkit



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

**Tertiary Education  
Commission**  
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua



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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)

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# Preparing to implement the learning support responsibilities toolkit

## 1.1 How to use this implementation toolkit

### Preparation

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

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

Choose an area or activity, for example learning support and teaching, 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, including disability support services staff.

#### Step 3: Refer to the learning support responsibilities implementation toolkit

Using the learning support 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 the development of your disability action plan. Have some fun and be transformative!

#### **This toolkit can be implemented in 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 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 the learning environment and possible actions for solutions. Use the tools provided as templates and re-use them.

#### **OR**

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

Remember:

- It's essential to 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 are 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 learning support responsibilities.

It has been designed for the following staff within tertiary providers:

- Teaching staff.
- All staff involved with assessment and the provision of exams.
- Technical staff including those providing laboratories, tutorials, etc.
- Specialist staff including disability support staff, sign language interpreters, note takers, readers, writers, specialist tutors and those providing exam support.
- General support services including all health services, student learning services, student associations and those services providing academic, administrative and general support.

The earlier management responsibilities toolkit may also be relevant to some stakeholders.

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



## 1.4 What do the learning support responsibilities include?

This implementation toolkit covers learning support responsibilities including:

- principles of universal design in education
- appropriate use of personal information
- learning and teaching
- examinations and assessment
- learning support for Māori disabled learners
- learning supports for learners with different impairments
- other diverse disabled learners
- general and specialist support services
- transition into employment
- staff development.

## 1.5 Principles of universal design in education<sup>1</sup>

According to The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training there are seven generic principles of universal design that can be adapted to reflect the educational setting.

### 1. Equitable educational experience

- Instruction is understandable and relevant to all learners, and accessible to learners with a diverse range of abilities.
- Information is available in various formats at the same time.
- Assessment is carried out in a flexible manner.

### 2. Flexible material and instruction

- Learners can choose how they access material (i.e. formal lectures are supported by online material, labs and tutorials available at different times of the day and week).
- Material is designed to accommodate the widest range of users.
- Material is adapted to suit all learning paces (i.e. lecturers pause after key points).

### 3. Predictable structure and instruction

- Material is easy to understand and logically sequenced, according to importance.
- Instruction occurs in a predictable manner and format.
- Material such as notes and websites are offered in a clear, easy-to-read format.
- Feedback is adequate and timely.

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1 <https://www.adcet.edu.au/disability-practitioner/course-design-and-implementation/universal-design>

#### **4. Perceptible information**

- Information is communicated in multiple ways (i.e. visual and auditory).
- Websites follow the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) guidelines.
- Information is compatible with assistive technology.

#### **5. Mistakes are tolerated**

- Learning hazards are minimised (i.e. a homepage link on all web pages allows the user to return to home if they make a mistake).
- Instruction anticipates variation of skill and ability.
- Advanced notice about important tutorials and lectures is provided.
- Students are encouraged to get help with proof-reading documents.

#### **6. Eliminate unnecessary physical effort**

- Non-essential physical effort is minimised.
- Students have the opportunity for rest breaks during class.

#### **7. Physical accessibility**

- Instruction is equally available to people with different physical characteristics and communication needs.
- Learning environments cater for assistive technology.

# Learning support responsibilities

## 2.1 Appropriate use of disabled learners personal information

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### Vision

A safe environment exists for disabled learners and taura to provide personal impairment information and there are effective systems for communicating relevant, timely and appropriate learning support information to both staff and disabled learners.

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### Best practice standards

- Impairment information is only sought to arrange support and disseminated only to staff on a 'need to know' basis, with the learner's permission.
- Staff receive information about the individual needs of disabled learners in a clear, effective and timely way.
- Staff protect an individual's privacy and only disclose impairment information with the learner's permission and for the provision of effective learning support.
- A safe environment is created for learners to disclose impairment information in line with the disclosure provisions in the Health and Disability Commissioner Act and Privacy Act.

## Key themes from the special interest groups

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“We encourage disclosure with a statement that goes in course outlines, so that learners know they can come to us for information and support. The learner can decide who should know about their support needs. We don’t send information out to an academic before the learner has come to see us.”

“Almost all of the learners had experienced what I would call being ‘outed’ by one of their lecturers or tutors ... someone making a public comment, usually with the best of intentions, but even so, a public comment so that suddenly everybody knew that person had a disability. Whereas for our learners with non-obvious disabilities, who didn’t want all their peers to know, they found that particularly difficult ... We think we tell staff about confidentiality and disclosure, but I don’t think they always see the finer points.”

*Disability support services staff*

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## Ideas and resources

Creating a safe environment for learners to provide impairment information includes:

- Getting their permission and deciding with them who ‘needs to know’.
- Only providing information about what the learner requires in terms of their learning support needs (the impact), rather than information about their diagnosis.
- All staff realising this is personal information and should be provided on a ‘needs to know’ basis and only provided to other people with the permission of the learner.
- Policies and procedures on confidentiality of health information that protect the privacy of an individual’s impairment information, in line with the Privacy Act.
- Providing staff training about appropriate use of this information and checking all staff and disabled learners understand these policies and procedures, including the reasons for notification, gathering information for monitoring and who has access.

- Ensuring learners are not required to continually repeat verification of impairments.
- Explaining to learners the benefit of providing this personal information to determine learning support needs and how this information will be kept confidential.
- Having questions for disabled learners in application forms that are reassuring, outline the purpose for collecting information and are linked to a statement that staff will endeavour to offer support.
- Encouraging learners to create a guideline around their learning support needs.

### What you need to know

- The Privacy Commissioner has developed some **health information privacy code fact sheets**, which provide the boundaries around health information. These provide guidelines for collecting, storage, access and talking about health information of disabled people.

Health information should be collected directly from the individual. It should only be used for the purpose for which it was collected and the person providing this information should be aware of that purpose and give permission to share this information and to whom.

In a tertiary environment, health information about a disabled learner should not be shared with a staff member until the disabled learner has given their permission and authorised this. The individual should also be able to view the information collected and have the opportunity to correct mistakes.

The only exception is when disclosure will prevent or lessen a serious or imminent threat to public health or safety or to the life or health of the individual concerned or another individual. In these circumstances staff need to be able to justify their actions in terms of the Privacy Act.<sup>2</sup>

- There have been some recent changes to the Privacy Act to reflect changes in the wider economy and society and to ensure it is fit for the technological world in which we live. [Privacy Act 2020 Update Information Sheets](#)

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2 Sourced from the Privacy Commissioner's Website. (2021).

- Information Sheet 5 includes information about changes to the privacy principles. For example, 'personal information may only be disclosed to organisations in other countries where there are similar protections to those in the New Zealand Privacy Act and businesses and organisations must take reasonable steps to protect unique identifiers from being misused. Health information could be regarded as this.

### **Engaging disabled learners**

- Involve these learners in the development policy and procedures around appropriate use of disabled learners' personal information.
- Check that they are comfortable with how these are being implemented and if they have concerns and ideas for service improvement.

### **Examples of good and bad practice**

- If learners tell someone within the institution about their impairment, then the tertiary institution may not be able to claim that it did not know if there is a failure to offer support and adaptations from teaching staff (e.g. a learner declares their impairments and related support on an application form).
- People have a right to request that their impairment information is treated confidentially. This may result in alternative support.

For example, a learner with a vision impairment is very embarrassed by his impairment. Normally large-print handouts would be provided in class. However, handouts are given in advance so that he can look at them before class, so he does not have to be seen reading them during the class.

### **Useful networks and links**

- [www.privacy.org.nz/](http://www.privacy.org.nz/)

## 2.2 Learning support and teaching

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### Vision

All academic, trades and training programmes are accessible in all respects to disabled learners and taura. Staff design and implement appropriate teaching and learning strategies using universal design principles and alternative formats.

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### Best practice standards

1. Teaching staff plan and employ teaching and learning strategies and reasonable accommodations to make course delivery as inclusive as possible for disabled learners, without compromising essential programme standards or components.
2. Effective learning support strategies and reasonable accommodations for disabled learners exist for online learning, distance education or other flexible delivery modes such as e-learning.
3. Where possible, disabled learners have the same access to academic and vocational placements, including field trips, work placements and study abroad, as other learners.

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“I think the biggest problem that teaching staff have today is that they don’t know that they’ve got someone in their classroom who needs something until it’s so late that they can’t do anything about it. And then we’re playing catch up.”

*Academic staff, tertiary institution*

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“If I can just reflect on the recent lockdown with COVID, we’ve just had our 2020 student survey back and it’s actually quite heartbreaking reading about the difficulties a lot of our learner cohort had with lockdown.

Students with multiple health conditions, with ADHD and SLD, having difficulty getting into a routine, experiencing isolation ... really alone in what they’re doing.

I’ve been a bit concerned about how excited the university has been about moving to online learning. I’ve never seen so many learners withdraw in semester II.”

*Disability services, tertiary institution*

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## **Ideas and resources**

- 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, and for when these learners have more complex needs.

- Academic, teaching and technical staff should have the support and training necessary to enable them to meet the requirements of disabled learners, so they can:
  - Offer a flexible curriculum taking into account different ways of learning and demonstrating competence.
  - Recognise the learning implications for disabled learners.
  - Make adaptations to delivery appropriate for learners with different impairments.
  - Offer appropriate and effective academic support and guidance for these learners.
  - Advise learners of inaccessible course parts prior to starting, and develop solutions.

- The [Principles of Universal Design in Education](#) and [Universal Instructional Design](#) are used in the development of courses so all learners can fulfil course requirements with support.
- Inclusive teaching and learning strategies include:
  - Institution-wide policies and procedures for flexible teaching and assessment that encourage the use of inclusive practices as a standard part of course design/teaching.
  - Anticipating teaching and learning requirements for disabled learners.
  - Adapting teaching to take into account the different ways that learners learn.
  - Rest breaks in classes for learners and support staff (e.g. interpreters, note takers).
  - Information in alternative formats – electronic, enlarged, easy-to-read (plain English), pictorial, Braille and audio recordings of lectures, lecture notes, video captioning and transcription of videos, tactile diagrams.
  - Electronic handouts can be easily converted into large print or alternative formats.
  - Access to electronic information sources through the library.
  - Arranging material in advance for learners and support staff such as an interpreter.
  - Using assistive technology (e.g. using radio microphones).
  - Showing willingness to discuss support and invite learners to approach them privately.
  - Staff seeking advice from disability support services staff to help to develop effective support.
  - Co-operative links with other institutions/community agencies to share equipment and staff.
  - Seeking accessible academic and vocational placements for disabled learners.
- Consider developing a national set of resources rather than everyone developing their own to reduce cost and time. In Australia they have the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training ([www.adcet.edu.au](http://www.adcet.edu.au)).

## Engaging disabled learners

- Speak with disabled learners about their preferences for how they receive information and how their learning is accommodated.
- This includes the impact of:
  - Large or small groups, individual study, classes, library, workshops, field trips, etc.
  - Different environmental conditions and times (e.g. noisy, quiet, bright or low light, morning, afternoon or evening, the pace at which they study).
- Staff should not make assumptions about a learner's requirements. Instead ask disabled learners about what might help or what the real effects on their learning and assessment might be. They will have useful suggestions: "Nothing about us without us!"

## What you need to know

- Consult with disabled learners before talking with other staff about them and remember your obligations under the Human Rights and Privacy Acts from earlier sections.
- The quotes above about COVID-19 and the difficulties with online learning for some disabled learners were consistently raised by disability support staff from various tertiary providers who attended the special interest groups.
- One staff member said, "We need to value family/whānau as co-partners because the knowledge that can be brought by that [partnership] can actually circumnavigate a whole lot of those things we stumble over as you try to discover what that student's needs are. So when you've got somebody else who can provide you with a ton of those answers, right from the beginning ... [it's better as] a co-partner approach."

Some key themes from the special interest groups about learning support and teaching:

### *Current disabled learners*

“Biggest barrier is that some tertiary institutions don’t know the supports available.”

“Scanned copies of course readings photocopied from books are not accessible, especially when they are photocopies of photocopies with old fonts. So this makes the resources inaccessible.”

“(Hidden disability) it’s really easy to be overlooked unless you are advocating really strongly.”

“Staff expect physical and sensory impairments among learners, but ADD and chronic fatigue are not taken into consideration and lecturers may not know the flow-on effect of their actions.”

Learners with hidden disability reported this made it difficult getting recognition for the need for learning support and lecture notes, support with transport and parking, group work, or arranging assistive technology. They were also burdened by having to pay for costly assessments with medical professionals.

Disabled learners talking to someone responsible for postgraduate support and pastoral care can make a difference with postgraduate study.

Some learners reported it is very hard to get readers/writers or proof-readers with technical knowledge of subjects like sciences, music or French, etc. This needs to be taken into consideration.

### **Examples of good practice**

- Disability support service anticipates a learning situation that might be inequitable:

During the COVID-19 lockdown teachers and learners were asked to work from home. Online teaching was adopted as a temporary measure and institutions made sure that video-recorded lectures, tutorials and labs were made available as podcasts.

One university’s student disability services reminded all staff of the existing equity policy and inclusive teaching and learning guidelines to ensure that disabled learners were not disadvantaged during such rapid changes.

- With some tertiary providers there is still quite a big resistance to recording lectures, which can create many barriers for disabled learners. However this may be changing:

Support for this needs to be coming from the top to have some consistency.

“We didn’t have an issue at all for the first time this year with having lecture recordings online, and obviously COVID helped propel us into the 21st century with that. None of the lecturers had a problem with providing recordings. So that was wonderful.”

“Being part of teaching and learning, we have quite good connections with the people that teach or advise academic staff. So there has been some developments in resources for videos, like putting in captions that will help blind learners.” *Disability support services staff*

- Some disabled learners may work through a disability office to inform lecturers of their needs, while others may approach teaching staff directly.

One safeguard is requiring any teaching staff to notify the disability office of variations to assessment and teaching methods that learners receive.

Forward planning for learners, for example, with learning (intellectual) disabilities is essential.

It is important to involve disability support staff early on and to develop transition plans for those learners transitioning from supported learning courses. Funding should be available for both social and academic mentors.

The Australian universities have been providing explicit inherent requirements for their programmes. For example, the University of Sydney has [Inherent Requirements for their Animal and Veterinary Medicine](#) programme. The document states that “Reasonable adjustments (accommodations) are provided to assist learners to achieve the inherent requirements, not as a substitute for them” i.e. reasonable accommodations need to balance the interests of everyone affected, including learners and the university.

- This [insightful video discusses inherent requirements](#) on the ADCET webpage.

- For a New Zealand example, the disability information and support service at Otago University has developed the following templates for their learners and staff.

They have shared these to give you ideas to develop your own templates:

[Inclusive Teaching Practice](#)

[Electronic Notes](#)

[Receiving Peer Notes](#)

[Tutoring](#)

- When developing programme and course specifications:
  - Identify and remove barriers to participation and achievement for disabled learners.
  - Account for impairments in course delivery, including individual requirements and learning styles and supports.
  - Ensure course approval includes informed consideration of impairments and involves disability services staff.
  - Provide sufficient information to enable learners and their support networks to make informed decisions.
  - Specific transition strategies to assist disabled learners to move successfully to higher studies or employment are implemented.

### Useful networks and links

- The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training ([www.adcet.edu.au](http://www.adcet.edu.au)) includes some valuable [teaching and learning resources](#)
- [UDLL Universal Design for Learning: A Best Practice Guideline](#)
- [Accessible Curricula Good Practice For All](#)
- [OIA Good Practice Framework for Supporting Disabled Students](#)
- [QS Quacquarelli Symonds](#)

- Some New Zealand tertiary providers have developed useful online brochures, handouts and guidelines for disabled learners, their family/whānau and for staff. Click these to download:
  - [Waikato University](#)
  - [Otago University](#)
  - [Victoria University](#)
  - [Auckland University](#)
- Below are some simple inclusive teaching and learning strategies that can be adopted by teaching staff:
- The Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand have recently released [Guidance on medical program applicants and students with a disability](#).
- [Trinity College Dublin Disability Service](#) developed some useful information for parents of disabled learners.
- University of Washington [Communities of Practice](#).

## General classroom strategies<sup>3</sup>

- Face the class when speaking.
- Repeat discussion questions from other learners since not all learners will be able to hear their peers.
- Give both oral and written instructions.
- Put key phrases on your classroom notes or on the whiteboard/blackboard.
- Prepare course materials early. This will ensure that you, the learner and any other support staff have enough time to make any adaptations such as enlarging the materials or providing them online in accessible formats.
- Provide learners with a list of new technical terms or subject-specific abbreviations.
- Make assignment sheets and reading lists available in electronic format and offer to enlarge text.
- Provide all lecture notes electronically so that learners can modify them to accommodate their impairments.

For example, large text (e.g. 18 point type) for learners with vision impairments or specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia), Braille printed on coloured paper, notes for an interpreter.

- Do not walk around the class or pace back and forth.
- Repeat discussion questions while facing the class.
- When using videos provide a written summary of what the video shows in advance of the session or arrange for it to be subtitled or provide a transcript.
- In any teaching situation make sure that any disabled learner has an unobstructed view of the teacher.

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<sup>3</sup> 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).



## **Use of PowerPoint presentations**

- A dark background and light text is best for dark rooms.
- A light background and dark text is best for light rooms.
- Keep the same background colour throughout the presentation.
- Avoid patterned backgrounds.
- Minimise volume of text – use phrases not sentences. Use bullet points.
- When using graphics/visuals to add interest, be aware of the colour combinations.
- Only use one or two text colours, one or two font styles and one or two animations.
- Put the presentation on the internet for learners to download.

## **Choosing an appropriate lecture theatre**

- Has it got a hearing loop for learners with hearing impairments?
- Check the microphone is in place and working correctly for Deaf or hearing impaired.
- Has it got wheelchair access that doesn't make these learners conspicuous?
- Will it be suitable for a learner who has a guide dog?
- Has it got power points in the front to place tape recorders or laptops?
- Has it got networked points for accessing the internet as part of a lecture?
- Is the room going to be overcrowded and is there extraneous noise?
- Is there enough time for learners with mobility impairments to get to their next lecture.

## **Making tutorials Inclusive**

- Consider seating arrangements – a semi-circle so that learners can lipread.
- Only allow one individual to talk at any one time.
- Repeat what the learner has said.
- Rephrase what the learner has said if it isn't particularly clear.
- Use a flipchart or whiteboard to aid what the learner has said and allow them to follow.
- Put the main ideas of discussion on a board or a chart.
- Provide a discussion paper prior to the tutorial to enable learners to prepare and increase their confidence levels.
- Have breaks if the tutorial is particularly long so learners remain active participants.

## **Good laboratory practice**

- Always discuss procedures and any special safety considerations with the learners before allowing an experiment to begin.
- Safety rule sheets should be available in alternate formats.
- Arrange and discuss evacuation plans for fire and other emergencies.
- Give disabled learners an opportunity to become familiar with the laboratory before the first session.
- Discuss and resolve learning support needs and consult with the learner as to whether there are tasks too risky for them to handle alone and if they need support.

## **Work placements and field trips**

- Seeking placements in accessible contexts.
- Providing specialist guidance on international placements.
- Re-locating field trips to alternative sites or providing alternative experiences or comparable opportunities which satisfy the learning outcomes.
- Working with placement providers to ensure accessibility.
- Providing support before, during and after placements that takes account of the needs of any disabled learners, including transport needs.”

## 2.3 Learning support for Māori disabled learners

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### Vision

Opportunities are promoted for Māori disabled learners and tauira and their whānau to access, participate and achieve in tertiary education with demonstrable improvements to overcoming barriers to participation and achievement rates.

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### Best practice standards

1. Māori disabled learners and their whānau are involved in the ongoing development and implementation of strategies to overcome barriers to participation and achievement, and academic outcomes for Māori disabled learners improve.
2. General and specialist support for Māori disabled learners are developed in partnership with Māori disabled learners, are culturally appropriate and accessible.
3. Ongoing consultation occurs with Māori advocates in relation to this support.
4. Specific strategies are developed to encourage and increase the number of Māori disabled learners studying at tertiary level.
5. Participation, retention and achievement rates of Māori disabled learners are monitored and improve.

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How do we specifically support Māori disabled learners and their whānau?

“Having a framework for impairment that aligns with definitions from within Te Ao Māori, I think would be really, really useful and would help us work in a much more bi-cultural way that honours Te Tiriti moving forward.”

*Manager, disability services, tertiary institution*

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Understanding cultural barriers to accessing support:

“One of our major challenges is encouraging more Māori and Pacific learners to come across and access our services. There’s a whole lot of cultural barriers around that and we really need to work hard on encouraging them to come to our service.”

*Team leader, disability services, polytechnic*

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## Ideas and resources

- How do we specifically support Māori disabled learners and their whānau?

“Having a framework for impairment that aligns with definitions from within Te Ao Māori, I think would be really, really useful and would help us work in a much more bi-cultural way that honours Te Tiriti moving forward.”

*- Manager, disability services, tertiary institution*

- Strategies for Māori disabled learners should include:
  - Identifying barriers to participation and achievement for Māori disabled learners improve.
  - Having Māori staff within disability services and staff with impairments within Māori services.
  - Involving whānau and Māori networks in service development and support (e.g. having representation on disability advisory committees from local iwi and/or wananga in that area).
  - Targeting specific recruitment programmes to the Māori community.
  - Ensuring all marketing information reflects cultural diversity.
  - Māori staff networking in the local Māori community.
  - Staff being aware of cultural issues influencing how people view impairments.
  - Linking Māori learners into existing cultural support groups and services.
  - Developing relevant staff training.
  - Developing specific services for Māori as part of existing disability support services.

## Engaging disabled learners

- Involve Māori disabled learners and their whānau in the development and implementation of strategies to improve academic outcomes for Māori disabled learners.
- Seek support from the Māori community and family/whānau for solutions.

## What you need to know

- It is important to recognise cultural diversity and identity in the disability community.
- Apply a human rights framework and invite feedback.
- Include Māori disabled learners in marketing.
- Previous Māori disabled graduates could be engaged to support current Māori disabled learners.
- Present stories using the term 'Māori disabled learners'.
- Understand there are different interpretations of cultural perspectives of disability, e.g. autism linked to Gods.
- We need to focus on building the confidence and solutions for overcoming the barriers for Māori disabled learners.
- This toolkit must sit alongside other key documents: the treaty, the Māori disability action plan, your organisation's Māori learner success plans.
- When we are implementing this toolkit it is important that we recognize the diversity within the disability community in its widest context – diversity within cultural identity differences.

## Useful networks and links

- [The Māori Disability Action Plan](#)
- [Reframing disability from an indigenous perspective](#)
- [NZ Research exploring the accessibility of health and disability support organisations for disabled Māori and their whānau](#)
- [Growing up kāpo Māori: Whānau, identity, cultural well-being and health](#)

## 2.4 Examinations and assessment

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### Vision

Assessment and examination policies, procedures and practices provide disabled learners and taura with the same opportunity as their peers to achieve learning outcomes.

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### Best practice standards

1. Provide reasonable accommodations for examinations and assessment that allow disabled learners the same opportunity as their peers to achieve learning outcomes.
2. Develop a clear procedure for granting alternative arrangements following the national standard for [Guidelines and Procedures for the Provision of Alternative Arrangements in Tests and Examinations to Students with Disability/Impairment \(Achieve, 2016\)](#).
3. Ensure that access to alternative arrangements:
  - a. is widely publicised with a clear pathway for disabled learners to follow
  - b. operates with minimum delay
  - c. is applied consistently across the institution or organisation.
4. Monitor the provision of alternative arrangements regularly so that:
  - a. equity and fairness are upheld
  - b. teaching staff understand possible provisions and procedures and how to advise disabled learners
  - c. provision is consistent across the tertiary provider.
5. Consider providing alternative arrangements for internal assessment and tests of under 30 minutes for disabled learners with a reading, writing or spelling difficulty, on an individual needs basis.

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Poor practice in which a learner is unable to access learning support:  
“With dyslexia it was very hard to do reading and writing and I was not able to have any support, the university denied any support for that, which made it mightily impossible to do exams and tests.”

*Former disabled learner, tertiary institution*

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## Ideas and resources

- Reasonable accommodations for examinations and assessment may include:
  - The use of assistive technology in examinations. For example, C-Pens that have been developed specifically for exam use. This eliminates the need for a reader in an exam.
  - Flexibility in the balance between assessed coursework and exams to help minimise issues like stress.
  - Demonstration of achievement in alternative ways – presentations in sign language, oral exams, assignments instead of exams, short-answer instead of multiple-choice exams or vice versa, assessments which vary question and response options (e.g. audio or video tape instead of written answers).
  - Additional time allowances, rest breaks and rescheduling of exams.
  - The use of computers, note takers, reader/writers and other support in examinations.
  - Examinations and presentation of assessed work in alternative formats.
  - Additional rooms and supervisors for those using alternative arrangements.
  - Extended deadlines for assignments.
- Providing an alternative arrangement examination and assessment manual can ensure consistency by guiding staff on areas such as the use of scribes and computers, additional time and managing oral exams. Training for test/exam support staff is also important.



## Engaging disabled learners

- Alternative examination/assessment procedures and arrangements are widely publicised.

## What you need to know

- If evidence is provided that delayed completion of assessed work, non-attendance at examinations, deferral or withdrawal has been due to impairment then policies and procedures should allow this to be recorded in non-prejudicial terms in all academic files.

Some key themes from the special interest groups about examinations and assessment:

### *Academic and disability support staff, tertiary institution*

Teaching staff can feel frustrated if not given a chance to meet a student's learning support needs:

"I had a learner with a learning disability and it wasn't until we were halfway through her third year course with me that she turned around and told me that she had a problem doing exams. Well, there was no exam in the second year course that I taught her in, but if she had told me what her problems were I would have told her how she could have been helped in every other context to do with the course."

Guidelines and procedures are currently not used consistently across tertiary education organisations:

"Lecturers at my institution do not consistently take into account the needs of learners with specific learning disabilities when marking scripts, and some learners may be disadvantaged by losing marks for spelling and grammar etc. Are these guidelines endorsed by TEC and the Ministry of Education? If so then I think it should be stated that it is expected that tertiary providers follow these guidelines."

## Examples of good practice

- Sometimes disabled learners do not have a diagnosis, but have obvious impairment-related learning support needs. Services should always be supported to put in a bridge until the learner is able to get the right documentation or support, but not to send a learner away with no plan or support in place.

## Examples of good and bad practice

- In the COVID era and for online vigilation some tertiary providers have used systems such as ProctorU that can have adverse impacts on disabled learners if not properly monitored.

## Useful networks and links

- Check out and follow the [National Guidelines](#) mentioned earlier.

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Barriers to passing industry exams and entry requirements for disabled learners:

“So let me just give you an example, which has been big in my mind, and that is in the plumbing, gas, and drain laying industry, there are about a 1,000 people who have finished their training that can’t pass the registration exam.

Now, when you think about it they’re a wasted resource, they get to that point and they can’t get any higher. Now we’ve come up with a way of helping these people get their registration exam.

The important thing about that is all of a sudden their income expands enormously because they’re a registered tradesperson. Their bosses’ income increases, because they can charge them out for more. New Zealand benefits. And it can be, literally if you multiply it over a lifetime, it can be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

So that’s an example of what I call the investment approach. In the same way an interpreter, a signing person, if they enable somebody to succeed in their degree, it’s a cost, but it’s an investment cost.

And it’s the same thing as for midwives and entry to the police, where people have to do a very, very difficult psychometric test. That literally excludes a lot of people, because we all know that the time pressure of psychometric tests is [difficult for] many dyslexic people ... And it’s only a sort of an artificial sieving mechanism. That’s all it’s used for in institutions. It’s out of date and antiquated, and it applies across a whole lot of sectors.”

*Staff member previously with an ITO*

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## 2.5 Services for other diverse groups of disabled learners

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### Vision

Opportunities are promoted for disabled learners and tauira who may also experience additional barriers arising from membership of other equity groups to access, participate and achieve in tertiary education with demonstrable improvements to overcoming barriers to participation and achievement rates.

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### Best practice standards

1. There is ongoing development and implementation of strategies to achieve and improve academic outcomes for disabled learners who may also experience additional barriers arising from membership of other equity groups such as other cultural groups, women, international learners, LGBTQIA communities, migrants, at-risk youth, older people, etc.
2. General and specialist support for these diverse groups of disabled learners are developed in partnership with them.
3. Ongoing consultation occurs with them in relation to this support.
4. Specific strategies are developed to encourage and increase the number of disabled learners from these diverse groups studying at tertiary level.
5. Participation, retention and achievement rates of disabled learners who experience additional barriers arising from membership of other equity groups are monitored and improve.

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“From my experience, one of the biggest barriers is around the lack of knowledge and understanding of staff in terms of working with disabled learners ... There’s probably a slightly better journey for learners who are obviously disabled, but for learners who have mental health issues or autism or other things that are less obvious, there is a lack of knowledge that creates quite a significant barrier for those learners ... And that’s in everything from the way that curriculum is provided, the way assessment is set ... or even some specifics like taking exams.”

*General staff, tertiary institution*

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### **Ideas and resources**

- When implementing this toolkit it’s important to recognise the diversity within the disability community in its widest context.
- Remember that 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 Pacific peoples, Asian women, international learners, from LGBTQIA communities, migrants, at-risk youth, older people, etc.

### **Engaging disabled learners**

- Involve disabled learners who experience additional barriers arising from membership of other equity groups in the development and implementation of strategies to overcome barriers and improve their academic outcomes.
- Seek their support for solutions.

## What you need to know

- It's important to recognise cultural diversity and identity in the disability community.
- Include disabled learners from these other underserved learner groups in marketing.
- Present stories of what has gone well for disabled learners – take a strengths based approach to this.
- There may be different interpretations and perspectives of disability from various underserved learner groups.
- Focus on building the confidence and solutions for overcoming the barriers to tertiary education for all currently underserved learner groups.

## Useful networks and links

- [National Pasifika Disability Plan](#)
- [Cultural responsiveness in delivering education and employment outcomes for people with disability from CALD communities](#)

## 2.6 Learning supports for students with different impairments

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### Vision

Teaching and other support staff report that they have the knowledge, skills, information and support to work effectively with disabled learners and taura with different impairments, and feedback processes for disabled learners and taura concurs with this.

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### Best practice standards

1. Key staff receive regular and ongoing training about effective support for disabled learners with different impairments.
2. As well as providing information about effective support for disabled learners with different impairments, this training and support emphasises that staff should work in partnership with disabled learners, their whānau and support networks as they are likely to have the best understanding of the learning support they require from lived experience.
3. This staff training and support is adequately resourced and arranged as part of induction and development programmes for all staff and, in particular, those involved with teaching and assessment.
4. Strategies are developed and implemented to measure if staff development and training leads to staff having the knowledge and skills to work effectively with these learners.
5. Specialist expertise, including the expertise of disabled learners and whānau, are actively involved in this training.
6. Staff receive and have access to resource information about effective support for disabled learners with different impairments.
7. There are feedback processes for disabled learners that indicate that key staff have the knowledge, skills, information and support to provide effective learning support for disabled learners with different impairments, and this is supported by monitoring and evaluation.

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“The last couple of years we’ve been having more deaf learners come to where I work in the trades department. I suppose it’s not common to have a deaf person want to be a carpenter. And the tutor [did not] know how to work with it ... The disability support team wondered, “How do we get someone to support this?” It was really heartening to see that our management over here really got on board to support and get what we needed. So now we actually get quite a few from the deaf community wanting to come here, because we put a lot of better practices in place. It’s not the best at the moment, but they’re definitely working on it.”

“Most of the solutions are going to have advantages for learners who are not disabled. Making sure that you don’t put up dirty great big scanned PDF files that a blind learner can’t process directly, is going to solve problems for all the learners who have band-width issues. You know, it’s a simple, simple message.

You put a ramp into this building and watch all the non-disabled people walking up and down it because it’s easier than the stairs.”

“I found [ADCET] to be a tremendous learning resource. And also, because it’s a clearing house, it’s got that independence as well and can run webinars, which are really, very useful as well.”

*Trades and other staff, tertiary institutions*

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## **Ideas and resources**

- The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) provides a great overview of [teaching and assessment strategies](#) for learners with different impairments. There is an equivalent section for disability support practitioners which includes some [additional ideas](#) as well that may be relevant to teaching staff.
- Auckland University has developed a range of resource sheets for staff about providing [learning support for students with different impairments](#). Some of the links, handouts and guidelines for staff highlighted in the ideas and resources section for teaching and learning support also includes these types of resources.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic and the move to more online learning has impacted on disabled learners in different ways, which need to be considered in your planning.

## Autism

- [Life in a Pandemic](#) by Life Unlimited, the parent not-for-profit of Altogether Autism, provides an insight into the impact on people with autism.
- These articles provide an overview of some of the challenges for [people with autism](#) and [people supporting them](#) in tertiary education.
- [This article](#) on supporting autistic learners at university refers to the excellent [NZ ASD Guideline](#), which is a valuable resource.

The special interest groups staff working with those with autism suggested:

“We know we’re going to need to have an individualised approach that is as flexible as possible to meet the wide range of needs.”

“Autism, dyslexia, dysgraphia, all those sorts of things that you can’t see, are just getting swept under the carpet.”

“Getting learners tested and diagnosed for things like dyslexia, ADHD, to some extent autism, is a huge issue for us. It’s something we’re really struggling with.”

*Examples of good practice for people with autism:*

1. A mentor, somebody to organise their schedules, to keep them on task with assignments, to be a bit of a social translator for some of the things that are going on can help. Also useful for some learners with dyslexia.
2. Asking for help can be a real barrier so approaching them first may work.
3. Group work is often a nightmare for learners with autism when you’re asked to do work as part of a team.

“We had a terrible example where a learner actually dropped out of his whole study because of the dynamics in the group environment ... The whole dynamic of group work can be tricky for autistic learners.”

4. Transitions can be really difficult.

“There’s a lot of highly capable autistic people who could have a great career that are actually sitting at home playing video games, just not getting that right pathway into meaningful study, work, whatever that might be.”



5. Encouraging more connection.

“Get autistic people together and they have no difficulty at all being socially connected. Being with your own tribe is incredibly liberating. And I know that universities and tertiary institutions can be really lonely places. So if there is a place, actually that connection [should be] encouraged.”

6. The need for flexible access.

“If you’ve got a learning need, that’s the requirement. It’s not a diagnosis ... I love the idea that there might be some assessment or diagnosis options at tertiary institutions. It’s such a barrier for so many neurodiverse people.”

7. Stories can move hearts and change attitudes really effectively.

### **Deaf community and online learning**

- [Strategies for Zoom Meeting](#)
- [Captioning for the Deaf Community](#)

The special interest groups staff working with Deaf people suggested:

“... the support that Deaf people access in tertiary education is hugely variable in different locations in the country. And there is no access for Deaf people to private training institutes, because there’s no funding, nothing.”

“Sadly, we have not seen an increase in the number of Deaf people going into tertiary education .... There’s two or three every year, and that’s nationally, which is a really sad statistic. So we do want more Deaf people going into tertiary institutions.”

“ ... this is about the funding for interpreters. I know it’s a really difficult conversation for the Government to have, because it is 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.”

#### *Examples of good practice for Deaf people:*

“We offer interpreters to our Deaf learners. I’m quite fortunate in that our chief financial officer is very understanding of how expensive that is ... He just tends to say ... “We have to provide that support and that’s all there is to it.”

## Specific learning disabilities (SLD)

The special interest groups staff working with those with SLD suggested:

“I think that one of the ways forward is an awareness raising, generally, not just for educators, but for the wider community about what neurodiversity is and isn't, and because it seems to me that it's a largely invisible condition in New Zealand. We've had the problem where the Ministry of Education denied dyslexia's existence until 2007.”

“Students with dyslexia ... is the biggest group of learners in terms of the number of learners that we get with regards to disability. We are seeing more learners with ADHD, as well as ASD ... “

*Examples of good practice of support for people with SLD:*

“I'm working with TEC and Ako Aotearoa to develop a thing called the dyslexia friendly quality mark ... It's slightly morphing into the neurodiversity friendly quality mark ... this quality mark targets board, senior management, academic staff, resource writers, learning support staff ... “

“We have a community of practice (of) academics to support learners with dyslexia.”

## Mental illness

- [Supporting Students with Mental Illness - Good Practice Guide Australia](#)

The special interest groups staff supporting people with mental illness suggested:

“We do know there's been an increase of learners with mental health (issues), with conversations from my colleagues from the health and counselling centre ... that group cannot identify with, or tend not to associate with, disability services, which is a challenge sometimes.”

*Examples of good practice of support for people with mental illness:*

“We’ve got a mentoring service going for learners with mental health conditions.”

“We have a new position ... a (mental health resource) which is awesome. It’s been a really, really good resource for staff and learners. He’s purely focused on mental health. So, that’s been amazing.”

### **General feedback**

- [Online Learning Good Practice](#)
- [Enhancing the quality of your online teaching resources and practices](#)
- [The impact on disabled learners in Australia - Staff Survey](#)

## 2.7 Access to general and specialist support services

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### Vision

Disabled learners and taura have equitable access to appropriate support services.

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### Best practice standards

1. Disabled learners have access to the full range of support services available to their non-disabled peers.
2. Where existing services are not accessible, alternative services and/or arrangements are made.
3. Services to all learners are regularly reviewed, ensuring that they meet the emerging requirements of learners with different impairments.
4. All support services are culturally appropriate to taura Māori disabled learners, and to other diverse groups of disabled learners.
5. General and specialist support staff have the skills, experience, support and networks to provide effective advice and support to people with different impairments, their whānau/families and other staff.
6. General, specialist and other support staff receive guidance and training on the use of non-discriminatory practices so staff are aware of their legal obligations under the Human Rights and Privacy Acts, HDC Code of Rights and other relevant legislation.
7. General, specialist and other support staff meet their obligations related to the Health and Disability Commissioner Act, 1994 and other relevant legislation such as the Human Rights and Privacy Acts.

8. Disabled learners have access to, are aware of and are offered independent advocacy services from either the student association, HDC advocacy services or Human Rights Commission when they have concerns about the learning supports or reasonable accommodations being offered to them by the tertiary provider.

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“University was a time where I was having to learn how to advocate for myself – very helpful to have someone in the disabilities office that I could talk to – it is always important if we move away from relying on the disabilities office, that we still have one-on-one relationships.”

“General support and pastoral care should be there for everybody – educating staff about how that could apply when the learner has a disability.”

*Current disabled learner*

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### **Ideas and resources**

- Specialist staff includes disability support staff, sign language interpreters, note takers, readers, writers and specialist tutors.
- General support services can include all health services, student learning services, student associations and those services providing academic, administrative and general support.
- By developing and promoting a wider range of general services that encompass disabled learners, institutions can reduce the costs of specialist services.
- Accessible support services have:
  - A location that is easily identified, physically accessible to those with sensory and mobility impairments and safe for people concerned about confidentiality.
  - Appropriate communication access (e.g. faxes, access to interpreters, email, private rooms, alternative contact points that are advertised).
  - Service information is in accessible formats.

## Engaging disabled learners

- Developing a survival guide for disabled learners and hosting a specific individual orientation for learners with different impairments, with the support of senior or previous disabled learners.
- Mentoring for specific groups of learners. For example, those with autism where learners may struggle with social interactions, group work, lockdowns, change etc. Some tertiary providers have also set up mentoring programmes for those with mental health issues.
- Disability support networks for disabled learners.
- Having peer mentoring where senior disabled learners contact new learners.
- Consulting disabled learners and their whānau about service improvements.

Feedback from the special interest groups:

“(In Trades) we get a lot of learners who don’t even know or even understand what they need for their disability yet.”

“I think we need to do a lot more research as to why some learners are not accessing disability support services. If disability support services is going to be the fund holder for support around accessibility within the tertiary system, then we’ve got a huge population in the tertiary system that potentially has unmet needs ... and might be failing, might be not meeting their academic potential within the system.”

## What you need to know

- The Health and Disability Commissioner Act,<sup>4</sup> the associated Code of Rights and the complaint process, cover all health and disability services, including those in tertiary education environments such as student health and counselling services. The aim of this Act is to “promote and protect the rights of health and disability service consumers”, including those with impairments [HDC Code of Rights](#).

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4 Health and Disability Commissioner’s Office. (1994). *Code of health and disability services consumers’ rights*. Auckland, New Zealand: Health and Disability Commissioner’s Office Brochure. <https://www.hdc.org.nz/disability/the-code-and-your-rights/>

Under the Code of Rights service providers must provide services that comply with these rights, inform consumers of these rights and inform consumers how to make complaints.

Under the Code of Rights all people, including those with impairments, when they use a health and disability service have the right to:

- Respect, dignity and independence
- Fair treatment, not discrimination
- Service of a proper standard
- Effective communication
- Be fully informed and give informed consent
- The support they choose, and to complain.

These rights also apply to teaching or research that involves health and disability services. The Health and Disability Commissioner's Office has developed a brochure that provides an overview of obligations that relate to specific rights outlined in the Code of Rights, including the complaints procedures that all health and disability services must follow when a complaint is received.

The mechanism used to resolve complaints or issues is generally informal discussion and mediation using an independent advocate from the health and disability advocacy services. There are also legal processes for cases of a serious nature.

### **Examples of good practice**

Some key themes from special interest groups about general/specialist support services:

“We've made a real push this year to try and get more exposure awareness over the campus for what we do ... lots of posters around dyslexia awareness, workshops for first year learners and workshops for learners about to go out into the workforce.”

“Some learners have started contacting us about setting up, I guess, Facebook groups to connect with other learners. In the past, it was hard to set up ... there seems to be more and more learners and they're needing or want to connect with each other, which could actually lead to some useful stuff.”

- Support services for disabled learners can be enhanced by:
  - Establishing a staff network to coordinate support services for disabled learners.
  - Disability support services staff being a resource to assist other staff.
  - Note takers, specialist tutors, reader/writers receive adequate training and appropriate remuneration, so that they have effective skills.
  - Effective independent advocacy for disabled learners.
  - Those involved with the spiritual, cultural, sporting and social areas of the learner environment considering the needs of disabled learners in planning and developing specific strategies to involve them.
  - Marketing services among community networks that disabled learners access.
  - Disabled learners, especially those with complex academic or personal needs, are contacted early enough to arrange appropriate and effective support.
  - Students have frequent opportunities to discuss their learning support needs.
  - Support services assist disabled learners to become independent members of the academic and learner community.
  - Support services have effective networks and co-operate with other institutions and agencies to enhance services and gain access to specialist advice when required.
- Your organisation may wish to consider guidance around emotional support animals, which are becoming common in some overseas jurisdictions.

### **Useful networks and links**

- Supporting learners with mental health issues seems to be growing in demand. The [Australian University Mental Health Framework](#) provides guidance for mentally healthy university settings that support learners to thrive educationally and personally.



## 2.8 Transition into employment

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### Vision

All academic, trades and training programmes provide support and training for disabled learners and taura that leads to them gaining employment.

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### Best practice standards

1. In the first instance, organisational or other career service staff provide support and training for all disabled learners about successful transition into employment, work experience, internships, vocational placements and job opportunities.
2. There is support for all disabled learners with the development of job applications, CVs, interview and other employment skills and strategies to successfully provide personal information about impairment related support to employers.
3. Disability support and other staff talk with disabled learners about how their learning support in a tertiary environment can be translated into workplace support, and the skills and assistive technology that they will require in employment.
4. Tertiary providers build partnerships with disability related employment services that can assist disabled learners with their transition into employment.
5. There are feedback processes for disabled learners that indicate this support and training is leading to the successful transition of disabled learners into employment, supported by monitoring and evaluation.

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“We need to start talking about merging and melding what happens in universities and polytechs, and in the workplace. So I think if we can do anything with Kia Ōrite, we can start to merge what’s happening in the lecture theatres and in the job space.”

*Disability community agency staff*

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“There needs to be more done with transitioning in employment.”

“I think it’s really necessary to build that bridge between what’s happening with the tertiary provider and what’s happening in the workplace.”

“ ... the same assistive tech that you use to learn should be used in the workplace.”

*Disability services and trades staff, tertiary institution*

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## Ideas and resources

- [MSD Lead Toolkit](#) is a valuable resource for leaders, managers and human resource professionals to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for disabled people.
- [Employment Today Magazine - The forgotten 20 percent \(2020\)](#)
- [Supporting disabled students with disability beyond higher education](#)
- The [AND programme](#) in Australia is brilliant and their internship programme is world-class. Their stepping into internship programme has been running for years and is specifically designed for tertiary disabled learners that are exiting university and going into internships.

“If we could start to build in some opportunities for early engagement, internships, opportunities to meet and greet socially, those types of opportunities would be incredibly useful and helpful ... ”

“For many employers it is a bit of a risk to take onboard an employee with a disability. So if we’ve started to build up that relationship over the period of three years, they already know that person, they have a very close relationship with them, they’re invested in them ...” - *Employment agency, specialist interest group.*

- [Three positive ways to redefine disability as a source of career strength](#)
- [MyPlus](#) work in the disability and employment space in the UK, and have developed a [Toolkit](#) for university staff supporting disabled learners as they transition into employment to ensure that they are able to provide the specialist careers advice required.

## 2.9 Staff development

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### Vision

Staff development ensures that staff have the knowledge and skills to work effectively with disabled learners and taura and create a fully inclusive environment.

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### Best practice standards

1. Regular disability responsiveness and inclusion training for staff is adequately resourced and arranged as part of induction and development programmes for all staff and, in particular, those involved with teaching and assessment.
2. This training covers disability equity issues, the principles and benefits of principles of universal design in education and universal instructional design, inclusive teaching and assessment practices, learning supports for those with different impairments, common barriers, engaging disabled learners with different communication and information requirements, staff obligations under the HDC Code of Rights, Human Rights and Privacy Acts and other relevant policy and legislation, strategies to plan, implement and evaluate effective learning support for disabled learners.
3. Strategies are developed and implemented to measure if staff development and training leads to staff having the knowledge and skills to work effectively with disabled learners.
4. Specialist expertise, including the expertise of disabled learners and whānau, are actively involved in staff disability training and appropriately reimbursed.
5. Staff have access on an ongoing basis to resource information about creating an inclusive educational environment, barriers to participation and achievement, and sources of internal and external support.
6. Demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion by welcoming and actively encouraging the employment of disabled staff.

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“Actually, learners aren’t the only people who are disabled ... I’m a staff member, I’m disabled. If I can’t survive as a staff member in everything used by the (tertiary provider), then a learner can’t. That’s what it comes down to. If I can’t manage with all my experience of working within the online teaching environment, then how does a learner with the same equipment as me cope on day one? ... The litmus test for the way you look after disabled learners is the way you look after disabled staff.”

“To me, there is an enormous barrier in staff knowledge and capability around being the sort of educator that disabled learners would flourish next to and alongside.”

*Disability services and academic staff, tertiary institution*

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## **Ideas and resources**

- Ideally staff induction, development programmes and resource information should cover:
  - Disability equity issues, the principles and benefits of universal instructional design, inclusive teaching practices, curriculum development and learning resources.
  - The implications of different impairments on learning and teaching strategies, including barriers and learning supports.
  - Designing and managing physical access for people with different impairments.
  - Engaging disabled learners from different cultural and equity groups or who have different communication and information requirements.
  - The range and types of learning support available to disabled learners with different impairments.
  - Obligations under the HDC Code of Rights, Human Rights and Privacy Acts and other relevant policy and legislation.
  - Strategies to plan, implement and evaluate effective support for disabled learners.

- Many larger tertiary institutions have already developed training programmes that they may be willing to share, or use external providers including disabled people to provide this training. Contact disability support services within larger universities or tertiary education organisations to find out about these training programmes and resources.
- Endorsement from council and senior management for this training and development is essential.
- Where possible training should involve all staff, including general, teaching, part-time and contract staff.

### **Engaging disabled learners**

- Involve disabled learners with different impairments in this staff development and training.

### **Examples of good practice**

- Designated contact(s) for disabled learners in different parts of the organisation with appropriate and ongoing professional development.
- Strategies for measuring outcomes of training can include reviewing progress with learner participation, retention and success rates, learner climate surveys and staff evaluations of the benefits of training.
- Staff development initiatives may also include staff mentoring, competency programmes, actively employing more staff with impairments and advertising positions among disability community networks.

Some key themes from the special interest staff development:

“I like the idea of a resource for staff. ‘I’ve got a blind learner in my class. What do I do now?’ Well, go in and look it up and go, Oh, there it is, blind: instant information, better awareness, it recommends you go talk to them. ‘Okay, I’ll do that!’ So go to a resource rather than a training.”

“I think disability awareness needs to be taken as a responsibility across the organisation. That means the level at which plans are developed ... you would need to look at where resourcing responsibility is ... I think for us it would be around department plans, because they are allocated budgets, [to] make the decisions around. Well, what’s their plan for disability?”

“Disability awareness training in institutions ... There are multiple ways to understand disability. There’s hidden impairments, visible impairment, and yeah, I think institutions need to have a bit more understanding in that regard.”

“One thing that would really help us would be if there was more pedagogical training for staff and ... something from higher-up making it mandatory ... when they are inducted into their job.”

“Upskilling academic staff to work and support learners with any kind of disability.”

### **Useful networks and links**

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education provides a great overview of [teaching and assessment strategies](#) for learners with different impairments. There is an equivalent section for disability support practitioners which includes some [additional ideas](#) as well that may be relevant to teaching staff.

Auckland University has developed a range of resources sheets for staff about providing learning support for students with different impairments. Some of the links handouts and guidelines for staff highlighted in the ideas and resources section for teaching and learning support also includes these types of resources.