

Disability at UTS

About disability

Disability is a normal part of the human experience. Some form of disability affects 20 per cent of the population.

Disability can be temporary or permanent. People with disability come from across the community: Teachers, parents, partners, managers, health professionals, artists, athletes and more. Stereotypes and assumptions, often based on misunderstanding or ignorance, frequently contribute to discrimination and unequal treatment of people with disability.

In post-secondary education people with disability are identified as a disadvantaged equity group. This is due to under representation within higher education in Australia.



Disability and education

- Within the 15-65 year old age group, only 15 per cent of people with disability have a bachelor degree or higher.
- This is compared to 26 per cent for individuals without disabilityⁱ.
- Students with disability represented 5.2 per cent of all domestic undergraduates in 2012, the second consecutive year enrolment topped 5 per centⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ.
- This is below the national reference target of their population share of 8 per cent.

Employment and disability

For people with disability, employment means access to the personal, social and financial benefits of work.

For workplaces it means, an increase in diversity, a boost in morale and a fresh perspective they may not have considered. It also means their organisation better reflects, and can better understand, customers and clients

For employers the costs of employing people with disability up to 13 per cent lower than other employees.

Research shows that employees with disability:

- Are 90 per cent as or more productive
- Are 19 times more likely to be job satisfied
- Are four times more likely to stay in their role
- 98 per cent have average or superior safety records
- 86 per cent have average or superior attendance records

Disability rights

UTS has legal responsibilities as an employer and education provider. UTS must ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

Key legislation includes:

Commonwealth

Disability Discrimination Act 1992
Disability Standards for Education 2005

NSW

Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977
Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Disability discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably, or not given the same opportunities as others in a similar situation, because of their disability.

The DDA also protects people with disability who may be discriminated against because they are accompanied by

an assistant, interpreter or reader; a trained animal like a guide or assistance dog; or because they use equipment or an aid, such as a wheelchair.

The DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their disability, both:

- By refusing to provide them with goods or services or make facilities available
- Because of the terms or conditions on which, or the manner in which, the goods, services or facilities are provided

Discrimination can be **direct**: When a person with disability is treated less favourably than a person without that disability in the same or similar circumstances. For example, where a person is refused entry to a cafe because they are blind and have a guide dog.

It can also be **indirect**. This can happen when conditions are put in place that appear to treat everyone the same, but actually disadvantage some people because of their disability. For example, it may be indirect discrimination if the only way to enter a lecture theatre is by a set of stairs, because wheelchair users would be unable to enter the building.

The legislation canvasses what is reasonable and what could be seen as an unjustifiable hardship for the person/organisation providing access.

In practice, it is difficult for universities to claim unjustifiable hardship in relation to the cost of providing access.

More information: [A brief guide to the Disability Discrimination Act \(Human Rights Commission Website\)](#)

Disability Standards for Education 2005

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 elaborate further on the legal obligations of education providers to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. It also sets out how education and training are to be made accessible to students with disability. This covers:

- prospective students
- enrolment
- participation
- curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
- student support services
- elimination of harassment and victimization

For more information: [Disability Standards in Education \(Australian Government Department of Education and Training website\)](#)

Inclusive learning environments

Students have a range of abilities, cultural backgrounds, learning styles and educational needs.

For students with disability, access and inclusion in the social environment and extracurricular activities is equally important.

Inclusive education refers to the ways in which the UTS creates a meaningful, welcoming and engaging environment for all our students, to facilitate equitable and successful participation. Inclusive education is characterised at UTS by a positive stance towards diversity and difference that anticipates learner variability, recognises diverse strengths, and employs multiple ways of engaging with students.

[Inclusive Education Principles at UTS](#) describes key inclusive education principles that inform our pedagogy, curriculum design and teaching.

The [Student Rules](#) explain that UTS will make reasonable adjustments to coursework and assessment that enable access for students to demonstrate their achievement of relevant learning outcomes while also meeting the inherent requirements (refer to our [fact sheet on inherent requirements](#)).

[UTS Accessibility Service](#) is the University's central contact point for all students living with disability, medical or mental health conditions. The Accessibility Service provides assistance and support to access services, and to make requests for assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

The main purpose of the Accessibility Service is enabling students' participation in their learning and coursework. Reasonable adjustments aim to minimise the impacts of disability/health conditions upon study as far as possible, whilst maintaining academic integrity.

While the main focus remains on student's course progression, the Accessibility Service encourages students to take up opportunities for:

- Building upon individual strengths
- Learning how to manage their disabilities/health conditions in the study environment
- Preparing for transition following university.

The Accessibility Service assists students to develop their independence, self-determination and self-advocacy skills to enable participation in a productive and concerted way.

To receive support from the Accessibility Service, you will need to register.

Find out more about [eligibility](#) and [how to register](#) on the UTS Accessibility Service website.

For more information: [The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training \(ADCET\)](#) provides information, advice and resources to disability practitioners, academics, teachers and students on inclusive practices within the post-secondary education sector to improve the educational experience for students with disability.

UTS Careers

Research tells us tertiary students with disability can find it more difficult to secure employment opportunities after graduation. 61.5 per cent of students with disability reported being in full-time employment four months after they complete their studies. That's 11 per cent lower than the average statistic for all graduates (72.4 per cent^{iv}).

UTS Careers is a great source of information and advice around the world of work.

They can support students with career consultations, resume reviews, interview techniques, skill development, mentoring and more.

Work Based Learning at UTS

Work Based Learning or Practice Based Learning (WBL) is a key part of many degree programs at UTS and can include clinical placements, professional experience and internships that are completed as part of the course. The main course areas with work based learning requirements at UTS include:

- Nursing and Midwifery
- Teacher Education
- Clinical Psychology, Pharmacy, Orthoptics and Physiotherapy
- Courses with internships, such as Engineering or IT

Students who may need to request adjustments to WBL should ensure they register with the UTS Accessibility Service.

Any requests for reasonable adjustments for placements/WBL will need to be supported by specific and current documentation from a health professional.

For more information, contact the [UTS Accessibility Service](#).

Stepping Into Internships

The Australian Network on Disability (AND)'s *Stepping Into* program is a paid internship scheme that matches talented university students with disability with roles in leading Australian businesses.

For students, it's a chance to gain vital work experience during study. For businesses, it's a talent pipeline that helps cultivate an inclusive and diverse workplace culture.

Engaging with the *Stepping Into* program is simple. Students in their last or second last year of study can find out more information [on the AND website](#).

Australian Network on Disability membership

UTS has an organisation membership to the Australian Network on Disability (AND).

AND has a wide range of resources and check lists in the membership area that may be of benefit.

Staff of UTS can use the organisational log- in details for the membership area. For our login username and password contact, the [Equity and Diversity Unit](#).

Training

As part of our commitment to creating a sustainable and socially just society, UTS runs a series of training programs for our staff to increase awareness and build leadership capacity.

For current training dates, visit the [Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion training website](#), or contact UTS Diversity & Inclusion Training Coordinator Arif Ongu at Arif.Ongu@uts.edu.au.

The Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion can also organise training and development specially designed for your work area.

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012). *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings 2012*. Cat. no. 4430.0. Accessed on 28 November 2014. Sourced from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/E82EBA276AB693E5CA257C21000E5013?opendocument>

ⁱⁱ Naylor, R., Baik, C., & James, R. (2013). *Developing a Critical Interventions Framework for advancing equity in Australian higher education. Discussion paper prepared for the Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education*. Centre for the Study of Higher Education, Melbourne: The University of Melbourne. Accessed on 28 November 2014. Accessed on 19 October 2015. Sourced from <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/critical-interventions-framework/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Koshy, P. (2014). *Student Equity Performance in Australian Higher Education: 2007 to 2012*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University. Accessed on 28 November 2014. Sourced from http://www.ncsehe.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Student-Equity-Performance-in-Australian-Higher-Education-2007-to-2012-FINAL_V2.pdf

^{iv} 2016-17 Graduate Outcomes Survey, GradStats, February 2018