

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Introduction

In 2017 the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) commissioned *The Inclusion of People with Disability in VET Cross Sector Project*. During, but outside the brief of the project, it was identified that there was a need, and benefit, in producing an introductory professional development resource to raise awareness about the rights and support requirements of people with disability for VET Sector staff.

While most educators in the VET Sector have had basic training about working with individual needs, there is minimal training about how to effectively respond to the needs of students with disability.

The VET Disability Awareness e-Training project is funded by the Department of Education and Training and SkillsTAS and builds upon the successful *Disability Awareness Training* developed by the NDCO Program in partnership with ADCET. This new project aims to develop two standalone e-Training packages suitable for VET/RTO staff in both the Program Support/Administration and teaching streams to be better equipped with knowledge and understanding about their roles and responsibilities in effectively supporting students with disability to achieve positive training outcomes.

This literature review collates a range of current research, resources and requirements that impact on the provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET) to students with disability to guide the development of the modules.

VET Sector

In 2017, an estimated 4.2 million students were enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) with an Australian training provider, representing almost a quarter of the Australian population aged 15–64 years. In comparison, in the same year, there were 1.5 million higher education students enrolled with an Australian higher education provider, and 3.8 million school students enrolled in Australia. Of those enrolled in VET, 5.0% reported having a disability.¹

The providers of VET include technical and further education (TAFE) institutes, adult and community education providers and agricultural colleges, as well as private providers, community organisations, industry skill centres, commercial and enterprise training providers. In addition, some universities and schools provide VET².

¹ The vocational education and training sector: a quick guide - Parliamentary Library Research Paper Series, 2018–19

² Australia's VET Sector ASQA: <https://www.asqa.gov.au/about/australia-vet-sector>

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Vocational education and training is provided through a network of eight state and territory governments and the Australian Government, along with industry, public and private training providers. These organisations work together to provide nationally consistent training across Australia. Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications have a very practical focus and have been developed with the specific goal of preparing students with skills for work. VET is designed to develop work ready skills to join or re-join the workforce, move into a new career or gain additional skills for their existing career³.

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) can deliver and assess both accredited and non-accredited courses.

Accredited VET courses include those that are based on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels 1 to 8: Certificates I, II, III and IV, Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas, Vocational Graduate Certificates and Vocational Graduate Diplomas. Qualifications cover a diverse range of industry driven skills and job roles.

Non-accredited courses are structured learning opportunities that do not lead to a nationally recognised unit of competency or qualification but address workplace training needs and requirements e.g. elements of workplace, health and safety, cultural safety, positive psychology, online systems training.

The VET qualifications available for each industry are defined in the relevant national Training Packages listed on the national register of VET: www.training.gov.au. Training packages are developed by Service Skills Organisations (formerly by Industry Skills Councils) to meet the training needs of an industry, or a group of industries.

Training packages do not suggest how a learner should be trained, rather, they specify the skills and knowledge required to perform effectively in the workplace.

Each training packages is made up of three components:

- units of competency: define the skills and knowledge to operate effectively and how they need to be applied to perform effectively in a workplace context.
- qualifications framework: groups of units of competency ranging from Certificate I to Graduate Diploma level.
- assessment guidelines: the industry's preferred approach to assessment, including the qualifications required by assessors, the design of assessment processes and how assessments should be conducted.

³ Australia's VET Sector ASQA: <https://www.asqa.gov.au/about/australia-vet-sector>

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Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are education and training providers registered by the Australia Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)⁴ to deliver VET qualifications and courses. Information about RTOs is available on www.training.gov.au Private registered training organisations deliver accredited and non-accredited courses and programs across Australia. Currently, there are more than 4000 private RTOs operating nationally.

To be registered as a training organisation, RTOs must meet a range of mandatory requirements set by the Australian Skills Qualification Authority (ASQA) and state and territory regulatory bodies such as the Training Accreditation Council of Western Australia, and the Victorian Regulatory Quality Authority.

VET Sector as distinct from Schools and University

Compulsory education in Australia starts between the age of five or six years, depending on the state or territory requirements. School comprises 13 years of education, and beginning in 2020, all young people must participate in education or training until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or they turn 18 years of age, whichever occurs first. Currently, young people are required to continue participating in education or training until they turn 17 years of age.

The National Curriculum for schools sets out, through content descriptions and achievement standards prescribing what students should be taught and achieve, as they progress through school.

Tertiary education in Australia, means any formal education that proceeds from compulsory school education, and includes both higher education and vocational education. Higher education is generally provided by universities and vocational education is provided by government Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes and private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

Universities and VET providers both offer qualifications that are nationally (and often internationally) recognised. Although there is some overlap between the qualification levels, in general, VET qualifications aim to provide a practical, work-oriented skills base.

⁴ ASQA <https://www.asqa.gov.au/>

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There are also differences in the grading and assessment processes. VET qualifications use competency-based assessment, and Higher Education qualifications generally using a grading approach to assessment.

Competency Based Training is designed for the learner to demonstrate their ability to do a certain task to a prescribed performance standard as outlined in the Unit of Competency. Competency Based Training deems a learner as either competent, or not yet competent in demonstrating that performance standard, and a learner will need to be deemed competent in all required units to achieve a full qualification.

University generally offers an 'academic' education experience based on knowledge, understanding and application of theoretical approaches of a subject or topic. The demonstration of this knowledge and understanding is then graded and scaled against a set of measures.

Undergraduate students normally study for 3-4 years full time to earn their first bachelor's degree. They can then continue at university and undertake postgraduate, master's degrees and doctorate programs.

Vocational courses are also typically quite short compared to university degrees. A vocational course can take anywhere from a few hours up to a couple of years full time study. Certificates often take 3-12 months full time to complete. Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas often run for one to two years full time. Apprenticeships and traineeships can take longer – 3 to 5 years in some cases.

Entry requirements for university courses are based a national scoring system of achievement usually attained through completion of year 12. Entry scores are usually based on the intellectual demands and competition for each course.

VET courses, especially at lower levels, typically have no or low entry requirements. Higher level VET courses often require successful achievement of preceding course levels and experience in the workplace. Depending on the State or territory funding arrangements students may also be expected to complete 'Language, literacy and Numeracy' assessments prior to commencing courses.

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VET Sector Requirements

The National Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015 provide for regulatory obligations that must be upheld as part of training provider registration⁵.

The Australian Standards Quality Authority (ASQA) uses the Standards to protect the interests of all students in Australia's VET system. The Standards guide nationally consistent, high-quality training and assessment services in the vocational education and training system.

The Standards aim to:

- provide national consistency in regulation of the VET sector, using a standards-based quality framework and a risk-based approach
- promote quality, flexibility and innovation in VET
- promote Australia's reputation for VET locally and overseas
- promote a VET system that meets Australia's social and economic needs
- protect students undertaking or proposing to undertake VET in Australia
- ensure access to accurate information regarding the quality of VET.

These Standards form part of the VET Quality Framework, a system which ensures the integrity of nationally recognised training in Australia. RTOs are required to comply with the VET Quality Framework at all times. As the national regulator for the VET sector, ASQA regulates and audits training providers against the VET Quality Framework.

The purpose of the Standards is to:

- describe the requirements that an organisation must meet in order to be an RTO in Australia
- ensure that training delivered by RTOs meets industry requirements (as set out in training packages and accredited courses) and has integrity for employment and further study
- ensure RTOs operate ethically and consider the needs of both students and industry.

⁵ Users Guide to the Standards for RTOs 2015 - <http://www.asqa.gov.au/users-guide-to-the-standards-for-rtos-2015/users-guide-to-the-standards-for-registered-training-organisations-2015.html>

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The Standards describe outcomes RTOs must achieve, but do not prescribe methods by which RTOs should achieve these outcomes. This allows RTOs to be flexible and innovative in their VET delivery—an acknowledgement that each RTO is different and needs to operate in a way that suits their clients and students.

RTOs take many forms, including very large Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes and other public providers; enterprise RTOs that are part of larger organisations and only train staff of those organisations; community-based providers; commercial colleges; and many more. These organisations are diverse in size, structure, and governance and in the scope and volume of services they provide. By describing outcomes rather than inputs, the Standards encourage flexibility and innovation while assuring the quality of training.

The standards include:

- Standard 1. The RTO's training and assessment strategies and practices are responsive to industry and learner needs and meet the requirements of training packages and VET accredited courses
- Standard 2. The operations of the RTO are quality assured.
- Standard 3. The RTO issues, maintains and accepts AQF certification documentation in accordance with these Standards and provides access to learner records.
- Standard 4. Accurate and accessible information about an RTO, its services and performance is available to inform prospective and current learners and clients.
- Standard 5. Each learner is properly informed and protected.
- Standard 6. Complaints and appeals are recorded, acknowledged and dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively.
- Standard 7. The RTO has effective governance and administration arrangements in place.
- Standard 8. The RTO cooperates with the VET Regulator and is legally compliant at all times.

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The National Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 also provide guidance about individualised learning in terms of access and equity. According to the standards, access and equity means policies and approaches aimed at ensuring that VET is responsive to the individual needs of clients whose age, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability, sexuality, language skills, literacy or numeracy level, unemployment, imprisonment or remote location may present a barrier to access, participation and the achievement of suitable outcomes⁶.

ASQA indicates that the following standards are relevant to providing quality training and assessment services to students with disability⁷:

Standard 1: The RTO's training and assessment strategies and practices are responsive to industry and learner needs and meet the requirements of training packages and VET accredited courses.

Clause 1.7

The RTO determines the support needs of individual learners and provides access to the educational and support services necessary for the individual learner to meet the requirements of the training product as specified in training packages or VET [vocational education and training] accredited courses.

Standard 4: Accurate and accessible information about an RTO, its services and performance is available to inform prospective and current learners and clients.

Standard 5: Each learner is properly informed and protected.

Clause 5.1.

Prior to enrolment or the commencement of training and assessment, whichever comes first, the RTO provides advice to the prospective learner about the training product appropriate to meeting the learner's needs, taking into account the individual's existing skills and competencies.

⁶ ASQA Fact Sheet – Providing quality training and assessment services to students with disabilities

⁷ ASQA FACT_SHEET: Providing quality training and assessment services to students with disabilities - https://www.asqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/FACT_SHEET_Providing_quality_training_and_assessment_services_to_students_with_disabilities.pdf?v=1508135481

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Clause 5.2.

Prior to enrolment or the commencement of training and assessment, whichever comes first, the RTO provides, in print or through referral to an electronic copy, current and accurate information that enables the learner to make informed decisions about undertaking training with the RTO and at a minimum includes the following content:

Clause 5.4

Where there are any changes to agreed services, the RTO advises the learner as soon as practicable, including in relation to any new third-party arrangements or a change in ownership or changes to existing third-party arrangements.

- Standard 8—the RTO cooperates with the VET Regulator and is legally compliant at all times.

These standards mean RTO's should provide clear information about the requirements of courses e.g. inherent requirements or information that allows students to make informed choices about their capability to complete the requirements of a course.

It is also necessary to determine the support needs of students and provide access to educational and support services as necessary, so that students can meet the requirements of the course they are enrolled in. Where additional support requirements have been established, an RTO must be able to demonstrate that this support has been made available.

Examples of educational and support services that can assist students with disability meet course requirements include:

- study support and study skills programs
- language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) programs or referrals to these programs
- providing equipment, resources and/or programs to increase access for learners with disabilities
- *and other learners in accordance with access and equity principles*
- use of trained support staff including specialist teachers, note-takers and interpreters
- flexible scheduling and delivery of training and assessment
- the provision of learning materials in alternative formats.

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RTOs also needs to provide advice and information to students on:

- the suitability of the course
- any special physical or cultural requirements for the course
- reasonable adjustments that can be made
- support that is available

Additionally, clauses 6.1 to 6.6 about supporting and informing learners are also relevant⁸:

Standard 6: Complaints and appeals are recorded, acknowledged and dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively.

Clause 6.1:

The RTO has a complaints policy to manage and respond to allegations involving the conduct of:

- a) the RTO, its trainers, assessors or other staff
- b) a third-party providing services on the RTO's behalf, its trainers, assessors or other staff
- c) a learner of the RTO.

Clause 6.2:

The RTO has an appeals policy to manage requests for a review of decisions, including assessment decisions, made by the RTO or a third-party providing services on the RTO's behalf.

Clause 6.3:

The RTO's complaints policy and appeals policy:

- a) ensure the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness are adopted at every stage of the complaint and appeal process
- b) are publicly available
- c) set out the procedure for making a complaint or requesting an appeal
- d) ensure complaints and requests for an appeal are acknowledged in writing and finalised as soon as practicable
- e) provide for review by an appropriate party independent of the RTO and the complainant or appellant, at the request of the individual making the complaint or appeal, if the processes fail to resolve the complaint or appeal.

⁸ What clauses 1.7, 5.4 and 6.1 to 6.6 mean for your RTO <https://www.asqa.gov.au/standards/chapter-3/clauses-1.7-5.4-and-6.1-6.6>

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Clause 6.4:

Where the RTO considers more than 60 calendar days are required to process and finalise the complaint or appeal, the RTO:

- a) informs the complainant or appellant in writing, including reasons why more than 60 calendar days are required
- b) regularly updates the complainant or appellant on the progress of the matter.

Clause 6.5:

The RTO:

- a) securely maintains records of all complaints and appeals and their outcomes
- b) identifies potential causes of complaints and appeals and takes appropriate corrective action to eliminate or mitigate the likelihood of reoccurrence.

Clause 6.6:

Where the RTO is an employer or a volunteer organisation whose learners solely consist of its employees or members, does not charge fees for the training or assessment, and does not have in place a specific complaints and appeals policy in accordance with clauses 6.1 and 6.2, the organisation has a complaints and appeals policy which is sufficiently broad to cover the services provided by the RTO.

Obligations for supporting students with disability in a VET context

For all people enrolling in VET a certificate III is the most commonly completed qualification level, however people with a disability are more likely to complete lower-level qualifications than their peers without disability⁹.

Representation of people with disability fluctuates but has averaged approximately 5% of all those enrolled in VET with the following trends having been highlighted:

- commencements in apprenticeships and traineeships are lower for people with a disability
- people with a disability are more likely to complete lower-level qualifications, which may affect employment outcomes

⁹ At a glance- RESEARCHING VET AND DISABILITY: TABATHA GRIFFIN & FRANCESCA BEDDIE (2011) NCVER

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- poor educational performance may be due to educational disadvantage rather than the disability.
- for learners who come to VET with a low set of skills, the small transitions and improvements in the quality of life are important outcomes.
- VET students need information on the support available and access to that support while completing their training
- VET staff need more information and training about their role in supporting students with disability¹⁰

While it has been recognised that students with disability and medical conditions are entitled to, and want to participate in training and education, there are significant obligations for training providers to ensure access and inclusion strategies are in place.

Each training organisation should have explicit and responsive policies and practices to address the differing needs of students and ensure people are well informed about their rights and responsibilities. They should also have training and assessment strategies that meet the diverse needs of students with disability.

These obligations are in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), the Education Standards (2005) and relevant equal opportunity legislation.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

The convention recognises that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others¹¹.

Article 24: recognises a person's right to lifelong education and a realisation of this right without discrimination.

¹⁰ At a glance- RESEARCHING VET AND DISABILITY: TABATHA GRIFFIN & FRANCESCA BEDDIE (2011) NCVER

¹¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

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Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992

The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of their disability. This means service providers and organisations need to ensure people with disability can access and participate on an equal basis. Employers and service providers must make whatever adjustments are necessary and reasonable to allow people with disabilities to use those services to the same extent as others.

Under section 22 of the Act, it is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person's disability or a disability of any associates of that person:

- by refusing or failing to accept the person's application for admission as a student; or
- in the terms or conditions on which it is prepared to admit the person; or
- by denying or limiting the student's access to any benefit provided by the institution; or
- by expelling or subjecting the student to any other detriment.

If providing additional services or facilities required by a student with disability causes unjustifiable hardship on the educational institution it is not unlawful to refuse or fail to accept a person's application for admission. However, many large training organisations would find it difficult to demonstrate that a financial hardship occurred, or that the services and facilities were exclusively beneficial to the student with disability.

One of the aims of this Act is to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination on the grounds of disability in areas of education, access to public premises and employment. A person's disability should be considered only when it is relevant and fair to do so.

The definition of a disability under the DDA is broad, and includes:

- *physical*
- *intellectual*
- *psychiatric*
- *sensory*
- *neurological and learning disabilities*
- *physical disfigurement*
- *the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms*

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Disability as defined by the Act is:

- loss of physical or mental functions, e.g. person who has quadriplegia, a brain injury, epilepsy or a vision or hearing impairment.
- loss of part of the body, e.g. amputation.
- infectious and non-infectious diseases and illnesses, e.g. AIDS, hepatitis, tuberculosis (TB), allergies, typhoid bacteria.
- malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body, e.g. diabetes, asthma, birth marks or scars.
- a condition which means a person learns differently from other people, e.g. autism, dyslexia and intellectual disability.
- any condition which affects a person's thought process, understanding of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour, e.g. depression, neurosis, personality disorder or schizophrenia.

The Act covers a disability which a person:

- has at present e.g. cerebral palsy or diabetes
- had in the past e.g. repetitive strain injury, cancer or a mental illness
- may have in the future e.g. HIV positive and potential to develop AIDS
- is imputed to have e.g. on the basis of living with someone with a disease such as AIDS or hepatitis

The DDA also covers a person who:

- needs special equipment to assist them e.g. a wheelchair or oxygen supply
- is accompanied by a career, interpreter, reader or assistant
- is accompanied by a guide or hearing dog or other trained assistance animal
- is an associate of a person with a disability e.g. a friend or a family member

The DDA applies to all aspects and stages of vocational education and training and includes enquiries, enrolment, selection, course delivery, assessment, planning, monitoring and graduation.

Under the DDA, RTOs have a legal obligation to ensure, or as far as possible, that prospective and existing students with a disability have the opportunity to access vocational education and training and achieve the outcomes on the same basis as their peers without disabilities. A key way to providing this is through reasonable adjustments.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, an adjustment is not required if the making of the adjustment would impose 'unjustifiable hardship' on another person.

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However, the burden of proof falls on the person claiming unjustifiable hardship. A definition of unjustifiable hardship is outlined in the Act under section 11.

In determining unjustifiable hardship, all circumstances of the particular case need to be taken into account. The process should take account of the scope and objects of the Act and the Standards, particularly the fundamental principle of removing discrimination as far as possible, and of the rights and interests of all relevant parties. The burden of proof also falls with the institution to demonstrate unjustifiable hardship.

Each case is based on its own facts; and is balanced against the benefits to the student with disability.

If the institution is unable to make reasonable adjustment because unjustifiable hardship has been proved, it should ensure that the student is made aware of the reasons and is helped to find an alternative provider and/or course to meet their needs and capabilities.

Disability Standards for Education 2005

The Disability Standards for Education¹² were formulated under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and were tabled in Parliament on 17 March 2005. They came into effect in August 2005. The Standards clarify the obligations of education and training providers to ensure that students with disabilities can access and participate in education without experiencing discrimination.

The Australian Government implemented the Disability Standards for Education 2005 to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

The Standards explain the obligations of education and training providers towards students with disability, including schools, vocational education providers and universities.

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 set out obligations and rights for education and training providers and for current and prospective students. Under the Standards, all education providers are required to make reasonable adjustments to assist students with disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students.

¹² Disability Standards for Education 2005 - <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005> and <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2005L00767>

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The Disability Standards for Education 2005 ceased operation as a legal instrument on 1 April 2015 but maintain a persuasive value in guiding practice¹³.

The objectives of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 are:

- to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against students with disability
- to ensure, as far as practicable, that people with disability have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community in the area of education and training, and
- to promote recognition and acceptance that people with disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 address the following areas:

- Enrolment;
- Participation in the course for which the student is enrolled;
- Curriculum development, accreditation and delivery;
- Student support services;
- Elimination of harassment and victimisation.

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 also ensure the rights of students with a disability to gain assistance that enables equity of access to:

- enrolment
- participation in a course
- curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
- student support services
- elimination of harassment, bullying and victimisation

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 do not support:

- Lowering of standards;
- Ignoring the inherent competency requirements; or
- Ignoring workplace health and safety.

While there may be some accommodations that may be considered an unreasonable adjustment due to unjustifiable hardship placed on the education or training provider (such as major building modifications for a small provider), an education provider cannot use the cost of flexible teaching, learning and assessment as a reason to discriminate against a student who has a disability.

¹³ Australian Government Initial Response to the 2015 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005

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Whilst educator awareness and understanding has improved, further work is required to ensure that students, educators and key stakeholders are fully informed and aware of their rights and obligations¹⁴.

Additional Resources

- Disability Standards¹⁵
- DDA Guide – Getting an Education¹⁶

Equal Opportunity

Each State and Territory in Australia has Equal Opportunity legislation which makes it unlawful to discriminate in the area of education on the basis of disability or impairment.

It is essential for education and training providers to take positive steps to eliminate unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability. RTOs and Educators are encouraged to explore and understand the requirements of the state and other states where your organisation is national VET provider.

The following are the Acts in each State or Territory, which contain protections from disability discrimination in education:

- SA - Equal Opportunity Act 1984 -
<http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/EQUAL%20OPPORTUNITY%20ACT%201984.aspx>
- NSW – Anti Discrimination Act 1977
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/aa1977204/
- Victoria – Equal Opportunity Act 2010
<http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/the-law/equal-opportunity-act>
- Queensland – Anti Discrimination Act 1991
<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/A/AntiDiscrimA91.pdf>

¹⁴ Australian Government Initial Response to the 2015 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005

¹⁵ Disability Standards <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/disability-standards>

¹⁶ D.D.A. guide: Getting an Education <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/dda-guide-getting-education>

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- ACT – Discrimination Act 1991
<http://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/1991-81/current/pdf/1991-81.pdf>
- WA – Equal Opportunity Act 1984
<http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au/AboutUs/TheEqualOpportuntiyAct.aspx>
- Tasmania – Anti Discrimination Act 1998
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/consol_act/aa1998204/
- NT – Anti Discrimination Act 1996
<http://notes.nt.gov.au/dcm/legislat/legislat.nsf/linkreference/AntiDiscrimination%20Act?opendocument>

Summary Guide to Anti-Discrimination laws around the States and Territories:

- <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/guide-australias-anti-discrimination-laws#summary>

Current Processes for Supporting Student with Disability

Tertiary education institutions such as universities, TAFE and private education and training providers regularly provide student, disability and equity services and supports in order to meet their obligations to students with disability. .

Many tertiary institutions also align their commitment to access equity and reasonable adjustments through a Disability Action Plans. The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Act encourages organisations to develop Action Plans to eliminate discriminatory practices.

An Action Plan is a strategy for changing business practices which might result in discrimination against people with disabilities, and assist organisations to strategically plan for changes. Copies of these can be registered with Australian Human Rights Commission¹⁷.

While each educational institution has its own processes and approaches for providing these services and supports the roles and functions typically include:

- registering eligible students for learning supports when students with disabilities request assistance

¹⁷ Action Plans and Action Plan Guides- <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/action-plans-and-action-plan-guides>

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- assessing how the disability impacts on learning
- determining the student's learning support needs
- identifying suitable reasonable adjustments to reduce the impacts on the student's learning and participation
- developing a learning support plan or learning access plan to detail information about the reasonable adjustments and supports to be provided
- liaising with teaching and general staff to facilitate the implementation of reasonable adjustments and supports
- referring students to other appropriate services, such as for learning/academic support, counselling, or financial advice etc.¹⁸

There are a wide range of strategies being utilised to support students with disability to access and complete qualification and courses through VET. These vary across organisations but generally can be categorised in the following services/supports:

Learning Support Plans or Learning Access Plans

A Learning Support Plan or Learning Access Plan contains information on the support a student living with a disability or medical condition may require while studying at TAFE SA. The document is developed by the student and a Disability Practitioner. It outlines the impacts the student's disability or medical condition is likely to have on learning. It also contains information on the adjustments to delivery/methodology and assessment practices which will facilitate equitable participation for the student.

The Access Plan also includes information on any assistive technology the student may use, and any specific services being provided, such as Auslan interpreting. Only students who have provided appropriate documentation regarding their disability or medical condition negotiate Access Plans.

A student who wishes to negotiate an Access Plan provides a Disability Practitioner with documentation from a medical practitioner, psychologist or other health or education specialist.

¹⁸ Supporting tertiary students with disabilities – individualised and institutional level approaches to practice

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Once the Access Plan is completed, the Student and Disability Practitioner develop a plan for how it will be distributed to the educational staff responsible for the program in which the student is enrolled. Educational staff who receive the Access Plan are usually responsible for distributing the plan to program staff who will be involved in its implementation.

The student has ownership of the Access Plan and may provide the plan to any or all lecturers with whom s/he has contact.

Students who wish to access disability support are usually required to provide relevant supporting documentation from a medical practitioner, psychologist or other accredited health or educational specialist. Specialised disability services can be provided to students where required once appropriate supporting documentation has been provided.

Universal Design

Universal Design is one of the key ways in which educational institutions can provide access and equity to students with disability. Universal design refers to 'design of products and environments to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or of specialised design'¹⁹.

In education, this means developing course content, teaching materials and delivery methods to be accessible to and usable by students across the broadest diversity ranges. Inclusive education facilitates the access, participation and success of students. This approach acknowledges that students with disability or other needs may learn differently, but are not less academically capable.

Curricula and course material is considered to be universally designed if:

- Students can interact with and respond to curricula and materials in multiple ways
- Students can find meaning in material (and thus motivate themselves) in different ways
- Web-based course material is accessible to all
- Information is presented in multiple ways.

¹⁹ Mace, R. 2008. About UD. The Centre for Universal Design. Sourced on 1 October 2014. Retrieved from http://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/design/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

There are seven Principles of Universal Design in Education:

1. Equitable educational experience

- Instruction is understandable and relevant to all students, and accessible to students with a diverse range of abilities
- Information is available in various formats at the same time and same cost (i.e. workbooks are available on disk, in print form and on the internet)
- Assessment is carried out in a flexible manner

2. Flexible material and instruction

- Students can choose how they access material (i.e. formal lectures are supported by online material, labs and tutorials are 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

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 during class to change their posture or position (i.e. rest breaks are provided for longer sessions)

7. Physical accessibility

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

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Universal design can be applied to all aspects of instruction but should also be incorporated into the design and development of training packages and units of competency. Where universal design is applied access barriers for students should be diminished.

Reasonable Adjustments and Accommodations

Reasonable adjustments (also referred to as 'accommodations') refer to the support provided by tertiary institutions for students with a disability or health condition to ensure equal access to teaching and learning. Reasonable adjustments are referred to in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005. States and Territories may also have their own legislation such as ACT Disability Discrimination Act 1991

Reasonable adjustments ensure that people with a disability or health condition have access to and participate in the academic, occupational and social activities of a tertiary institution. In making reasonable adjustments academic tertiary institutions ensure that the academic integrity of courses and programs offered is maintained to the appropriate standards.

It is recommended that students who require adjustments should discuss their needs with a Disability Practitioner (also referred to as Disability or Inclusion Advisors). The adjustments will be recommended in line with legislative guidelines and are directly related to up-to-date medical documentation provided by the student.

When recommending the appropriate adjustments for students with a disability or health condition there are a variety of factors that need to be considered.

These may include:

- the nature and onset of the disability
- the type of assessment and course requirements
- the student's ability to participate in courses or programmes
- the student's usual work methods and their ability to achieve learning outcomes
- information from consultation with the student involved
- a focus on enhanced independence
- the effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including staff, and other students
- the cost and benefits of making the adjustment

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

The primary responsibility of the RTO is to provide the best possible education and training experience for all students. Students may reach their goals and realise their potential in different ways – and this is true particularly for students with disability.

Determining the reasonableness of appropriate accommodations or adjustments for disability requires careful consideration and care. Given the highly individual nature of disability and the vast range of competencies required in different courses there is no single formula or set of rules to assist in this activity. However, a range of alternative assessment strategies for students with different types of disability have been used very successfully in post-secondary education sector in Australia and overseas.

Each person's experience of disability is multidimensional and complex and the guiding principles that underlie these suggestions are that learning adjustments should always:

- be negotiated by the student and staff;
- consider the individual student's needs;
- maintain the integrity of academic standards; and
- be applied flexibly

Commonly-provided adjustments that may be made under the Standards include:

- screen readers that read aloud text from electronic files
- voice recognition software
- Auslan (sign language) interpreters
- adaptation of equipment
- text in alternative formats
- alternative assessment methods
- extra time for essays/exams/work
- learning support
- physical access modifications
- hearing loops or other assistive hearing devices such as personal FM systems
- special equipment
- electronic versions of lectures

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology includes devices, tools, hardware and software that enable people with a disability to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible. Developments in assistive technology have significantly improved opportunities for access to information and education for people with disability.

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Utilisation of assistive technology during studies can greatly enhance the student experience in terms of access to their learning, independence, self-esteem, and quality of life. Without assistive technology many students would not have access to or be able to benefit from their education. Some examples include screen readers, screen magnifiers, alternative keyboards or input devices.

Scheduling and Study Load

Utilising part time and flexible pathways and schedules to allow the student to manage effectively.

Apprentices/Trainees with a Disability (DAAWS)

The Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support Scheme (DAAWS) is a Commonwealth-funded initiative which supports apprentices/trainees with a disability, helping them reach their full potential as skilled workers.

For further information please visit:

- [Australian Apprenticeships](#)
- [Support for Australian Apprentices with a Disability Fact Sheet](#)

Participation Assistants and Supports

Participation Assistants are employed to assist students with a disability with completing specific hands-on tasks in class, where the student is unable to complete those tasks independently. The tasks that a Participation Assistant may undertake will vary, depending on the nature of the student's disability and the specific requirements of the course/s they are studying. Participation Assistants do not provide academic support, nor assist with writing or editing assignments.

Participation Assistants will generally complete tasks as requested by the student during class times only. As such, days / hours of classes will vary according to the student's enrolment.

Transition Plans

- Transition planning is a process that helps young people plan, prepare and work towards achieving their future directions and goals. It is planning now for a desired future, and a process that:

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

- promotes a smooth transition to adult life
- is empowering
- informs decision making
- maximises choices
- provides direction and purpose

Transition planning supports the connection with the education and training providers to collaborate and negotiate about course choices, reasonable adjustments, access planning and generally planning for the transition to VET. It is also an opportunity to develop a Disclosure Plan.²⁰

Current Research

In Australia there has been several and recent research projects exploring the experience of students with disability in tertiary and vocational education settings. This research provides valuable guidance about the issues and strategies faced by students, educators and administrators.

Inclusion of People with Disability in VET - Cross Sector Project 2018

<https://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A78947>

In 2017, the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) commissioned PwC's Skills for Australia, a Skills Service Organisation (SSO), to undertake the Inclusion of People with Disability in VET cross sector project. The project aimed to make improvements to the vocational education and training (VET) sector by strategically addressing barriers to inclusion of people with disability.

PwC conducted extensive national consultations with stakeholders across multiple industry sectors, and from a variety of stakeholder groups, and identified a number of skill and knowledge gaps that contribute to the ongoing exclusion of people with disability.

As a result the cross-sector project proposed and developed additional training package components to help address current skill and knowledge gaps amongst VET practitioners, employers and service providers that can be used across multiple industries.

²⁰ NDCO SA Transition Planning: <https://www.ndcosa.com.au/transition-planning.html>

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

These included:

- enhancement of inclusive teaching practice skills and knowledge in existing TAE units of competency
- creation of new units and a skill set for VET practitioners wishing to build skills for, or specialising in, delivery and assessment to learners with disability
- creation of a new cross sector unit in improving organisational accessibility
- creation of a new cross sector units and recommend use of, or changes to, existing units to promote support for diversity in organisations
- creation of a new cross sector unit in inclusive hiring practice
- creation of a new skill set in delivering career pathways and development support for people with disability

It is hoped that the implementation of these components will improve flexibility in the Australian vocational system, enhance occupational mobility and improve accessibility for people with disability in education and training, employment and customer service contexts.

A significant number of additional considerations emerged from stakeholder consultations. These present opportunities that are outside of the scope of this cross-sector project but are nonetheless important considerations to support successful outcomes, including successful implementation of the proposed training product improvements and training for VET staff. These include but are not limited to:

- guidance on inherent course requirements;
- training in life and employability skills for people with disability;
- funding and incentive models to support the inclusion of people with disability;
- mandatory reporting standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs);
- improving work experience opportunities for people with disability

Review of the Disability Standards for Education

<https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>

The Minister for Education and Training, in consultation with the Attorney General, is required to undertake a review of the Standards every five years. In 2015, the Australian Department of Education and Training engaged an independent consultant, Urbis, to conduct the 2015 Review of the Standards.

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

This review focused on the effectiveness of the Standards in:

- supporting students with disability to access and participate in education on the same basis as other students
- raising awareness and eliminating discrimination against people with disability in education and training. It will also examine the progress made by education providers in implementing the Standards since the 2010 Review of the Standard

The review identified a range of case studies of best practice in supporting students with disability and indicated that Educators and education providers appear to have good awareness of the Standards and find them to be a useful guide to their obligations relating to students with disability.²¹.

Key findings of the review include:

- the Standards were being used by people with disability to advocate for their rights and to pursue adjustments however there was a general lack of awareness of the Standards among groups experiencing additional disadvantage
- applying the Standards in practice was challenging
- a need to continue and strengthen pre-service and post qualification training for educators, and to provide tools in support of self-audit
- the standards prescribe a minimum set of expectations rather than support aspirational levels of application
- the breadth of definition of reasonable adjustment is appropriate to the range of contexts in which it will apply
- additional guidance is required about basic elements e.g. what is required in terms of consultation, individualised planning, determining inherent requirement and reasonable adjustments
- the standards focus too heavily on complaints mechanism for compliance
Transition from one education and training system to another is not addressed by the Standards
- access and participation in terms of funding and types of support and processes differ in each sector

²¹ Final Report - 2015 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 – URBIS (2017)

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

The review recommended that the Australian Government work with State and Territory governments, and relevant peak bodies to:

- produce consistent, accessible summaries of rights, obligations and complaints processes tailored to different education settings, and in a range of accessible formats and languages (Recommendation 1)
- ensure that accessible summaries of rights, obligations and complaints processes is provided to all prospective students as part of enrolment processes in every education settings; published on every education institution's website; and is prominently displayed in education facilities (Recommendation 2).
- develop a range of exemplars of good practice which illustrate effective adjustments, including how decisions are made on what is 'reasonable'. The exemplars should be accessible to both education providers and to students with disability or their associates and serve to support development of a common language and understanding (Recommendation 3)
- work with professional bodies for educators (and education administrators) to strengthen access to and uptake of substantive training in disability in pre-service and in-service training, to support the effective implementation of the Standards. This should include skills-based training focused on effective conversations in the context of the Standards' intent to engage and retain students with disabilities in education (Recommendation 4)
- develop guidance for education providers in relation to the intersection of the Standards with legislative and regulatory instruments relating to disability; the NDIS; activities conducted outside the classroom e.g. industry placements/practicums (Recommendation 5)
- develop nationally consistent tools to enable education institutions to conduct 'self-audits' of their compliance with the Standards (Recommendation 6)
- improve consultation practices with students or their associates, including development of policies or procedures on personalised planning for students with disability which outlining the type of consultation required, the frequency of consultation and how consultations are to be documented (Recommendation 7)

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

- provide consistent guidance on best practice approaches to planning for personalised learning, including guidance on the use and content of individual learning plans (or equivalent) and the need for periodical review (Recommendation 8)
- consult about the feasibility of coordinated collection and analysis of relevant complaints data at the national level (and potentially institution level), to improve transparency of system performance (Recommendation 9)
- explore the feasibility of a nationally consistent monitoring and accreditation model to strengthen proactive compliance with the Standards that would complement the present complaints-based compliance model (Recommendation 10)
- consider extending the application of the Standards to included childcare providers (Recommendation 11)
- work with states and territory statutory authorities responsible for curriculum and assessment explore strategies to improve continuity and consistency of adjustments between classroom and assessment contexts (Recommendation 12)
- improve the consistency of funded supports for people with disabilities in different post compulsory educational settings to ensure equitable access across settings (Recommendation 13)
- work with public and private academic publishers to develop strategies to increase the availability of academic texts and other education resources in Create Once/Publish Everywhere (COPE) formats that allow ready adaptation to various accessible forms (Recommendation 14)

In response to the Final Report - 2015 Review of The Disability Standards for Education 2005 the Government agreed or agreed in principle with these recommendations.

A key action in response to the review was the Australian Government launch of the new National Training Complaints Hotline (the Hotline)²² for Vocational Education and Training on 20 January 2015.

²² National Training Complaints Hotline - <https://www.education.gov.au/NTCH>

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

The Hotline is a joint initiative with state and territory governments and allows the public to raise concerns about the training sector. The Hotline directs complaints to the appropriate Commonwealth, state or territory organisation for assistance. It also allows the Australian Government Department of Education and Training to analyse complaint trends in order to quickly identify further action and improvements that are needed.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) Students with Mental Health by Orygen in 2017

[https://www.orygen.org.au/Policy-Advocacy/Policy-Areas/Employment-and-education/Tertiary-education/VET-student-mental-health/VET-Student-Mental-Health-Policy-Brief-final?ext=.](https://www.orygen.org.au/Policy-Advocacy/Policy-Areas/Employment-and-education/Tertiary-education/VET-student-mental-health/VET-Student-Mental-Health-Policy-Brief-final?ext=)

In a report compiled by Orygen the National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health it was highlighted that at least one in four young people experience mental ill-health each year and that VET students have been found to be more likely to experience mild-moderate levels of psychological distress than non-students. There are also a significant number of VET students who, due to adverse fiscal, familial, social and housing situations, may be at higher risk of mental ill-health. VET provider survey data has indicated that only one per cent of students in VET identify that they are experiencing a mental illness. Students with identified mental illness have low subject completion rates in VET.

At present, VET providers, both public and private, report limited capacity to provide effective support for these students. Staff in TAFE's have reported that students' mental health is a substantial issue for the sector and that, due to the 'earn or learn' paradigm in welfare policies, the number of students experiencing mental ill-health was increasing. In particular they identified:

- a need for greater awareness, stigma reduction and mental health promotion (including promotion of services) to support disclosure and help-seeking
- a need for appropriate skills, supervision and support among staff and managers to respond confidently to the diverse needs of students with mental illnesses
- a lack of clarity concerning their role in supporting students with mental illness, in particular their duty of care as educators (as opposed to personal support providers)
- that mental health providers promote TAFE as a therapeutic option for their clients but incorrectly assume there are extensive support services on campus available for them.

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Recommendations:

- Develop a coordinated policy response for VET student mental health
- Support VET and community service partnerships
- Develop national guidance and resources
- Increase mental health awareness and literacy among staff, students and vocational service providers.

Supporting tertiary students with disabilities – individualised and institutional level approaches in practice

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/supporting-tertiary-students-with-disabilities-individualised-and-institution-level-approaches>

This study explored the experiences of students and institutions in providing support to tertiary students with disabilities. It involved interviews with students, specialist support staff and educators.

Supporting students with disability is more complex in practice and even though educators and students are aware of the obligations and requirements students know little what is offered, until it was critical. And educators are unsure about implementation in practice, the impact, and to what extent the supports contribute to the student achieving successful completion.

Students with disabilities reported that their difficulties and need for reasonable adjustments seemed to be less understood.

The issues identified included:

- inherent requirements are explicit in the performance requirements of the training package and units of competency
- students may only be engaged for short periods of time
- to date there has been limited training regarding how to better support students with disability ‘
- teaching staff available for extra tuition
- inclusion principles to be consistently considered in course development
- collaboratively negotiated learning support plans with students, disability staff, teachers and department
- disability services based at every campus

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

- more robust processes for student follow-up in disability services.
- clearer understanding of the legal framework guiding the responsibilities of disability staff and teaching staff.
- reduce the workload on teaching staff so they have more time to spend with individual students. Development of guidelines for teachers to facilitate creating reasonable adjustment options.
- provision of positive reinforcement and recognition when teaching staff make adjustments.
- access to advice as well as training about disability for teaching staff
- provision of training in inclusive teaching practices.
- provision to all teachers, including sessional staff, of access to disability training.
- creation of peer-support groups to build students' capacity to support each other
- improvement of physical access around campus.
- websites of educational institutions in accessible formats.
- websites include easily located information about eligibility and services available from the disability service.
- campus-based support services for students, including disability support, co-located (e.g. creation of a student support hub).
- adequate and safe physical access around campus (e.g. adequate parking bays, lighting).
- information about room location and accessibility visible to all students when self-selecting a tutorial group.
- visible presence of students with disabilities as part of the educational institution's student population (e.g. inclusion of pictures of students with visible disabilities in generic marketing material for the educational institution and its courses; active inclusion of students with disabilities in open day and course information events).
- clear statements in course information about the types of learning activities and assessment tasks involved, so that students can make informed choices on enrolment.
- clear study guides (e.g. weekly, modular) so that students know what to expect and what preparation for each week/module is required.
- timely provision of all written information for classes to students (e.g. online) prior to classes, so students have access to and can become familiar with content.

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

- presentation of information in a range of modes where possible (e.g. making in-class materials available online, filming practical tasks for students to review) creation of flexible options for assessment and varied assessment tasks that tap into a range of skills (e.g. oral, written, observation, practical demonstration of competency).
- timely and constructive feedback to students on assessment tasks.
- learning resources available in accessible formats.
- consistent use of accessible formats for online learning platforms.
- automated systems to remind students of key dates (e.g. smart phones, email reminders linked to online portal calendar).
- active coordination and monitoring of the timing and pacing of assessment tasks across concurrent subjects/modules within a course.
- accessible disability awareness training for teachers that enhances their awareness of the impacts of disabilities on learning, classroom participation, and use of online systems.
- training for teachers that enhances their knowledge and skills for inclusive instructional practice and in particular enables the participation of diverse students in group-based activities and discussions.
- support staff mingling with students in class, providing support more inclusively at times when the student with a disability is not requiring direct support.
- peer-mentoring programs which actively engage students with disabilities as mentors and promote peer mentoring as inclusive of students with disabilities.
- involving students with disabilities, disability services staff, curriculum support and teaching staff so that their respective expertise informs how peer networks, support services, and staff training are developed and delivered.

Recommendations of best practice included:

- strengthening teacher knowledge about UDL and adaptive practices
- recognising and responding to individuality
- establishing inclusive teaching and design practices

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Unfinished Business

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/unfinished-business-student-perspectives-on-disclosure-of-mental-illness-and-success-in-vet>

This research indicated that there was a correlation between the success of training and disclosure and a strong relationship between responsibility and support.

The key challenge is the way in which disclosure occurs and how support is engaged. There was a highlighted delineation between data collected for RTO reporting purposes and identification and engagement with services.

For many students they indicated that they would like to take more responsibility for the outcome of their training but needed appropriate and ongoing support to do so.

There appears to be a gap between the student expectations of support and the organisational capacity to provide support. But at the heart of the experience students s indicated the following strategies of support would be most useful:

- clearer information about reasonable adjustments a, accommodations and supports available.
- closer monitoring of attendance, accountability, and performance.
- clear instructions, expectations and timeframes about assessment tasks
- provision of timely and constructive feedback
- ability to apply for Extensions with clear parameters
- note takers or notes from sessions

Supporting inclusive learner experiences in higher education²³

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/supporting-an-inclusive-learner-experience-in-higher-education>

This research highlighted key practices that support inclusive learner experiences for tertiary students with disability.

Recommended practices included:

- ensuring all key content is available online prior to delivery of training
- promoting the recording of lecturers or the provision of notes (where confidentiality may be an issue)

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

- use of technology to include everyone e.g. online forums where students can login from home
- move from reading lists to resource lists
- empowering learner*s to meet their own needs
- distinguish between the need to know (essential) and nice to know content
- promote a strategic approach to creating content to improve accessibility and ability to create alternative formats e.g. create one publish in everyway (COPE)

Current Resources:

Inclusive Learning Framework and Resources

<https://desbt.qld.gov.au/training/providers/inclusive>

The Inclusive Learning Framework was the Queensland response to the National Equity Blueprint²⁴, and include overviews, training modules and resources education and support providers can use to implement inclusive learning.

The resources include:

Overview Fact Sheets:

- Developed to ensure Vocational Education and Training providers are aware of the Inclusive learning: A way forward Strategy, and the need to embed inclusive practices in training:
 - An overview for VET managers/supervisors
 - An overview for VET educators

Training modules:

- Designed to develop understanding and encourage implementation of the principles and actions of the Inclusive learning: A way forward Strategy, and provide evidence of staff continuous professional learning on inclusive practice.
 - VET managers/supervisors
 - VET educators
 - VET administrators

²⁴ NVEAC Equity Blueprint

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Supporting Resources:

- Inclusive learning booklet
- Inclusive learning wall poster
- Love Apptually: Apps to support learning
 - This resource has been designed to assist VET practitioners and learners to select applications (apps) for mobile devices that support inclusive VET teaching and learning. It highlights several mobile and tablet apps focusing on those that support the development of foundation skills and learners with disability.
- Universal Design checklist
 - A tool for VET providers to assess materials and communications and enhance accessibility for everyone.

Additionally, the Reasonable adjustment in teaching, learning and assessment for learners with disability - A guide for VET practitioners was also developed in 2012 and updated in 2018²⁵.

This guide has been designed to assist VET practitioners (teachers and trainers, tutors, disability practitioners and educational managers) to make reasonable adjustment in teaching, learning and assessment for learners with disability.

It explains the concept and role of reasonable adjustment in VET to:

- increase the participation of all learners (especially those with disability)
- reduce the impact of disability on achieving a vocational qualification leading to employment

The guide provides information and practical strategies on how reasonable adjustment can be applied in teaching, learning and assessment. It also discusses system-based actions, such as providing information on courses as well as rights and responsibilities, to pave the way for effective implementation of reasonable adjustment.

²⁵ Reasonable adjustment in teaching, learning and assessment for learners with disability - A guide for VET practitioners

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Disability Awareness eLearning

<https://disabilityawareness.com.au/>

Developed as part of the Australian Government initiative, National Disability Coordination Officer Program, Disability Awareness Training is an eLearning training freely available in Australia. Its content is ideal for someone who has minimal or no knowledge of disability and can be used as a refresher course to be applied across the workplace and the community.

This eLearning training is freely available in Australia. Its content is ideal for someone who has minimal or no knowledge of disability and can be used as a refresher course. The promotion of disability awareness in our workplaces and communities is vital in establishing a society where people with disability are valued and included.

The resource seeks to challenge the ingrained cultural and attitudinal barriers that perpetuate this discrimination and provides participants with a general overview of the legislative framework which supports the inclusion of people with disability in Australia.

The training consists of four modules which must be completed in successive order.

Module 1 What is disability?

- What does disability mean to you?
- Perspectives of disability
- Types of disability
- Statistically speaking

Module 2 – Let's talk about disability

- Language & Terminology
- Person First Language
- Communication
- Myths & Stereotypes

Module 3 – Legislation & Policy

- Overview of legislative & policy framework
- Stigma & Discrimination
- Disability Disclosure

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Module 4 – Disability in the Community

- Disability & Education
- Disability & Employment
- Disability & Access
- Disability & Justice
- Fostering an inclusive community

Each module ends with a short quiz to allow participants to demonstrate their understanding, and participants receive a certificate at the completion of the training.

The Creativity of Success: Disability in the Classroom & the Workplace (SA)

<https://www.acpet.edu.au/uploads/files/Publications/Disability-in-the-classroom-and-the-workplace.pdf>

This booklet will help private training organisations/ Registered Training Organisations (RTO) overcome their uncertainties and discover that while having the right resources at the right time can be instrumental to the student's success, providing training for people with a disability is mostly common sense. This guide was developed by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) and the National Disability Coordination Officer Program (NDCO)

Building Confidence in Enrolling Learners with Disability

<https://www.acpet.edu.au/uploads/files/NDCO%20Booklet%20%20copy.pdf>

This guide is for small to medium education and training providers who deliver both Vocational Education and Training as well as Higher Education qualification, it aims to assist training providers to feel more content in supporting students with disability through the determination of training pathways, course selection, enrolment, and individual education planning. The guide was developed by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) and the National Disability Coordination Officer Program (NDCO)

What's the Difference Booklet?

<https://www.ndcosa.com.au/what---s-the-australian-government--national-disability-coordination-officer--ndco--program-people-with-disabilitydifference-.html>

What's the difference between high school and post-secondary education and training?

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Supporting Students in VET

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

This fact sheet compares several aspects of school, VET and university life. Areas covered are: Learning Environment, Enrolment, Classroom, Managing Your Study, Study Expectations & Support Your Disability.

Disability Standards for Education Website: Your Right to an Education Website and E-Booklet : A guide for educators and people with disability

<http://www.ddaedustandards.info/dda-edu/about.htm>

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Education Standards became federal law in August 2005. This booklet has been produced to provide information to students and their families about how the Standards may affect them.

Guidelines for Designing Accessible Instructional Media

<https://www.adcet.edu.au/resource/8123/guidelines-for-designing-accessible-instructional-media/>

This recently updated guide provides an overview of some of the accessibility issues that confront many students in the tertiary education sector in Australia. It includes information to assist those producing or modifying education media to improve access for all students, especially those with sensory disabilities

Supporting students with Disability or Mental Illness – Good Practice Guide

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/supporting-tertiary-students-with-a-disability-or-mental-illness-good-practice-guide>

This good practice guide is designed to assist teaching staff and disability services staff in both vocational education and training (VET) and higher education institutions to offer individualised or institution-level adjustments in teaching, learning and assessment methods to support students with disabilities or ongoing ill health. It is based on research that considers the viewpoints of these tertiary students, as well as specialist disability services workers and teaching staff. The adoption of these principles aims to improve the educational experience and rate of course completions for these students.

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This good practice guide developed by NCVET is based on the following reports:

- Unfinished business: student perspectives on disclosure of mental illness and success in VET by Annie Venville and Annette Street, 2012
- Supporting tertiary students with disabilities: individualised and institution-level approaches in practice by Ellie Fossey, Lisa Chaffey, Annie Venville, Priscilla Ennals, Jacinta Douglas and Christine Bigby, 2015

Opening All Options: Specific Learning Disability Resource

<https://www.adcet.edu.au/oao>

This resource provides advice and tips for Disability Practitioners, Teachers and Academics on how best to support post-secondary education students with SLD to achieve success in their studies. It includes information on pre-screening, reasonable adjustments you can make, teaching strategies, study skills, assistive technology, and universal design solutions to assist you address the learning barriers faced by students with an SLD.

Dyslexia Resource Guide

<https://www.adcet.edu.au/resource/9471/dyslexia-resource-guide/>

This resource aims to assist practitioners working in Disability Services within the tertiary sector who are responsible for planning and implementing reasonable adjustments for students with dyslexia, including assistive technology.

Staying the course: A guide to working with students with mental illness – 2nd Edition (2012) and Staying the course: A guide to working with students with mental illness Facilitator Guide – 2nd Edition (2012).

<https://www.dtwd.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/uploads/vetres-staying-the-course-facilitator-2012.pdf>

This guide and companion guide have been written to help staff in registered training organisations (RTOs) work effectively with learners who are living with mental illness. It has been developed at the request of staff and learners who recognise that there is limited information in the area of mental illness, and that there has been an increase in the number of learners with mental illness who enter training. It provides VET staff with information to support learners to achieve their goals in education and training – and complete their course of study in particular.

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It has been developed for all staff working in RTOs (state training providers, private providers and community providers) throughout Western Australia, including administration staff, support staff, client service officers, trainers, assessors, lecturers, teachers, tutors and managers.

Recommended Inclusions and Considerations for the e-Training Modules

Across all the research and resources a number of the key challenges have been identified for supporting students with disability in the VET Sector that should be given particular consideration. These include:

- individualised approaches
- reasonable adjustment should be least disruptive and intrusive but most beneficial to the student
- reasonable adjustments should change as the student develops
- recognition that there is a disparity between competency standards and what is acceptable in the workplace
- inherent requirements are explicit in the performance standards / requirements of the training packages and units of competency
- the challenges of interpreting the performance standards / requirements of the training packages and units of competency
- student may only be engaged for short periods of time in VET making it more difficult to engage students and implement longer term strategies of support
- understanding about roles and responsibilities in this process and benefits of disclosure, and concerns about the potential to avoid through direct online enrolment
- a need for more detailed information about inherent requirements and reasonable adjustment for both staff and students
- students out of school who may have received significant support during school but when advocating for themselves don't disclose when they get to VET or disclose / advocate well
- the need for key relationships between accessibility teams and educational staff
- University has access to funding to support students is different VET may have some less access to resources which requires additional creativity and flexibility
- language, literacy and numeracy requirements are misunderstood and not always well addressed
- educators are not necessarily aware of what they should and could do

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- complexity of students needs and the anticipated increase due to NDIS and will require more resources
- limited lead time for when a student comes to VET and a gap in transition from high school to VET
- students need comprehensive course information that will allow them to make informed decision making about the courses
- lecturers understanding their responsibilities in what they need to do and what is reasonable
- perception of VET and what people see it as
- ensuring learners are supported particularly where there is a focus on distance education and regional/remote locations
- pre enrolment information, guidance and entry processes are challenging and results in the individual being in the wrong course
- working with NDIS supports /services and how that is managed is an emerging issue
- not being considered at the policy and industry
- need to recognise that disability touches all curricula
- a lack of lower level courses means fewer entry points and stepping stones
- professional development for educators
- utilise codes of conduct and disciplinary policies and procedures
- creating an environment to encourage disclosure and support seeking behaviours
- vocational placement also requires particular consideration

Conclusion

This literature review is not exhaustive but sufficiently identifies a range of key issues experienced by students with disability in VET, and proposes a range of recommended practices that help inform educator practice. These approaches and strategies are key considerations in developing the e-Training modules.

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Additional Resources

Department of Education and Training

The Australian Department of Education and Training is a department of the Government of Australia charged with the responsibility for national policies and programs that help Australians access quality and affordable early childhood education, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, international education and academic research.

<https://www.education.gov.au/>

National Training Complaints Hotline

The National Training Complaints Hotline is a joint initiative between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. Anyone with a complaint or query about the training sector now has one number to call, so they can report a complaint and have it referred to the right authority for consideration.

National Training Complaints Hotline: 13 38 73

<https://www.education.gov.au/NTCH>

Australian Human Rights Commission

The Australian Human Rights Commission conducts research and public inquiries, facilitates industry-wide reforms through disability standards and guidelines, assists organisations to develop Disability Action Plans and run community education programs.

Telephone: (02) 9284 9600

National Information Service: 1300 656 419

General enquiries and publications: 1300 369 711

TTY: 1800 620 241 Fax: (02) 9284 9611

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights>

ADCET

Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) provides comprehensive information about assistive technology in a learning environment.

<https://www.adcet.edu.au/>

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NDCO National Disability Co-ordination Officer Program (NDCO Program)

The Australian Government's National Disability Co-ordination Officer (NDCO) Program works strategically to assist people with disability access and participate in tertiary education and subsequent employment, through a national network of regionally-based NDCOs.

The NDCOs work with stakeholders at the local level to reduce systemic barriers, facilitate smooth transitions, build links and co-ordinate services between the education, training and employment sectors. The NDCO Program adopts the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 definition of 'disability'.

The NDCO Program objectives are to:

- improve linkages between schools, tertiary education providers, employment service providers and providers of disability programs and assistance at all government levels
- improve transitions for people with disability between school, community and tertiary education, and then to subsequent employment
- improve participation by people with disability in tertiary education and subsequent employment

<https://www.education.gov.au/national-disability-coordination-officer-programme>

Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability (ATEND)

ATEND is a peak professional body for disability practitioners in the tertiary education and training sector, including the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) program.

<https://www.atend.com.au/>

AustEd Listserv

The AustEd email list is an initiative of the Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability (ATEND) and is a closed list, its aim is to facilitate discussion and information-sharing among disability practitioners and teachers within the post-secondary education sector. Discussions focus on inclusive teaching, learning and support for people with disability in this sector.

<https://www.adcet.edu.au/resource/9146/austed-email-list/>

ASQA

The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) is the national regulator for Australia's vocational education and training sector. ASQA regulates courses and training providers to ensure nationally approved quality standards are met.

<https://www.asqa.gov.au/>

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TAC

The Training Accreditation Council (TAC or the Council) is Western Australia's independent statutory body for quality assurance and recognition of vocational education and training (VET) services. The Council is established under the Vocational Education and Training Act 1996. The Council operates within the National Skills Framework and is the Western Australian VET Regulator. It complies with the Standards for VET Regulators 2015.

The Council registers training providers under the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 and accredits VET courses under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

<http://www.tac.wa.gov.au/>

VRQA

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) is Victoria's education and training regulator. An independent statutory authority that works to assure the quality of education and training in Victoria through the application of standards to education and training providers and accreditation of courses and qualifications.

<https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/>

AVETRA – what does the acronym stand for?

AVETRA is Australia's only independent association for research in vocational education and training. We bring together research stakeholders and researchers from the TAFE, university, industry and government sectors.

<https://avetra.org.au/>

NCVER

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is the national professional body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing and communicating research and statistics on the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector.

<https://www.ncver.edu.au>

VELG

VELG Training is a member serving organisation and Australia's leading provider of Vocational Education and Training (VET) professional development and consulting services.

<https://www.velgtraining.com/>

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VDC

The VET Development Centre (VDC) was established in 2005 by the Victorian Government to promote the development and raise the professional standing of people working in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector. VDC delivers and facilitates Victorian Government funded continuing professional learning and evaluation activities to the Victorian VET workforce.

<https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/>

My Skills

My Skills website is an Australian Government initiative to ensure training consumers have access to current, straightforward, independent and trustworthy Information to help them make choices about their training options. As the national directory of vocational education and training (VET) organisations and courses, My Skills strives to improve the quality and accessibility of information available for VET consumers and provides the ability to search for, and compare, VET courses and training providers.

<https://www.myskills.gov.au/>

Training.gov.au

The national register for training in Australia and contains the authoritative information about RTOs and nationally recognised training.

<https://training.gov.au>

JobAccess

JobAccess is the National hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers.

<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/>

Advocacy Finder

The National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) provides people with disability with access to effective disability advocacy that promotes, protects and ensures their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights enabling community participation.

<https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/>

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External Disability Complaints Bodies:

People wishing to complain about disability services they are receiving, the following complaints services can be contacted:

- **Complaints Resolution and Referral Service (CRRS) – 1800 880 052** (free call from land lines). The CRRS is a free service for people with disability who are users of Disability Employment Services (DES), Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and/or Advocacy services which are Australian Government-funded services.
- **National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline (the Hotline) – 1800 880 052** (free call from land lines). Contact the Hotline to report cases of physical, sexual, psychological, legal and civil abuse, restraint and restrictive practices or financial abuse.

Please note, the Hotline is a referral service only and does not provide crisis services.

- **Department of Social Services (DSS) Complaints – 1800 634 035.** Contact DSS with complaints that cannot be investigated by the NCSL or CRRS, as well as complaints about either of those services or JobAccess.
- **National Customer Service Line (NCSL) – 1800 805 260** (free call from land lines). If you have a concern about your employment services Provider, you should raise it with your provider in the first instance. If you feel like you are unable to talk with your service provider, you can contact the Employment Services National Customer Service Line on 1800 805 260 (free call from land lines) or email nationalcustomerservice@jobs.gov.au
- **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission – 1800 035 544.** Contact the NDIS Commission if you have a complaint about NDIS services in places where the NDIS Commission is working. The NDIS Commission is available from: 1 July 2018 in New South Wales and South Australia. 1 July 2019 in the Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria and 1 July 2020 in Western Australia.
<https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/>

Help to make a complaint or report

- If you have a hearing and/or speech impairment, you can contact the National Relay Service (NRS) by calling **1800 555 677** then asking for the number listed above for the relevant complaint service.
- If you need an interpreter, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) by calling **13 14 50**. TIS National will put you through to any of DSS' listed phone numbers.

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State and Territory Based Vocational education and Training Services

New South Wales

- [New South Wales State Training Services](#)

Victoria

- [Victoria Education and Training](#)
- [Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority \(VRQA\)](#)

Queensland

- [Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training](#)
- [Queensland Training Ombudsman](#)

Western Australia

- [Western Australia Department of Training and Workforce Development](#)
- [Training Accreditation Council \(TAC\)](#)

South Australia

- [Department of Innovation and Skills](#)
- [Office of Training Advocate](#)

Tasmania

- [Skills Tasmania](#)

Australian Capital Territory

- [ACT Government Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate – Skills Canberra](#)

Northern Territory

- [Northern Territory Department of Trade, Business and Innovation – Workforce NT](#)

VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

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Disability Standards for Education 2005 Guidance Notes

AHRC 2012 publication Know your rights: disability discrimination (www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/knowyour-rights-disability-discrimination).

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Fact Sheet – Department of Education and Training

Disability Standards for Education 2005 Fact Sheet – Department of Education and Training

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VET Disability Awareness e-Training Modules - Literature Review:

Effective Consultation: Improving outcomes for students with disability Fact Sheet - – Department of Education and Training

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Universal Design for Learning, National Centre on Universal Design for Learning website

Using assistive and accessible technology in teaching and learning, Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), UK website

Create and verify PDF accessibility (Adobe Acrobat Pro), Adobe website
Information on accessibility best practices for PDF authors.

Make your Word documents accessible, Microsoft Office Support website
Best practice for making Word documents accessible.

Making the web accessible, Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) website
Information, standards and guidelines to assist organisations in making the Web accessible. Includes Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) that explain how to make web content (the information in a webpage or web application) accessible to people with disability.