

# Educating staff about the Disability Standards for Education

A practice based approach to providing face  
to face training for higher education staff

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# Background

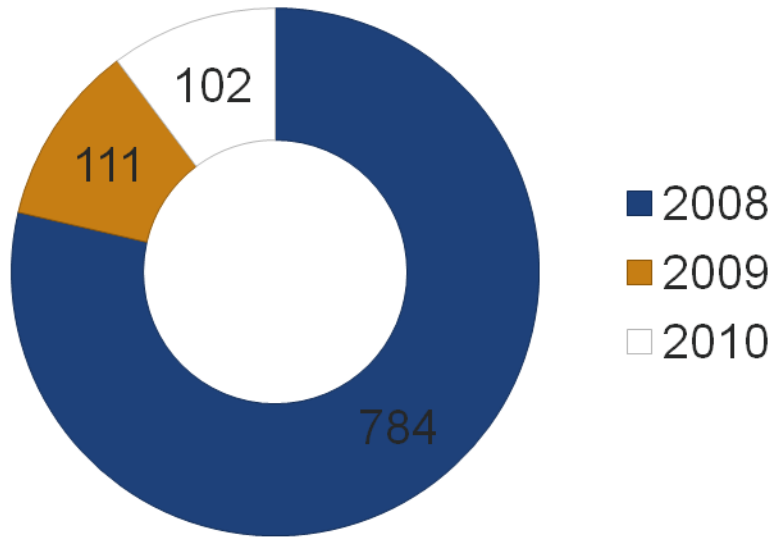
- The University of Canberra conducts annual face to face training workshops on the Disability Standards for Education (DSE).
- We have been running this program since 2008.
- The program was developed to raise awareness of the needs of students with a disability within the context of the DSE and;
- To provide information and advice to staff about their obligations

# Background

- The program was developed through a sub committee of the Equity and Diversity Advisory Group
- There was consensus that if we could raise awareness about disability issues and accommodations, we would improve outcomes for students studying with a disability at UC.
- Prior to 2008- a negative and reactive culture

# Workshop Structure and Delivery

## Staff Attendance



- 2008 - the first and major training workshops. General and separate Faculty based workshops.
- In 2009 and 2010 we ran combined workshops for all staff.
- The workshops are compulsory and are endorsed by the Vice Chancellor
- Workshops provide a platform for staff discussion, knowledge sharing and peer learning to impact institutional change

# Workshop Structure and Delivery

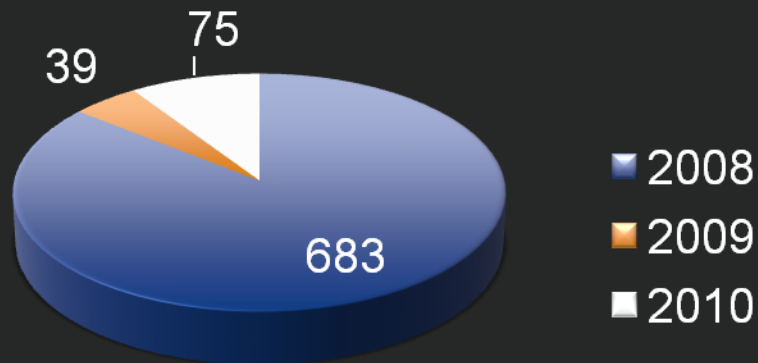
The 2 hour DSE Workshop consists of:

- ➔ General information about the DSE with a focus on the application of the 5 main areas of the standards
- ➔ Information from UC AccessAbility about how we apply the standards in practice
- ➔ Group work about the definition of 'disability'
- ➔ How to make reasonable accommodations
- ➔ Group work looking at 'real' scenarios and how to apply what is reasonable
- ➔ In built is the opportunity for questions and discussion, a pre and post knowledge test and evaluation

# Impact on staff knowledge

## Pre and Post test

### Pre and Post Test Responses

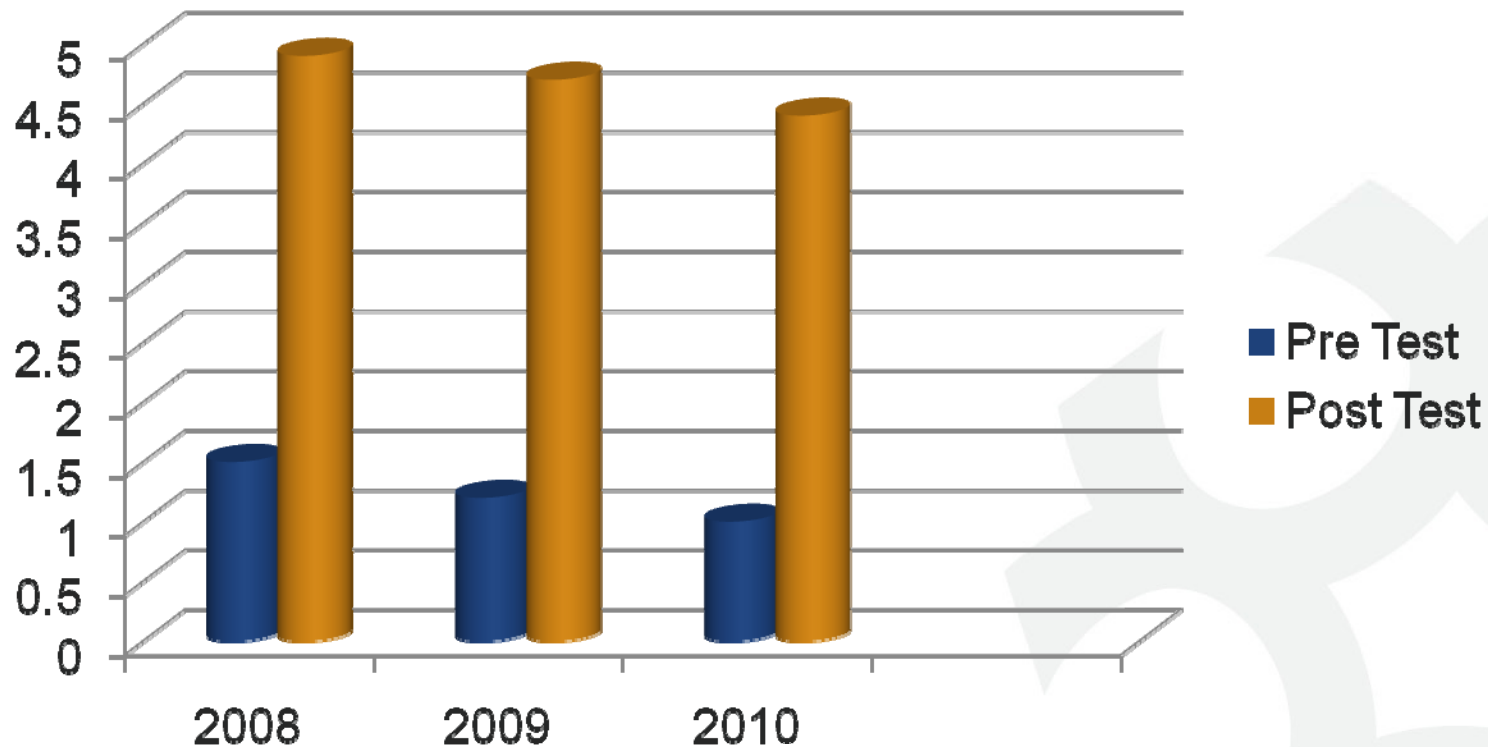


- The Pre and Post test analysed knowledge of:
  - disability,
  - legislation,
  - reasonable adjustment,
  - “on the same basis” and;
  - the 5 areas covered by the standards
- Participants’ knowledge and understanding improved significantly in relation to each area after the workshop in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

# Impact on staff knowledge

## Pre and Post test

- Of particular interest are results for Question 5 relating to the five areas covered by the DSE (Scores ranged from 0 to 5)



# Impact on staff knowledge

- Experiences of supporting students with a disability and uncertainties around what to do?
- Awareness that supporting students' is not an 'impossible' task and a recognition of the support already being provided
- An opportunity to talk through complex issues and gain practical advice

## **Common Themes-**

- Supporting students with mental illness and complexities around behaviour
- Providing information in Alternative Formats
- Inherent requirements



# Resultant improvement of support

- UC AccessAbility perspective-
  - Better understanding of student needs and adjustments required
  - More contact for advice and referrals to UC AccessAbility from staff
  - On going opportunities for strategic input at Senior level
  - Disability Advisors are well respected and seen as the 'experts' to advise and assist with disability support issues
- Anecdotal student feedback-
  - Students report less conflict with academic staff, particularly those students who enrolled at UC prior to 2008
  - A willingness of staff to support and empathise with students' needs
  - General consensus that advice regarding reasonable accommodations to Faculty staff will be accepted from UC AccessAbility
  - Less complaints

# Practitioner Perspective

- **General consensus after the workshops have been delivered-**
  - Staff are surprised at the range and level of support provided to students with a disability
  - A ‘rush’ of new referrals and contact with UC AccessAbility for assistance
  - A great networking tool for those who participate and for UC AccessAbility
  - A positive platform for disseminating information about support for students with a disability and promoting the services available to assist
  - A framework for building rapport with staff

# Overall Outcomes

## Positives-

- Enhancing the knowledge base of staff leads to better outcomes for students with a disability.
- A new name for the 'disabilities office' to UC AccessAbility
- The role of disability advisor- a shift from being the demanding and unreasonable advisor to the respected and consulted expert 😊
- Embedding workshop program as 'encouraged participation' in University promotion policy
- The workshops will again be offered in 2011

## Challenges-

- Resourcing
- There is still a lack of understanding about the significance of Inherent requirements within the context of making reasonable accommodations
- Addressing the complexities of difficult situations with students

# Where to from here?

## HEADS-UP

Higher Educators Advancing Disability  
Standards- Universities online Project



- 2 Year Project
- Funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council
- A National Focus

# HEADS-UP

Higher Educators Advancing Disability Standards-Universities  
online Project

## Issues-

- Duplication of good existing resources
- Cost
- Dissemination
- Flexibility – so universities can customise the training
- Embedding e.g. Links to promotion
- Reporting – doing the right thing & seen to be doing the right thing (Statistics)
- How effective are we?
- How many people are using these resources?

## How can we work together to achieve this?

- Reference group – virtual consultants
- **YOUR** feedback