



*Getting the*  
**RIGHT SUPPORT**

*at the*  
**RIGHT TIME**

*from the*  
**RIGHT PEOPLE**

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*A Pre-planning Toolkit for people who are  
Blind or have a Vision Impairment  
entering Higher Education or Vocational  
Education and Training*



National Disability Coordination Officer Program  
AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

***The Australian Government's National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program works strategically to assist people with disability to access and participate in Higher Education or VET and subsequent employment, through a national network of regionally based NDCOs.***

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# GET THE RIGHT SUPPORT AT THE RIGHT TIME FROM THE RIGHT PLACE

**Congratulations on your decision to undertake further education or training. Whether you are finishing school or returning to education as a mature-aged student, this marks the beginning of a whole new chapter in your life.**

Participating in further education or training can help you on your career pathway, providing you with skills and qualifications to improve your chances of getting a job. You will have the opportunity to build more confidence, to enhance your capacity and develop new strategies to overcome challenges, expand your critical thinking skills, make new connections, and develop new social and professional networks.

If you are blind or have a vision impairment you may require extra support to complete your chosen course and to ensure your participation is on the same basis as other students. This booklet will help you identify the types of support available to you, and to understand who may be responsible for funding these. Planning in advance to implement

the supports you need can help to ensure you successfully participate in and complete your studies.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has been established to fund reasonable and necessary supports that are related to your disability and that can help you become more independent, participate in everyday activities, and achieve your goals. ‘Reasonable’ is something that is fair and within the scope of the scheme, and ‘necessary’ is something you need because of your disability.

The NDIS will be responsible for supports that assist you to lessen the impact of your disability on activities that are not directly related to your education or training. These can include personal care and support, transport to and from the campus, assistive technology and equipment, and specialist supports for the transition from further education to employment. These may be funded in your NDIS plan under core support, capacity building and/or capital support budgets.

The NDIS will not be responsible for your learning and support needs that primarily relate to your further education and training success.

Your Higher Education or Vocational Education and Training (VET) provider is required by law to provide support that is directly related to your studies. This can include learning assistance, building modifications, transport between education or training activities and general education to employment transition supports.

## Further support

**Education standards online resource:**

■ [dda.edustandards.info](http://dda.edustandards.info)

**NDIS via ADCET:**

■ [www.adcet.edu.au/disability-practitioner/student-access/ndis](http://www.adcet.edu.au/disability-practitioner/student-access/ndis)

The table below explains in more detail the types of supports funded by the NDIS and the supports funded by your Higher Education or VET provider.

### NDIS reasonable and necessary supports for eligible people

#### This can include:

- Personal supports at the education or training facility that are required by an individual regardless of the activity they are undertaking (eg. orientation support to help finding your way around the campus environment).
- Aids and equipment that are required by an individual regardless of the activity they are undertaking (eg. readers, personal communication devices).
- Transport to and from an education or training facility for those unable to use public transport, as part of broader transport assistance a person would receive to address their mobility needs.
- Specialised support and training for education or training staff related to the specific personal support needs of a student with disability, including development of specific behaviour management plans.
- The coordination of your NDIS supports with the supports offered by the Higher Education and VET system.

### Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training provider

#### This can include:

- Learning assistance (eg. teachers' assistants), and inclusion support (eg. Auslan interpreters) to enable the participation of students with disability in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training programs and services, in line with reasonable adjustment and any other relevant legislation.
- Reasonable adjustment to education and training facilities, including capital works (eg. ramps, lifts, hearing loops).
- Aids and equipment that are fixed or non-transportable, which enable a student access to education or training (eg. hoists).
- Aids and equipment for education or training purposes (eg. modified computer hardware, education software, Braille textbooks).
- Reasonable adjustments to transport for education or training activities (eg. excursions, site visits) where this transport is being arranged for other students.
- General support, resources, training and awareness building for education/training staff and other staff to support and engage students with disability.
- Intensive case coordination operated by the Higher Education and VET system where a significant component of case coordination is related to education and training supports.

Adapted from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) principles to determine responsibilities between NDIS and other Services:  
<https://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/communique/NDIS-Principles-to-Determine-Responsibilities-NDIS-and-Other-Service.pdf>

## Blind or have a Vision Impairment

If you are blind or have a vision impairment, you may require assistance with:

- Access to assistive technology
- Accessible information and texts
- A plan for how you will navigate the physical environment.

## What can you do to prepare?

Contact the Disability Practitioner (who may be called Disability Adviser or Disability Liaison Officer, etc) within your new Higher Education or VET provider as early as possible – ideally at least 12 weeks before semester starts.

It's important to do this even if you have only applied for a course and not received your offer yet. This gives the education provider time to ensure that all relevant information will be accessible in your preferred format, which may include electronic, Braille, or large print.

The first meeting with the Disability Practitioner usually provides an overview of all the required services and supports, and identifies any gaps. You can include others in this meeting. Take a family member who can help explain what you need and take down details. Try to get your NDIS Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or Support Coordinator to attend as well.

When you have developed a Learning Access Plan (LAP) with your Higher Education or VET provider, provide a copy to your NDIS LAC or Support Coordinator.

Contact relevant Blindness or Vision Impairment Support Services so that they can work with the University in identifying priority areas on campus that you will need to learn. This will take quite a while and you may not be able to learn a lot of routes at any one time – you may need to schedule several introductory sessions.

You may be able to download a campus map and visit the campus so you can familiarise yourself with the physical environment. Locate key areas such as the library, cafeteria and toilets.





### What do you need to consider?

- What supports, technology or strategies have you successfully used in the past, or currently use to participate in study and/or community activities?
- What do you think you may need to fully participate as independently as possible in Higher Education or VET? (Consider what you have used already, and what new things you may need to try).
- You can also try to find a student or graduate who is blind or experiences vision impairment to ask about the types of support and equipment they required during their study.

## Who is responsible for funding your reasonable and necessary requirements?

### NDIS may fund your disability-specific needs, such as:

- Technology and apps that are necessary for you to communicate in the community and your education setting
- Equipment and supports that assist with navigating and participating in the further education or training environment, for example:
  - Joining appropriate clubs and societies, going to the cafeteria, participating in orientation activities, attending society meetings for the first few times, engaging with union activities and support
  - Communicating with academic and support staff
- Orientation and mobility instructor to familiarise yourself with the campus
- Transport to and from the campus
- Transport to and from work placements.

### Your education provider may provide assistance for your studies, such as:

- Information and texts in accessible preferred formats
- Practical assistant to assist you in laboratory work
- Practical assistant to assist you on excursions and work placements
- Alternative examination arrangements, eg. assistive technology, scribes, extra completion or resting time
- Transport between campus venues
- Ensuring the areas you need to access are accessible, eg. classrooms, library, cafeteria.

### You will need to fund your own everyday items and student costs, such as:

- Laptop or desktop computer
- Textbooks, stationery and USBs
- Course and student fees
- Home internet connection and ongoing charges.



## What might you learn from another student's experience?

### **Amy has a vision impairment and has recently completed her university studies in psychology.**

Amy had an NDIS package that met her broad goals to participate in her many areas of interest and a diverse array of activities both in her personal and professional life. The focus was to ensure Amy had flexibility and independence in performing and engaging in all elected activities. This included specific support to assist her participation as a student.

The NDIS was able to help in supporting the purchase of a guide dog, Spence, as well as the associated training and orientation. Amy was required to purchase her own laptop and the NDIS funding covered assistive technology resources, including speech-to-text software and text-to-speech software – Dragon, JAWS, Zoom text and KNFB reader. Having access to this assistive technology made it easier for her to complete her university studies and gain employment. The NDIS was also able to assist and contribute to her transport costs, including taxis. This helped to continue her goal for mobility and independence.

Amy also met with the university Disability Advisor. Together they developed a Learning Access Plan (LAP) that outlined the supports, services and assessment accommodations provided by the university. These included extra time to do coursework due to difficulties in managing visual fatigue, and extra time for internal and external exams. In exams, Amy was also provided with access to a scribe, a computer equipped with JAWS, large-font printed items and a light-adjustable room. Amy and the university regularly reviewed and adjusted her LAP. For example, initially a scribe was provided for written exams, however, after a semester Amy realised that completing exams through dictation to another person was not really helpful.

During her studies, Amy completed various placement and work opportunities. This meant the university and NDIA-funded organisations continued to communicate and liaise about supports or accommodations that were required. Amy has found that success comes when the NDIS and the University work together to best support her requirements.





**What do you need to consider?**

**What will you ask your NDIS LAC and Planner?**

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**What will you ask the Higher Education and VET Disability Practitioner?**

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# OFF CAMPUS & DISTANCE STUDENTS

**You may have decided to undertake your studies as a Distance Education student or trainee. This may mean that all or part of your learning and assessment is off-campus, while occasional workshops, intensive teaching modules or retreats may be on campus.**

As a Distance Education student or trainee, in addition to your specific disability needs you may require assistance with:

- Accessing electronic course material
- Self-organising and managing your study requirements
- Attending occasional on-campus workshops, seminars or retreats.

## What can you do to prepare?

As a Distance Education student or trainee, you are still entitled to relevant support from the NDIS and the Higher Education or VET provider to support your participation in your studies, and can follow the preparation steps and consideration steps in this booklet. You may also like to think about the following points:

- If you have on-campus learning activities, consider the travel time, accommodation options, your personal support needs while travelling, and your personal support needs while on campus.
- What personal resources and strategies can you use to maintain the engagement and motivation you need to complete your distance learning? This might include having a study check-in buddy, going to the local library regularly, or sticking to a rigid timetable.

## Who is responsible for funding your reasonable and necessary requirements?

**NDIS may fund your Distance Education disability-specific needs, such as:**

- Personal care assistant for the duration of your time away from home when attending on-campus learning activities
- Travel assistant while travelling to and from on-campus activities
- Travel costs for your personal care assistant
- Accommodation and meal costs for your personal care assistant
- Assistance to manage studies.

**Your education provider may provide assistance for your studies, such as:**

- Accessible technology or equipment while on campus.

**You will need to fund your own everyday items and student costs, such as:**

- Downloading on-line material
- Food and drink while attending on-campus activities
- Your travel costs
- Your accommodation costs.

# USEFUL RESOURCES

## **Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)**

ADCET provides information, advice and resources to disability practitioners, academics, teachers and students on inclusive teaching and support within the post-secondary education sector. There is an area on the ADCET website that has been developed for students. This area assists with planning for post-secondary education including information on disclosure, reasonable adjustments, discrimination and other useful information and resources to support you in your studies.

■ [www.adcet.edu.au/students-with-disability](http://www.adcet.edu.au/students-with-disability)

## **Disability Standards for Education**

The Disability Standards for Education were introduced in 2005 to clarify the obligations of education and training service providers, and the rights of people with disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). This includes your right to access and participate in education on an equal basis with students without disability and receive reasonable adjustments to facilitate your participation. For more information on the Disability Standards for Education:

■ [www.adcet.edu.au/disability-practitioner/legislation-standards/disability-standards-for-education](http://www.adcet.edu.au/disability-practitioner/legislation-standards/disability-standards-for-education)

## **National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program**

The Australian Government's 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.

■ To find your nearest NDCO, go to:  
[www.adcet.edu.au/resource/9243/ndco-details](http://www.adcet.edu.au/resource/9243/ndco-details)

## **Get Ready For Study and Work**

Get Ready for Study and Work student workbooks are based on ten top tips for young people with disability. They contain information, contacts and activities to help students make a successful transition from school into tertiary study, work or post school programs. There are also versions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability.

■ [www.westernsydney.edu.au/getreadyforstudyand-work/resources/get\\_ready\\_top\\_tip\\_workbooks](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/getreadyforstudyand-work/resources/get_ready_top_tip_workbooks)

## **National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)**

The NDIA is an independent statutory agency. Their role is to implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which will support a better life for hundreds of thousands of Australians with a significant and permanent disability and their families and carers.

■ [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au)

## **StudyAssist**

This website provides information for students about government assistance for financing tertiary study.

■ [www.studyassist.gov.au](http://www.studyassist.gov.au)



# GLOSSARY

**ADJUSTMENTS** (sometimes 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.

**ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY** (also referred to as ‘inclusive technology’) is a piece of equipment or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disability. For more information, visit: [www.adcet.edu.au/inclusive-technology](http://www.adcet.edu.au/inclusive-technology)

**LEARNING ACCESS PLAN (LAP)** is a plan developed by the Higher Education or VET provider in consultation with you. It provides details of the specialist services, study and assessment adjustments you will require while studying. It may also be called an Access Plan, Integration Plan or something similar.

**LOCAL AREA COORDINATOR (LAC)** is a local organisation working in partnership with the NDIA, to help participants, their families and carers access the NDIS. LACs will help participants write and manage their plans and also connect participants to mainstream services and local and community-based supports.

**NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE AGENCY (NDIA)** is an independent statutory agency. Its role is to implement the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

**NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)** is the new way of providing support for Australians with disability, their families and carers. As an insurance scheme, the NDIS takes a lifetime approach, investing in people with disability early to improve their outcomes later in life.

**NDIS PLAN** is a written agreement worked out with the participant, stating their goals and needs, and the reasonable and necessary supports the NDIS will fund for them. Each participant has their own individual plan.

**NDIS PLANNER** develops the NDIS plan in consultation with the participant.

**STUDENT DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTRE** provides a space on campus where students with disability can access assistive technology and other specialist equipment. Not all Higher Education or VET provider campuses offer these places.

**SUPPORT COORDINATOR** helps build an individual’s capacity to implement all supports in their NDIS plan, including informal, mainstream, community and funded supports.



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