

DISABILITY SERVICES



Disability Action Plan

2017 – 2020

Vice-Provost's (Academic and Equity) Forward

This University wide Disability Action Plan implements the commitment made in the University's Strategic Plan and Equity and Diversity Strategy and targets specific actions to address equity for staff and students of Victoria. It also guides the University in meeting our legislative obligations towards people with disabilities and ensures that the University meets the best practice standards for an inclusive tertiary education environment outlined in Kia Ōrite – Achieving Equity (Achieve, 2004).

This plan does not focus on everything that is working. Rather, it focuses on the areas that have been identified as needing expansion or greater emphasis.

Victoria University Values and Strategy

Victoria University is committed to equity of opportunity for all staff and students. Our values outlined in the Strategic Plan 2015-2019 include inclusivity, equity and diversity. Disability and inclusion are reflected in two of the Strategic Plan's Primary Strategies:

Primary Strategy 3: 'Provide a holistic learning, teaching and student experience that is second to none'.

Primary Strategy 4: 'Secure the intellectual potential put at risk through experience of disadvantage'.

The University is committed to implementing the Equity and Diversity Strategy 2017-2020. The Strategy provides a framework for action, lists clear principles that inform the vision of an equitable university, identifies where responsibility lies and outlines the challenges faced. The implementation of this Disability Action Plan is part of that commitment.

Victoria University Policy

Victoria has two key policies relating to achieving equity for disabled people. The Staff Development Policy (April 2008) addresses equity in objective 4.5.

"Staff development should be accessible on an equitable basis, should promote the principles of equity and diversity, and should reinforce the University's equity and diversity objectives.

Where appropriate, development opportunities should accommodate any specific needs of underrepresented groups or draw attention to equity and diversity issues."

The Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments Policy (August 2005) details the University's commitment to ensuring students with impairments can demonstrate their abilities equitably with other students.

Relevant Legislation

The University's obligations towards staff with disabilities are outlined in the following legislation; The State Sector Act 1988, New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, the Human Rights Act 1993, Privacy Act 1993, Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994, Employment Relations Act 2000, Building Act 2004 and the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006.

Reasonable Accommodation is the term used in the Human Rights Act to describe the creation of an environment that will ensure equality of opportunity. In the University context it applies to changes that can be made to the work or study environment to enable a disabled person to work or study effectively.

Guiding External Documents

The following documents have influenced this Disability Action Plan.

- In addition to legislative obligations, New Zealand has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (adopted in 2006) and is developing implementation strategies in line with this. Article 24 recognises the right of persons with disabilities to education and Article 27 refers specifically to the employment of disabled people.
- The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2016 (Ministry of Social Development, 2016) provides a high level framework across the government sector that guides planning to ensure access and inclusion in all areas of life for disabled people.
- 'Kia Ōrite - Achieving Equity' (Achieve, 2004) was the tertiary education sector's response to the NZ Disability Strategy, developing best practice guidelines to assist in creating an inclusive tertiary education environment for students with impairments.
- Lead Toolkit for Employing Disabled People in the State Sector (State Services Commission, 2017) is a best practice guide for employing and retaining disabled people in the State Sector.

Disability and Victoria University

The way disability has been understood and resourced has changed significantly during Victoria's history. We acknowledge that history and the learning that has come from it.

Language and Culture

The language we use when talking about disability has evolved from a deficit approach to a more inclusive one that welcomes diversity. At Victoria you hardly hear students or staff with impairments referred to as 'handicapped' or 'special', we refer to them by name, acknowledge their impairment related needs and work in partnership with them. We value their expertise and celebrate our diverse University community, of which people with impairments are an integral part. Recognition of the needs and value of staff and students with impairments continues to develop. This heightened awareness increasingly means that individuals no longer have to rely on the goodwill of others to get the support they need.

Learning Gleaned From a Human Rights Case

An example of the significant change that has occurred at Victoria, is the recognition of the importance of accessible built spaces. In 1994 this was the first tertiary institution to have a Human Rights Case taken against it and the University was found to be in breach of the Human Rights Act. The complaint arose after the move of the Sociology and Social Work School to an inaccessible site.

As part of the settlement, for several years Victoria University reported to the Human Rights Commission on its progress. The disability community re-engaged with senior management in 1998, as they believed that in some areas the University wasn't progressing agreed actions. The senior management team undertook Disability Equity Training. After the training, the then Managers of Disability Services reported directly to the Vice Chancellor to progress Victoria's disability responsiveness and manage disability risk.

Today Campus Services works closely with Disability Services and these teams are committed to improving the accessibility of our built spaces, which is a key component of the University's Strategic Asset Management Plan. University systems also enable staff to select the most accessible spaces when booking events and courses.

Disability Equity Training

Victoria University was the first New Zealand tertiary education institution to provide formal disability equity training written and delivered by disabled educationalists and students with disabilities. This training was initiated as part of a PhD action research project and was a truly empowering experience for all involved. The training emphasised disabled people as experts on their lives and their experience and this training was introduced to other tertiary institutions around the country. Similar professional development is still provided today as a partnership between staff and students with disabilities at Victoria.

Kia Ōrite – Achieving Equity

Victoria University was the first New Zealand tertiary institution to endorse Kia Ōrite Achieving Equity: New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments. Kia Ōrite – Achieving Equity is recognised by the Government as providing expectations about the type of support that should be offered for students with disabilities. It was endorsed by the University's Council and the Senior Management Team. It is now included in disability and inclusion training for staff and guides the work of the University's Disability Services in increasing the participation, retention, completion, progression and achievement of students with disabilities.

Disability Services

Today Disability Services has designated responsibility for providing services and support for the 1400 students with impairments on campus who engage with them annually. Students are provided with an assessment to identify barriers they may face, a suite of tailored support services, liaison with academic staff, advice, coaching and individualised planning. Disability Services then monitors and evaluates students' academic achievement in relation to the support provided. Disability Services also supports the Victoria University community to become a fully inclusive education institution. They do this by providing disability awareness; advice and expertise on accessible built spaces; technological systems; inclusive lecture delivery, policies and practices. The service is recognised for the quality of its disability advice and support for students within New Zealand. There is currently no comparable dedicated disability service for staff.

Equity Indicators

Student Participation

In 2016, 1372 students registered with Disability Services. The number of students registered with Disability Services has steadily increased, up from 1184 in 2015, and this follows a consistent trend. This is positive because students with disabilities are under-represented at Victoria (as they are in tertiary education across New Zealand). Data for the numbers of students with disabilities was calculated by counting those students who have declared as being deaf/Deaf, having a disability, impairment, injury or medical condition on enrolment plus those students who did not declare on enrolment but subsequently registered with Disability Services.

In 2016, the number of Māori students registered with Disability Services increased to 142 from 110 in 2015. The number of Pasifika students increased to 45 from 40 in 2015. The New Zealand Disability Survey (Statistics New Zealand 2013) highlighted that Māori and Pacific people had higher-than-average disability rates. Therefore, it is particularly important to increase engagement from Māori and Pacific students.

The proportion of students who declare a disability and register with Disability Services also rose in 2016 to 93% from 87% in 2015.

Staff Participation

In 2015, 2.4% of staff self-reported a disability (Equity and Diversity Staff Report, 2016), which is slightly more than in previous years. Generally, slightly more women than men report a disability. The New Zealand Disability Survey (Statistics New Zealand, 2013), established that 16.7% of adults 15-64 reported a disability, which is not reflected to the same extent in our workforce.

Student Achievement

Student achievement rates remain consistent. In 2016, 92% of students with disabilities passed one or more of their courses as opposed to 91% in 2015.

Implementation and Review

Responsibility for implementation of this Disability Action Plan is to be shared by staff of the University including academic staff and staff providing services to students. Disability Services will have a leading role in implementation and will be available for support and advice to other staff implementing actions. An annual report on the progress made towards achieving the targets outlined in the plan will be prepared by Disability Services for the Equity and Diversity Committee. A review of this plan will take place in alignment with the review of the Equity and Diversity Strategy.

Disability Action Plan Targets 2017-2020

Objective One: Awareness of Support and Engagement

Increase the recruitment, awareness and engagement of future and current students with disabilities with Disability Services.

Primary Actions	Performance Measure	Responsibility
<p>Primary action 1: Provide information, advice and scholarships to support the recruitment of prospective students with disabilities to Victoria and their engagement with Disability Services.</p>	<p>Number of Victoria students who register as having a disability</p> <p>Proportion of students who declare a disability and register with Disability Services</p>	<p>Disability Services Student Recruitment and Orientation Student Academic Services Management and Administration</p>
<p>Primary action 2: Increase the awareness of the support available for students with disabilities, including Māori and Pasifika students.</p>	<p>Percentage of students who declare an impairment who are aware of Disability Services</p> <p>Number of Māori and Pasifika students registered with Disability Services</p>	<p>Disability Services Student Recruitment and Orientation Student Academic Services Management and Administration Te Putahi Atawhai</p>
<p>Primary action 3: Provide opportunities for current students with impairments, volunteers and support staff to take a leadership role in working in partnership with Disability Services to promote the service to other students.</p>	<p>Benchmark reports of events and profiles of student leaders</p>	<p>Disability Services Careers and Employment Communications and Marketing CanDo</p>

Objective Two: Support and Develop

Support and develop student with disabilities to achieve their academic potential and foster their development

Primary Actions	Performance Measure	Responsibility
<p>Primary action 1: Assess the impairment related needs of students and develop an Education Access Plan that communicates these needs to academic staff to ensure that barriers to successful participation are removed and the inclusive strategies and accommodations are implemented.</p>	<p>Percentage of users who considered Disability Services contributed to their success as a student</p>	<p>Disability Services Academic staff</p>
<p>Primary action 2: Connect students with relevant Victoria services, peer support and external agencies that can support the student's study and transition to employment.</p>	<p>Examples of collaborative approaches to student support are reported on</p>	<p>Disability Services Te Putahi Atawahi Student Learning Careers and Employment</p>
<p>Primary action 3: Students receive quality, timely support and services (including adaptive technology, paid support, voluntary support, assessment support).</p>	<p>Percentage of users who were satisfied with the overall performance of Disability Services</p>	<p>Disability Services</p>
<p>Primary action 4: Foster and recognise the achievement and development of students.</p>	<p>Successful course completion for students who declare an impairment and engage with Disability Services</p>	<p>Disability Services</p>

Objective Three: Disability Awareness

Enhance the disability awareness of our Victoria community.

Primary Actions	Performance Measure	Responsibility
Primary action 1: Provide disability and inclusion awareness training opportunities for students.	Number of sessions provided and number of participants	Disability Services
Primary action 2: Provide disability and inclusion professional development opportunities for staff.	Number of sessions provided and number of participants	Disability Services Human Resources
Primary action 3: Identify a Disability Liaison Advocate in every school and service to champion disability awareness.	Disability Liaison Advocates identified and annual meetings held	Disability Services Schools Central Service Units
Primary action 4: Actively seek advice, expertise and feedback from: Victoria's disability community, external disability community, government and NGOs (including ACHIEVE) to ensure best practice (Disability Services).	Initiatives are documented and reported on.	Disability Services

Objective Four: Inclusive environment and practices

Enhance the inclusivity of our campuses, technology and practices.

Primary Actions	Performance Measure	Responsibility
Primary action 1: Conduct a campus wide accessibility audit of our built environment to identify and prioritise access developments.	Campus accessibility audit completed and work programme established.	Disability Services Property Services, Campus Services
Primary action 2: Seize opportunities of new building work and upgrades to incorporate accessibility best practice.	Examples of accessibility best practice are reported on.	Disability Services Property Services, Campus Services
Primary action 3: Actively identify and implement accessible information and communication technology that can assist staff and students with disabilities to interact with information, the environment and others.	Innovations are reported on.	Disability Services Information Technology Services
Primary action 4: Benchmark Victoria's approach to accessible assessment against the 2016 ACHIEVE Guidelines and Procedures for the Provision of Accessible Assessment Arrangements, identify and implement enhancements (Disability Services w Schools, Faculties)	Benchmarking of accessible assessment approaches conducted, enhancements reported on.	Disability Services Faculties

Objective Five: Support for staff with disabilities

Increase the ability of the University to respond proactively and responsively to the needs of staff with disabilities.

Primary Actions	Performance Measure	Responsibility
Primary action 1: Collect reliable, meaningful data about staff with disabilities to inform decision-making.	Participation rates of staff with disabilities in Victoria workforce increase	Human Resources
Primary action 2: Develop and communicate an online resource toolkit for staff with disabilities and their managers.	Online resource available 2018 and annually updated	Disability Services Human Resources
Primary action 3: Following on from the outcomes of the Your Voice – Victoria Staff Survey, further investigate the experience of staff with disabilities to identify the barriers to full participation and the support needed.	A framework is established to prevent and mitigate the barriers to full participation and support.	Human Resources