

Disability and Impairment Policy

Nōnahea i Whakarerekē | Last Modified
Rā Arotake | Next Review Date
Mana Whakaae | Approval Authority
Āpiha Whakapā | Contact Officer

March 2026
March 2030
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic
Team Leader, Equity & Disability Service

Kupu Whakataki | Introduction

This document sets out the framework through which the University aims to meet its obligations to the University community who have an impairment due to disability under various legislative and regulatory requirements

Kaupapa Here | Policy Statements

This policy is informed by the [Human Rights Act 1993 \(New Zealand Legislation website\)](#), the [New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026 \('Disability Strategy'\) \(Office for Disability Issues website\)](#) and [Kia Orite Achieving Equity: New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments \("Code of Practice"\) \(Achieve website\)](#).

In conjunction with the University [Equity and Diversity Policy \(PDF, 278KB\)](#), this policy aims to create an inclusive learning environment that maximises outcomes for the University community facing barriers to access and participation in the University environment. It implements this commitment to those in the University community with disabilities, learning difficulties and impairments through the Equity and Disability Service (EDS) and the cooperation of Schools and Departments.

Principles

The key principles that inform the implementation of the University's commitment are:

- Adopting the Biopsychosocial Model of disability, which accounts for factors such as
 - i. social attitudes;

- ii. physical environment;
 - iii. architectural characteristics;
 - iv. legal and social structures;
 - v. culture;
 - vi. social norms; but also
 - vii. personal factors of the individual such as gender, age etc.,.
- Increase and enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to access higher education.
 - Provide a confidential service (EDS) for students in relation to personal health/disability or impairment
 - Attract and value students from a wide diversity of background
 - Provide current students, future students and alumni with disabilities the opportunity to realise their full potential for physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development through full participation within the University.
 - Support students in their studies and beyond and foster in them a sense of belonging to the scholarly community.
 - Use Universal Design Principles, specifically:
 - [UC Design Guidelines 6: Access and Mobility \(PDF,1MB\) \(University About UC website\)](#) where practicable within the built environment to provide an accessible campus for all users of its spaces. Physical modifications required to University teaching spaces are discussed with Learning Resources in conjunction with EDS. UC Design Guidelines incorporate the [BRANZ standards around Universal Design \(BRANZ website\)](#) and [New Zealand Building Code requirements \(Building Code Hub: Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment website\)](#).
 - [Universal Design Principles for Learning \(CAST website\)](#) to provide equal learning opportunities and provide the best student experience possible.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Role of the Disability Resource Service

EDS use the [Achieve guidelines and procedures \(Achieve website\)](#) when considering alternative arrangements for students accessing Tertiary Educational Institutes. EDS utilises the Achieve guidelines and procedures to monitor best practice and outcomes for the students registered with the service.

EDS is committed to ensuring that current and future students with disabilities are able to seek admission to the University on the same basis as other students without a disability discrimination. It's role and responsibilities include:

- 1.1 To support eligible students enrolled in an assessed course who have temporary or permanent impairments that affect their ability to learn or completed an assessment;
- 1.2 To carry out needs assessment;
- 1.3 To develop Learning Support Plans;
- 1.4 To advise students about other University such as Academic Skills Centre, Student Care, internships and Employment, Mentoring and the UC Health Centre;
- 1.5 To coordinate the provision of specialised services. EDS will work with other University services to ensure that accommodations are enabled, e.g. working with the, furniture and equipment providers;
- 1.6 To work with relevant departmental/school staff to provide advice and guidance to ensure that accommodations and supports recommended in the Learning Support Plan are understood and provided;
- 1.7 EDS has responsibility for training all reader/writers, note-takers and other support staff;
- 1.8 EDS is responsible for organising and funding high cost and specialist accommodations. This includes access to specialised equipment and technology (such as screen reading software) and specialist services such as Braille, sign language interpreting and reader/writers for tests and examinations;
- 1.9 Students have the option to disclose to EDS staff for the purposes of identifying and implementing appropriate education-related adjustments. Upon completion of enrolment a student gives consent for information to be shared within the University for the purposes of their education. This includes all relevant information about their impairment and its impact upon their ability to study;

Needs assessment, Learning Support Plans and Examination Special Arrangements

a) Needs Assessment

In carrying out a needs assessment, the information provided to EDS will be used but EDS may also seek external advice from appropriate professionals such as doctors, neurologists etc.

Those that require disability assistance animals can ask EDS and the UCSA what animals are permitted inside University and UCSA buildings.

EDS will meet with students who wish to receive support and the student complete a Learning Support Questionnaire. This in conjunction with the current medical information may be used to develop a learning support plan.

b) Learning Support Plans

This will be shared with the relevant department administrator, the student's lecturer and course tutors where applicable.

Plans may include:

- Note-taking requirements,
- Exam special arrangements,
- Use of assistive technology,
- Reformatting of course materials,
- Study/rest room,
- Field trip and placement assistance,
- Individualised campus orientation, and
- Environment considerations.

c) Examinations Special Arrangement and Special Consideration

When deciding what support is needed for examinations or tests, EDS use [*Achieve: Guidelines and Procedures for the Provision of Alternative Arrangements in Tests and Examinations to Student with Disabilities \(Achieve website\)*](#). The *Achieve Guidelines and Procedures* cover all provisions of alternative arrangements including

- the procedure for granting alternative arrangements,
- special exam and department test considerations,
- procedures for the provision of alternative venues for tests and examinations,
- the use of reader/writer and supervisors,
- rest breaks,
- extra time allowance,
- utilizing a New Zealand sign language interpreter,
- use of computer during test and examinations,
- voice recognition software,
- computer based tests and examinations,
- provision for alternative formats, and
- any assistive technology.

Special consideration applications, in addition to exams special arrangements, may be considered on a case by case basis. EDS will refer the student to the Records, Examination and Graduation Office to discuss a Special Consideration application in certain circumstances. Further information about Special Consideration can be found in the [*Special Consideration Regulations \(University Regulations website\)*](#), the [*Special Consideration Procedures and Guidelines \(PDF, 227 KB\)*](#) and on the [*Special Consideration webpage \(University Study website\)*](#).

2. Responsibilities of the University, Department/Schools and Academic Staff

a) To Students

The University will endeavour to provide up-to date, relevant information on all University activities. For example

- Course supports available;
- Information about departments and schools;
- The University shall endeavour to provide up to date, relevant inherent requirements relating to course information on all university activities i.e., course information.
- The University will provide better online course content information to maximise the student's ability to make an informed choice around study options and help the student take into account the functional impact of their impairment, diagnosis or disability.
- Brochures on supports available (Service Units, University websites) to make people aware of access to higher education whether from secondary school or after leaving secondary school.

The University uses a number of best practice sources regarding universal teaching and learning principles (see the “**Useful Information for Staff**” sub-heading on the [Alternative Format Centre \(AFC\) webpage \(EDS website\)](#) for access to the principles themselves).

The Department/School shall endeavour to teach using best practice universal design principles for learning below:

- Multiple means of representation,
- Multiple means of action and expression,
- Multiple means of engagement, and
- Combine the principles where possible with technology.

The Department/School is responsible for providing support in line with any Learning Support Plans recommended by EDS.

- Each Department/School is expected to encourage inclusive teaching practice using universal design principles for teaching and learning. The Academic manager should nominate a Disability Liaison Person (the Liaison) to work with EDS in order to achieve this goal. The Liaison would also work with EDS and the individual student to devise Learning Support Plans.
- The Department/School will provide support and/or alternative teaching arrangements in line with universal design principles (e.g., time extension, adapting course delivery etc.) to allow students to satisfy the assessment or other requirement as stated in the course outline.

Note: Alternative teaching arrangements should not compromise academic standards, the essential nature of the course nor what are deemed to be essential skills or knowledge in relation to the course

Teaching staff can contact the education department specialist in inclusive teaching practice for advice on support and alternative teaching arrangements.

- The Department/School will discuss any issues regarding the compatibility of the course requirements and the student's disability with EDS.
- Department/Schools are to assist EDS in identifying students with the appropriate subject knowledge and skills to fulfil support positions e.g., note-taking, reader/writers and test supervisors.

b) To Staff

The University [Equal Employment Opportunity Policy \(PDF, 257KB\)](#), sets out the University specific commitments towards staff members with disabilities.

Support information for staff members can be found in the [HR Toolkit \(University Human Resources intranet\) \(Staff only\)](#), the [Health and Safety Toolkit \(University Health and Safety intranet\) \(Staff only\)](#) and from the [UC Human Resource advisors \(University About UC website\)](#) directly.

3. Responsibilities of Students

Registration with EDS

To use the services EDS provides a Student will need to be registered with EDS and have a current Learning Support Plan.

To register with EDS the student must provide EDS with:

- a) Up-to-date relevant medical evidence regarding the current status of their medical condition.
- b) for students with specific learning difficulties (SLD's), provide reports, completed by an Educational Psychologist or a Level C Assessor that are less than 4 years old, where learning difficulties are present.

The purpose of disclosure is not to exclude students from opportunities for the purposes of identifying and implementing appropriate education-related adjustments but enable access to a safe environment with appropriate adjustments.

Returning Students will need to re-register at the beginning of each academic year, or if possible at the end of the previous academic year in order that any changes in need can be addressed.

Change of Circumstance

Students must advise EDS as soon as possible of any change to their impairment/disability, or their course of study, that could alter the support or accommodations required.

Students must also advise EDS as soon as possible if any difficulties arise with the support or accommodations offered.

Examinations and Tests

Students should apply to EDS as soon as possible if special arrangements to be made for any tests or examinations are required.

A student sitting department tests must contact the Departmental Administrator at least 10 working days' before the date of the test if they require special arrangements to be made (see the [EDS web pages \(University Equity and Disability Service website\)](#) for further information). Failure to do so may mean you lose the ability to have special accommodation to sit your test.

Information on arrangements for mid and end of year formal examinations are available on the [EDS web pages \(University Equity and Disability Service website\)](#)

Limitations to the Provision of Support

Students must attend all lectures, seminars workshops, or field trips where support or accommodation has been provided. If unable to attend the student must advise their EDS Advisor as soon as possible.

Continuing failure to advise your EDS Advisor of non-attendance may result in the supports being withdrawn or recovery of costs from the student sought. One off absence or late notification of absence may mean that that support will still have to be paid by EDS regardless of the support not being delivered by EDS. These costs may be forwarded on to the student, at the discretion of EDS.

Equity funding from the Tertiary Education Commission provides funds for the majority of the work of EDS, with the University providing additional funding dependent upon the needs of the students with impairments in any given year. It is possible to envisage a circumstance where the University could decide that a person's impairment is such that specialist services or facilities cannot reasonably be made available. The University is bound by the provisions of the in dealing with those situations.

Note: New building and renovations to existing buildings will be up to code and therefore will meet legal requirements.

Complaints

Any concerns in relation to decisions made under this policy should in the first instance be discussed with the EDS Team Leader, and/or the Head of Department/School.

Academic issues should be raised with reference to the [Academic Appeals and Grievances Principles and Procedures \(PDF, 396KB\)](#).

Non-academic issues should be raised using the information on the *Raise a Concern* webpage.

Note: This does not prevent a student pursuing the matter through an external agency such as the Human Rights Commission or the Health and Disability Commissioner.

Tautuhinga | Definitions

Bio-psycho-social model of disability – understands functioning and disability as a dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, both personal and environmental¹.

Disability – the [New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 \(Office for Disability issues website\)](#) defines disability as “*something that happens when people with impairments face barriers in society*”².

Disability Liaison Person – the person nominated by a department or school to liaise with the Equity and Disability Service (EDS) and be involved in the devising of Learning Support Plans.

Equity and Disability Service (EDS) – University service area dedicated to assisting students with impairments by providing appropriate, disability-related study support services and specialist resources.

Impairment – the manifestation/s of a disability which may be sensory, physical, neurological psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments. An impairment can be temporary or long-term condition, illness or injury that affects a student's ability to learn, to communicate, to concentrate, to remember, to hear, to be ambulant, to speak or see.

Learning Support Plan – document to communicate the reasonable accommodations to be made on behalf of a student with an impairment as a result of a needs assessment. This plan is written by EDS in consultation with the student and the Disability Liaison Person from the relevant department or school.

Needs Assessment – assessment carried out by EDS in conjunction with the student, and with input from academic staff and external professionals where necessary, to ascertain which reasonable accommodations should be made to ensure the student has equality of opportunity whilst at the University.

Note-taker – a person who attends lectures to take notes for a student whose impairment makes the taking of notes difficult or impossible.

Reader/writer – a person who assists a student with an impairment in an exam or test situation by reading the questions and/or writing answers as dictated by the student, where

¹ [World Health Organisation, “World Report on Disability” 2011, pg 4](#)

² [Disability Strategy 2016-2026 Office for Disability Issues, pg 12](#)

the student's impairment is such that it is difficult or impossible for the student to do so unaided.

Reasonable Accommodation – the disabling nature of a student's impairment is taken into account, and appropriate adjustments are made to aspects of the teaching and learning context, whenever it is necessary, possible and reasonable to do so. Reasonable accommodations should not compromise academic standards, the essential nature of a course, nor what are deemed to be essential skills or knowledge in relation to a course.

Staff or staff member – person/s engaged for paid employment with the University by way of an employment agreement.

University community– for the purposes of this policy, “University community” is defined as the set of all current student and staff members.

He kōrero anō | Related Documents and Information

Whakaturetanga | Legislation

- [Education Act 1989 \(New Zealand Legislation website\)](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1993 \(New Zealand Legislation website\)](#)

UC Regulations

- [Special Consideration Regulations \(PDF, 44KB\) \(University Regulations website\)](#)

Te Pātaka Kaupapa Here | UC Policy Library

- [Academic Appeals and Grievances Principles and Procedures \(PDF, 396KB\)](#)
- [Assessment Policy, Principles and Guidelines \(PDF, 267KB\)](#)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity Policy \(PDF, 203KB\)](#)
- [Equity and Diversity Policy \(PDF, 224KB\)](#)
- [Special Consideration Procedures and Guidelines \(PDF, 215 KB\)](#)

Te Pae Tukutuku me te Ipurangirotu o UC | UC Website and Intranet

- [EDS \(University Equity and Disability Service website\)](#)
- [HR Toolkit \(University Human Resources Intranet\) \(Staff only\)](#)
- [Health and Safety Tool Kit \(University Health and Safety Toolkit\) \(Staff only\)](#)
- [Prepare for Safe Field Activity \(Health & Safety intranet\) \(Staff Only\)](#)
- [Support Student with a Disability \(Health & Safety intranet\) \(Staff Only\)](#)
- [Enrol at UC \(University Enrol website\)](#)

Mōwaho | External

- [Achieve \(Achieve website\)](#)
- [BRANZ \(BRANZ website\)](#)
- [Building Code Hub: MBIE \(Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment\)](#)
- [Human Rights Commission \(New Zealand Human Rights Commission website\)](#)
- [Kia Orite Achieving Equity: New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments \(Achieve website\)](#)
- [Office for Disability Issues \(Office for Disability Issues website\)](#)
- [The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2001 \(Office for Disability Issues website\)](#)
- [New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026 \('Disability Strategy'\) \(Office for Disability Issues website\)](#)

This policy remains in force until it is updated.

Document History and Version Control Table			
Version	Action	Approval Authority	Action Date
<i>For document history and versioning prior to 2013 contact ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz</i>			
1.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conversion of document onto new template.• Changed PVC, SS&I to Director, SSAC in line with current title.• Hyperlinks updated.	Policy Unit	Sep 2013
1.01	Document review date pushed out.	Policy Unit	Mar 2014
1.02	Hyperlinks updated.	Policy Unit	Jul 2014
1.03	Review date pushed out.	Policy Unit	Sep 2014
2.00	Scheduled review by Contact Officer.	Policy Unit	Apr 2015
3.00	Scheduled review by Contact Officer, major changes, name change from <i>Disability Policy – Students</i> , policy re-write	Executive Director, Student Services and Communications	Dec 2018
4.00	Schedule review by contact officer, change from DRS to EDS	Policy Unit	Oct 2019
4.01	Scheduled review date pushed out, template reformatted.	Policy Unit	Nov 2021
4.02	High-level revision, no change at this time.	DVC (Academic)	Mar 2026