

# Disability Action Plan 2014-2018

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## Foreword

The Disability Action Plan (2014-2018) continues the University of Melbourne's proud history of supporting students experiencing disability to participate equitably in the academic and co-curricular environment. From the establishment of a Handicapped Students' Advisory Committee in 1968, to being the first University in Australia to lodge a Disability Action Plan with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1994, the University has remained at the forefront of changing understandings of, and approaches to, disability service provision in the higher education sector.

The University continues its commitment to the ongoing review and improvement of its policies and practices that relate to disability through the Disability Action Plan (2014-2018). The Plan details the University's aims and strategies for proactively addressing the challenges of achieving equitable access - physical, informational and attitudinal, for students with disabilities and reaffirms the University's commitment to providing a rich Melbourne experience for all of its students.

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## Background

In 2013, a review of the Disability Action Plan 2008-2013 (DAP2008) was conducted in consultation with faculties, services and students, and a summary of performance against targets was produced (see the Review in Appendix A). The Review also highlighted work yet to be finalized as well as areas for improvement. The Disability Action Plan 2014-2018 (DAP2014) carries forward the goals of DAP2008 and outlines both practical and aspirational targets for the life of Plan.

## Vision

The University aspires to be recognized as a leader in disability services, ensuring that students with disabilities are able to participate fully in educational programs and student life and be free from harassment and discrimination. DAP2014 therefore is designed to further these goals and aspirations.

## Aims

The Review of the DAP2008 highlighted both our achievements as well as areas for improvement. Importantly, this Plan sets the foundation on which to continue the good work of the University and shape our goals for the next five years. In developing these goals, DAP2014 continues to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the Education Standards<sup>1</sup> as well as the Australian Vice – Chancellors' Committee Guidelines for upholding academic standards and providing students with disabilities opportunities 'to realize their academic and social potential'<sup>2</sup>. DAP2014 therefore aims to:

- Develop a culture that understands and responds to disability as the obligation of all. Such a culture recognizes that the 'quality of life of a community is improved by the inclusion of all persons in that community'<sup>3</sup>, and enables students with disabilities to be active participants in all aspects of university life. This requires:
  - improved awareness and education;
  - supporting policies and procedures and
  - effective leadership and networks.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/DisabilityStandards/Pages/Disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/resources/343/327>

<sup>3</sup> Judge Graeme Innes, of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, in the case of Scott and Bernadette Finney on behalf of Scarlett Finney v. The Hills Grammar School, No. H98/60, paragraph 6.16 (<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/scott-and-bernadette-finney-behalf-scarlett-finney-v-hills-grammar-school-0>).

- Foster best practice and innovation in disability services. Importantly, being at the forefront requires a whole of university approach. This involves:
  - recognizing the critical role of research in informing disability practice and developing links with the research community;
  - benchmarking against other institutions recognized for their innovation and effectiveness in disability practices and research
  - embracing and applying innovative technology in the support of students; and
  - ensuring that activities are appropriately resourced.

**DAP2014 Aims To be achieved by end of plan (2018) unless otherwise stated.**

| Aims   | Administration and Policy  | Teaching and Learning   | Services and Campus Life  |
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| <p><b>Develop a culture that understands and responds to disability as the responsibility of all.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved awareness and education</li> <li>• Integrated policies and services</li> <li>• Mainstreamed services</li> <li>• Free of discrimination and harassment</li> </ul> | <p>Processes for managing disclosed information are streamlined and standardised to improve the experience of students with disabilities and ensure consistent application of the privacy policy by 2015. <b>Director, Student Services</b></p> <p>Local strategic and operational plans address DAP14 aims by including and measuring disability related activities, and are in line with the Staff Equity and Diversity Framework. <b>Deans and Heads of Budget Divisions</b></p>  | <p>Inherent requirements for all courses are developed and accessible to prospective and current students by 2015. <b>Deans</b></p> <p>Disability training and support is extended to all staff. <b>HR, Deans, Heads of Budget Divisions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All new staff will undertake DDA eLearning modules as part of their induction by 2015.</li> <li>• All current staff will have undertaken DDA training by 2018.</li> </ul> <p>A communication strategy to promote the use of disability-related resources to tutors and academic staff is developed and implemented by 2014. <b>Director, Student Services</b></p> | <p>Access and opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in co-curricular activities are actively promoted and published. Strategy to be developed by Dec 2014. <b>Academic Registrar</b></p> <p>Students with disability are actively supported into further study and transition to work. <b>Academic Registrar and PVC Equity and Student Engagement</b></p> <p>Disability awareness is actively promoted and all students are supported to understand how to contribute to a campus free of discrimination and harassment. <b>Academic Registrar and PVC Equity and Student Engagement</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Foster best practice and innovation in disability services.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research informed</li> <li>• Benchmarked</li> <li>• State of the art</li> <li>• Resourced</li> </ul>  | <p>A framework and protocols are established to improve statistical information, including the recording of and reporting on students with disabilities. <b>Academic Registrar</b></p> <p>A university-wide Disability Reference Group, responsible for leadership and strategic advice on disability, including the DAP2014, is established. <b>Associate Director, Student Programs</b></p> <p>Regular reviews of disability services are conducted and recommendations implemented. <b>Manager, Disability Liaison</b></p> <p>A benchmarking activity with internationally recognised institutions is undertaken and completed by 2015. <b>Manager, Disability Liaison</b></p> <p>All web sites and applications which form part of the University web presence are compliant with web accessibility guidelines by 2015. <b>ITS and Deans and Heads of Budget Divisions</b></p> | <p>Technological and online solutions to improve disability support are actively investigated, resourced and implemented. <b>Academic Registrar</b></p> <p>All subject and course materials are available in formats that can be accessed by assistive technology, such as screen-reading software, by 2015. <b>Deans and DVC Academic</b></p>  | <p>Formal links are established by 2014 with the Student Union, Clubs and Societies to improve access and participation in co-curricular activities. <b>Manager, Disability Liaison</b></p> <p>Accessibility is considered in the design and delivery of University events for prospective and current students, alumni and members of the public. <b>DVC Engagement, Academic Registrar, PVC Equity and Student Engagement</b></p> <p>A digital media strategy is developed by 2014 to promote wellbeing, provide real time advice and foster networking opportunities for students with disabilities. <b>Associate Director, Student Programs and Associate Director, Wellbeing</b></p> |