



The University of Auckland

Review

Creating an inclusive teaching and learning environment for students with impairments

November 2009

Review Report

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Preface	2
Commendations and Recommendations	3
Introduction	7
Findings	10
1. Access to buildings facilities and equipment	10
Physical location of campuses.....	10
Buildings	10
Facilities and equipment	12
Subject material and lecture notes are on the institutional intranet and in accessible formats	13
Disability spaces.....	14
2. Examinations and assessment	16
Additional rooms for test and exam conditions	16
Reader/writers	17
Additional time.....	17
Alternative forms of assessment	18
A range of different assessment practices are used across each course.....	18
Students are offered optional assessment modes within a particular assessment task.....	19
Regulations.....	19
Strategies.....	19
3. Access to general and specialist services	19
3.1 Specialist services	19
Disability Services	20
University student call centre	21
Faculty Student Centres	21
Centre for Academic Development	21
University Health and Counselling Centre	21
Student Records Office	21
Examinations Office	21
Property Services	21
Library	22
3.2 Other specialist services	22
Note takers.....	22
Transcription Service.....	22
New Start.....	22
Maori and Pacific student support structures.....	22
Liaison people in faculties/service divisions.....	22
3.3 Information about services	23
3.4 Location of support services	23
4. Teaching and Learning	24
4.1 Encouraging students to ask for support	24
The importance of disclosure	24
Reasons for non-disclosure	25
Privacy issues	26
Other challenges	26
4.2 Inclusive teaching and learning practices	27
Other issues identified by staff	29
5. Staff development	31

6. Policy and guidelines	33
7. References.....	34

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Preface

This is the report of a predominantly qualitative study instigated by the Equity Office to raise awareness of inclusive teaching and learning for students with impairments and identify current practices and structures that support these students at The University of Auckland. The best practice standards related to teaching and learning as outlined in *Kia Ōrite* (2004)¹ were used to guide the review process (and the structure of the report).

The findings reflect well on The University of Auckland. The provision of services that support the teaching and learning of students with impairments is both appreciated and effective. There is a willingness on the part of academic and general staff to implement inclusive teaching and learning practices. Respondents to the review identified many examples of successful strategies that have been implemented.

There are opportunities for enhancement of services and facilities to support effective teaching and learning. The following were frequently identified as opportunities to assist academic and general staff and students with impairments:

- Additional information about services available to support the learning of students with impairments, for both staff and students.
- Guidelines, seminars and training for staff in both teaching and operational roles to create a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for students with impairments.

The review was conducted in three stages; interviewing students with impairments (n=11); interviewing staff whom students had identified as supporting their learning at the University (n=15); and an all-staff survey with separate academic and general staff versions (433 respondents). There was considerable synergy of views between staff and students and also between academic and general staff.

A Review Working Committee was established to provide advice, share knowledge and experiences and provide comment. Committee members were selected to provide specialist expertise and representation from key stakeholder groups. The Terms of Reference agreed by the Working Committee were:

1. Identify current practices and structures that support inclusive teaching and learning for students with impairments within The University of Auckland;
2. Develop and promote information to support University of Auckland staff in the application of inclusive teaching and learning practices for students with impairments;
3. Develop and promote information about successful strategies to support learning for prospective and current students with impairments;
4. Provide information to staff and students about what to avoid when supporting teaching and learning of students with impairments."

Trudie McNaughton
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity)

¹ The University of Auckland is required by TEC to implement the best practice principles outlined in '*Kia Ōrite: Achieving Equity. New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments*'.

Commendations and Recommendations

The following commendations and recommendations have been developed in light of the review findings, best practice standards in Kia Ōrite and the expertise of the Review Team, Review Working Committee, Teaching Learning and Quality Committee and the Equity Committee.

1. Policy

Commendations:

- The University of Auckland includes a clause regarding students with disabilities in the "Teaching and Learning Policy, Assessment of Student Learning" (Special Arrangements for Assessment)
- The Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences has developed a "Code of Practice for Fitness to Practice" to provide guidance for staff and students.
- The Faculty of Education Equity Committee is considering issues related to eligibility for professional registration for students with some types of impairments.
- The Board of Graduate Studies has revised The University of Auckland's doctoral scholarships regulations to enable domestic students with socially compelling reasons (which includes impairments or disabilities) to access doctoral scholarships part time.

Recommendations:

- 1.1 The Equity Office and the Registrar explore the appropriateness of including a reference to consideration of impairments and other equity issues within the University "Establishment of a Policy within the University of Auckland Procedure Document".
- 1.2 The Teaching Learning and Quality Committee developing guidelines to support the learning needs of students with impairments. This would include responsibilities of faculties, service divisions, staff and students and reference to the process for student complaints and appeal.

2. Access to buildings and facilities

Commendations:

- Property Services is responsive to issues for students with disabilities.
- Security staff support students with physical impairments to access disability parking.
- Students with impairments at The University of Auckland consider the provision of disability study spaces to be a valuable resource.
- Some faculties and departments have made provision for students with impairments to access rest spaces.

Recommendations:

- 2.1 The Equity Office and Property Services develop and promote guidelines to assist faculties, service divisions and departments reduce physical barriers for students with impairments as appropriate.
- 2.2 That the Equity Office and Property Services continue to monitor the accessibility of buildings and facilities for students with impairments to ensure they meet or exceed the standards identified in NZS 4121:2001: Design for Access and Mobility: Buildings and Associated Facilities.
- 2.3 The Equity Office, Equity Committee and Faculty Equity Committees review and promote the provision of study and rest spaces for students with impairments.

- 2.4 The Equity Office and Property Services work together to ensure principles of inclusive design in the Grafton redevelopment.

3. Examinations and assessment

Commendations:

- The Examinations Office ensures that students with impairments are able to access appropriate conditions for exams and tests, often at relatively short notice.
- Improvements have been made to the scheduling of exams held under special conditions.
- Some faculties have a liaison staff member with responsibility for supporting students with impairments which includes the co-ordination of appropriate arrangements for tests and examinations.
- The majority of academic staff review respondents are providing a range of different assessment practices across each course.
- The Examinations Office, departments and faculties provide many examples of flexible arrangements being made to accommodate students with disclosed impairments.

Recommendations:

- 3.1 The Equity Office and Examinations Office provide "Alternative Arrangement for Examination and Assessment" guidelines to ensure consistency across the University of Auckland in areas such as the use of reader/writers (amanuenses), computers, additional time and managing oral exams, and provision of appropriate spaces for exams and assessments. Guidelines should include student responsibilities such as to provide early notification of test timetables to Disabilities Services.
- 3.2 The Centre for Academic Development develops guidelines and training opportunities for academic staff to provide a range of assessment options across courses and, where appropriate, within particular assessment tasks.

4. Access to general and specialist services

Commendations:

- The University of Auckland provides a wide range of general and specialist support services. These services are valued by students with impairments and the staff who have supported their learning.
- Some faculties and departments have a staff member with specific responsibilities to support and coordinate resources for students with impairments.
- The Equity Office is providing a range of valued support strategies for students with impairments.

Recommendations:

- 4.1 The Equity Office develops and promotes additional information for staff and students about the services available to support students with impairments including eligibility requirements.
- 4.2 That each faculty nominate and publicise appropriate liaison person/s for students with impairments. This responsibility should be included formally in job descriptions.
- 4.3 The Equity Office ensures adequate transcription, sign language interpreters and alternative print services within the resources available.
- 4.4 The Equity Office ensures high standards of delivery from note takers and reader/writers.
- 4.5 The Centre for Academic Development and the Equity Office monitor the demand for services from students with learning impairments and ensure support is available within the resources available.
- 4.6 The Equity Office provides information to students on all campuses about access to facilities and services across The University of Auckland and supports students to access those services.
- 4.7 The Faculty of Education review the current location of the Disability Office at the Epsom Campus.

5. Teaching and learning

Commendations:

- The Centre for Academic Development supports staff to develop inclusive teaching and learning strategies including via aCADemix magazine.
- The Centre for Academic Development is responsive to providing academic assistance to students with impairments to enhance learning.
- Many of the staff respondents are incorporating a range of practices to support inclusive teaching and learning.
- Staff respondents are keen to enhance their practice.

Recommendations:

- 5.1 The Equity Office and the Centre for Academic Development explore with the Rūnanga appropriate strategies to support teaching and learning for Māori students with impairments.
- 5.2 The Equity Office and the Centre for Academic Development explore with the Pacific Reference Group appropriate strategies to support teaching and learning for Pacific students with impairments.
- 5.3 The Equity Office and the Centre for Academic Development develop information and training/awareness raising opportunities for all staff (including academic staff on fixed term contracts) to promote inclusive teaching and learning practices.
- 5.4 The Equity Office, Staff Advisory Committee, Human Resources and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to consider the incorporation of inclusive teaching and learning strategies into academic staff performance review and promotion criteria.
- 5.5 The Equity Committee explores appropriate ways to evaluate inclusive teaching and learning practices.
- 5.6 The Teaching Learning and Quality Committee include inclusive teaching and learning competence in the Teaching Excellence Awards.

6. Disclosure of information about impairments

Commendations:

- Many University of Auckland academic staff respondents are endeavouring to balance the need for students with impairments to access support and services, with respect for their privacy.

Recommendations:

- 6.1 The Equity Office develops and promotes guidelines for staff and students regarding disclosure of information on impairments and disabilities.

Introduction

In order to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive teaching and learning for students with impairments and to enhance their achievement at The University of Auckland, the Equity Office initiated this review – Creating an Inclusive Teaching and Learning Environment for Students with impairments – to provide initial research into student and staff perceptions of current practices and structures that support inclusive teaching and learning for students with impairments within the University.

Background

Government expectations about the kind of support tertiary education institutions should offer students with impairments are set out in Kia Ōrite: Achieving Equity, The New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments, published by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the Ministry of Education in 2004. Between 2004 and 2007, there was no requirement for tertiary institutions to implement the best practice guidelines. In 2008, TEC made explicit reference to this document on its website under the heading of TEO Component funding – Equity Funding.

According to the New Zealand Disability Survey 2001, one in five New Zealanders lives with a disability; and that disability increases with age. Kia Ōrite (p.47) attributes the instigation of the Special Supplementary Grants in 1998 to “a significant increase in the number of students with impairments participating in tertiary education”. Creating an inclusive teaching and learning environment is important given the prevalence of disability and that not all students choose to disclose.

This review project was implemented by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity) as a proactive approach to find out how well The University of Auckland provides an effective inclusive teaching and learning environment for students with impairments.

In 2008 a scoping exercise in preparation for the review was commissioned and carried out. The process for this included reviewing key documents and a wide range of interviews with key stakeholders within the University. The resulting report recommended that the focus of the review be on teaching and learning ‘as it cuts to the core function of the University from a student perspective’.

A Review Working Committee was established to provide advice, expertise and comment based on their knowledge of The University of Auckland and its practices. Committee members were selected to provide specialist expertise and representation from key stakeholder groups (Appendix 3). The Terms of Reference and objectives discussed and agreed by the Working Committee were as follows:

1. *Identify current practices and structures that support inclusive teaching and learning for students with impairments within The University of Auckland;*
2. *Develop and promote information to support University of Auckland staff in the application of inclusive teaching and learning practices for students with impairments;*
3. *Develop and promote information about successful strategies to support learning for prospective and current students with impairments;*

4. *Provide information to staff and students about what to avoid when supporting teaching and learning of students with impairments."*

Methodology

The review employed a mixed method strategy that was primarily qualitative. There were three key phases:

- Semi-structured interviews with students who have an impairment or impairments.
- Semi-structured interviews with staff who were identified by the students as having assisted their learning at the University.
- An anonymous online staff survey designed to raise the awareness of staff about the importance of inclusive teaching and learning strategies and to collect data relating to examples of good practice and what to avoid.

An important consideration for the strategic review was to provide an opportunity for all staff to contribute. Therefore a limitation of the methodology is that the respondents are self-selected (rather than a random sample). It is therefore likely they will have interest in creating an inclusive teaching and learning environment either positively or negatively and it is therefore not possible to make inference for the population at large.

The findings in this report represent the responses given to interviews and the staff survey. Absence of specific issues or topics should not be construed as negative; it is simply that they were not raised.

Terminology

The following definitions were used by the review team:

An inclusive learning environment is one which identifies and removes barriers in all areas of campus life.

Impairments include: Deaf, hearing, blind, vision, head injury, medical conditions, mental health conditions, mobility/physical, speech and learning impairments.

Kia Ōrite (2004, p.10) uses the New Zealand Disability Strategy definition of disability, stating:

"We acknowledge the different viewpoints that exist with regard to the language around disability. The language we have chosen fits with the social model of disability. By referring to students with impairments, and to the interaction between the student with the impairment and the tertiary environment as creating disability, we separate out what can be changed. This is a useful tool for creating an inclusive environment."

General principles which underpin the creation of a fully inclusive tertiary education environment for students with impairments are outlined in Kia Ōrite (2004, pp.11, 12):

1. *Students with impairments are provided with equitable opportunities to achieve their individual capabilities and participate in all aspects of tertiary education life.*

2. *All interactions with people with impairments are characterised by respect for their rights, dignity, privacy, confidentiality, and equality.*
3. *Students with impairments are able to participate in an environment that is free from harassment and discrimination where both staff and students are aware of their rights and responsibilities under legislation.*
4. *Policies, procedures, services and facilities, including strategic planning and resource allocation, enable students with impairments to achieve equitable access to tertiary education and the full range of activities that encompass campus life.*
5. *An equitable learning environment is created by considering the needs of students with impairments in all aspects of the learning process, including course design, curriculum, delivery, assessment and support strategies.*
6. *Students with impairments are enabled to participate in their course of study on equal terms with other students.*
7. *Staff are trained to meet the requirements of students with impairments, they invite these students to discuss their requirements and treat requests promptly and seriously.*
8. *Students with impairments:*
 - a. *Make known their requirements in advance, so appropriate services are provided.*
 - b. *Where possible, share responsibility for negotiating and developing solutions.*
 - c. *Advise institutions of difficulties they encounter.*

Principles

A general principle underpinning the value of an inclusive teaching and learning environment is that in making proactive system-wide changes all students and staff can benefit and fewer students with impairments will need to make individual requests for support:

Inclusive practice in the provision of reasonable adjustments will remove the need for large numbers of often unwieldy adjustments. (Healy, M. et al 2008)

Kia Ōrite (2004, p.10) also notes that *the implementation of many of the Best Practice Standards would also have a positive impact on staff, particularly those staff who have or develop impairments.*

Findings

Where possible the findings are reported using topic headings which correspond to Best Practice Standards for Creating a Fully Inclusive Environment outlined in Kia Ōrite Achieving Equity: New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments (2004).

Full reports of interview and staff survey findings, which include methodology and respondent profiles, are provided in Sections 2 and 3 of this report.

The findings from each phase of the review process showed there was considerable synergy between the views held by students and staff and also between general and academic staff. These findings provide valuable information to develop and promote information towards creating a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for students with impairment studying at The University of Auckland.

1. Access to buildings facilities and equipment

Students with impairments will have equitable access to the physical environment within the tertiary institution in which they will study, learn, live and take part. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p. 28)

While progress is being made towards better access to buildings and facilities, it would appear from the review respondents there is still a way to go. More general staff than academic respondents to the staff survey said they notify management or Property Services where there are difficulties with the physical environment. Some (more academic than general) said they would consider doing this in the future.

Key issues arising from the interviews and staff survey relating to access issues include:

Physical location of campuses

Concerns were raised about the ease of access, particularly but not only for students with physical mobility and/or visual impairments to move around the University, particularly the City campus. Respondents cited that the hilly terrain, traffic, pavements constantly being dug up and slippery leaves contributed to access issues. An absence of ramps near external stairs in some places was also mentioned.

The fact that we are on the side of a hill in the middle of the city and they keep digging up the footpaths and we are in an environment where property is expensive and so we have to make the most of the space that we have got.

Even though you've got a [mobility] scooter, a scooter can only do so much. Like when there were road works around.

Buildings

Many of the expressed concerns relate to older buildings. However, it appears that newer buildings, or those which have been recently altered, can also be problematic (e.g. Owen G Glenn Building, School of Population Health, General Library). Key issues raised by review respondents primarily relate to:

- Lifts
[The access lift in the General Library] is used by various people, the students with a disability but also parents and so on. There have for a long time been complaints about how that doesn't work very well. It's to do with the closing, there is an automatic closing door that doesn't really close properly and the library's position has pretty well been that it does work properly, you just have to make sure that the door closes. There is no buzzer where somebody can say come and help me, this isn't working. You are out of the library and so you are not going to be able to get in... And if you take away over bridges it's just not acceptable that you have worse access.

...There's no lift in that building...you have to go through that building, go up in the lift, go up to the third floor and then walk....and for me that's usually quite a bit of a hike.

- Doors
Access is always a challenge... at Tamaki we have got those new buildings but the Code of Compliance is not necessarily good enough. For example at Tamaki the toilet buttons: I have full hand function and I find them hard to press, so someone with limited hand function is going to find it hard.

There are no automatic doors leading into the Business Student Centre area or into the Postgraduate Office reception area in the OGGB.

- Toilets
There is too much of a 'passing the buck' mentality, especially when it comes to facilities such as disabled toilets. These things should be a given in this type of environment, not something that should be fought for by a Department on behalf of a student. The basic facilities such as toilets are an embarrassment in parts of the campus.

Disappointment re inadequacy of toilet facilities for those students in wheel chairs - a male after he has left the building his class is taught in, travelled a short distance outside before entering another building and then required to use female toilets while someone stands watch for him.

The campus as a whole (Epsom) is geared towards the able-bodied student. We have lecture theatres that do not have spaces for students in wheel chairs, doors that are stiff, narrow and difficult to go through, very limited disability toilet access (if you have a class in T block and you are in a wheelchair you have to go out the building, up the sloping driveway 150m to the main road, along the front, past gateway 4, then down the Gate 3 driveway 150m to A block, for a disability toilet; the women's disability toilet on level 3 N Block has a fire hydrant hose holder in the way of accessing the toilet).

- Resources
Flexibility to support access issues for students with impairments may be constrained by budgetary considerations and what money is available through Property Services for work on making buildings more accessible etc, for example, alterations to buildings, building ramps for easy access, door actuators, signage etc.

Facilities and equipment

Campus facilities, equipment and events are accessible to all students with impairments. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p. 30)

Concerns raised by respondents regarding facilities and equipment include:

- Difficulty accessing seating
Physically lifting a student in a wheel chair down the steps in a lecture theatre because they could not access the room in any other way.

One paper I did, the lecture theatres were the old style ones so they were not required to comply with the Building Code, so that meant I had to sit up the back and had difficulty hearing and especially stage one papers where it is filled with students, hundreds of students. I like to sit at the front so I can hear everything. As you move up in the years though, in say stage 2 and 3, the lecture rooms are more accessible because there are fewer students.

A student who sat at the back of a small class in a large lecture theatre—rather than grouping together with the other students explained that the reason she did so was because she had mobility problems ascending and descending the stairs (she is obese).

- Poor acoustics
The PA system [in the Owen Glen building] is brand new, top of the range. But it's too echoey. And I thought initially it was just me, just the way I am processing the sounds. But then talking to other students they are saying yeah, the acoustics are terrible. I think it's just set up wrong. It took forever for someone to do something about it. I went to my Audiologist because initially I thought it was just the setting on my device and he had several theories about the speakers [in the lecture theatre], but we got nowhere in getting the technician to look into them. And health professionals were saying [to the technicians] you need to do something about this, we have got three deaf people in this room and they can't hear anything. Never mind the non-deaf students who can't hear either.

One staff survey respondent noted improvements to acoustics:

Reverberation time in acoustic specifications for pool teaching spaces has recently been decreased to improve speech intelligibility.

- Inflexible lighting
Lighting design that has a positive impact on people with vision impairments. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p. 31).

An academic staff member who participated in an interview explained that a student with a medical condition triggered by harsh lighting was unable to be accommodated without compromising other students.

The course is taught in HSB1 and I keep the lights on. There is not really a dimming function in that room, so either you have to have all the lights on or you turn them all off. I do want to accommodate the student, but in past courses when I have reduced the lighting, I have gotten negative comments from students saying it is too dark. So I am aware of trying to balance other students' needs and wants with individual students. I would be perfectly

happy to dim the lights but I think shutting them all off is not where I want to go.

- Access to transport and parking
Information on the UOA website regarding disability access/parking needs to be kept up to date.

If we are going to continue to schedule split courses across two campuses, then realistically there should be some accessible means of moving students. ... Well also to be honest, there aren't very many accessible buses in Auckland. Properly accessible buses and if you are talking about moving a car chair, you are almost never going to get a power chair on any bus, so there needs to be some kind of thinking outside the square.

[Access to disability parking is] brilliant. I investigated going to Victoria University, but their parking is on a time by time basis, that's how bad it is in Wellington. So I couldn't go there... But sometimes I miss some of my lecture because I have to get in touch with security and give them the keys [because someone has taken the park] ... it's just another burden, another barrier. But security has been brilliant.

Subject material and lecture notes on the institutional intranet and in accessible formats

Student respondents stated that access to notes, preferably in advance of lectures, was important to them as visual, physical and learning impairments can all impact significantly on their ability to take notes and/or to follow a lecture.

Lecturers being organised, having the PowerPoints for the lecture, the readings, all that up there way before ahead of time, so you can familiarise yourself with the information and have that already there in your thoughts and then the lecturer comes You can start connecting the dots. (Student, learning impairment)

One of my co-ordinators has been really good. For one course there are really only three people I have to contact every week because the co-ordinator has just told all of the Lecturers involved in that course who I am and they just come in with a set of notes.

Most of the lecturers interviewed were supporting this practice and some with course coordination responsibilities were strongly advocating the practice to others.

I coordinate [and ensure] that all the PowerPoint lectures were put on Cecil so that means that they have got the material there that is accessible ... interestingly you do see students with these recorders there and that might be because English is not their first language or something like that. I think we have a very comprehensive course book, so without saying that we are doing this for students with disabilities, the fact that what we cater for that group of students in that course.

I encourage staff to have notes early, if I am coordinating because I like, for example, to make notes available to writers in the group or to the Disabilities Coordinator. I do put the notes up on Cecil now, but I did talk about that with the students and I say that some people like to have the notes so they can sit and listen and some people like to be able to write

and that's a free choice. But I like to make available the choices to students. I don't like them to think that they are not smart enough to write their notes.

Most of the academic survey respondents also said they always or often supply subject material and lecture notes in advance to enable a student to prepare for a class. However, this may not always involve putting them on the intranet. Of those saying they never or only sometimes do this, a few had not considered the importance of this but would consider doing it in the future.

Time constraints were an issue for some.

I do not have time to convert my lecture notes and resources for delivery via Cecil. I intend in future to include this role in my tutor's job description and contract, if I can win departmental support for this initiative. On completing this survey, I am now thinking of presenting that as an equity as well as T&L initiative.

The majority of academic and general staff respondents to the staff survey indicated that technological support (e.g. putting notes and material onto CECIL, PowerPoint and creating PDF documents) would assist them in their current role to create a more inclusive teaching and learning environment.

Disability spaces

A specific equipment area, often located in the library containing equipment suitable for students with impairments (e.g. computers with specialist software, Dictaphones, ergonomic chairs and desks). (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p. 32)

There are four designated study spaces and resource rooms listed on The University of Auckland website. These are the Todd Foundation Centre, the General Library Resource Room, the Kate Edger Information Commons Resource Room and the Law Faculty Resource Room. These spaces are considered to be a valuable resource by many of the students and staff who participated in the interviews.

I mean the thing about having that little disability space is if I'm having a really, really bad day I'm only in there with someone else who's disabled or I'm on my own whereas if I'm in the big student learning places and something won't go right or I can't remember how to work something I feel like a dipstick myself and I have to like turn around and say to some student excuse me could you..., so it is nicer to have that space because then if you've got a problem you can slow down or stop whereas if you're in a space where there's someone sort of standing in a queue waiting for your computer it's a bit different. I've got a computer at home but I would prefer to work here because at home there are too many other things. It's like going to work here and forget about what's at home.

However, these specialised spaces are not easily accessible to all the students who would like to use them.

Medical and Health Science doesn't have, for example, a Disability Room so I can't see any of the computers at Grafton.... The disability spaces on the city campus definitely [supports my study] because I am able to pull the computer as close as I want. They have software on it that helps in case there are things I can't see like zoom text and things like that.

The Todd Centre has wonderful facilities, is just too far away for some of the students with disabilities to get to and to be able to make use of and I think that in those cases we should have in the outlying Faculties a similar facility but again that would be a huge resource. (Staff member)

I would like to use the room where students go and lie down sometimes because I get tired. But it is such a rigmarole so it's easier to drive home and lie down... It's nothing to do with disabilities failing; it's just that it's another thing to have to sort out. I have to sort out my parking, I have to sort out note takers, I have to sort out lecture ... extra tutorial or extra test time and going and getting a room to sleep in is just another thing to do... Library disability spaces are another rigmarole. You have to go to the library people; they tell you that you have got to have some note from Disabilities. I can't be bothered.

One student who studies on the Grafton Campus described having to travel to the City Campus to use a disability space.

It's probably because they haven't had the need to have that sort of equipment before because usually students with [a visual] impairment would probably not either choose that course on purpose or for example usually if you have an impairment there is a lot of Lab work involved and it is quite hard so you would probably opt not to do it. So that is probably maybe why they don't have the facilities, but in spite of not having that, they have been so good personally that I really don't mind coming to the city and studying here. I have the photocopier here as well so it worked out well for me.

There are conflicting opinions as to how disability spaces should be equipped.

There's a problem with the computers [in the library disability space] they're a bit old ...

[Our faculty] provides the disability room and we provide the upkeep, but the equipment is owned by Disability Services and they are supposed to upkeep and upgrade it. This has fallen by the wayside in the last couple of years... I think it is resource constraints.

I think [disability] spaces are very important. It's whether the rapidly obsolete technology that we have got in those rooms is the real reason for those rooms to be there and traditionally that has been the idea that we set up [spaces] like the Todd Centre where four of the computers in there have access to Jaws. While most students with visual impairments now realistically will have access to, or should have access to their own copies of Jaws. ... and because of the requirements that we have to actually let people access that space. It is the only space with a disabled accessible toilet tucked away with a rest room, with height adjustable desks. We have to be quite selective who gets in that. I do think there is real value in those spaces, but I do begin to query whether there is more value in the collegiality of the study space aspect than there is in the adaptive tech.

[If equipment for students with disability is in] an open sort of area it can be disruptive to other students, then you get that thing where the disabled student might not use it because they feel their privacy is invaded and

they feel that other students are being disrupted and they have to moderate how they study. Whereas if it's in a closed room, then that has advantages but also disadvantages in that it tends to become a piece of equipment that may not be upgraded with everything else because it may not be in high use and maybe because it has its own special software and there is that extra thing if you have to make sure that if you upgrade it, you make sure everything works together.

2. Examinations and assessment

Assessment and examination policies, procedures and practices provide students with impairment with the same opportunity as their peers to succeed. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p. 37)

The University of Auckland Teaching and Learning Policy: Assessment of Student Learning has a clause pertaining to students with disability (p.6) which states:

The University is committed to ensuring accessibility of its courses, programmes and assessment procedures for all students with disabilities.

- *Teaching staff are required to respond positively to requests for reasonable adjustments to be made if assessment arrangements are likely to place a disabled student at a disadvantage over non-disabled students*
- *Assessment and examination practices and procedures should provide disabled students with the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.*

Different issues relating to examinations and assessment were raised by respondents in interviews and those who had completed the staff survey. Key concerns that were raised in the review process include the following:

Additional rooms for test and exam conditions

When asked about challenges they had experienced to their learning at the UoA, many of the students described experiences where inappropriate rooms had been provided for tests and exams.

I had a test which required power point slides to be shown, so you have to be in a room where a computer can play this and everybody else that does the test does it in a lecture theatre. Well [the lecturer] set up this space in a room [which as used by a number of people] and put a hand written sign on the doorway that said do not enter test in progress. You know what happened, about six different lecturers came in and one of them got quite stropky when my writer said they should leave as this was a test... Anyway I got a very poor mark because I lost my train of thought. I'm not writing it, I'm telling someone the details and my writer said are you sure you've finished, and I said I can't think any more, these people kept coming in and out so I, when I got the mark back I got quite a low mark.

I have had some negative experiences there, in that I have come early for my tests, because I have been given 20 minutes extra and then the rowdy lot comes in 20 minutes later and I am interrupted... I think I have said before about the education needed by the Faculties and I think the responsibility for that is with the University, so that lecturers, well meaning, kind hearted, good spirited as they are, don't plonk us in a room and then have other students turning up 20 minutes later or however long

later, to disrupt us or leaving and this has happened last year, last semester I might add, I had to stay longer in the room and the students left and chatted and cluttered and made a big noise.

A staff survey respondent also commented that there were not enough rooms in close vicinity to run exams for students with impairments and that there was increasing pressure on providing supervision.

Reader/writers

The provision of reader/writers (amanuenses) was considered to be an important service for many of the student interview participants. However, being able to use the service effectively is often challenging. In addition, a number of students expressed concerns about the variable quality of those fulfilling the role.

Sometimes I've had some terrible [writers]; I had to make a complaint about one of them once. Terrible! Never listened to what I said. Wrote the wrong things down and that's the other thing some of them don't listen. Some of them decide that they'll start the paragraph here when you actually want a paragraph started there. There are those sorts of problems and I did make a complaint last year about one of them that I had.

The attitude of the reader/writer is also important. One mature student with an impairment had experienced some difficulties when her writer was a student.

I feel like the student is looking down their nose at me as if, you know, this silly old lady hasn't really got a problem, they only find out when they get me to write my name on things and they're not supposed to do that, they're supposed to do everything for me but they sit there and think well there can't be anything wrong with her, she doesn't look disabled.

Some of those interviewed and some staff survey respondents believed that barriers would be reduced if computers could be used in tests and exams however it appears that current regulations do not allow for this.

But it's a rule of the council that the default option is that students where possible use amanuenses ... and more and more students are coming through NCEA who are having access to computers in examination. The problem is that there hasn't really been sufficient work done on perceived advantage when it comes to computer use because of the amount of information that many people are able to put out when they type, versus when they handwrite. There is a perceptual battle that needs to be fought, but there are also some practical needs to be figured out. Eventually I believe everyone will move on to using computers, because handwriting is becoming an obsolete art, but we still have an annual debate. There is a mechanism in place to get students assessed to use computers, which is by default done through the Student Learning Centre.

Additional time

Additional time allowances and the provision of rest breaks are available to students who meet the necessary criteria and for many these were described as crucial.

It is really good having [disability support] there because for one I can read much better if the print is larger, ... and with the tests as well having that extra time, I have 10 minutes extra per hour, because one eye is

worse than the other so I basically mainly use my left eye, so that helps during the test to have that extra time since I read slower.

However, one student mentioned that the exam accommodations approved for her were not what she considered to be the most appropriate for her impairments.

I get extra time in exams and we changed it last year ... I get rest breaks in exams and then I apply for extra time in exams and that was approved. Then the University re-evaluated everyone last year but didn't actually notify the students so when I came to sit my exams I was getting rest breaks instead of extra time and I got a little bit panicked but they re-evaluated it... they're trying to limit how many people get extra time in exams. They based my exams, I've got a heart condition as well which is quite mild, and they based part of it on that but it was just quite interesting seeing that they think rest breaks are more beneficial for me with chronic fatigue. ... While you're not mentally working your brain during that break, you still think about the exam but for me it can make me more tired.

A couple of participants also mentioned organisational issues in making arrangements for additional time in tests.

We've had instances where we've emailed a lecturer about a test and they've got back to us within a day which has been fantastic and generally Disabilities will say we're organising it through them or the lecturer actually wants you to go talk to them and they'll organise it through you which has happened a lot this semester. I think the worst instance was last year we couldn't actually get hold of a lecturer through phone or email. It got to a point where I was going up to his office every couple of hours to see if he was up there. (Student)

Alternative forms of assessment

The staff survey asked if appropriate arrangements are made for students with impairments to have alternative forms of assessment where required. The majority of academic respondents said that they always do this and many of those saying they never, or only sometimes, do this would consider doing it in the future.

A range of different assessment practices are used across each course

This includes tests, assignments and projects. Most of the academic survey respondents said they do this all of the time or often.

Students are offered optional assessment modes within a particular assessment task

Very few of the academic survey respondents said they always or often do this. Many said they had not considered the importance of doing this and half of those said they would consider doing it in the future. Some expressed concerns about the implications of this practice or requested clarification.

I found this a challenging question as this could compromise the reliability of assessments in some of our courses which are used for medical entry. The perception about optional modes of assessment would be problematic and open to criticism about fairness and reliability. It would be an interesting challenge to introduce as described in the question. The assessment design I tend to use is a range of modes which are completed by all students. The range of modes accommodates the strengths of learners as well as challenge them with modes which are not their preferred.

Clarification regarding assessment tasks and opportunities for and ideas about including different types of tasks.

Regulations

A number of concerns relating to perceived lack of flexibility in regulations such as completion times and late deletion policies were identified by staff survey respondents.

Students who have overcome mental illness and have previously failed courses as a result of this a long time ago are unable to have these excluded from academic transcripts used in job applications - even if the courses pertain to a completely different subject area than the student's successful degree. Invisible disabilities that are not disclosed go undetected.

Strategies

Review respondents identified a variety of examples of successful strategies relating to exams and assessment. These included:

- Online assessment.
- Contacting students who are slow in delivering work.
- Verbal and written peer feedback opportunities.
- Alternative forms of feedback negotiated with students with a particular difficulty (e.g. oral presentations).
- Improvements to scheduling of exams held under special conditions.
- Modifying assessment forms that unnecessarily disadvantage some students.

3. Access to general and specialist services

Students with impairments have equal educational opportunity through access to appropriate support and services. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p21).

3.1 Specialist services

Many of the University's support services were mentioned as being important by students and staff interview participants. In some cases there was a perception that more resources were required to enhance the service provided. Respondents

to the staff survey were also asked to comment on the listed services that provide support for students with impairments and could help develop an inclusive teaching and learning environment. Specifically, they were asked if they knew what each listed service offers and if they had either used the service themselves or referred students. If they did have experience of the service, they were asked to assess how helpful the service had been in offering support or advice for themselves or for students they had referred.

Disability Services

The majority of academic and general staff survey respondents said they were familiar with this service and what it offers (e.g. alternative print service, note takers, New Zealand sign language interpreters, specialist mental health support, specialist study space, and special conditions for tests). Less than half had contacted the service for support and advice or to refer students. Most of these found the service to be either very helpful or some help.

The UoA is difficult enough for able bodied students. I think the disability office these days is practical and sensible with actions they are taking to assist persons with impairments.

This service was also considered to be of great importance to most of the student and many of the staff interview participants.

The University doesn't make it easy. If it wasn't for Disability Services, I would have left here and gone. (Student)

I feel competent to deal with any situation, but I welcome the support of Disability Services and I could only operate with the help of Disability Services. (Staff member)

Some staff survey and interview respondents suggested there may be a lack of resources for this service.

I think I pointed out maybe in the beginning that I feel that with the Disability Services, often the intentions are good but funding is an issue I think and often what is available to you is either not convenient or not right for you as an individual and so on. I often feel that there needs to be a bit of communication between the Disability Services at the University and the students themselves.

Disabilities Office resource priorities (or financial resources?) do not meet demand for motorised wheelchairs. I have had over the years several students in wheelchairs who have had to cover long distances across campus with steep access paths in places. They have to leave classes early and are often late and physically drained, and sometimes embarrassed and distressed. Pushers have been arranged but not consistently.

Comments I receive from undergraduate students indicate that while Disability Support Services are very helpful they are understaffed and priority is sometimes given to postgraduate students particularly when dealing with transcription of lecture notes and reading materials. This results in time delays. Materials are also not always provided in a format readable by software such as JAWS. I know of one student who admitted she left the University to study at another tertiary institution which she felt better supported students with a disability.

University Student Call Centre

The majority of academic survey respondents said they were not familiar with what this service offers. However, the majority of general staff were. Most who had experience of the service found it to be very helpful or some help.

Faculty Student Centres

The majority of academic survey respondents said they were familiar with what these centres offer. Most who had experience of the service found it to be very helpful or some help.

Centre for Academic Development (CAD)

This centre includes the Student Learning Centre (SLC) which assists students with learning impairments. The majority of staff survey respondents were familiar with what CAD provides and those who had experience of the service mostly found it to be very helpful.

Two of the students who participated in interviews had learning impairments and had found SLC to be very useful but one had experienced some difficulties being able to access them when required.

University Health and Counselling Centre

Most students with impairments need to access Student Health and Counselling if they wish to apply for special conditions. However, this service was only specifically mentioned by one student in the interviews who said she 'found two people there to be spectacular' and one staff member who said she had received 'huge support' from them. Other staff and students said they had recommended the service to others.

Most of the staff survey respondents said they were familiar with this service and what it offered. Of those who had experience of it, most found it to be very helpful. Some suggested more resources may be required to support students with mental health related impairments.

The University Counselling Services provide an excellent service, however they can only offer students 10 free sessions. For most if not all mental illnesses, long term therapy is the best treatment (and much recent research supports this), however students cannot usually afford this for the duration of their studies.

Student Records Office

The majority of respondents said they were familiar with what this service offers and most who had experience of the service found it to be very helpful.

Examinations Office

The majority of respondents said they were familiar with what this service offers and most who had used the service found it to be very helpful or some help.

Property Services

The majority of respondents said they were familiar with what this service offers and, of those who had experience of the service, most found it to be very helpful or some help.

Library

The majority of respondents said they were familiar with what this service offers and, of the respondents, most academic staff found it to be very helpful and most general staff found it to be very helpful.

3.2 Other specialist services

The following services were not listed in the staff survey as specific University support services that have a role in contributing to an inclusive learning environment but were mentioned by interview participants and, in some cases, by staff survey respondents in the open-ended sections.

Note takers

The provision of note takers was considered to be an essential service to many of the students with impairments who participated in an interview. However, the quality of the service was reported as being highly variable.

I get some really good note takers and some that just can't be bothered or don't appreciate that they need to take proper notes. So it's more pot luck...

Transcription Service

The alternative print service was also seen as very useful to the students requiring this, but it can take too long to get material back (one of academic interviewees explained that her husband is reading material onto tape to bridge the gap).

A challenge on an ongoing basis...has been using the library, accessing literature and then having to send it away to my narrator to be narrated. The whole process is very long and time consuming. It's a huge rigmarole and once it goes to the narrator sometimes I have to wait a long time to get it back and in the meantime I need it and need it quickly, and it's not coming to me quickly.

New Start

New Start was mentioned positively by three of the students who participated in an interview as being the key to helping them adjust to study and linking them in with related services.

Maori and Pacific student support structures

While there was only one Maori and one Pacific student interviewed, reference was made to university culture support structures that they were able to access and one participant had found to be of great benefit.

Liaison people in faculties/service divisions

Some interview participants (staff and students) identified that having a student liaison person in faculties/service divisions and departments for students with impairments was advantageous. It seems that this service is more likely to be provided in the smaller faculties. Consequently in bigger faculties students and staff were less likely to know who to approach.

Each faculty needs a liaison person who would be the first 'port of call' for the student. This person would then disseminate the knowledge/updates to other staff members.

The staff survey asked respondents if they knew whether there was a liaison person to assist students with impairments in their faculty or service division. Fewer than half the academic and general staff respondents knew this and even fewer knew if there was one in their department.

3.3 Information about services

Many of the staff and students who participated in this review did not know what services were available to support students with impairments and/or who was entitled to use them.

I always presumed it was to do with wheelchairs or dyslexia or needing a reader or needing a writer for an exam or something like that – not the kind of work I was doing because so much of it was in my head.

You know when you start university you have no idea about what's going on. My dad was the one that said you have to go to Disabilities and I'm like but I don't come under a disability, and he said I think you should talk to them.

Most of the staff respondents wanted more accessible information for students and themselves.

A student with an impairment sitting out there would have to read into [the information and decide], do my issues fit at the Medical Centre or the Student Counselling because that is really not what I'm ... it's more of maybe a teaching and learning kind of thing.

Probably things like this survey, seminars profiling "places to go" or in general terms raising awareness of the general body of staff/students at the university on a more regular basis, "where to go" for inclusive support with the same profile given such things as fire/emergency drill. Find ways of disseminating inclusive literature within Faculties. Using special education/disability staff who have the special expertise required to be mentors/support persons, more professoriate in this area.

Yes. I would like to see, in publicly available print, a clear list of the actual services that all the University support services you list purport to provide. Does the student Records Office actually HELP students concerning withdrawals and late deletions etc? I thought it just dealt with the forms.

Some staff respondents said they try to ensure that, at the beginning of each semester and class, student support services were promoted.

3.4 Location of support services

Some staff and student interview participants pointed out that there was not equal access to support services across all campuses and the current location of the Disability Services Office at Epsom campus is not easily accessible by students with mobility impairments.

4. Teaching and Learning

All academic programmes are accessible to students with impairments, and staff design and implement appropriate teaching and learning strategies. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p.33).

4.1 Encouraging students to ask for support

Staff show a willingness to discuss support, invite students to approach them privately and contact students where performance may be affected by impairments. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p.35).

All staff participants in interviews and most of the academic survey respondents said that inviting students to make contact with them about any aspect of their class was important. However, most respondents said they never include a statement about their willingness to make arrangements for students with impairments in their course notes and the majority do not invite students to privately discuss their special learning requirements. Many said they would consider doing this in the future.

Staff survey respondents were also asked how easily they thought their faculty, department or service division enabled students to disclose impairments. While many others said they had no way of knowing, of those who made a specific response, just under half said they thought it would be "quite easy", more academic than general staff said "not easily". The open-ended responses to this question provide insight to the criteria staff applied in deciding how easy it might be for students to disclose.

The majority of staff survey respondents (academic and general staff) said they felt confident in supporting students with impairments.

The importance of disclosure

Communication systems are effective in providing relevant and timely information to both staff and students, and a safe environment exists for students to disclose information. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p.42).

Staff and student respondents in this review placed a high importance on the need for students with impairments to disclose in order to access the specific support they required.

It's just a matter of just going up to [lecturers]. I don't say this just for Pacific people, a lot of disability people as well, find it very scary going up to a lecturer and saying 'hey my name is so and so and I have this and that [impairment] and I'm just wondering if we can talk about a way that I can get more out of your class'... I don't think I've ever come across a situation where lecturers haven't been understanding, haven't been open to what you're saying because I think 90% of the time they want you to get the most out of it and they want to help you and it's just all about being there and just communicating ... the main thing that all of the people with different impairments will tell you is that as long as they communicate or as long as they know where disabilities [services] are they'll be fine.

More academic than general staff survey respondents said that students had disclosed to them in the last year. For most the number of students was fewer than five.

For some staff, little consideration appears to have been given regarding the probability of at least some of their students having permanent or temporary impairments.

I haven't encountered a student with impairments.

Others had considered this.

I'm sure I've had more than five students with difficulties in my various classes this past year.

A few staff and student respondents expressed concern students were often required to continually disclose their impairment/s and believe this to be unacceptable.

The 'policy' of non-disclosure and the implicit do nothing until neediness that this engenders is a major problem. I come from a background of active inclusion in schools where a partnership approach is the key. As the parent of a young woman with significant impairments I find the situation very frustrating when I have had experience of what can be achieved.

I don't think this is fair for the student. They should only have to tell a central administrator ONCE - who should then notify lecturers and work to ensure classes are made accessible. This might mean all the lecturers sitting down to have a discussion (perhaps with the student if they want this) to share ways to make learning accessible for specific students.

The view is often expressed that students do not need to disclose any need for support they have, in turn the attitude that staff need not bother about creating accessible learning environments until disclosure occurs seems to dissuade students from making the disclosure. I foster openness and show a willingness to try whatever it may take for a student to be more successful and in turn at times find other staff including support co-ordinator promoting the RIGHT to non-disclosure and not engaging to check if the student is succeeding. I have had debates and arguments over this stance. It would be fine if some of the principles of universal design & access were available more readily but they simply aren't.

Reasons for non-disclosure

Review respondents (students and staff) identified many reasons why students may choose not to disclose. These include:

- Lack of staff awareness may impede a supportive environment for students to disclose.
- Too much of a burden for students being required to continually disclose and/or being required to constantly verify their impairment/s.

I just think some departments could be a little more willing to take my word for it when I say I can't do something. I have had some experience where you say you can't do something and they say 'well why not?' And you say 'well it's like I can't hear', and you have to put it very simply and they still don't get it. And they are like, 'but I am talking to you now and you can hear me, so why can't you hear when I am talking in the lecture'.

I say, 'well the room is bigger, the acoustics are different, not one-on-one', I could go on forever, but it takes a lot of time to explain that.

- Current culture of the University may influence the level of safety students feel in disclosing some types of impairments (e.g. learning and mental health).

When [a potential research supervisor] found out that I had this impairment, she sort of questioned whether I would be okay doing the project and she didn't ... you could see she was on the fence as to whether she wanted to take me on when she found out. That actually got me quite upset because basically she started to suggest other career options for me and I didn't like that because I said to her I have proven myself in undergrad.

- Impairments may only be identified or begin after study begins. They also may fluctuate in terms of severity.

I am sometimes in a wheelchair and I sometimes cannot care for myself. I cannot comb my own hair or brush my own teeth or toilet myself. I cannot even write. ... That is one of the markers of [my medical condition] - the unpredictability.

Privacy issues

These issues included not wanting to be singled out as a student with impairments (stigmatised), students having to constantly verify their impairment, or choosing not to register with Disability Services or not realising that they need to register (there may be many reasons for this including all of the above).

...I had a phone call from a lecturer asking why they weren't told that a student was in a wheelchair when it was time for a test and they were booked in the upstairs room. I had to carefully explain to them that it was because the student had not registered with us and we didn't know that student was in a wheelchair and had no way of telling them that...

Other challenges

For some students their impairment is only one of a number of challenges they face. Other factors that were identified by students include illness, tiredness, family and cultural responsibilities.

Well my overall health ... plus I have got, as you get older, more people in your family get sick and die and they don't die quickly, so when you have got dying family left right and centre it does make attending difficult. On top of the health and disability issues it is just another thing to have to contend with as far as trying to study and succeed - to study successfully... [I failed two papers], because of failure to make satisfactory academic progress due to illness and family deaths. I think healthy and able-bodied people would take the family deaths in their stride because they are like the three-legged stool, but I am already the two-legged stool and then the family dying in the same year, that means I am a one-legged stool. Something is going to totter over. I am already disadvantaged by the physical and health impairments, I think able-bodied people find it difficult enough.

Reasons why students do not disclose are complex. Matthew (2009) notes that, writings on disability and pedagogy suggest that even academic staff, structurally empowered by their position as teachers, may find it difficult to disclose a disability in the classroom. A staff survey respondent's comment verifies this.

As a lecturer with a disability I have not disclosed my condition to anyone in an official role – although the opportunity to do so may exist. All I can say is there are situations in which the [invitation to disclose may be given] but whether students (or staff for that matter) feel enabled to disclose impairments is a matter that is influenced by many factors, including societal norms, University systems, personal and staff attributes and many other factors.

4.2 Inclusive teaching and learning practices

Student interview participants identified practices which had supported their learning at the University. Staff interview participants identified what they did to support inclusive teaching and learning practices. Staff survey respondents were given a number of examples of inclusive learning strategies and asked to indicate which they were currently incorporating and if there weren't whether they would consider doing so in the future.

Strategies that most academic, and where applicable most general staff, survey respondents said they are incorporating all of the time or often are:

- Creating a class climate where diversity is respected (includes different learning needs).
- Clarifying goals and expectations at the beginning of the session.
- Providing information in oral and written form.
- Ensuring that oral communication is clearly enunciated and the student's sightline is not obscured. If appropriate, a microphone is used. (The majority of general staff respondents also do this all of the time or often but over a third never do because it is not applicable to their role).
- Ensuring that spoken instructions are direct and explicit.
- Providing an opportunity for students to reflect and ask questions about instructions.
- Providing sufficient time in verbal interactions for students to ask questions and respond.

Instructions for any in class activities are written on the board in sequential 'verbed' steps. Instructions are repeated back via lecturer explicit questions.

- Using visual aids during lectures and tutorials.

Learning strategies, e.g. use of all sensory modalities to make a point, advice on revision techniques, and on how to read, search for and retain information, are incorporated into my lectures.

- Adapting teaching materials to take into account different learning styles.
- Incorporating a time for review at the end of the session (but fewer said they always do this).
- Reducing note taking tasks. Those who do this only sometimes or never indicated that they had not considered the importance of doing this and would consider doing it in the future.

- Identifying potential barriers to learning that may arise in their lecture, tutorial or lab. Of those who did not do this, many said they had not considered the importance of doing this and that they would consider doing it in the future.
- Providing material and information in alternative forms.

I had a student with a disability who failed a course which I coordinated in 2007, so at the beginning of the 2008 course (she had re-enrolled) I emailed her and specifically offered to help out where possible. In the end this meant myself (and all other lecturers in my course) printed the lecture notes for her to have during the class, whereas other students received this material by Cecil after the lecture. She did well in the course and easily passed in 2008.

I had a student with Asperger's and found it helped him a lot if I gave him his own copy of whatever I was writing on the board or display, or even notes of general remarks I had made in class.

Online self-paced interactive programmes for learning that may be repeated according to a student's need.

The strategy that was incorporated the least by respondents was:

- Prioritising reading notes. Less than half the academic respondents say they do this all the time and over a third said they never do this. Many of those who do this never, or only sometimes, indicated they had not considered the importance of this and would consider doing it in the future.
- Nearly half the academic staff respondents said that they never identify curriculum requirements which may present potential barriers to students with impairments in course materials. Many of these had not considered the importance of doing this and said they would consider doing this in the future.

From a series of options provided in the staff survey, the most commonly negotiated action for students who disclosed impairments to academic staff was providing more time to complete work and ensuring that information (lecture notes) are made available in advance or in an alternative format. For general staff, the most commonly identified actions were providing access to venues, seating and clearing access ways.

A number of additional strategies to reduce barriers for students with impairments were identified by staff. These include:

- Arranging seating and lighting.
- Setting up learning support groups or buddying systems.
- Conducting 'Surgeries' periodically so that students can have an extended one-on-one conversation about their learning in private.

The best strategy so far has been regular communication with the student involved. Students with disabilities are generally extremely resourceful and have a very good sense of their strengths and the issues that are likely to arise for them. Problem solving in partnership with the student is definitely an advantage.

Other issues identified by staff

Some academic staff expressed concerns or challenges regarding creating an inclusive teaching and learning environment. These include:

- Staff attitudes.

Support is not just about technical accommodations; it is about accepting that impairments are an ordinary feature of the human condition. Attitudes that regard impairment as a marker of inferiority are as big a barrier as the assumption evident in the university buildings that all the users will walk.

- Technical skills, expertise or support required for some inclusive practices.

Support in the form of course materials in alternative formats can take a long time to obtain.

The biggest problem is to know how the course looks to a student who may have a non-obvious disability. For example, do we know which students are colour-blind, and do we know how to check our slides from their point of view?

Information in this area needs constant review and update - latest best practice - takes time - needs to be disseminated to staff through effective channels. Keeping up-to-date can be hard. Supporting students who don't disclose difficulties can be hard!

- Some students with impairments can be challenging.

Finding specific disabled student extremely confrontational, making it very difficult to provide appropriate assistance.

- Increased student expectations.

I think that more students are coming out from the secondary system with an awareness of the help that is available and this is just a flow-on to the universities and we are having to be aware of it and provide the resources.

- Being supportive of students with impairments without disadvantaging other students.

This work is important and great you are advertising it, but the university also needs to ensure that it caters for those who get bored with going slow. I loved those artful lectures that are now discouraged as not working for some disabilities students, so mourn that when you cater for one group it is usually at the expense of something else.

- Large classes.

Our class size is greater than 1000 and we deal with diverse learning experiences already - will need additional resource to cope with needs of other impairments - especially physical constraints in terms of being able to accommodate as well as all other constraints in managing a class of this size.

- Workload.

In reality, due to workload, there may not be adequate time to attend to students with impairments.

- The use of new technologies to reduce barriers.

Encouraging the UoA to adopt an improved approach to allowing students to select their preferred channel(s) of communication; introducing speech recognition and interpretation to systems to accommodate students with vision impairments - so that they can for example authenticate themselves by phone (rather than keying in a user code and password), or interrogate the knowledge base by phone.

- Some campuses do not have the same access to facilities.

That the University are more inclusive in their plans and strategies to include the Tai Tokerau campus instead of letting us "drop off the radar".

- Perceptions of University priorities.

This University's preoccupation with PBRF scores is having a significant impact on teaching quality in general. It will be difficult to get academic staff in particular to take disability issues seriously until the University shows it takes teaching seriously.

- Principles.

It should be about an inclusive environment for all students, and to cater for everyone. The average student who doesn't quite have the same learning style as everyone else, but who isn't "impaired" needs just as much, if not more help, because there are MORE students like this than there are students with special impairments.

I am concerned at some of the strategies that are being suggested in this survey are not conducive to high quality learning. In particular, the excessive use of Cecil is detrimental to learning. Similarly, I do not prioritise my recommended reading lists, because I recommend only essential material anyway. Similarly, I am concerned that the "no" responses here are phrased as "I have not considered the importance of doing this". In this context, if I do not do something, it is because I have considered it and do not consider that it is educationally appropriate.

A university culture which is more inclusive, so that it is NATURAL to accommodate students in lectures, etc rather than having lecturers look at you like you have two heads if you suggest it.

- Some respondents requested clarification of what constitutes an impairment.

What do you define as 'impairment' in this context? I think some awareness raising would be a good thing with some practical suggestions.

In the UK, dyslexia and the autistic spectrum are being heavily discussed and catered to in the tertiary environment, but I have seen no awareness of these as educational issues in New Zealand.

Just need to be more aware of what can constitute an impairment to learning e.g. is ESL included?

Not entirely sure how widely 'impairment' applies - are students who are simply not bright enough to succeed at university or have skills in another area of life 'impaired'?

Other comments include:

From experience as a postgraduate advisor and frequent supervisor a key challenge is RSI. The questionnaire does not really pick up on this, assuming that most learning where difficulties are found is related to teaching practice.

I was shocked to discover that although UoA provides ample support for students with disabilities, the Disabilities Office provides essentially NO support for academic staff with disabilities. This is a serious oversight!

5. Staff development

Staff development initiatives include disability issues and ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to work effectively with people with impairments and create a fully inclusive environment. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p39).

- The majority of academic and general staff survey respondents said they would like staff development opportunities and departmental seminars to assist them in creating a more inclusive environment for students with impairments. Most had not attended any staff development or information sessions either at The University of Auckland or another tertiary institution. The main reason given for this was they were not aware of any being available.
- Completing the staff survey or participating in an interview had made some staff interested in finding out more.

I now need to look at the University website to see what information is available. If it is not clear and comprehensive I would like training / educational information to be made available with some urgency.

- Staff on fixed term contracts may not have access to professional development opportunities.

As a part time fixed term employee [Graduate Teaching Assistant] I get no professional development in my department with regard to anything let alone inclusive learning which I consider to be very important. I think fixed term employees should be included in this type of PD.

- The majority of staff survey respondents identified insufficient knowledge about inclusive practices as their greatest challenge, and time to participate in staff development was the second greatest.

I figure the issues out on a case by case basis. While this is inevitable as the specific impairments are likely to be different and unique, I feel formal guidance should be more readily available and proactively provided. This should be a compulsory part of academic orientation and lecturer, tutor training.

- Some review staff respondents identified what they would find useful.

While the ongoing support from the [Equity] office and CAD is fantastic as it is a step in the right direction, we need more staff fusing so that we can conduct staff development seminars around the university.

I would like to see the University take more responsibility for making its teaching staff aware of the issues around this and providing specific training opportunities within departments that take into account the specific teaching and learning contexts in which staff are teaching and students are learning.

I have never received any guidance on how to identify students with learning disabilities or how to design teaching to address them. Indeed, options and suggestions for teaching and assessment strategies would be very welcome for me to consider.

It may be useful to get in someone who provides 'sensitisation' programmes about people with disabilities and how to respond when you do encounter such students. It's not enough that healthcare people, such as those in my faculty (FMHS) are trained clinically about disability - the social implications often escape their attention and it's the social implications that affect study.

I think we all need to talk about these issues as a group/team.

Because people are unaware of disability and disability-related issues, I think there is discomfort about it... I don't know, what are their needs, is that huge, am I going to have to walk somebody to the bathroom? I mean if you talk to people who are blind or vision-impaired and they are, like, give me a week and I will sort it out ... I just need one person to show me around and then I am good to go. I think the staff would really benefit from just some awareness, to make people feel more comfortable that in many cases it's making small changes in what you do that makes a great difference, that makes what you do and how you do it much more inclusive.

No papers, nothing in print, nothing on the web. I think it is about having facilitators come in and talk. I think it's about giving people the language to talk and getting it out there so that people feel confident to be inclusive. Working with disabled people to come in and actually run those [sessions] and certainly with the experience of disability would be a great way to do that. I think it would get a turnout because I know everyone ... [would] appreciate even just learning a bit about the language and what words mean.

6. Policy and guidelines

All policies, procedures and planning processes take into account the goal of a fully inclusive educational environment in which students with impairments have equal opportunities for participation and achievement. (Kia Ōrite, 2004, p.13).

The University of Auckland's Teaching and Learning Policy, Assessment of Student Learning (2004) and the Guidelines for Effective Teaching (2009) include a number of statements that either implicitly or explicitly support the provision of an inclusive teaching and learning environment. However, interviews and open-ended responses to the staff survey provided a number of requests for clear, accessible policies and guidelines.

Very important that we have clear, accessible policies to support students with disabilities and clear directions to staff that they are to be accommodated.

The lack of clear policy or guidelines regarding the necessity of special accommodation provision to support students.

University's legal obligations to disclose knowledge of a student's impairment, e.g. mental health issues to credentialing body, e.g. medical council, are not clear to me.

Unsure about policy re offering alternative assessments in response to specific and unpredictable situations.

Review of university policies towards students with disabilities to see whether the relevant statute reflects current international best practice and change of rules where appropriate - centralised capture of information on learning disabilities - as part of the enrolment process, course coordinators being alerted to presence of students with special needs and nature of these needs (not necessarily the nature of the disability but what measures are required to include the students).

Commitment in UoA Teaching & Learning Policies for use of inclusive teaching, learning & assessment practices with training/support for staff to be able to develop inclusive programmes that are based on principles of universal design.

I think it is important for all staff to be aware that there are policies and to have regular refresher dates.

Guidance for lecturers/tutors about alternative tasks for students with disabilities and information about privacy issues.

Much greater awareness and transparency about students with impairments - who can be included and what rights they have and what supports are available to them and their teachers!

Interview participants (staff and students) identified a need for consistent policy around providing lecture notes in advance.

Mention was also made by some of the need for policies and guidelines to address statutory obligations in regard to eligibility for professional registration of students with some types of impairment. The School of Medicine (within the

Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences) has developed a Code of Practice for Fitness to Practice (2004) to provide guidelines. However it is not clear if all relevant staff know about this. Other schools within the University may also need to consider doing this.

Students need opportunities to discuss the appropriateness for the targeted employment following graduation if they have a serious impairment. For example, students with severe reading and writing difficulties will find it very hard to get a teaching position even if they are supported to complete a teaching degree.

Balancing rights of individual access and confidentiality with Fitness to Practice in a profession such as medicine is an ongoing challenge. See it as a case by case situation. Medical training is intensive physically and mentally and may preclude inclusion of students with severe impairments, no matter how well intentioned the university.

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