

## STUDENT GUIDELINES FOR DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ON DISABILITIES OR IMPAIRMENTS

### Purpose

These guidelines are intended to support students with disclosing disabilities or impairments in order to access services and adjustments to support their success at the University.

### Background

The University of Auckland has made a commitment in its Strategic Plan 2005 – 2012 'to recruit and retain a high quality staff and student body, striving to create equal opportunities for all those of ability to succeed in a university of high international standing'. It seeks to create an inclusive learning environment in which students feel safe to disclose disabilities or impairments.

### Definition

Many definitions of disability exist. The New Zealand Disability Strategy: Making a World of Difference. Whakanui Oranga (Ministry of Health, 2001, p.1) states that:

*Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments. Instead, "disability" is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have.*

The New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments (Kia Ōrite Achieving Equity) uses the New Zealand Disability Strategy definition of disability and refers to people or students with impairments. This includes people with permanent impairments, those with impairments resulting from long or short-term injury or illness, the Deaf community and people with other impairments such as learning disability, neurological or cognitive difficulties, mental illness and other more hidden impairments.

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) provides Equity Funding to support students with the following range of permanent (ongoing for 6 months or longer) or temporary disabilities or impairments

- Deaf
- Hearing impairment
- Blind
- Vision impairment
- Specific learning disabilities
- Medical
- Head injury

- Mental health
- Physical/mobility
- Speech impairment

## **Audience**

These guidelines are intended to apply to prospective and current students at The University of Auckland.

## **Relevant Legislation**

The University is legally required to comply with each of the following:

- Education Act, 1990
- New Zealand Bill of Rights Act, 1990
- Human Rights Act, 1993
- The Privacy Act, 1993
- Health and Disability Commissioner Act, 1994
- Disability (United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) Act 2008.

## **Relevant Objectives from The University of Auckland's Strategic Plan 2005 - 2012**

The University's Strategic Plan, 2005 – 2012, encourages proactive and imaginative responses to meeting the learning needs of all students, including students with disabilities or impairments, for example:

- Objective 13. *Recruit and retain a high-quality staff and student body, striving to create equal opportunities for all of those of ability to succeed in a university of high international standing;*
- Objective 14. *Enhance and promote a student environment that is welcoming, enjoyable and stimulating, encouraging students to reach their full potential within a climate of academic excellence;*
- Objective 18. *Provide an infrastructure that supports teaching, learning, research, and community engagement of the highest quality.*

## **Disclosure**

The Kia Ōrite / Achieving Equity Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments (Ministry of Education 2004, p42) vision advocates for:

*Communication systems are effective in providing relevant and timely information to both staff and students, and a safe environment exists for students to disclose impairment information.*

The decision to disclose is personal and may depend on the nature of disabilities or impairments, the type of course or programme being undertaken and the kind of support that is needed.

There is no legal requirement for students to disclose information about their disability or impairment at the time of application or enrolment. However, in order to access disability support, such as special accommodations for studies, tests and examinations, students will need to disclose information about their disability or impairment to the relevant section/s of the University such as Disability Services, Student Health and Counselling, Examinations Office, Student Learning Centre and appropriate faculty staff.

## Reasons for Disclosure

It takes time for Disability Services and other support services to plan, organise and implement requested support and adjustments. Early disclosure can enhance a successful outcome for the student and assist staff in managing their workload.

### **Students may choose to disclose their disabilities or impairments because:**

- It may help prevent and/or reduce barriers.
- Support can be put in place, e.g. having access to all the services available from Disability Services and other services at The University of Auckland.
- If done during enrolment there is time to discuss and implement relevant strategies or adjustments.
- It gives students the opportunity to explain the impact their disability has on their study.
- Disclosure may help the University respond to the needs of other students with disabilities.

### **Consideration**

If students do not disclose, it may be difficult to arrange any course related adjustments and lecturers or tutors may not be able to meet students' specific needs that remain unknown to them.

## Disclosure Procedures

### **1. What is disclosing and who needs to know?**

Disclosing is when a student provides information about their disability, impairment or medical condition and their specific needs to an appropriate staff member.

Some types of support, such as note taking, accommodations for tests and exams, disability car-parking or access to disability study areas is only available to students who have registered with Disability Services.

To do this, students need to provide current documentation from a relevant health professional to confirm their disability or impairment. Disability Services staff will discuss with the student what kind of information is required.

Wherever practicable, and subject to consent, Disability Services can liaise on behalf of the student with the relevant department(s) and/or staff members about specific support strategies required.

### **2. When to disclose?**

Disclosure can occur at anytime including:

Application stage

- Students have the opportunity to disclose a disability or impairment when applying for acceptance at The University of Auckland. This information is collected for (1) statistical reporting of students with disabilities (in a form which ensures individuals cannot be identified) as required under NZ law or by statutory agencies and (2) used within the University to enable staff to provide appropriate services to students with disabilities or impairments.
- Disclosure is required to prove eligibility if applying for admission on the basis of disability or impairment to limit-entry programmes or courses through an Undergraduate Targeted Admission Scheme (UTAS).

Prior to the start of Semester

- Students requiring support should contact Disability Services before lectures start to ensure there is adequate time to implement appropriate strategies.

At any time during their studies

- Students can discuss initial or changing requirements with Disability Services or a University staff member of their choice.

### 3. How to disclose?

When disclosing a disability or impairment to a staff member, it is important that the student provides as much information as practicable about the impact of their disability or impairment on their study and the kinds of support needed.

### 4. Confidentiality

The University of Auckland takes confidentiality issues seriously. However, with the consent of the student, relevant information about their disability or impairment and required support strategies can be discussed with appropriate staff members. This can also avoid the need for students to continually explain their requirements.

## Choice of Degree and Subjects

Students choosing a course of study that leads to a professional qualification (such as law, teaching, nursing, or other medical professions) should make themselves aware of the relevant registration requirements for becoming a practitioner, in addition to on-course study and work-placement requirements.

## Related Documents

- Kia Ōrite / Achieving Equity: Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments (Ministry of Education, 2004).
- The University of Auckland Equity Policy.
- The University of Auckland UTAS Policy.

## References

- 'Mature Study', University of South Australia and the Regional Disability Liaison Office, Adelaide Environs, [Mature Study](#).
- "Choosing your path - Disclosure: It's a personal decision". University of Western Sydney and University of Ballarat (<http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/ndco/disclosure/>)
- Mental Health Foundation, "I haven't Told Them, They haven't Asked", Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz).
- Victoria University of Wellington, Disability Services, 'Positive Disclosure'.

## Website Links

- Disability Services: [www.disability.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.disability.auckland.ac.nz).
- Student Learning Centre: <http://cad.auckland.ac.nz/index.php?p=slc>.
- Student Health & Counselling Services: <http://www.auckland.ac.nz/ua/cs-counselling-services>.
- The Centre for Academic Development: <http://cad.auckland.ac.nz/index.php?p=magazine>.
- Human Rights Commission: [www.hrc.co.nz](http://www.hrc.co.nz). For general enquiries email [info@hrc.co.nz](mailto:info@hrc.co.nz).
- Health & Disability Commissioner: <http://www.hdc.org.nz>.

**For further assistance**

Faculty contacts for Disability liaison:

<b>Arts</b> Moana Oh, Equity Manager Extn 89114 <a href="mailto:m.oh@auckland.ac.nz">m.oh@auckland.ac.nz</a>	<b>B &amp; E</b> To Be Confirmed	<b>Education</b> Dr Ruth Williams, Assoc Dean Students Extn 48739 <a href="mailto:Ruth.williams@auckland.ac.nz">Ruth.williams@auckland.ac.nz</a>	<b>Engineering</b> Imee Tribo, WIE Equity Adviser Extn 88606 <a href="mailto:i.tribo@auckland.ac.nz">i.tribo@auckland.ac.nz</a>
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Please contact the Disability Services Senior Coordinator, Brian Stanney on extension 88808 or [b.stanney@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:b.stanney@auckland.ac.nz) for further advice.

Feedback on these guidelines is welcome at any time and will be considered carefully and in regular reviews on policy and guidelines.

Trudie McNaughton  
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity)

Approved by the University of Auckland EO Committee [*Date Month 2009*]