Disability Action Plan

2017–2020

Strength in Diversity

UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
QUEENSLAND

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and honour the Giabal and Jarowair peoples of Toowoomba; the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul peoples of Springfield and Ipswich; the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, Sydney; and the Kambuwal peoples of Stanthorpe as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways where the University of Southern Queensland is located.

Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and future. We celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Australians and acknowledge the important role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian society.

The University respects and acknowledges our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders and visitors who come from many nations across Australia.

USQ Culture

Respect

We respect each other and value diversity of people, culture and ideas within USQ's community.

As an institution, we value and respect all staff and students who live with disability or who provide care for someone with a disability. We recognise the important contribution that is made to the life of the University by people with disability and their carers. We will consult with people who have disability and their carers when making any decisions directly concerning them.

Integrity

In all we do, we apply and expect the highest personal, professional and ethical standards. Together we act with transparency, consistency and fairness.

The University commits to being accountable for the actions set out in this Disability Action Plan. We will take collective responsibility for ensuring that the plan is appropriately implemented and reviewed with outcomes reported.

Excellence

Through expertise, innovation and creativity, we work together to excel in all that we do as a University community.

We will pursue the goals of the Disability Action Plan vigorously and to the utmost of our ability. We will aim not only to fulfil legislative requirements, but to exceed them. We seek to achieve sector-leading outcomes in this field.

RESPECT INTEGRITY EXCELLENCE

USQ's Disability Action Plan

Removing barriers – creating opportunity

The University of Southern Queensland is committed to supporting people to achieve their full potential. The implementation of a **Disability Action Plan** (DAP) is a key component of this commitment. By identifying and addressing barriers to equitable participation, we aim to expand opportunities for each member of the USQ community to achieve their individual and collective ambitions. In doing so we are supporting USQ's values of **Respect**, **Integrity** and **Excellence**.

Disability is part of the diversity of the human condition. It can take a multitude of forms, many of which are not visible or not immediately apparent. As defined in the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), the term disability is used to refer to situations where a person has a physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment. The Act's definition also extends to long- and short-term illnesses that have similar impacts. Further, carers and associates of people with disability are given the same protections from discrimination as a person with disability.

Issues of disability and caring affect a substantial proportion of the population. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012), there are approximately 4.2 million people in Australia living with disability. In addition, a report from 2015 estimates that 2.8 million Australians act as unpaid carers for people with disability, people with terminal illnesses and the frail aged (Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). Whilst it must be acknowledged that there is likely to be some overlap between the two categories, these combined figures represent a significant number of people.

Strength in Diversity

An inclusive, diverse institution is a strong and flexible one. Rising to the challenge of creating an equitable and accessible environment is to lead by example, to drive innovation, to empower and to inspire. Ultimately, it leads us towards achieving the best possible outcomes for our staff, students and communities.

Barriers to access for people with disability may include physical, attitudinal, technical or institutional barriers. Each person at USQ has an important role to play in breaking down barriers and to work together towards creating a fully inclusive and accessible environment at USQ.

Development Process

In developing USQ's 2017–2020 DAP, it was essential to hear directly from USQ staff and students who would be impacted by the plan. The University engaged with key stakeholders at all levels, including senior level executives, managers, academic and professional staff, as well as students at every stage of study – pathway, undergraduate and post-graduate. USQ made a concerted effort to engage people on each of its campuses and to reach out to online students.

The feedback from each of these interactions has been key in shaping the final document, along with the results of the Employee Engagement Survey 2016 and the guidance of the DAP Reference Group. We extend our grateful appreciation to all of the people who so generously shared their time, experiences, thoughts and expertise with us.

References:

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2012). *Survey of disability, ageing and carers: summary of findings.* Retrieved from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4430.0main+features12012

Deloitte Access Economics. (2015). *The economic value of informal care in 2015.* (Report). Carers Australia. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/economic-value-informal-care-Australia-2015.html

Key Documents

There are a range of policies and legislation that relate to the implementation of any **Disability Action Plan** (DAP). In particular, a DAP is pivotal in assisting an organisation to meet its legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992).

Below is a list of the key documents which have informed USQ's Disability Action Plan:

Legislation:

- Disability Discrimination Act (1992) Cth
  - Disability Standards for Education (2005)
  - Disability (Access to Premises) Standards (2010)
  - Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (2002)
- Fair Work Act (2009) Cth
- Privacy Act (1988) Cth
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act (1986) Cth
- Anti-discrimination Act (1991) QLD
- Work Health and Safety Act (2011) QLD

USQ Strategy and Plans

- USQ Strategic Plan 2016–2020
- USQ Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016–2020
- Social Justice Strategic Plan

USQ Policy and Procedure

For current versions of policies relating to Disability, Diversity, Equity and Wellbeing, please refer to the USQ policy library: **policy.usq.edu.au**

Target Areas

1. Learning and Teaching:
The University will strive to ensure that its learning materials and teaching practices are inclusive, accessible and embracing of its diverse cohort of pathway, undergraduate and post-graduate students.

2. Research:
The University will support and champion the research activities of staff and students, pertaining to people with disability and carers.

3. Employment:
The University commits to providing equitable and supportive conditions for people with disability and carers throughout their employment at USQ.

4. Support Systems:
The University will provide appropriate and effective support systems for students and staff with a disability.

5. Environment:
The University will strive to ensure that its online and physical environments are accessible and inclusive of all members of the University community.

6. Leadership and Governance:
The University will implement, monitor and renew the **Disability Action Plan** in a timely and transparent manner and in accordance with its commitment to social justice and ethical practice.

1. Learning and Teaching

The University will strive to ensure that its learning materials and teaching practices are inclusive, accessible and embracing of its diverse cohort of pathway, undergraduate and post-graduate students.

Action areas	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
1.1 Targeted training	• Role-specific training is available to all academic staff on Disability Awareness and Curriculum Design and Delivery to support their compliance with the Disability Standards for Education (DSE) • Staff provide appropriate responses to students with disabilities or those who are carers for someone with a disability in accordance with institutional processes	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor	2018
1.2 Comprehensive support	• Teaching staff are provided with ongoing support to develop inclusive, accessible course materials, assessment items and teaching practices • Guidelines for Inclusive Teaching Practices at USQ are developed	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor	2018
1.3 Recognition of excellence	• Excellence and innovation in course design and inclusive teaching practices are recognised and encouraged through targeted Learning and Teaching Awards	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor	2018
1.4 Creation and sharing of knowledge	• USQ takes an active role in advancing knowledge related to Inclusive Teaching practices through research and professional development opportunities • Opportunities exist for teaching staff to share their expertise in inclusive teaching and learning practices to optimise learning for students of diverse abilities	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor	2018

2. Research

The University will support and champion the research activities of staff and students, pertaining to people with disability and carers.

Action areas	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
2.1 Higher Degree Research (HDR) Students	• Research students with disability or caring responsibilities for a person with disability are appropriately supported in an accessible and inclusive research environment • Research students with disability or caring responsibilities have equitable opportunities to pursue their research activities to their full potential	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	2018
2.2 Engaged research agenda	• Research activities that relate to disability are supported and promoted • High impact research pertaining to disability is produced by USQ researchers • Actively seek to form positive research networks relating to disability both internally and externally to USQ	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	2018
2.3 Connections with community and industry	• Proactively seek to establish collaborative connections with the community or in industries where the results of disability-related research may be applied, or research agendas furthered	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)	2019

3. Employment

The University commits to providing equitable and supportive conditions for people with disability and carers throughout their employment at USQ.

Action areas	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
3.1 Recruitment	• The University's staff recruitment processes are equitable and accessible for people with disability and their carers • Appropriate training is provided for recruitment panel members	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2017
3.2 Induction	• The formal induction process includes mandatory Disability Awareness training for all staff • Staff are made aware of supports available should they choose to disclose a disability, and invited to join relevant equity networks	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2018
3.3 Career Development	• Staff with disability or those who are carers for a person with a disability are supported to identify and pursue career progression opportunities • Relevant, role-specific professional development in the area of disability is supported, accounted for and acknowledged in the yearly performance review process	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise) Vice-Chancellor, Senior Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellors	2018
3.4 Recognition of Excellence	• USQ will seek to establish an annual award for excellence and innovation in a disability related field, practice or initiative by academic and professional staff	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2018

4. Support Systems

The University will provide appropriate and effective support systems for its students and staff.

Action areas	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
4.1 Adjustments	• Adjustments which facilitate more equitable participation in the learning environment or workplace will be implemented in a consistent and timely manner • Staff who are implementing adjustments for others are provided with relevant, clearly communicated and timely information and support	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2018
4.2 Appropriate support	• All support services for students and staff aim to be culturally appropriate, accessible and inclusive of people with disability regardless of their location or mode of access • The rights of students and staff to privacy and confidentiality are upheld	Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2019
4.3 Carers for people with disability	• Information about supports available for carers is included in all relevant USQ materials • Staff training programs on disability include information pertaining to the factors that may impact on the lives of people who care for someone with a disability and the support and adjustments that may be required	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2017
4.4 Feedback and complaints	• USQ has clear processes for providing feedback and lodging complaints and the process is clearly communicated • Staff and students are encouraged and supported to form support networks and provide feedback	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2017

5. Environment

The University will strive to ensure that its online and physical environments are accessible and inclusive of all members of the University community.

Action areas	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
5.1 Physical environment	• A programme of progressive accessibility improvements for USQ campus and buildings is implemented	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2020
	• All USQ students and staff have equitable access to intercampus travel options, including the intercampus shuttle bus	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	
	• Information about accessibility is readily available when making room bookings	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2018
5.2 Digital Environment	• A program of progressive improvements to the University's technological environment is implemented	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2020
	• Access is an integral consideration in the digital infrastructure and software acquisition process		
	• Staff are provided with opportunities to develop skills in creating accessible materials	Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor	
5.3 Multimedia	• Wherever possible, new USQ videos and multimedia are made accessible, including the provision of captioning on videos and appropriate transcripts	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities)	2018
5.4 Events and Marketing	• USQ events incorporate accessibility and inclusion into their planning and implementation stages	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2018
	• USQ marketing campaigns incorporate accessibility and inclusion into their planning and initiatives		
	• Accessibility information is readily available on the USQ website, maps and mobile applications		

6. Leadership and Governance

The University will take responsibility for implementing, monitoring and renewing its Disability Action Plan in a timely and transparent manner and in accordance with its legal obligations and internal policies.

Action areas	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
6.1 Promotion	• Clear and timely communication occurs regarding the DAP and related issues throughout the University Community • Communication, including media releases and internal documents, are appropriate, respectful and consistent with established guidelines for portraying people with disability	Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities)	2020
6.2 Implementation	• A Disability Action Plan Working Group to oversee the implementation of the plan is formed • The progress of the implementation is monitored at each Social Justice Strategy Board meeting	Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities)	2020
6.3 Review and redrafting of the DAP	• A review and redrafting of the document is undertaken in 2020, with a new DAP ready to be implemented for 2021–2024	Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities)	2020
6.4 Policies and Procedures	• University policies and procedures regarding disability are current and up to date, providing clear guidelines as a framework for decision making	Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise)	2018
6.5 Inclusive processes	• People with disability will have input into decision making concerning the DAP through representation in key committees and working groups in the University, including the Disability Action Plan Working Group.	Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Communities)	2020

Glossary

Access:
The opportunity to participate in an activity or engage with a resource. For example, accessing course materials or accessing a building.

Barrier:
Something that may prevent someone from accessing an activity or resource.

Carer:
In the context of this Disability Action Plan, a carer is a person who has the role of providing care for a person with disability.

Equitable:
Where people are given equal opportunity to participate in the life of the University. To achieve this, extra resources or adjustments may be required to facilitate access.

Inclusive:
All are welcome and included, irrespective of their ability, gender, race or socioeconomic background.

Reasonable Adjustment:
A change that needs to be made to the usual way of doing things to allow equitable participation for people with disability.

University Community:
University of Southern Queensland staff and students.

Acknowledgements