

RMIT Diversity and Inclusion

ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN

FOR STAFF, STUDENTS AND
VISITORS WITH DISABILITY

Introduction

RMIT University’s mission is to create transformative experiences for students, getting them ready for life and work, and to help shape the world with research, innovation, teaching and engagement.

(Ready for Life and Work: RMIT’s Strategic Plan to 2020)

In this Strategic Plan, RMIT affirms its ongoing commitment to ‘inclusion’ as one of its key values:

RMIT creates life-changing opportunities for all, welcomes students and staff from diverse backgrounds, honours the identity and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations, and is an accessible and open institution dedicated to serving the needs of the whole community.

Background and current status

In the RMIT Staff Survey conducted in 2015, staff reporting a disability, especially those who require a work-related adjustment, indicated there was room for improvement in RMIT’s practices in supporting staff diversity, safety and wellness.

In relation to students, over the last few years there have been increases in students enrolled and registered with Disability Services. These students often have significantly more complex needs along with less visible and fluctuating health-related circumstances. For example, over 50% of students registered with Disability Services have a mental health condition.

While much good work has been achieved over the ten years of our preceding Disability Action Plans, broad consultation with staff, students, specialist agencies, and key stakeholders has identified the need for continued attention to:

- demonstrating visible leadership commitment to inclusion and diversity, and promoting awareness and appropriate behaviour among staff and students
- ensuring that our physical and digital environments are accessible, inclusive, and safe
- providing an equitable and inclusive experience for all students and staff with disability

In addition, consultations emphasised the need for a strong focus on teaching and learning, by:

- continuing to promote inclusive teaching and assessment practices as the standard to support all students
- improving the provision of “reasonable adjustments” to teaching, learning and assessment for individual students as required.

A new Plan

Consistent with our legal and regulatory requirements, and our Strategic Plan values and commitments, this new Accessibility Action Plan sets out actions for the next five years to improve the experience of students, staff and visitors with disabilities.

RMIT commits to promoting this Plan, devoting appropriate resources to its implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation, and supporting leaders to develop and implement operational plans. We will continue to track and report on indicators regarding the participation and experience of our staff and students with disabilities. The Plan will be lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission as a demonstration of our commitment to meet the objectives of the Federal Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Standards for Education.

In adopting and implementing this Accessibility Action Plan, RMIT demonstrates how it values the richness of diversity among students and staff, and recognises its responsibilities to take University-wide transformative actions to enhance inclusion for staff, students and visitors with disabilities.

Summary

Action areas	Leadership and culture	Student enrolments	Teaching and learning	Program completion and outcomes	Built environments, facilities and grounds	Digital information and services	Staff recruitment, retention and development
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch and promote this plan, and monitor and report on implementation and achievements. • Consult people with disabilities, and incorporate accessibility considerations into University-wide projects. • Provide inclusive communications, events, information and professional development to increase awareness, commitment, and disability confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish inherent requirements statements for programs. • Provide resources and professional development to support staff and students in the use of inherent requirements. • Review selection processes and outcomes to facilitate increasing enrolments by students with disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote inclusive teaching and universal design, through staff professional development and resources. • Implement new systems and processes to support the production and publication of accessible learning and teaching strategies. • Improve reasonable adjustments for individual students through improved processes, communication, and liaison. • Build staff capacity to decide and implement adjustments. • Review policies and procedures regarding special consideration, academic progress, and appeals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise guidelines on Work Integrated Learning to facilitate participation. • Support students in self-advocacy skills and the negotiation of reasonable adjustments at work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with staff and students with disability to inform actions. • Enhance project documentation and utilisation of specialist expertise, to ensure compliance with building standards and beyond to best practice in new and refurbished buildings. • Undertake audits, then identify, prioritise and implement access improvements. • Update maps and signage. • Facilitate access to assistive technology and equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene an Accessibility Working Group to consult and advise on the identification and remediation of accessibility issues. • Prepare, implement and monitor a Web Accessibility Action Plan for every enterprise platform. • Support staff to produce accessible digital information and services through recruitment, professional development, and revision of policies and guidance materials. • Incorporate accessibility standards into RMIT Strategic Sourcing and Procurement including in relevant tender and contract documentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen relationships with partner organisations. • Provide support for staff and supervisors in recruitment and career development of staff with disabilities. • Deliver and promote materials and professional development to support implementation of workplace adjustments. • Support managers regarding staff with disabilities, long-term illnesses, mental health conditions and/ or injuries.

Action Area 1: Leadership and Culture

RMIT University aims to promote diversity and inclusion and provide a fair and safe environment for students, staff, and visitors.

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
1. Promote a culture of inclusion and valuing diversity, through leadership actions, and communications, events, and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Director, Human Resources¹ Chief Information Officer Executive Director, Marketing and communications Academic Registrar DVC Education 	Launch and promote this Plan, and monitor and report on implementation and achievements.	Nov 2016 (launch), ongoing (other)
		Submit application for the Australian Network on Disability Access and Inclusion Index citation 2016.	March 2017
		Consult with people with disabilities, and incorporate inclusion and accessibility considerations into University-wide planning, projects and service design.	Dec 2016, ongoing
		Publish resources to promote inclusive communications, events and positive representations of people with disability.	Nov 2016
		Revise and promote online and face-to-face disability competence training for staff and managers, integrated into existing program offerings.	Feb 2017, ongoing
		Update the disability-related information on websites for RMIT staff, students and visitors.	Feb 2017, ongoing
		Revise and implement University unlawful discrimination and harassment complaints procedures that are appropriate and effective.	Feb 2017

¹ If position titles change, these responsibilities will be updated accordingly.

Action Area 2: Student Access

RMIT University will increase applications and enrolments by students with disability.

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
1. Support prospective students to become aware of program inherent requirements and make informed choices about programs and pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deputy PVCs Learning and Teaching Academic Registrar 	Continue consultation to finalise, and then publish program inherent requirements and supporting resources.	Nov 2016, ongoing
		Provide professional development to teaching staff to support the appropriate use of the above materials in discussions with prospective or current students.	Nov 2016
2. Provide appropriate consideration of disability- and health-related circumstances in University admission and selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DVC Education Academic Registrar 	Review selection processes and outcomes to facilitate increasing enrolments by students with disability.	Dec 2017

Action Area 3: Learning and Teaching

RMIT University seeks to support staff to adopt inclusive teaching and assessment strategies for all students and provide reasonable adjustments for individual students with disability as required.

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
1. Continue to promote inclusive teaching and universal design for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DVC Education • Deputy PVCs Learning and Teaching • Chief Information Officer 	Include inclusive teaching in the <i>Essentials for Tertiary Teaching Practice</i> compulsory induction program for all new academic staff.	Dec 2016
		Promote resources and provide workshops and training for academic staff on inclusive teaching strategies.	Nov 2016, ongoing
		Continue to support production and publication of accessible learning and teaching content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement improvements to systems and processes (for example, the Video Management System and timetabling) to facilitate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opt-out lecture recording and publication - Availability in different formats - Captions for all video and audio content - Timetabling consideration in light of long-term medical conditions. 	Dec 2017

Action Area 3: Learning and Teaching

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
2. Provide reasonable adjustments for individual students in teaching, learning, and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DVC Education Dean/ Deputy Head Learning and Teaching, Colleges Academic Registrar 	Publish resources for staff and enrolled students regarding inherent requirements, reasonable adjustments, equitable assessment arrangements and advice and options for seeking support.	Feb 2017
		Implement revised processes and systems for developing and communicating Disability Services recommendations to Schools, improve communication and clarify responsibilities within Schools.	Feb 2017
		Continue liaison between Disability Services and Schools to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support consistent and timely implementation of individual student DLU Plans Promote models of good practice, and Enhance staff capacity with particular focus on complex student issues. 	Feb 2017, ongoing
		Provide resources, training and support to enhance the capacity of School staff and students to discuss, decide and implement reasonable adjustments. Curate resources and host on the RMIT Teaching and Learning website.	Feb 2017, ongoing
		Review policy and procedures in relation to special consideration, academic progress, and appeals.	Dec 2016

Action Area 4: Program Completion and Outcomes

RMIT prepares students for life and work with targeted career services.

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
1. Provide a range of targeted career development strategies and services	DVC Education	Develop and promote guidelines for stakeholders regarding the participation of students with disabilities in Work Integrated Learning.	Nov 2016
		Support students in the development of skills concerning self-advocacy, sharing of health or disability-related personal information, and employability including the negotiation of workplace adjustments.	July 2017

Action Area 5: Built Environments, Facilities and Grounds

RMIT University provides built environments, facilities and grounds that are welcoming, accessible and safe.

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
1. Consult with staff and students with disability to inform actions that improve accessibility and safety of built environments, facilities and grounds	Executive Director, Property Services	Establish an expert reference group for campus accessibility to provide advice on accessibility issues and actions, including user testing.	November 2016
		Consult staff and students with disability to obtain user feedback and then prioritise and implement recommendations.	July 2017 Annual basis
		Conduct an annual survey of current staff and students.	July 2017 Annual basis
		Review the process for notifying access issues and implement and communicate the revised process.	Dec 2016

Action Area 5: Built Environments, Facilities and Grounds

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
2. Ensure new and refurbished built environments, facilities and grounds comply with prescribed accessibility standards at a minimum, and incorporate best practice where possible	Executive Director, Property Services	Explicitly reference accessibility requirements within project documentation and implement these.	Dec 2016
		Ensure built environments, facilities, furniture and grounds demonstrate best practice access and inclusion provisions.	Dec 2016 Annual Basis
		Develop specific issues / areas where RMIT aspires to outperform current standards for inclusion in design standards.	Dec 2016 Annual Basis
3. During works for new or refurbished facilities and grounds, ensure these comply with relevant standards and that users are advised of any alterations to access provisions and paths of travel in a timely manner	Executive Director, Property Services	Explicitly reference accessibility requirements within project documentation and implement these.	Dec2016
		Include advice on access including paths of travel within project communications and signage.	Dec 2016
		Establish a targeted means of communicating changes to accessible pathways to users with disabilities.	Dec 2016
4. At a minimum, modify existing built environments, facilities and grounds for compliance with current accessibility standards where heritage and other restrictions allow, incorporating best practice where possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On request • As part of planned works in the RMIT Property Portfolio Plan 	Executive Director, Property Services	Conduct regular audits of accessibility compliance, with high impact issues prioritised, and recommendations for improvement resourced and implemented.	Dec 2016 Annual Basis
		Explicitly reference accessibility requirements within project documentation and implement these.	Dec 2016
		Include reference to Accessibility Action Plan in the Property Portfolio Plan.	Dec 2016
		Consider individual specific staff / student accessibility issues on a case by case basis in coordination with HR, Disability Services, and the respective Colleges.	Ongoing

Action Area 5: Built Environments, Facilities and Grounds

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
5. Update and publish campus accessibility information maps annually, or as changes are made, to support the needs of people living with disability	Executive Director, Property Services	Review and publish maps on the RMIT website annually or as changes demand.	As required
		Ensure maps provide clear information about wheelchair access, locations of accessible toilets, gradient and parking facilities.	As required
		Update RMIT signage standards to reflect Accessibility Action Plan.	Dec 2016
6. Ensure that adequate signage is in place to assist people living with disability to navigate RMIT campuses with ease	Executive Director, Property Services	Review and update existing signage.	Dec 2016 Annual basis
		Incorporate advice about signage requirements for accessibility within the RMIT Design Brief and implement.	Dec 2016
7. Facilitate access to assistive technology and equipment through the University Library	Associate Director, Library Resources	Recruit, train and support Library Disability Liaison Representatives.	Dec 2016 and ongoing
		Review Library equipment provision and purchase additional equipment as needed.	Dec 2016 and ongoing
		Continue to provide specialist equipment in spaces within Library sites.	Dec 2016 and ongoing

Action Area 6: Digital Information and Services

RMIT University will ensure students, staff and visitors are able to access and use RMIT University's digital information and services.

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
1. Consult with staff and students to identify and remedy accessibility issues	Chief Operating Officer	Convene an Accessibility Working Group for the RMIT Resources portfolio, to consult and advise on the remediation of University accessibility issues raised by staff or students.	Dec 2016
2. Provide accessible digital information and services consistent with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director, Digital and Customer Experience Strategy • Chief Information Officer 	<p>Prepare, implement and monitor a Web Accessibility Action Plan for every enterprise platform (including Adobe CMS, Blackboard, Service Now, LibrarySearch, SAMS) that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessment, including: management of potential inaccessibility, including interim alternative options, and prioritisation and timeframe for remediation • Assessment of required resources for resolution • A schedule of audits • Website accessibility statements reviewed at least annually. 	Dec 2016 for Plan preparation, and ongoing for implementation
		Publish a central register of Web Accessibility Action Plans and support their development and implementation.	Dec 2016 and ongoing for implementation
		<p>Support RMIT staff to produce accessible digital information and services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit and train staff who produce digital materials for enhanced digital accessibility expertise • Revise the accessible document and website templates, and rollout. • Include an accessibility guidance/info-pack in staff and contractor induction materials • Any RMIT group producing digital information and services to engage via Marketing and Disability Services to undertake user testing for students and staff with disabilities • Maintain and promote access to appropriate inclusive technology options as standard software in MyDesktop to students and staff with disabilities. 	Dec 2017, ongoing

Action Area 6: Digital Information and Services

3. Procure accessible products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Financial Officer • Chief Information Officer 	Incorporate accessibility standards into RMIT Strategic Sourcing and Procurement including in relevant tender and contract documentation.	Dec 2016
		Source or recruit digital accessibility technical expertise to evaluate accessibility of in-house and vendor products.	July 2017, ongoing
		Communicate RMIT accessibility requirements to vendors, and at time of purchase and renewal seek advice on their plans to become compliant.	Dec 2016, ongoing

Action Area 7: Staff Recruitment, Retention and Development

RMIT will provide an equitable and inclusive environment offering employment and development opportunities for all staff.

Action	Responsibility	Target	Timeline
1. Increase recruitment, retention, and engagement of staff with disability	Executive Director, Human Resources	Strengthen relationships with partner organisations, including active participation in recruitment initiatives, to profile and support RMIT recruitment of staff with disability.	Sep 2017, ongoing
		Provide support for people managers and HR staff to enable understanding of inherent requirements and reasonable adjustments through the People Management Essentials training program and other professional development resources and support.	Feb 2017, ongoing
		Deliver and promote materials, professional development and training to support implementation of the workplace adjustment process.	Feb 2017, ongoing
		Provide guidelines, resources, professional development, training and other supports to assist managers regarding recruitment and career development for staff with disabilities, long-term illnesses, mental health conditions and/or injuries.	Sep 2017, ongoing