

Accessibility Action Plan

AAP 2024 - 2026





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Federation University acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where our campuses are located and recognises their continuing responsibilities to care for country at these sites of teaching and learning. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations Peoples. We recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, their experiences, cultures, languages and practices.

The Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where our campuses, centres and field stations are located include:

WIMMERA: Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagulk

BALLARAT: Wadawurrung

BERWICK: Boon Wurrung

GIPPSLAND: Gunai Kurnai

NANYA STATION: Mutthi Mutthi and Barkindji

Message from the Vice-Chancellor

Federation University champions access and inclusion for all. We celebrate our diversity and empower our community to be supportive and respectful of all members of our University and extended communities. The Accessibility Action Plan 2024–2026 (AAP) represents our values in action.

The AAP outlines the concrete steps we are taking to support inclusivity, enhance accessibility, and increase participation in our University community. The AAP is the product of university-wide collaborations directed at improving inclusive practices and extending equal opportunities for individual success among our students and staff.

I wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions made to the AAP by Student Equity and Inclusion, the Disability and Learning Access Unit, and the AAP Advisory Group, in particular those students and staff who courageously shared their personal experiences to benefit this and future generations.



Professor Duncan Bentley

Vice-Chancellor and President
Federation University Australia



Legislative, Regulatory and Quality contexts

The AAP 2024–2026 aligns with the requirements of Federation University's Strategic Plan and Living Values, our internal policies and procedures, as well as external Acts, Standards and Guidelines.

ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNAL POLICY, PROCEDURE AND LEGISLATION

- Federation University's Strategic Plan 2021–2025
- Federation University's Living Values
- Equal Opportunity and Valuing Diversity Policy
- Workplace Adjustments for Staff with Disability Procedure
- Disability Learning Access Plan Procedure
- Student Access, Progression and Wellbeing Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2021–2025
- Recruitment and Appointment Policy
- Learning and Teaching Policy
- Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Placement Policy

ALIGNMENT WITH EXTERNAL POLICY, PROCEDURE AND LEGISLATION

- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
- Disability (Access to Premises — Buildings) Standards 2010 (Cth)
- Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015 (Cth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (Cth)
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (Cth)
- Child Safe Standards 2022 (Vic)



Disability explained

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, disability encompasses physical, sensory, perceptual, mental and intellectual disabilities.

People live with a disability if they experience any of the following

- total or partial loss of their bodily or mental functions
- total or partial loss of a part of their body
- the presence in their body of organisms causing disease or illness
- the presence in their body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of their body
- a disorder or malfunction that results in them learning differently from others without the disorder or malfunction
- a disorder, illness or disease that results in disturbed behaviour or that affects their thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement.

Disabilities are recognised, regardless of whether they

- presently exist (e.g. a person who uses mobility aids)
- previously existed but no longer exist (e.g. a person who suffered a workplace injury)
- may exist in the future (e.g. a person with an early diagnosis of a degenerative disease)
- are imputed to a person (e.g. a minor whose teachers have reasonable grounds upon which to raise concerns and request reasonable adjustments to help the student learn).

Importantly, the legal definition of disability extends to behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of a disability. This casts a wider net for those students and staff in our community who need support.

Community context

Disability can impair a person's functionality, limit their activities and/or restrict their participation in life situations, including their involvement in some or all facets of university life. Disability discrimination accounts for the highest volume of complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission. We will document how we proactively prevent discrimination and support the rights of our students and staff to engage fully in their academic, social and/or workplace activities.

NATIONALLY

- Around 4.4 million Australians are estimated to have a disability, this equates to 1 in 6 people.
- Across Australia, 3 million people live with depression and/or anxiety.
- In 2019, 1 in 10 people with a disability (aged 15+) experienced discrimination.
- Of adults with a disability, 47% have experienced violence after age 15.
- Of Australians aged 15 to 85 years, 45% will experience a mental health condition during their lifetime.

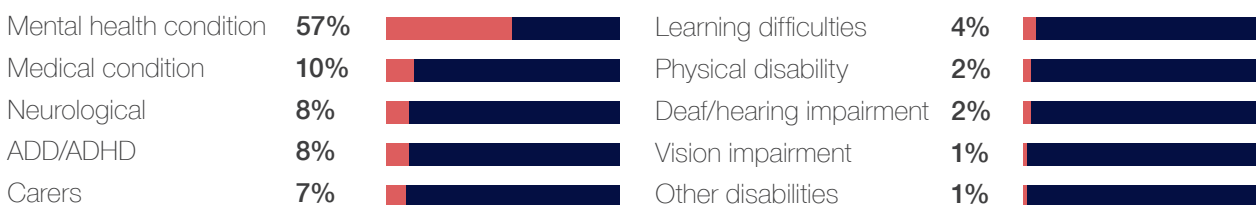
Sources: Australian Network on Disability, and.org.au (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2019, 4430.0 – Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia 2018) and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, aihw.gov.au

AT FEDERATION UNIVERSITY

In 2019, 12% of students at Federation University identified as having a disability. This is significantly higher than the average for university students in Victoria (7.9%) and across Australia (7.7%). Each year since 2013, the proportion of students with disability at Federation University has also increased at a higher rate than Victorian and national averages. The DLAU provides services to students with disabilities within the University's equity framework and in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and Disability Standards for Education 2005. These services include the identification, recommendation and negotiation of reasonable adjustments for students.

Source: National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, ncsehe.edu.au

The University's Disability and Learning Access Unit (DLAU) supports students living with a broad range of disabilities. The data below shows self identification of disability by Federation University students to the DLAU in 2022 shown as a percentage of all students who have identified as having one or more disability type.



Development and Consultation

In 2020, the University established an advisory group that comprised students, teaching staff and professional staff across TAFE and Higher Education. Members included students and staff with lived experience and/or professional expertise in accessibility matters. The advisory group's efforts resulted in valuable collaborations, meaningful engagement with stakeholders, and the formation of ideas and actions for this plan.

During 2022, Student Equity and Inclusion led additional consultation sessions to ensure that the nature and extent of support services were informed by the needs of student cohorts, including mental health and disability. Student consultation sessions provided a broader opportunity for the identification of gaps, actions and opportunities for change. Staff consultation sessions ensured that owners of actions in this plan will remain accountable and committed to fulfilling their planned contributions.



Governance and Reporting



The University's Inclusion Steering Committee has overall responsibility for the endorsement and implementation of this action plan, led by Student Equity and Inclusion. The Inclusion Steering Committee membership includes students and staff.

Progress reports will be provided annually to the Inclusion Steering Committee to ensure the University:

- complies with the requirements of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation, regulations and standards
- implements in line with the University's policy framework mechanisms to support academic activities, including but not limited to reasonable adjustments
- oversees the effectiveness of these mechanisms to maintain and improve the quality of higher education that is offered to students with identified disabilities.



Our Principles

Our Embedded Principles






<h3>Accessibility</h3> <p>“Accessibility allows us to tap into everyone’s potential.” - Debra Ruh</p>	<p>The AAP ensures that students and staff with a disability are afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, participate in the same activities, and access the same services as those without a disability.</p> <p>In the context of the AAP, accessibility applies to both the physical and online worlds. This is because accessible environments are key to enabling everyone in our community to interact as fully as possible.</p>
<h3>Equity</h3> <p>“Virtue can only flourish among equals.” - Mary Wollstonecraft</p>	<p>Equality is another cornerstone of the AAP because every person in Australia has the right to equal and fair treatment, independent of their gender, race, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs or any other immutable, personal characteristic such as a disability.</p> <p>Central to the AAP is the need to safeguard our students’ and staff members’ equal opportunity rights, so that they can make the most of their lives and talents regardless of their abilities, backgrounds or identities.</p>
<h3>Universal Design</h3> <p>“Consider the needs of the broadest possible range of users from the beginning.” - Ron Mace</p>	<p>The principle of universal design refers to the design of products and environments to ensure they are useable to as many people as possible without the need for adaption or modification. For example, universal design promotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ramps instead of stairs and automatic doors instead of pull/push doors to access buildings• videos with captions and transcripts of presentations to access spoken information• text with enlargement features and choices for screen colour and contrast to access digital materials. <p>Universal design is a human-centred approach closely linked with the social model of disability. Both are proponents of respect towards all people’s dignity, rights and privacy.</p>
<h3>Social Model of Disability</h3> <p>Being different is not a problem. The problem is being treated differently” - Anonymous</p>	<p>The social model of disability focusses on how society places limits on a person. Under this model, society is the primary issue, disability a secondary matter. For example, buildings with steps are inaccessible to people who use mobility aids. Here it is not the person but rather the building design that creates a barrier.</p> <p>Barriers can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• environmental (e.g. building and garden design)• institutional (e.g. laws and policies)• sensory (e.g. spoken and written words)• attitudinal (e.g. prejudicial and discriminatory views). <p>When societal barriers are removed, we move towards equality.</p>

Our Values

Our Commitment

Our Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) 2024-2026 is founded on Our Living Values. By releasing our AAP, Federation University commits to removing systemic, and other barriers to participation for people with a disability as they learn, study and work on our campuses and online. We are committed to creating an environment where all people with a disability feel confident and empowered to flourish and thrive.

Our Living Values

 <p>Inclusion</p>	 <p>Innovation</p>	 <p>Excellence</p>	 <p>Empowerment</p>	 <p>Collaboration</p>
<p>Inclusion is a core principle of the AAP because the plan champions university-wide improvements to inclusive practices.</p> <p>The development of the AAP drew upon broad consultations, extensive stakeholder engagement and intersectional discussions so as to hear and integrate into the actions as many voices and ideas as possible.</p>	<p>The AAP embeds into our community innovative actions and outcomes that are designed to have an immediate, appropriate and positive impact.</p> <p>The stakeholder-centred actions will be reviewed for their effectiveness to ensure continuous, cutting-edge improvements.</p>	<p>Inclusive and accessible actions enhance the opportunity for all to engage and thrive at Federation University.</p> <p>The AAP evidences our commitment to and pursuit of excellence in providing accessible learning environments and delivering exceptional stakeholder experiences.</p>	<p>Our students and staff are empowered for success in an environment of equal opportunity and belonging.</p> <p>The AAP is testament to the trust we place in our people to find solutions through listening, learning and bold action.</p>	<p>The AAP is the product of a consultative process driven by collaborations between students and staff.</p> <p>Through knowledge sharing and cross-functional partnerships, we have worked together to address complex organisational challenges, build mutual respect, and nurture our sense of community.</p>

Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) 2024 - 2026

Actions

ALIGNMENT TO LIVING VALUES: INCLUSION

1. EMBED WORK PRACTICES TO STREAMLINE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS
2. ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCE AND ACCESSIBILITY OF DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF WITH DISABILITY

ALIGNMENT TO LIVING VALUES: INNOVATION

3. REDUCE BARRIERS TO ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION THROUGH RESEARCH

ALIGNMENT TO LIVING VALUES: EXCELLENCE

4. INTEGRATE UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

ALIGNMENT TO LIVING VALUES: EMPOWERMENT

5. IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS AND STAFF WITH DISABILITY
6. REDUCE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

ALIGNMENT TO LIVING VALUES: COLLABORATION

7. PROMOTE THE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF STUDENTS AND STAFF WITH DISABILITY





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Disclaimer: Information contained in this brochure was correct at the time of distribution. October 2023.

Prepared by Student Equity and Inclusion

Status: Final | Version: 1 | Date: October 2023

Designed by Centre for Academic Development, Federation University

CRICOS Provider No. 00103D | RTO Code: 4909 | TEQSA No. PRV12151 (Australian University)

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