

# Access Plans for VET Educators Fact Sheet

This Fact Sheet provides an overview and helpful information for Educators and Managers working with students who have an Access Plan.

## What is an Access Plan and why is it required?

An Access Plan is the formal document developed by Equity Services (or alternately known as Student Services or Disability Services) in consultation with the student living with disability, medical or mental health condition.

It lists the reasonable adjustments that are required to reduce educational disadvantage and ensure students can participate in their studies on the same basis as students without disability. On the same basis means that students with disability are provided with opportunities and choices that are comparable to those available to students without disability.

As an education and training provider we are legally required to comply with the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and Disability Standards for Education (2005).

These require us to:

- a) Make reasonable adjustments for students experiencing a disability, medical or mental health condition, and
- b) Demonstrate that we have consulted directly with the student when determining any proposed adjustments.

## How are adjustments on the Access Plan determined?

- Students are encouraged to disclose any disability-related assistance required, as early as possible in their learning journey.
- Equity Services contacts the student who has made a request for support on the basis of their disability.
- Equity Services meets with the student to determine what requirements they may have and whether reasonable adjustments are to be made.

- The student provides evidence of their disability and the impact on their learning and participation.
- Equity Services will use this information to assess the impact of the student's condition on their study, taking account of diagnostic assessments, reports, previous educational adjustments and individualised plans and other information from the student's qualified practitioner.
- Recommendations for inclusive practices, study adjustments and services are based on:
  - the impact of the student's disability/ condition in relation to the inherent requirements of the course,
  - what is practically possible, the student's skills and preferences in using assistive technology and alternative strategies.
  - Discussions with educators about assessments requirements, types and placements.
- Where adjustments may need to be made to the course program/ delivery and assessment strategy, recommendations are discussed with the student, the educational team, and other service providers where necessary.
- Equity Services drafts the Access Plan which is agreed to by the student and a copy retained. The student is encouraged to refer to it in discussions with their educators.
- The Access Plan is communicated to the appropriate/relevant educational personnel for discussion and action.

## Do all students who experience a disability, medical or mental health condition have an Access Plan?

Not everyone.

There are a number of reasons why a student may not have an Access Plan; including:

- Many students are able to study on an equal basis to other students without additional assistance.

- Some students may not wish to be identified as having a disability; and decide to negotiate directly with their educators for adjustments that are able to be organised with ease, without formalising an Access Plan.
- Some students are registered with Equity Services, and have some arrangements in place (for example, extended Library/ Assistive Equipment loans), but they don't have an Access Plan in place because they don't require specific arrangements to be made.
- Some students may have made a decision not to disclose a disability, medical or mental health condition.

## Why don't all Access Plans indicate the student's disability/condition?

Unless the student has consented, the name of their disability, medical or mental health condition will not be indicated on the Access Plan. It is the impact of the student's condition on their participation in the course that is identified. Australian laws protect privacy and disclosure of personal information.

Knowing the condition may assist staff to understand these impacts, but it can also be misleading, as individuals may have very different responses to particular conditions.

Equity Services discuss with students the benefits of sharing information about their circumstances with educational staff.

Some students are confident and happy to disclose information about their condition to everyone that they will be working with while others may be more reluctant to disclose. This is particularly so for students with specific learning disabilities, medical and mental health conditions where historically stigma has been attached.

## What do I need to do when I receive a Learning Access Plan?

Educators need to consider and implement the recommended adjustments outlined in the Access Plan.

While the proposed adjustments have been recommended to assist the student to access their study, some are just good inclusive teaching practices that educators do all the time.

Other listed adjustments will be specific to the individual student's circumstances and requirements.

If you require further information on the proposed adjustments, you should discuss this directly with the student, your educational leadership team, and Equity Services for clarification.

## **How often will an Access Plan be reviewed?**

Access Plans are usually dated for a semester, full year or beyond. This will be determined through a discussion with the student and Equity Services and will often be dependent on the study load/schedule.

Some students have a permanent condition so their arrangements may remain the same for the duration of their course. So subsequent semester plans will just require dates of coverage amended.

Other students require the Access Plan to be reviewed more often, particularly if the student's condition fluctuates and unanticipated challenges arise as they progress with their studies.

Students are responsible for making an appointment with Equity Services if their Access Plan needs to be reviewed, has expired or they have enrolled in a different course.

If a student or teacher is finding that the recommended adjustments in an Access Plan are not working, they can contact Equity Services to request a review.

## **How can I provide feedback or learn more about Learning Access Plans?**

If you have questions or comments about Access Plans contact your Equity Services team.