

**CDL HUB**

*Career Development Learning Hub*

# Best Practice Principles for career development learning for students with disability

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## Abbreviations

ADCET	Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training
ALTF	Australian Learning and Teaching Fellows
CDL	Career Development Learning
DESE	Department of Education, Skills and Employment
NCI	National Careers Institute
NCSEHE	National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

## Executive summary

This document outlines a set of Best Practice Principles for career development learning (CDL) for students with disability and describes the process through which the Principles were developed. This work is part of a wider project titled *National CDL Hub for students with disability*, which was funded by a National Careers Institute (NCI) Partnership Grant. The overall research project aimed to showcase best practices in the field of CDL for students with disability.

Based on close analysis of the literature in the field, interviews with key stakeholders and advice from experts in the field, the following Best Practice Principles have been developed:

- Principle 1: Career development learning (CDL) led or developed by professional career development practitioners supports activity that is based on high standards of practice and ethical behaviour and also leverages existing knowledge and resources.
- Principle 2: CDL co-designed with people with disability promotes the empowerment and agency of this group.
- Principle 3: CDL that foregrounds individuals' strengths/capabilities and is embedded in personal perspectives of success respects and develops the whole student.
- Principle 4: Universal Design for Learning (UDL) implemented across all CDL activities ensures universal access and support.
- Principle 5: A longitudinal lifecycle approach to CDL that is correlated with maturity and key decision-making points supports consistent career thinking, planning and decision-making.
- Principle 6: CDL provided within disability-inclusive, anti-discriminatory partnerships between industry, students, families/supporters, educational institutions and government agencies enhances student outcomes.
- Principle 7: Employers, teaching staff and career practitioners who are disability confident, aware of unconscious bias and with positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion create respectful and equitable educational and employment contexts for students with disability.
- Principle 8: Anti-discriminatory, inclusive and accessible career information incorporated in all general career development materials supports awareness of CDL opportunities, resources and networks. It also promotes engagement with the networks for students with disability and their supporters.

## Introduction

This document outlines a set of Best Practice Principles (hereafter referred to as the Principles) for career development learning (CDL) for students with disability<sup>1</sup> and also describes the process through which the Principles were developed.

There are many different terms used to describe career-related support, including career education, career advice, career guidance and career development. This project has drawn upon the concept of CDL recognising that this is an encompassing term that refers to:

Learning about the content and process of career development or life/career management. The content of career development learning in essence represents learning about self and learning about the world of work. Process learning represents the development of the skills necessary to navigate a successful and satisfying life/career (McMahon, Patton & Tatham, 2003, p. 6).

Essentially, this definition highlights the need for students to learn both knowledge and skills in career/life management and acknowledges that this may occur with or without intervention (McMahon et al., 2003). Crucially, however, CDL may be assisted and fostered through appropriate and intentional career services and programs (McMahon et al., 2003).

The definitions of disability used within the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Australian Government, 1992) and Disability Standards for Education (DESE, 2005) are broad. They include disability that is imputed to a person, mental health conditions and conditions that previously existed or might exist in the future. These medical definitions dominate practice in educational settings. While medical definitions abound, this project recognises broader definitions that recognise a social perspective on disability. This social perspective acknowledges that the “issue” of disability does not only lie within the individual but also within the barriers and prejudices or “disabling tendencies” of society (Barnes, 2012; Oliver, 2013), which create career challenges for students with disability.

A key solution to removing the disabling aspects of society is Universal Design – an approach to designing projects, services, policies, websites and communications that is focused on making them inclusive, healthy and safe for everyone (Centre for Universal Design Australia, 2021). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) applies to the design of teaching and learning opportunities to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful and

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<sup>1</sup> Note: In this report and other resources in the [CDL Hub](#), we have opted for the “person-first” terminology of person or student or “with disability” rather than identity-first language (e.g. disabled, autistic) (Young, 2022). However, we acknowledge that within the disability community there is a range of ways that people identify with disability or disabilities, which are “diverse and individualised” and that language around disability is “constantly evolving” (Young, 2022, n.p.).

challenging learning opportunities and have equal opportunities to learn (CAST, 2022). Within CDL or career education, UDL is about designing experiences to meet the needs of all learners (Berry, 2022), thereby reducing the need for individual learners to have to disclose their disability and ask for adjustments.

The identification of the Principles for CDL for students with disability is part of a wider project titled *National CDL Hub for students with disability*. The project aims to showcase best practices in the field and create a [CDL Hub](#) that will assist others in developing bespoke and contextualised approaches to support the CDL of this student cohort.

Specifically, the project has:

- undertaken a national audit of existing CDL programs and interventions across the educational life cycle
- reviewed key literature related to barriers, supports and best practices for students with disability
- conducted qualitative research with students who have a lived experience of disability, their parents/carers and stakeholders (in the form of interviews and surveys, and analysis of existing data sources) to identify barriers, supports and best practices
- trialled a series of pilot programs that engage students with disability or stakeholders who work with this cohort and build upon the empirical evidence to create case studies of best practice
- established a national CDL hub<sup>2</sup> that will disseminate and showcase examples, case studies and resources to support the provision of CDL to students with disability.

This document forms part of a large suite of resources that include an audit of relevant programs designed to support students with disability, a background paper that focuses on national and international research and reports related to the field, a final report and case studies of best practice<sup>3</sup>.

This document seeks to both highlight the Principles and also explain how they were developed. The first section provides an overview of the methodology used.

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<sup>2</sup> [CDL Hub](#) to be established in early 2023

<sup>3</sup> These outputs will be published 2022–2023

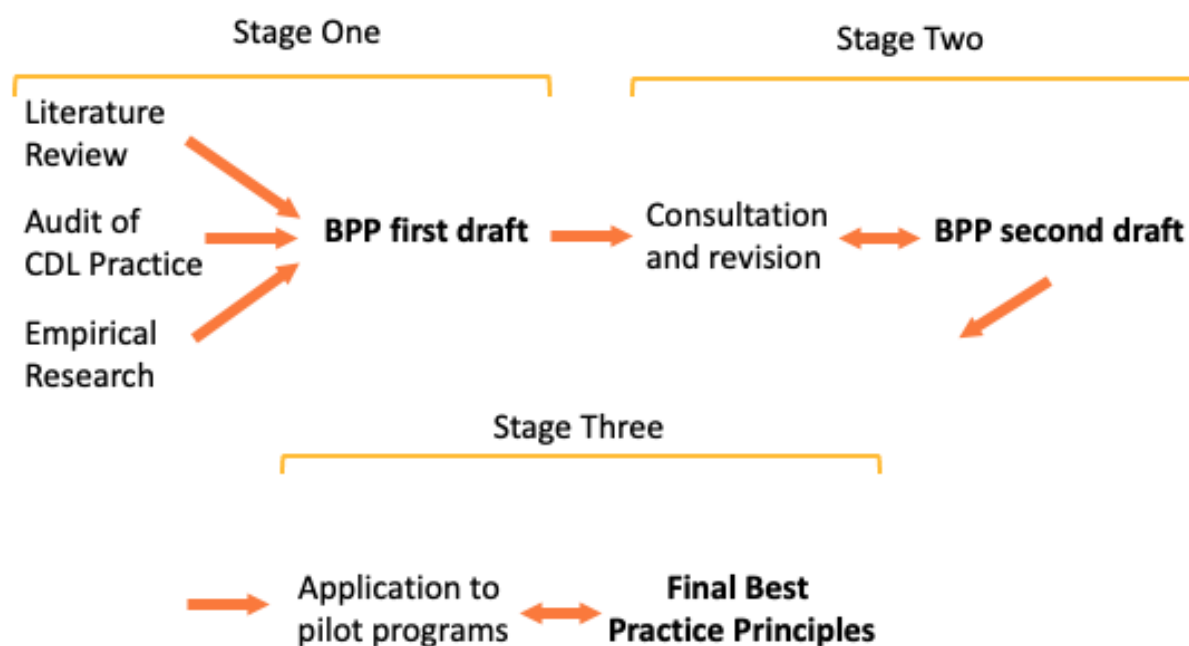


## Methodology

This section outlines the development of the Principles; that is, how they have been conceived, audited and revised to date.

The development of the (draft) Principles has been an ongoing cumulative process, illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Development of the Principles



The drafting of these Principles has been iterative and ongoing. As Figure 1 indicates, there are three key stages to this process. **Stage One** involved a review of key literature related to CDL that was targeted to students with disability. This review, which included academic articles, book chapters, reports and policy documents from the past 10 years, identified an emerging set of factors that are considered to be best practice for this cohort. At the same time, a national audit of existing CDL programs and interventions across the educational life cycle was conducted. This audit shed further light on factors that could be considered best practice in CDL. Building on this work, a qualitative research component contributed 50 interviews and 168 surveys from students with disability, their parents, and stakeholders across different stakeholder groups (including government departments of education, NCI, universities, vocational education, industry, school leaders, and career and disability practitioners). The literature review, audit, interviews and surveys informed the first draft of the Principles.

**Stage Two** involved consultation and repeated revision of the Principles. The first draft of the Principles was reviewed by the full research team (n=12) and members of the expert committee (n=12) and revised and updated in response to feedback. The Principles were then sent out for review to Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training

(ADCET) and revised again based on the comments of the reviewers (n=3). The Principles were then presented at two practitioner conferences in early 2022: Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA), and Students, Transitions, Achievement, Retention and Success (STARS). At each of these conferences, career advisors (n=15) and tertiary educators (n=11), respectively, had the opportunity to consider the Principles in light of their contexts and provide feedback on the Principles. The Principles were further revised in response to this consultation.

The second draft of the Principles was applied to the design and implementation of four pilot programs in CDL for students with disability across educational contexts in **Stage Three**. The pilot programs were implemented and evaluated during 2022, and the learnings from the process have been used to further refine and produce a final version of these Principles.

The following section outlines the Best Practice Principles for CDL for students with disability.

## Best Practice Principles

**Principle 1: Career development learning (CDL) led or developed by professional career development practitioners supports activity that is based on high standards of practice and ethical behaviour and also leverages existing knowledge and resources.**

- Employ individuals that are both qualified and accredited as professional career development practitioners across all educational institutions.
- Contextualise, implement and build on existing CDL programs to prevent duplication and to build best practices.
- Acknowledge/build upon students' expertise in relation to their own circumstances.

**Principle 2: CDL co-designed with people with disability promotes the empowerment and agency of this group.**

- Include students with disability as project/program leaders, decision-makers, co-creators/co-designers and sounding boards where appropriate.
- Appropriately train, recognise and remunerate students who are engaged in co-design of programs.
- Iteratively design programs with a continuous cycle of feedback and development that is informed by student and staff expertise.

**Principle 3: CDL that foregrounds individuals' strengths/capabilities and is embedded in personal perspectives of success respects and develops the whole student.**

- Support students in identifying their own aspirations, strengths, capabilities and priorities for development in order to envision these as keys to future success in education and their careers.
- Encourage and support students to continually define what success means for them in relation to their career goals and aspirations.
- Familiarise staff working in CDL with strengths-based thinking and reflective practice to ensure that their praxis does not slip unintentionally into deficit thinking.
- Celebrate success and, with students' permission, bring to the surface individuals who can be role models and mentors for students with disability.
- Acknowledge and support all students with disability and their family members as capable advocates and regulators of their own career pathways and aspirations.
- Position students with disability as key actors in their own career education planning.

**Principle 4: Universal Design for Learning (UDL) implemented across all CDL activities ensures universal access and support.**

- Apply the principles of UDL to all career-related planning and activities.
- Ensure equitable and consistent delivery and opportunity across institutions, sectors, regions and states.
- Embed CDL in the curriculum to maximise a whole-student, lifecycle and person-centred approach.
- Design inclusive work experience that does not assume an archetypical student but rather considers the diversity of cohorts.

**Principle 5: A longitudinal lifecycle approach to CDL that is correlated with maturity and key decision-making points supports consistent career thinking, planning and decision-making.**

- Commence career development work early, but ensure this is modified over time to align with students' growth and decision-making points.
- Support careers planning and transitions during school (to ensure wide access) and beyond, with dedicated career development practitioner support to enable individual career choices.

**Principle 6: CDL provided within disability-inclusive, anti-discriminatory partnerships between industry, students, families/supporters, educational institutions and government agencies enhances student outcomes.**

- Ensure that career staff collaborations with external partners (e.g. industry, employers, families/supporters, other educational institutions and government agencies) are included in the planning and execution of effective CDL.
- Develop clear roles and responsibilities for CDL among partners and set goals for partnership work. Embed accountability within partnership approaches to support shared responsibility and joint decision-making.
- Include parent/supporter education programs across educational institutions to increase knowledge of pathways and opportunities.
- Adopt a connected and embedded approach to support for students that ensures communication and coordination occurs across university units (e.g. access/equity and careers services, student services) and faculty or institutions.
- Develop students' transition plans (from school to tertiary education and employment) that are scoped in partnership with parents/supporters, career development practitioners and employers.

**Principle 7: Employers, teaching staff and career practitioners who are disability confident, aware of unconscious bias and with positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion create respectful and equitable educational and employment contexts for students with disability.**

- Provide education, training, support and resourcing to ensure staff are disability aware and confident.
- Support students, employers and their staff to understand and negotiate cultural, practical and regulatory barriers to employing people with disability.
- Partner with employers to consider how recruitment strategies can be made more inclusive of all individuals.
- Ensure employers are aware of the business case for engaging the talents of people with disability.
- Provide regular, rigorous and up-to-date professional development to educational staff (e.g. disability awareness training; disability confident career coaching; unconscious bias training).
- Embed robust disability awareness into workplace culture; this should include whole organisation disability inclusion strategies, protections for workers against disability discrimination and the promotion of inclusive recruitment strategies.

**Principle 8: Anti-discriminatory, inclusive and accessible career information incorporated in all general career development materials supports awareness of CDL opportunities, resources and networks. It also promotes engagement with the networks for students with disability and their supporters.**

- Provide information for students and their supporters that is clear, timely and accessible and validates the individual ways in which disability might be experienced and responded to. The information needs to be developed in a way that includes student perspectives as this will influence the way they think about their careers.
- Create materials to meet the needs of students with different types/forms of disability.
- Offer information that is accessible via multiple platforms, is coherent, curated and available through a range of different formats.
- Provide coherent and curated access for students and families/supporters to materials including but not limited to reasonable adjustments, inherent requirements, disclosure, discrimination and rights.
- Implement an appropriate and wide-reaching communications strategy that is inclusive of all audiences.
- Establish dedicated, up-to-date resources informing people of their rights and reasonable adjustments in higher education institutions.

- Highlight positive examples of accommodations and reasonable adjustments that have been successfully implemented to support career development for students with disability.

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