



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

# **The University of Sydney**

## **Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019–24**



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Cover image: Abercrombie Building

The University formally thanks all those who committed their time to provide feedback during the review process of the University's Disability Action Plan 2013-2018 and the development of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2024.

We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.

# Foreword from the Vice-Chancellor

The University's first Disability Action Plan was lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1999.



This is the University's fourth 6-year plan, and I am proud of what we have achieved over the last 19 years to improve access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

We are, of course, committed to meeting our legislative obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005, but we need to continue to move beyond this base and there is more work to be done. If we are to be a university in which the brightest researchers and the most promising students can thrive and realise their full potential, we must ensure that we provide a learning and working environment which is inclusive and accessible to all our students, staff and visitors.

I welcome the University's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019-24 and urge the whole University community to commit to working towards the achievement of its objectives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Michael Spence'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'S' at the end.

**Dr Michael Spence**  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal



# Foreword from the Disability at Work Network

The Disability at Work Network (DAWN) welcomes the University's fourth Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP).



Brian Bailey and Charles Humblet,  
Disability at Work Network,  
Co-Chairs 2019

The DAWN was itself an outcome of the previous Disability Action Plan (DAP) and, over the life of the previous DAP, the Network has become a respected representative group for the voices of staff with lived experience of disability.

For the DIAP to successfully achieve its ambitious objectives and make a real difference to the culture of the University, the voices of staff with lived experience of disability need to be included and embraced in decision-making and actions.

We all have a role to play in implementing the DIAP. Whether you are a University leader, shaping the culture of the University, a manager creating opportunities for staff with disability to thrive and succeed, or a supportive team member, you can make a positive contribution to the implementation of the DIAP and the culture of this institution.

**Charles Humblet, Brian Bailey**  
DAWN Co-Chairs 2019



Professor Jennie Brand-Miller,  
Chair, Disability Action Plan  
Consultative Group 2013-2018

Overseeing the implementation of the University's Disability Action Plan 2013-2018 has been an honour, as well as rewarding experience. We should all be proud of our 'whole of university' approach to building a culture of disability inclusion at the University of Sydney.

**Professor Jennie Brand-Miller**  
Chair of the Disability Action Plan  
Consultative Group 2013 - 2018

# Executive summary

This is the University's fourth Disability Inclusion Action Plan. Our focus is to become a world-class leader in the social and economic participation of people with disability in the life of the University.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan seeks to consolidate our previous achievements in improving access and inclusion. It aims to embed universal design thinking into our daily practice.

This plan seeks to enable students and staff with disability to lead full and enriched lives at the University by delivering an accessible best practice teaching, learning and working environment.

The implementation of the DIAP is the responsibility of all University staff and is led by the Disability Inclusion Action Plan Consultative Group.

1 in 5 people in Australia have a disability and many people will have a disability at some stage in their lives. To this end, the University commits to eliminating structural and systemic impediments that impact on people with disability, and developing a University culture where each person is valued for their individual contribution.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan has six key objectives to guide the University to uphold its access and inclusion principles and responsibilities as a leading education provider:

**Objective 1:** The University incorporates the rights and opportunities of people with disability in all policies and planning

**Objective 2:** The University of Sydney is a higher education provider of choice for all students

**Objective 3:** The University is an employer of choice for people with disability

**Objective 4:** The University's communication and digital environment is accessible to everyone

**Objective 5:** The University provides an accessible built environment to everyone

**Objective 6:** The University provides leadership to the community in developing an inclusive Australian society

The six key objectives of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan have been developed following a comprehensive review and University consultation process, involving students, staff and community members.

## Our commitment

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan seeks to transform the culture of the University through the application of a carefully considered program of actions and strategies that will identify and remove barriers to access and enable people with disability to fully participate at the University, including its learning, teaching, physical, digital, living and communication environments.

We are committed to working together to ensure inclusion of people with disability and to enable everyone to achieve their full potential and capabilities at this University.

### Disability

A person's functioning or disability is conceived as a dynamic interaction between a person with a health condition(s) and environmental and personal factors (WHO 2001). A disability may be visible or hidden, may be permanent or temporary, can be genetic or acquired or as a result of a chronic health condition and may impact individuals in different ways. While every person's disability and their experience of disability is unique, disability in Australia is defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth).

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) defines disability as:

- total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment, or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes disability that:

- presently exists; or
- previously existed but no longer exists; or
- may exist in the future; or
- is imputed to a person.



Disability Inclusion Week  
Launch Day 2018

## Zoe's story

Zoe completed her Bachelor of Science (Advanced) (Honours in Physics) at the University of Sydney in 2018. She completed her studies full time over 5 years. She is currently employed as a casual teacher in the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering at the University.

Zoe was diagnosed with a chronic medical illness that affects her concentration and mental health and causes her to experience pain and fatigue. Her health can fluctuate on a daily basis.

Zoe accessed reasonable adjustments such as lecture recordings, exam adjustments, timetable adjustments and individual support from a laboratory assistant throughout her degree which enabled her to complete her studies full time. Zoe says she would have to study part time without the assistance of Disability Services and the implementation of the Academic Plan model. Prior to the implementation of the Academic Plan Zoe says, "some academics did not know how to implement adjustments." Zoe believes that the plans provide academics with the necessary information to support students within the classroom.

Zoe says, "there is now a better understanding of chronic medical conditions both at the University and at a broader societal level." This understanding and the implementation of the Academic Plan model meant that Zoe's teachers began to meet with her at the beginning of each semester to plan what assistance she required in the classroom and they were more aware of adjustments that could be put in place.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan promotes a broader understanding of the legal requirements that support people with disability and by including this information in the document Zoe says, "she can draw on that information to be empowered and know my rights." The plan also demonstrates the University's commitment to people with disability to succeed at the University. Zoe says, "it is not always perfect, but the plan shows that the University is investing in me to get a degree."

Zoe says, "If adjustments are naturally in place and there is more flexibility within the teaching environment then I don't feel I have to ask for things, they are just offered."



Zoe Stawyskyj, Bachelor of Science (Advanced) (Honours in Physics) student



# Strategic and legislative framework

In keeping with the Strategic Plan, the Disability Inclusion Action Plan will support the University's culture strategy and University values.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan will also align with the University's Strategic Plan and Inclusion and Diversity Framework that supports inclusion of people with disability.

A Disability Inclusion Action Plan is a strategy for changing practices which may result in discrimination against people with disability. A Disability Inclusion Action Plan helps organisations to identify these practices and offer a blueprint for change. It ensures that the University meets its strategic and legislative requirements and identifies areas for improvement in a phased, coordinated and responsible approach. Once complete, the Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be

lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission under section 64 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth).

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan will comply with the:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth);
- Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW);
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth); and
- any other relevant laws.



“No big deal is made about disabilities or action [academic] plans. This is nice. It makes me feel like it's not a “problem” and any support is a normal part of university culture.”

**Student**  
University of Sydney

Ramp, Charles Perkins Centre Hub



# Progress and achievements since 2013

In 2013, the University of Sydney launched its ambitious 6-year Disability Action Plan 2013–2018, designed to make the University a world leader in improving outcomes for students, staff and visitors with disability.

## So, what did we achieve?

- Our **Digital Accessibility Implementation Plan** saw the roll-out of accessible communications technology across the University, including the installation of accessibility software across student computing spaces (Dragon Voice, JAWS and ZoomText). All University of Sydney web pages are being progressively updated to meet the international digital accessibility standards WCAG 2.0 AA.
- New buildings such as the Charles Perkins Centre, the **Abercrombie, Queen Mary** and the **Administration Buildings** have been built according to the Building Code of Australia. We have also upgraded a number of buildings across our campuses, including the Fisher Library. Meeting rooms (small and large) are fitted out with assistive listening systems and dedicated spaces for wheelchairs.
- We launched the **Disability at Work Network (DAWN)**, a network for staff with lived experience of disability, carers and staff with a passion for disability inclusion. The DAWN connects staff, promotes inclusion and offers strategic advice to improve the workplace for our staff with disability.
- A **Disability Awareness Training Framework** was established and includes targeted training for supervisors and managers, academic and professional staff supporting students with disability and an online module that provides an introduction to disability inclusion at the University.
- **Online campus maps** have been updated to show the location of accessible parking, entries, lifts and toilets.
- An **Academic Plan** model is now used to support students registered with Disability Services, who require academic support. The Academic Plan model provides an individualised and consistent process in assisting students registered with Disability Services.
- **Disability Services** expanded its service provision to offer support for students with disability at satellite campuses.
- All Faculties and nearly all PSUs have developed and evaluated **local Disability Action Plans**. These local DAPs facilitated the implementation of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan across all levels of the University.

The University's 2013–2018 Disability Action Plan has been recognised as 'best practice' and a model for the development of the NSW Government's own Plan.



Ramp, Mandelbaum House, University of Sydney

### What did our staff and students have to say?

A University-wide evaluation of the Disability Action Plan 2013–2018 tells us that staff and students feel there has been a significant improvement to the culture of the University.

#### Students

**46%**

of students in **2018** agreed that the University promotes a culture of inclusion, compared with **34%** of students in **2012**.

**57%**

of students in **2018** agreed that the University is supportive of students with disability, compared with **49%** of students in **2012**.

**57%**

of students in **2018** agreed that their faculty or school is supportive of students with disability, compared with **47%** of students in **2012**.

#### Staff

**60%**

of staff in **2018** agreed that the University promotes a culture of inclusion, compared with **36%** of staff in **2012**.

**21%**

of staff in **2018** agreed that the University is very supportive of staff with disability, compared with **13%** of staff in **2012**.

**54%**

of staff in **2018** agreed that the University work environment is accessible, compared with **37%** of staff in **2012**.

## Dr Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes

Lecturer in Education and Social Work,  
Sydney School of Education and Social Work

Sheelagh is a Kamilaroi woman originally from north-western NSW who is a lecturer in Education and Social Work. Sheelagh teaches and researches on culturally responsive education for Aboriginal students; social structures, inequalities and social justice; educational history, sociology and philosophy.

Sheelagh has congenital glaucoma and lost most of her eyesight at age seven following measles. She uses screen reader software and braille in her everyday work and personal life.

Sheelagh has a guide dog named Nina who gives her independence and confidence.

Overall, advances in technology have made Sheelagh's work life possible. She uses software programs to convert PDF documents to Word, to operate a computer and to deliver lectures using braille notes. However, technology can also create problems. For example, touchscreens are not accessible, and many software programs are still not getting accessibility right.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan sets out the norm for what should be in place for people with disability and is the backbone to Sheelagh getting her work done. Sheelagh says, "the Plan not only demonstrates the University's commitment to enacting change for access and inclusion, but it also gives people with disability a voice to have their human rights met. It gives me confidence at work because I know that I can use the Plan to advocate for change. Without the

Plan, I know that my work success would be significantly compromised."

Sheelagh says she cannot get by without human support. "Having people on board, such as the ICT Digital Accessibility Lead and the Staff Accessibility Manager, who get your disability, is so very important. I would have quit my job several times if I hadn't been able to call on this human support," she said.

Sheelagh says, "put inclusion and access at the centre of everything you do. That is, start with the assumption that you will have students, staff and visitors to the University who have a disability. Ameliorating barriers to access and inclusion is as much in the minds of people as it is in the environment in which people live, work and play."



Dr Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes, Lecturer in Education and Social Work and her guide dog, Nina

# Objectives for the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019–2024

## Objective 1:

**The University incorporates the rights and opportunities of people with disability in all policies and planning.**

- 1.1. Ensure the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is effectively implemented.
- 1.2. Monitor, evaluate and review the Disability Inclusion Action Plan to ensure it is ongoing, effective, has clear implementation timelines and reporting and feedback mechanisms.

## Objective 2:

**The University of Sydney is a higher education provider of choice for all students.**

- 2.1. Ensure a collaborative, innovative, effective and efficient approach for the support of students with disability at the University of Sydney.
- 2.2. Provide an innovative, creative, flexible and open learning environment that maximises access, participation and success for all students.
- 2.3. Provide equitable support services that are available to all students who need assistance.

## Objective 3:

**The University is an employer of choice for people with disability.**

- 3.1. Increase and retain the number of people with disability working at the University over the life of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.
- 3.2. Provide a barrier free and inclusive recruitment process.
- 3.3. Support our staff with disability.
- 3.4. Create an inclusive workplace culture.

## Objective 4:

**The University's communication and digital environment is accessible to everyone.**

- 4.1. Aspire to the University being a leading provider of accessible information and technology services.
- 4.2. Ensure positive and enabling language and images are embedded within University policy, procedures and documents.

## Objective 5:

**The University provides an accessible built environment to everyone.**

- 5.1. Provide an accessible campus to all staff, students and visitors.

## Objective 6:

**The University provides leadership to the community in developing an inclusive Australian society.**

- 6.1. The University is a leader in disability related research.

“I feel that the managers that I have worked for always go out of their way to make sure all staff are comfortable in their working environments.”

**Staff member**

**University of Sydney**



# Governance and evaluation

## Governance of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan Consultative Group oversees the implementation of the objectives of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2024. This includes monitoring performance and outcomes against the objectives of the plan and providing a forum for consultation with stakeholders, staff and students regarding the success of the plan. The Consultative Group will report biannually to the University Executive on progress.

## Evaluation of the Disability Action Plan 2013-2018

A sub-committee of the Consultative Group was formed to evaluate the Disability Action Plan 2013-2018 and to develop the University's next plan. The sub-committee consisted of students, staff and an external disability advocacy group.

The evaluation of the 2013-2018 Disability Action Plan measured the impact and efficacy of the plan and the results were used to inform the development of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2019-2024. All Staff and Students at the University were invited to participate in the evaluation via online surveys and focus groups.



“The assistive technology [Digital Accessibility] team help me to obtain reading material when it is not accessible and have assisted me to get access to all assistive tech I need.”

**Student**  
University of Sydney

# Appendix

## 1. Key terms

### Access

Access refers to people's ability to participate in the life of the University including its learning, teaching, physical, digital, living and communication environments.

Access is a principle that is applied to goods, services and environments, such as learning, work, social, digital and built environments. It describes the degree to which a person with a disability can participate in or access goods, services or the environment.

### Inclusion

When people of diverse backgrounds (e.g. of different abilities, ages, cultural backgrounds, genders) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents:

- [dca.org.au/topics/inclusion](https://dca.org.au/topics/inclusion)

### Workplace Adjustment for Staff

Workplace adjustments help to remove barriers so that an employee with a disability can perform the essential requirements of their job. Examples of workplace adjustments include flexible working arrangements, assistive technology and software, workstation modifications and non-standard ergonomic equipment. Most workplace adjustments are low cost and easy to put in place.

### Reasonable Adjustment for Students

Reasonable Adjustments are important for ensuring equal access to education for students with disability. The University is required by law to make reasonable adjustments for students with disability to enable them to equitably participate in courses or programs wherever necessary and it is reasonable to do so without affecting the essential academic requirements

of a course and to use the University facilities and services on the same basis as other students.

### Universal Design

Universal design is the process of creating products and built environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation. It aims to meet the broadest spectrum of abilities regardless of age, ability or life status. Universal design benefits everyone and promotes a more inclusive environment for individuals with disability.

### Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning is a framework for instruction based on three principles that guides the design and development of curriculum that can accommodate individual learning differences:

- **ADCET: Inclusive Teaching.**



Disability Inclusion Week Launch Day 2017

## 2. Legislation

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan has been developed to comply with the following legislation and guidelines:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Privacy and Personal Information Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW);
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Disability (Access to Premises – buildings) Standards 2010
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0

## **Continual consultation with students, staff and visitors**

The University welcomes feedback on this Disability Inclusion Action Plan or any matter regarding access and inclusion from students, staff and visitors.

[sydney.edu.au](https://sydney.edu.au)

The University of Sydney

## **Disability Services**

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CRICOS 00026A