



# Staff with disability workplace adjustments guidelines

These guidelines are designed to assist managers and staff members to implement the Staff with Disability Workplace Adjustments Procedure. They are to be read in conjunction with the:

- Equity and Diversity Enabling Policy
- Equity and Diversity Operational Policy
- Staff with Disability Workplace Adjustments Procedure

## What are “reasonable adjustments in the workplace”?

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the work environment is as inclusive as possible of the needs of all staff. However, sometimes more is required and “reasonable adjustments” are the administrative, environmental or procedural alterations that are required by staff members with a health condition or disability, to minimise the impact of a health condition or disability.

Adjustments apply to employees and prospective employees, casual staff, and contractors in all areas of employment, including:

- Recruitment, selections and appointments of staff
- Access to University facilities
- Training and career development of staff
- Performance management
- Promotion, transfer or any other employment benefit

Some examples of adjustments may include:

- Supply or modification of equipment, furniture or software
- Improving access to premises or re-designing work areas
- Job re-design, adjustment or flexible work arrangements
- Changes to communication processes and meeting arrangements

It is important that consideration be given to ensuring that the staff member is able to fully participate in professional development, informal activities, and social functions, for instance by ensuring that such events are held in accessible venues.

What constitutes "reasonable" varies on a case by case basis and the balance is sometimes difficult to strike. However, it is clear that employers are not required to lower work requirements or disregard the needs of other staff or students. In more complex cases it may be useful to seek advice from the Equity and Diversity Unit and examine previous judgements under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

## **Why should we make “reasonable adjustments” in the workplace?**

Making reasonable adjustments can make it possible for a staff member who has a disability or health condition to continue to work productively. A more diverse profile staff (including staff with disability) taps into a richer talent pool, informs the development of inclusive curricula, provides role models for students and greatly enriches university culture.

Deakin University is committed to ensuring that staff have opportunities to reach their full potential and can participate in all aspects of University life. The University has implemented policies and procedures to ensure that it provides a supportive, inclusive, fair and safe working environment for all its staff.

The University is also obliged under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), to reasonably accommodate a person’s disability in employment so as to avoid direct or indirect discrimination.

## **How to I determine the inherent requirements of the job?**

Inherent requirements are the essential activities of the job; the core duties that must be carried out in order to fulfil the position. They are those components which if removed or substituted would substantially impact on the learning outcomes. Inherent requirements relate to what must be accomplished, rather than how it is accomplished.

Determining what is a core requirement is sometimes difficult but needs to be determined in the circumstances of each job and may include safety considerations, productivity or quality requirements and team functioning. The following questions may assist in identifying which of the requirements of the position are core or essential:

1. Would the purpose of the role be substantially changed if a particular requirement were removed or substituted?
2. Does any work requirement impact particularly on people with disability eg the requirement that a person drive between campuses is impossible for a blind staff member, but they may be able to use public transport for such travel.
3. Have changing circumstances, practices or technology made a previous requirement redundant? eg the capacity to physically lift a patient is no longer required by nurses as lifting aids are available.
4. Could the employment objective be achieved by exchanging tasks with a colleague? eg It may be possible to swap a field trip that may be difficult for a person using a wheelchair for additional tutorial responsibilities?
5. If a requirement involves a particular skill, is it the actual skill that is required or is it the application of knowledge to the task? eg A chemist may be able to instruct another person to conduct an experimental procedure for them.



## **What should a staff member consider before requesting adjustments?**

It is useful to first consider the implications of your disability for your employment and whether there are adjustments that could be made to reduce the impact of these and what changes would enable you to work most productively. It may be useful to discuss options with your health practitioner and get their advice in writing if possible.

## **What should a manager consider if a staff member requests an adjustment?**

A manager who receives a request from a staff member for a disability-related workplace adjustment should contact the Equity and Diversity Unit for the most up-to-date information and advice regarding legislative obligations, reasonable adjustments and funding options.

When considering requests for adjustments to the workplace, managers should consider the particular needs of the staff member; the conditions that will enable them to work most productively; any recommendations from the staff members' health practitioner and make every effort to accommodate requests. Specialist staff in the Equity and Diversity Unit are available to assist with this.

## **What will be covered in the meeting between the staff member and manager?**

The staff member and their manager should meet to consider strategies and/or adjustments that would minimise the impact of disability in the context of:

- The staff member's disability-related needs and any recommendations from their health practitioner
- The inherent requirements of the position and operational requirements
- The skills and preferences of the staff member and any impacts that proposed adjustments may have on other staff or students
- Deakin's policies, procedures and legislative requirements.

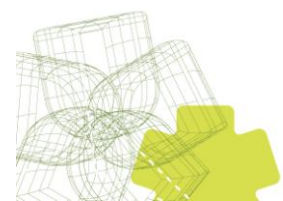
## **What to do after adjustments are agreed?**

The agreement should be documented in writing and may include:

- The agreed adjustments and any other changes to the staff member's work arrangements or equipment
- The commencement date and duration of the arrangements
- Trial period for the arrangements (if applicable)
- The process for review of the arrangements including regular meetings to discuss how the arrangements are working for the staff member and the University

Managers are responsible for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of agreed adjustments. The impact of the changes to work arrangements on the staff member, their colleagues and on workflow should be reviewed regularly.

If after following this procedure, a staff member or manager is not satisfied with the outcome he/she can discuss options with staff from the Equity and Diversity Unit.



## **Who will pay for any workplace adjustments that are required?**

Minor costs are usually met from the budget of the Cost Centre concerned. If costs are beyond the resources of the Cost Centre, the Dean/Director may make application for additional funding through the Equity and Diversity Unit.

In some instances and if the staff member is eligible, costs for reasonable adjustments can be reimbursed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' Workplace Modification Scheme. See [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) for more information.

## **Where can I get further information or assistance?**

Managers and staff are encouraged to contact the Equity and Diversity Unit to seek advice and assistance in relation to these guidelines or any related issues.

Deakin University has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which provides a counselling service to all Deakin staff. The Program is designed specifically to address and resolve both work related and personal problems adversely affecting work performance. For information see [www.deakin.edu.au/hr/ohs/assistance](http://www.deakin.edu.au/hr/ohs/assistance)

