

## Fieldwork, Work Placements and Study-Abroad Trips for Students with Disability

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Fieldwork, work placements and study-abroad trips offer rich learning opportunities in a range of disciplines, and with careful planning, can be made accessible to most students with disability. Many students find this kind of learning challenging and fulfilling, and employers often cite it as one of the key things they look for when recruiting new staff. Arrangements should be in place to ensure that students with disabilities benefit as much from learning beyond the classroom as their peers.

When a student with disability starts fieldwork or work placement, the teacher needs to identify the potential barriers to learning: practical, academic, social, or psychological. They should discuss with the student their learning support needs, and ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create a supportive, inclusive environment. However, students should not be singled out for apparently “special treatment”. Academic standards must be maintained, and course requirements met.

If participation of students with disability in fieldwork activities is not practical, alternatives can be offered, such as a different location, laboratory exercises or virtual fieldwork. The following strategies can form part of your inclusive teaching practice.

- Audit excursions and overseas partner institutions for accessibility. Is teaching staff aware of the barriers that particular venues or activities may pose for students with disability?
- When possible, organise excursions or trips abroad to places that are accessible
- Ensure that work-placement providers or overseas partner institutions are aware of the disability-related needs of your students
- Give students further opportunity to disclose a disability or particular needs as trips and placements are being organised
- Consult with students in finding placements to ensure their requirements are met
- Make arrangements to ensure that people with disability can take personal assistants or assistive technology with them if necessary
- Make responsibilities clear to placement providers and overseas partners – who, for instance, will take responsibility for providing assistive technology?
- Make arrangements for tutors to keep in touch with students on placement so that they can take action if problems arise
- Ensure that the fieldwork application and selection processes are equitable
- Identify key staff members with clearly defined roles who will organise and coordinate the placement
- Clarify assessment criteria and placement objectives
- Discuss with the student their learning needs and any implications of the placement experience. (If the student needs to move away from home, support and suitable accommodation will need to be planned early)
- Consult the employer and provide any disability-related training that is required

It is important to review and clarify any adjustments to the work environment that are required for the student to successfully complete the placement. This may include

- Physical access modifications (who will pay for them?)
- Customised work patterns e.g. work hours, regular rest breaks
- Assistive technology

- Access to information
- Personal care needs
- Learning support
- OH&S issues.

Ensure that placement agreement identifies

- The respective roles of the university, employer, field teacher and student
- Communication mechanisms
- Grievance procedures
- Any accommodations and services to be provided

Ensure that there is a full review of the placement with a view to continuous improvement of the process.

For more information use the Creating Accessible Teaching and Support (CATS) resources at [http://www.adcet.edu.au/Cats/Teaching\\_and\\_Assessment/Fieldwork\\_and\\_Work\\_Placements.chpx](http://www.adcet.edu.au/Cats/Teaching_and_Assessment/Fieldwork_and_Work_Placements.chpx)

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