

# Students With a Disability: Provision of Supporting Documentation Policy

## Section 1 - Introduction

(1) In accordance with the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#), the NSW [Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 No 48](#), the University of Newcastle Strategic Plan and the University's Disability Action Plan, the University of Newcastle will consider the needs of students with a disability in all administrative functions and in providing access to the University's buildings and facilities.

## Section 2 - Policy Intent

(2) This Policy sets out clear instructions as to the documentation that students with a disability are required to provide in seeking assistance. Its intent is to eliminate confusion and inconsistency so that students are assisted in a timely and efficient manner.

## Section 3 - Policy Provisions

### Requirements of Documentation

(3) Students with a disability who require support services or accommodations to alleviate the disadvantage caused by their disability, must provide appropriate documentation which verifies the existence of the disability, before services and accommodations can be provided.

(4) Documentation must:-

- a. be printed on official letterhead and clearly dated;
- b. be written in legible English and signed by the practitioner; and
- c. have been recently provided, that is within the last month for temporary disability, or in the last six months for fluctuating disabilities. A recent date is not essential for a permanent disability unless the situation changes.

(5) Documentation from the NSW Board of Studies or any other Australian secondary school authority will be valid for one semester but will need to be updated to the standards outlined above to ensure ongoing support.

(6) Students who do not have current appropriate documentation but will clearly be disadvantaged by not accessing support and accommodations will be given an extended time period to meet this requirement. The timeframe will not exceed one month from the date of the initial consultation.

(7) All documentation and information submitted to the University of Newcastle by students must be managed in accordance with the University's [Privacy Management Plan](#). That policy supports the principles outlined in the [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#), the [Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002](#), the [Protected Disclosures Act 1994](#) and the [State Records Act 1998](#).

(8) Documentation submitted to the Disability Support Unit or to other University staff regarding a student's disability

is considered highly confidential and will be managed and stored (both in hard copy and where appropriate in electronic format) by the Disability Support Unit in line with the [Privacy Management Plan](#) and [Records Management Policy](#). It will not be located with the student's primary student record, and will not be disseminated to any other office or individual without consent from the student.

## **Additional Documentation Requirements for Specific Disability Types**

### **Vision**

(9) Students must provide appropriate documentation from an ophthalmologist that

- a. describes the disability; and
- b. outlines the effects of the disability upon academic performance and university access.

(10) The documentation must state whether the effects of the disability are permanent, temporary or fluctuating.

(11) The documentation should provide suggestions for reasonable adjustments for lectures, examinations and other assessment tasks. This would include whether the student requires large print reading material, what font size is appropriate, or how much extra time will be required for examinations.

(12) Students who require reading material to be converted to accessible formats such as large print, e-text, audio or Braille are strongly encouraged to provide a vision assessment undertaken by a specialist independent service such as Vision Australia. This ensures that the most appropriate accessible format reading material is provided to the student. It also provides valuable direction for the provision of adaptive technology services.

### **Hearing**

(13) Students must provide appropriate documentation from a registered audiologist that:-

- a. describes the disability; and
- b. outlines the effects of the disability upon academic performance and university access.

(14) The documentation must state whether the effects of the disability are permanent, temporary or fluctuating.

(15) The documentation should also outline possible reasonable adjustments or support which may assist the student whilst studying at university and provide suggestions for reasonable adjustments for lectures, exams and other assessments tasks.

### **Learning**

(16) Students must provide appropriate documentation from a registered educational psychologist based on psychometric testing that:-

- a. describes the student's current level of aptitude, achievement, and ability to process information; and
- b. outlines the effects of the disability upon academic performance and university access.

(17) The student must have been at least 17 years of age at the time of testing.

(18) Secondary school documentation may be used for one semester but will require updating to ensure ongoing support.

(19) Individual 'learning styles' and 'learning differences' do not, in themselves, constitute a learning disability. Scores achieved through psychometric testing along with the relevant interpretations must also be provided.

(20) It is also required that a statement be provided which includes:

- a. the learning strengths and weaknesses that will affect the student's ability to meet academic demands; and
- b. recommendations for appropriate adjustments that are relevant to the university environment. This should include appropriate adjustments for lectures, examinations and other assessments tasks. If extra time is required for exams the value must be specified in the documentation eg 5 minutes per 30 minutes.

(21) Students with documentation relating to Irlen Syndrome or Scotopic Sensitivity that does not include testing of the student's current aptitude, achievement or ability to process information, will receive support and accommodations such as coloured paper and extra time for examinations. If more extensive support and accommodations are required to address an associated learning disability, the student will need to provide additional documentation from an educational psychologist that includes the results of psychometric testing as outlined above.

## **Medical**

(22) Students must provide appropriate documentation from a general practitioner or medical specialist that:

- a. describes the condition; and
- b. gives a summary of relevant present symptoms that may impact upon academic performance and university access.

(23) The documentation must state whether the effects of the condition are permanent, temporary or fluctuating.

(24) It should also provide suggestions for reasonable adjustments for lectures, exams and other assessments tasks.

## **Mental Health**

(25) Students must provide appropriate documentation from a registered psychologist, an AASW Accredited Social Worker, psychiatrist or general practitioner that describes and outlines the effects of the condition upon academic performance and university access.

(26) The documentation must state whether the effects of the condition are permanent, temporary or fluctuating.

(27) It should also provide suggestions for reasonable adjustments for lectures, exams and other assessments tasks.

## **Physical Disability**

(28) Students must provide appropriate documentation from a General Practitioner or appropriate specialist that:

- a. describes the disability; and
- b. outlines the effects of the disability upon academic performance and university access.

(29) The documentation must state whether the effects of the disability are permanent, temporary or fluctuating.

(30) It should also provide suggestions for reasonable adjustments for lectures, exams and other assessments tasks.

## **Neurological and ADD/ADHD**

(31) Students must provide appropriate documentation from a Neurologist, Neuropsychologist, clinical psychologist, psychiatrist or general practitioner that:

- a. describes the disability; and
- b. outlines the effects of the disability upon academic performance and university access.

- (32) The documentation must state whether the effects of the disability are permanent, temporary or fluctuating.
- (33) It should also provide suggestions for reasonable adjustments for lectures, exams and other assessments tasks.

## **Acknowledgements**

Health Practitioner's Report, Student Service, University of Tasmania, 2004

Documentation Guidelines for Students Who Have a Disability or Long Term Medical Condition, Disability Liaison Unit, Monash University 2003

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	8th October 2014
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<b>Responsible Executive</b>	Stephanie Brookman Associate Director, Student Wellbeing
<b>Enquiries Contact</b>	Scott Laing Associate Director, Student Wellbeing <hr/> Student Central

## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Student"** - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

**"Disability"** - As defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (as amended from time to time, or as per any replacing legislation).