

Frequently Asked Questions

Are students required to disclose their condition to academic staff?

Students are not required to disclose the nature of their condition to academic staff, unless there is an Occupational Safety and Health (OHS) risk. Where a student requires study adjustments, they are only required to disclose the impact their condition has on their studies, not the nature of the condition itself.

What legal obligations does the University have to provide adjustments?

The University has a legal obligation to provide a flexible environment that accommodates learning and provides reasonable adjustments for students. However, if a student does not disclose and substantiate their needs to the University in a timely manner, the University cannot take steps to implement reasonable adjustments.

These obligations are outlined in the following federal and state legislation:

- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(DDA\)](#)
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(DSE\)](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 2010](#)

Where can I learn more about how this legislation should be applied?

You can access scenario-based e-learning modules on the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Disability Standards for Education (DSE) here:

<http://services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/resources/elearning>

What do academic staff need to do?

Academic staff need to have conversations regarding an AAP in a private setting and not in ear shot of other members of staff or students.

You should do everything you can to help students feel comfortable raising any issues with you. Students will need to do this to request extensions or special consideration, so they need to be confident that they can discuss any of their concerns with you. In most instances, it will be best for students to register with [SEDS](#) to assist implementing adjustments that involved other parts of the University. They may also work closely with other [services for students](#).

What should I do if I'm concerned about a student's behaviour?

If you are concerned about the behaviour of one of your students and believe they may have a disability or health condition, you can contact [SEDS](#) to discuss the situation in more detail. You can ask [SEDS](#) for hypothetical or general advice in the first instance, to protect the student's privacy.

If you feel comfortable, you can approach the student in a discreet manner and discuss any concerns that you may have with them directly. However, it is against the law to impute a current, past or future disability so please don't make assumptions. You can express concern and name specific behaviours that are worrying you. Please be aware that students displaying behaviours of concern can be referred to counselling in the first instance <http://services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel>.

You should check for any special requirements the student may have, and to see if they are aware of the range of services and assistance provided by SEDS. If they are not, provide a referral to contact SEDS on **8344 0836** or by email by writing to: equity-disability@unimelb.edu.au. SEDS staff may need to obtain a student's consent before liaising with you about their situation.

What are equitable/reasonable adjustments?

[SEDS](#) determines reasonable adjustments after consulting with the student. They consider the advice provided by the student's medical practitioner, and balance that with the inherent requirements of your faculty. [SEDS](#) may also discuss the situation with your faculty and refer to the [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(DSE\)](#) before determining the adjustments.

What if I have concerns about the adjustments recommended by SEDS?

If you have concerns about the recommended adjustments, you can contact the nominated Student Equity and Support Coordinator (SESC) directly to negotiate alternative strategies. For further advice, you can contact [SEDS](#) on **8344 0836** or by email by writing to: equity-disability@unimelb.edu.au.

What kinds of equitable/reasonable adjustments can academic staff make?

Equitable adjustments are the changes you can make to the way you teach and assess your students. While this means that not all students receive exactly the same treatment, the adjustments are made to offset any disadvantage that students would face without these changes.

Reasonable adjustments can include:

- Extensions to assignments i.e. up to 10 working days can be granted by academics
- Flexibility in attendance requirements i.e. waive attendance requirements
- [Alternative Exam Arrangements \(AEAs\)](#) i.e. extra reading time, rest breaks
- Academic Support Worker assistance i.e. scribe
- Accessible teaching spaces and ergonomic furniture
- [Assistive library technology](#) i.e. voice recognition software

What should I consider when assessing a request for a reasonable adjustment?

In assessing whether a particular adjustment is reasonable, you should consider:

- student's disability
- views of the student
- effect of the adjustment on the student's ability to achieve learning outcomes and ability to participate in courses or programs
- effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected including the education provider, staff and other students
- costs and benefits of making the adjustment

What if the adjustment will give the student an unfair advantage?

Students who receive adjustments will not receive any unfair advantage. In some situations, students may not get the types or amount of change that they may feel entitled to. In both cases, maintaining academic integrity is central to the University's teaching, learning, and disability related objectives.

What if the student fails to meet the inherent requirements of the subject?

You can make adjustments for students with a disability or chronic health condition, however if they are still unable to demonstrate that they can meet the inherent requirements of a course (the fundamental parts of a subject or course that all students must meet) – even with reasonable adjustments in place, then they will not be able to pass the particular subjects. This is a relatively infrequent event, and if staff have any concerns they should contact [SEDS](#) on **8344 0836** or by email by writing to: equity-disability@unimelb.edu.au.

What responsibilities do students have in relation to reasonable adjustments?

Students with a disability must take responsibility for their learning. We expect students registered with a disability to:

- Read and reply to correspondence from the University relating to the academic adjustment
- Initiate and maintain contact with key teaching and faculty staff to communicate their academic support needs
- Advise the University in a timely way of changes in their condition and manage their enrolment accordingly
- Be aware of the expiry date of academic adjustments (e.g., alternative examination arrangements) and processes for obtaining or updating these supports