The University of Waikato Objectives for the Support of Students with Disabilities 2008 - 2010

Background

Since its inception in 1998 The Special Supplementary Grant for Tertiary Students with Disabilities funding has enabled increased participation, retention, success and progression for students with disabilities through a range of initiatives including the:

- Provision of specialist staffing support including Disability Support Staff, note taker support, NZ Sign Language interpreters, and staff to support students in their classroom, test, and research activities.
- Increased awareness of disability issues and needs within the student population, the staff at the University and within the community.
- Availability of specialist equipment and resources to support students with disabilities in their studies.

In January 2008 the SSGTSD funding will be replaced by Equity Funding for Students with Disabilities. The stated purpose of this funding is to provide additional support for TEIs to improve participation, retention, completion, progression and achievement rates for students with disabilities. The TEC has noted that additional indicators and reporting are required, especially for initiatives supporting students with disabilities, to supplement KPIs. This will take the form of quantitative reporting on participation and service access as this is essential to monitoring TEIs’ progress towards improving equity of access and achievement. This reporting already takes place through SSG Statement of Service Performance reports. Only this aspect of SSG reporting for students with disabilities will continue.

Funding for Students with Disabilities will be calculated on the SSGTSD formula of $28.60 (GST Excl) per EFT agreed in the Investment Plan. As such the University will receive the following allocations based on the current Investment Plan in order to support students with disabilities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>EFTS</th>
<th>Equity Funding for Students with disabilities (GST Exclusive)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>7955</td>
<td>$227,548.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8062</td>
<td>$230,573.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8181</td>
<td>$233,976.60</td>
</tr>
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In accordance with the Investment Plan 2008-2010 the University of Waikato will continue to invest heavily in the pastoral care of its students, and to build on its reputation for being student-centred. With respect to students with disabilities, it will be guided by Kia Orite: Achieving Equity, the New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments, and has in place a variety of initiatives and support services to enable the access, retention, achievement and completion rates of those of its students who have impairments.

These objectives encompass the strategies and initiatives the University of Waikato’s will undertake in the period 2008-2010 to comply with the TEC objectives for use of the Equity funding and in order to best meet the learning needs of students with disabilities.
Primary Objective:

To meet the learning needs of Students with Disabilities through the provision of various initiatives and support services which will maximise the participation, retention, completion, progression and achievement rates of students with disabilities.

Consultation in developing these objectives

The University is committed to ensuring that ongoing consultation and evaluation of services is undertaken with students with disabilities in order to engage them and their communities. All students are individually given the opportunity to provide the Disability Support Service (DSS) with feedback on existing services and to recommend areas for improvement and expansion. Formal feedback is provided through the annual DSS survey distributed to all enrolled student with disability.

DSS also maintains ongoing liaison with a number of individuals and organisations including:

- Prospective students with disabilities
- The Waikato Students’ Union Disability Officer
- University of Waikato staff (academic, general and in particular key student service providers e.g. Health Service and Halls of Residence staff)
- Other tertiary education service providers.
- Relevant government departments and disability organisations (e.g. Workbridge, Work and Income, TEC, Deaf Association, CCS, The Foundation for the Blind, Life Unlimited)

The issues raised through all of these feedback mechanisms has been taken into account in writing these objectives and in prioritising them the highest regard has been given to ensuring that the welfare and success of students with disabilities is optimised.
**Initiative 1: Participation**

Systems in place to:

- measure participation by students with disabilities at the University of Waikato and
- maximise the participation of students with disabilities through the provision of support services and an accessible campus environment

**Key performance targets and indicators for the initiative**

1.1 Enrolments by students with disabilities will be maintained and continue to be monitored and analysed with a view to improving or maintaining their current level of representation within the student body.

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>The Disability Coordinator will provide year-to-year comparative data on the participation rate of tertiary students with disabilities at the University of Waikato in the Disability Support Service Annual report prepared by 30 April 2009.</td>
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1 Preliminary analysis of comparative statistics (Statistics NZ, Disability Counts, 2001) suggest that of the 743,800 people with disability in the community only 189,700 were living in households and aged between 15 and 44 years of age. Of these a further 28,900 were identified as having an intellectual impairment (defined as people who need support from organisations like IHC or who have been to special school or receive special education because of an intellectual disability). This group was subtracted as being unlikely to participate in mainstream University programmes. Finally the 11,200 students enrolled in secondary schools were subtracted leaving a total of 149,600 people with disabilities living in households between the ages of 15-44. Students aged 15-40 comprised 85% of the entire student population at the University of Waikato in 2001. Based upon their proportional representation within the community, the participation target would be 3.8%. This target has been achieved by the University of Waikato annually since 2002. As such, it is appropriate to continue monitoring and analysis rather than to expect increased participation. It is also notable that 42% were defined as being mildly limited by their disability, 43% moderately limited (require special equipment or support with some tasks) and 15% severely limited (require daily assistance with personal care tasks). The number likely to require support therefore would also seem consistent with the current level of students seeking support for their impairment. Furthermore participation rates at the University of Waikato are also ahead of the average participation rate within the University sector of 3.35% (TEC, data 2003).
1.2 Support services and learning opportunities at University for students with disabilities actively promoted through a variety of mechanisms including:

- providing relevant information (in accessible formats) about course options, programme planning and support services, to assist students to make informed choices.

- providing information specifically targeted at students with disabilities about support services through: the recruitment and enrolment process; distribution of the Handbook for Students with Disabilities; and posters and promotional information for recruitment and open-day activities

- prompt enquiry follow-up

- enhancing accessibility of key information through the University Website and Disability Support pages.

- communication with relevant external agencies

2008 Current information on support, news and client feedback mechanisms available for download (in accessible formats) from the DSS Web pages. Student satisfaction with information and communication will be evaluated through feedback from DSS clients informally throughout the year and through a survey undertaken at the end of each academic year.

2009 Current information on support, news and client feedback mechanisms available for download (in accessible formats) from the DSS Web pages. Student satisfaction with information and communication will be evaluated through feedback from DSS clients informally throughout the year and through a survey undertaken at the end of each academic year.

2010 Current information on support, news and client feedback mechanisms available for download (in accessible formats) from the DSS Web pages. Student satisfaction with information and communication will be evaluated through feedback from DSS clients informally throughout the year and through a survey undertaken at the end of each academic year.

1.3 University staff able to respond appropriately to the needs of students with disabilities through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- the Disability Contact Persons Network in Schools and Departments.

- encouraging students with disabilities to identify themselves to academic staff at the beginning of each course to enable negotiation of individual accommodations

- individual advice from DSS to academic staff with pertinent information about the support of students with disabilities in their course (for example, alternative arrangements required)

- the promotion of inclusive teaching practices through the staff training manual and self-directed training programme (available to all staff on the Web).

2008 • Ensure these mechanisms are in place and monitor the effectiveness of these mechanisms through an annually administered survey. Results of this survey will be included in the Disability Support Service Annual report prepared by 30 April 2009.

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## Initiative 2: Retention

Systems in place to enhance student retention through support service provision, measure retention outcomes and to monitor satisfaction with these support services

### Key performance targets and indicators for the initiative

#### 2.1 Retention rate of tertiary students with disabilities at the University of Waikato monitored and analysed with reference to the retention rate of the general student population. Aim to achieve retention rate of students with disabilities consistent with that of the general student population.

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#### 2.2 The impact disability has upon the retention of students with disabilities minimised through proactive support systems which ensure that.

- students with disabilities who require support are identified and contacted by DSS
- students are well informed about their options
- barriers to access or learning are identified and resolved
- appropriate individual support programmes are implemented
- student withdrawals are monitored and the contributing circumstances analysed to inform future activities wherever relevant.

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| 2008 | All students with disability who identify themselves at enrolment are contacted by DSS to ascertain their individual support needs.  
End of year reports produced about the number of students with disabilities supported by DSS each year, the nature of the support provided and the rate of withdrawal of these students. |
| 2009 | All students with disability who identify themselves at enrolment are contacted by DSS to ascertain their individual support needs.  
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2.3 The University will regularly seek feedback from students with disability on the support and services they receive in order to provide optimal educational opportunities. Evaluation of the relative importance placed on various aspects of support service provision will be used to inform future activities.

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**Initiative 3 - Success**

Targeted support services provided to maximise the achievement and completion rates of tertiary students with disabilities.

**Key performance targets and indicators for the initiative**

3.1 The success and completion rates of tertiary students with disabilities should be increased to a level consistent with that achieved by the general student population at the University of Waikato.

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<tr>
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3.2 The success rate of tertiary students with disabilities maximised by employing and resourcing specialist staff to:
- assess individual support needs
- identify students at risk of being unsuccessful
- enhance the academic success level of students already succeeding
- provide appropriate advice on course/workload issues
- provide facilities/equipment for use by students with disability
- maintain ongoing contact with students requiring support throughout the year
- inform and advise students on a wide range of welfare and study related matters and to enable referral to other services as appropriate.
- inform and consult with students and staff on disability issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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| 2008 | - Disability Support Staff will make contact with all enrolled students with disabilities to keep them informed of important disability related information through distribution of the AccessAbility Newsletter.  
- The Disability Coordinator will provide year-to-year comparative data on the numbers of enrolled students with disabilities and those seeking support for their disability in the Disability Support Service Annual report prepared by 30 April 2009.  
- The Learning Disability Assessor will offer an academic support programme to all first year students with disabilities enrolled at the beginning of 2008 and report upon the number of students with specific learning disabilities accessing assessment and support from this service for inclusion in the DSS Annual Report. |
| 2009 | - Disability Support Staff will make contact with all enrolled students with disabilities to keep them informed of important disability related information through distribution of the AccessAbility Newsletter.  
- The Disability Coordinator will provide year-to-year comparative data on the numbers of enrolled students with disabilities and those seeking support for their disability in the Disability Support Service Annual report prepared by 30 April 2010.  
- The University will employ specialist staff on a part-time basis to support the needs of students with mental health issues. A report on numbers of students seeking support and their educational outcomes will be included in the DSS Annual Report. |
| 2010 | - Disability Support Staff will make contact with all enrolled students with disabilities to keep them informed of important disability related information through distribution of the AccessAbility Newsletter.  
- The Disability Coordinator will provide year-to-year comparative data on the numbers of enrolled students with disabilities and those seeking support for their disability in the Disability Support Service Annual report prepared by 30 April 2011.  
- The Disability Coordinator will report upon the impact the specialist staffing interventions have had in 2010 for students with specific learning disability and students with mental health issues in the DSS Annual Report. |
3.3 Individualised support services and staff meet the needs of tertiary students with disabilities. To achieve this.

- Support staff will be employed with prescribed position descriptions, trained in their respective roles and evaluated in their ongoing performance. These roles are likely to include NZSL interpreters (to sign for Deaf students), note-takers (to take notes in lectures for students unable to adequately scribe for themselves), reader-writers (to assist students who require alternative arrangements to sit tests) and general/research assistants (for students requiring assistance getting books out of the library, one-one tutoring, transcribing etc).

- Equipment, academic/technology support, tutoring and mentoring will be provided as required. Students who are assessed as requiring specialist equipment/software and/or furniture will be provided with access to this equipment on campus either through specialist computer lab facilities, in their own classrooms, or as mobile equipment they loan from the service. This equipment/software and furniture includes items such as dictaphones, Alpha Smarts, ergonomic chairs and desks, portable FM hearing system, computers, scanners, screen/text readers, voice activated software etc. These require regular updating, repair, replacement and/or additional purchases due to usage and demand.

2008 All students assessed as eligible for support services will be provided with services targeted to their individual needs. End of year reports will be produced about the number of students accessing these services, and the staffing and other costs associated with the provision of individualised support for inclusion in the Disability Support Service Annual report prepared by 30 April 2009.

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3.4 Enhance knowledge of career pathways and opportunities for students with disability through:

- referral of students to University and external agencies for career planning, preparation and/or courses.

- the provision of information specifically targeted at students with disabilities nearing completion of their programmes of study.

2008 Indicator: Career & Job Finding services and workshops will be promoted to all students with disabilities and the Career and Job Finding Booklet for Students with Disabilities will be revised for re-printing. Electronic copies will be distributed to all students completing studies in 2008.

2009 Indicator: Career & Job Finding services and workshops will be promoted to all students with disabilities and the Career and Job Finding Booklet for Students with Disabilities will be re-printed and distributed to all students completing studies in 2009.

2010 Indicator: Career & Job Finding services and workshops will be promoted to all students with disabilities and the Career and Job Finding Booklet for Students with Disabilities will be distributed to all students completing studies in 2010.