

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO**

**Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato**



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**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

**Disability Action Plan 2023-2025**

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## 1. Context

“I’m Year 13 and disabled. My future depends on how accessible NZ unis are.”

This quote from Ayolabi Martins, a former Youth MP for the Upper Harbour, wheelchair user and disability activist who currently lives in Tāmaki Makaurau (<https://www.renews.co.nz/im-year-13-and-disabled-my-future-depends-on-how-accessible-nz-unis-are/> accessed 10 October 2022) speaks to the importance of universities making quality tertiary education available to everyone. The development of a Disability Action Plan is an important step towards this goal. It is understood that staff in universities who are disabled or impaired also face challenges and that sustained effort is required to meet their needs. If we are to build a supportive community for disabled learners then the institution itself needs to tackle the ingrained ableism in the workplace for staff and students. This Plan, however, focuses on disabled learners, as required by the TEC, with the aim of creating a more inclusive and equitable tertiary education environment for disabled learners.

The development and implementation of a Disability Action Plan is grounded in law and policy, that is informed by Aotearoa New Zealand’s international human rights obligations generally, and by its obligations regarding persons with disabilities in particular. The rights to equality and non-discrimination are core to the effective implementation of these rights with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) being of particular significance to the development of the Disability Action Plan.

The obligations to protect and promote the rights of disabled people enshrined in the CRPD are reflected and reinforced in New Zealand laws and policies. The New Zealand Bill of Rights 1990 is a core piece of domestic law, as it states that everyone has the right to be free from discrimination. The Human Rights Act 1993 sets out what grounds of discrimination are prohibited, and includes discrimination on the grounds of disability. The Education and Training Act 2020 also has a role to play as it identifies safety and well-being as one of its purposes (s 4), and its requirement of tertiary education strategy (s 7).

At the policy level these rights are reinforced by New Zealand’s broader Disability Action Plan, and its Disability Strategy (NZ Disability Strategy 2016-2026) which was co-developed with disabled people and states in Outcome 1 - Education, ‘We get an excellent education and achieve our potential throughout our lives’ (ODI NZ Disability Strategy). The Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) and the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) further frame accessibility and inclusivity in education as stated in the objectives to; put learners with their whānau at the centre of education; provide barrier free access to all learners, offer quality teaching and leadership, provide learning is relevant to the lives of New Zealanders today and in the future; and, deliver a world class inclusive public education.

Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato – The University of Waikato’s Disability Action Plan, and the commitment it conveys, sits within this context and within the University’s commitment to the Te Tiriti o Waitangi as reflected in “Te Tiriti o Waitangi me te Whare Wānanga o Waikato -The Treaty of Waitangi and the University of Waikato” statement, in particular it reflects and aims to have outcomes that align with the two key principles:

1. “E kore tenei whakaoranga e huri ki tua o aku mokopuna.” “The generations of the future shall reap the rewards of the seeds that we have sown”
2. “Kotahi te kohao o te ngira e kuhuna ai te miro mā, te miro pango, te miro where. I muri, kia mau ki te aroha, ki te ture, ki te whakapono”. “Through the eye of the needle pass the white

threads, the black threads and the red threads. Afterwards, hold firmly to your love, the law and your faith”.

The DAP is particularly aligned with this second principle which speaks to diversity of identity, and equality.

This whakatauākī is commonly interpreted as conveying a message of strength in unity and equality despite differences in identity. The different coloured threads join together in passing through the eye of the needle, but the identity and integrity of each colour of thread is maintained even while they contribute to a common purpose.

Equally the DAP is aligned with the University of Waikato Pacific Strategic Plan (2021-2025) and the Pacific principles articulated in this Plan including alofa/ofa/aloha (love, respect and really being in the presence of other human beings (Samoa/Tonga/Hawai’i), fakatokilalo (humility (Tonga)), collective outcomes and success, sautu (holistic and collective well-being (Fiji)), and tautua/kuleana (a leader’s responsibility for collective well-being and outcomes (Samoa/Hawai’i)).

The DAP commits the University to working collaboratively with disabled students to realise their rights to education at Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato – The University of Waikato, to meet obligations outlined in international and domestic laws, domestic policies and all University principles that speak to inclusion.

This DAP takes account of the Kia Ōrite toolkit and seeks to use the guidance from the management and learning support implementation components of that toolkit to inform the dismantling of disabling environments within the University of Waikato.

The purpose of the actions outlined in this Plan is to communicate the University of Waikato’s commitment to improving participation and achievement in tertiary education for disabled students who as people with diverse identities and experiences are a key part of the diverse student group at Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato. This journey will include the wider staff and student body through the promotion of universal design principles and the promotion of equity and inclusion across the life of the University.

## 1.1 A snapshot of disabled learners at Waikato

### 1.1.1 Enrolments

Over the past five years, approximately 7% of NZ-based students enrolling at the University of Waikato have noted on their application to enrol that they have a disability.

**TABLE 1: All students with a disability (excludes students enrolled at the University’s off-shore campuses)**

(\* in all tables 2022 is an incomplete year, so only the first half year’s papers are included)

Has a Disability	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
Yes	7.3%	6.9%	6.9%	7.4%	7.7%	7.4%
No	92.7%	93.1%	93.1%	92.6%	92.3%	92.6%

As Table 1 indicates, between 2017 and 2022 the percentage of NZ domiciled students reporting a disability on enrolment remained relatively stable.

**TABLE 2: Proportion of students reporting a disability on enrolment (domestic/international)**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
Domestic	8.8%	8.6%	8.9%	8.9%	8.8%	8.4%
International	1.3%	0.9%	0.7%	1.0%	0.9%	1.1%

As Table 2 indicates, a significantly lower proportion of international students report a disability on enrolment; this proportion has remained relatively consistent at around 1% over the previous six years, as has the proportion of domestic students reporting a disability on enrolment (8-9%).

**TABLE 3: Proportion of students by gender reporting a disability**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
Female	7.4%	7.3%	7.5%	8.0%	8.4%	8.0%
Male	7.2%	6.4%	6.1%	6.6%	6.7%	6.6%
Gender Diverse	-	-	20%	25%	41%	27%

As Table 3 indicates, a slightly higher proportion of female students reported a disability than male students. This is of interest as in the general population in New Zealand aged between 15 – 44 years, disability is experienced at a higher rate in the male population (44%) than the female population (39%) (NZ Stats). Of interest in this table is the high proportion of students who identify as gender diverse reporting a disability which reflects an intersecting experience of gender diversity and disability in the student population that needs to be acknowledged and responded to.

**TABLE 4: Gender breakdown of students reporting a disability**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
Female	58.5%	61.2%	63.0%	63.4%	65.7%	65.3%
Male	41.4%	38.7%	36.9%	36.3%	33.5%	33.7%
Gender Diverse	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.8%	1.0%

When considered as a proportion of students reporting a disability, a far greater percentage of female students identify as having a disability than male students, the ratios in 2021 being 65.7% to 33.5%. This is exaggerated by the greater proportion of female students that the University typically enrolls each year.

**TABLE 5: Proportion of Māori and Pacific students reporting a disability**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
Māori	9.4%	9.4%	10.0%	9.6%	9.4%	9.0%
Pacific	7.0%	7.7%	6.2%	6.1%	6.4%	4.9%

A slightly higher proportion of Māori students reported having a disability than the total student population, with a lower proportion of Pacific students reporting disabilities.

### 1.1.2 Course completion rates

**TABLE 6: Course completion rates**

Has a disability	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 *
No	87.1%	86.4%	87.6%	87.6%	86.1%	84.6%
Yes	79.9%	78.1%	79.7%	77.4%	77.8%	78.6%

Table 6 shows that pass rates for all students with a disability were approximately 8-9% lower than for students without a disability, indicating a significant equity gap. This equity gap has remained constant over the past five years and needs to be addressed urgently.

**TABLE 7: Course completion rates by ethnicity (students who report a disability)**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 *
Māori	73.9%	74.2%	74.3%	72.8%	72.4%	71.2%
Pacific	78.2%	64.6%	68.8%	67.0%	71.1%	64.8%
Non-Māori, non-Pacific	82.6%	81.4%	82.4%	81.2%	80.5%	80.3%

Table 7 shows that pass-rates for Māori and Pacific students that report a disability are noticeably lower than non-Māori and non-Pacific students. This equity gaps generally reflect the difference in achievement between Māori and Pacific students and non-Māori, non-Pacific students overall. Efforts that are being under taken through the University's Ōritetanga programme are likely to help close this gap over time, but it is recognised that the University needs to have a continued focus on support for students with disabilities that recognises intersections with ethnicity.

### 1.1.3 Retention rates

**TABLE 8: First year student retention rates**

Has a disability	2019	2020	2021*
No	75.3%	75.2%	72.9%
Yes	68.6%	69.4%	70.4%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>70.6%</b>	<b>74.9%</b>	<b>72.7%</b>

As indicated in Table 8 the first year student retention rate for disabled students who report a disability is, on average, 5% under the retention rate for students who do not identify as having a disability.

This indicator replicates the TEC first-year student methodology and counts students who were enrolled as a first year student in a given year and subsequently re-enrolled. For example, the 2019 figure counts those students who first enrolled in 2019 who subsequently re-enrolled in 2020 or a subsequent year.

### 1.1.4 Accessibility services data

Accessibility Services report data to the TEC annually. Below are data reported in 2021 and 2022. In 2021 no data were available that reported the primary disability identities of students who registered with the service – these data were reported for 2022.

The following data in Tables 9 and 11 indicate the volume of students registered with Accessibility Services, and the 'provisions of support' (see Table 11). This reflects that not all students registered with the Accessibility Services sought support for their disability.

**TABLE 9: Disabled students registered with Accessibility Services 2021**

Campus	2021	2022
Hamilton	260	217
Remote/Online	11	13
Tauranga	37	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>271</b>

**TABLE 10: Proportion of students reporting a disability who register with Accessibility Services**

	2021	2022
Students reporting a disability who have registered with Accessibility Services	32.0%	30.1%

Table 10 shows that a relatively low proportion of students who report having a disability on enrolment go on to register with Accessibility Services. The University will explore opportunities to raise the profile of Accessibility Services and increase registration with the Service over the life of this Plan.

**TABLE 11: Primary support**

Primary Support	2021	2022
1-1 support (short term)	7	2
Case management	18	23
Note taking	15	24
Reader/Writer (in class)	2	-
Student success plan	2	1
Test/Exam support	216	199
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>249</b>

In the University's experience, not all students who register with Accessibility Services will seek specific support. Also, the data in these tables are not disaggregated at the student – support level; some students receive more than one type of support, some none and some only one type. There is an opportunity going forward to collect and report this level of data so service use can be more clearly evaluated and potentially linked to outcomes for students.

The data in Table 11 indicates that 'test/exam support' was by far the most commonly used support in 2021. While as noted the data are not disaggregated at the student-support level, given the large number of provisions of this support it can be assumed many if not most of the disabled students using accessibility services in 2021 were seeking and using this kind of support. This reflects that a 'test/exam' approach to assessment is, or is perceived to be a significant challenge with inbuilt barriers for disabled students.

In 2022 data were gathered and reported on disability type as indicated in Table 12 below. It is important to note some students may identify across multiple experiences as these data are not reporting 'primary' disability. It is also important to note that some of the 271 students who registered with Accessibility Services in 2022 may not have indicated 'disability type'.

**TABLE 12: Disability type 2022**

<b>Disability</b>	
Vision (impaired)	6
Vision (Blind)	2
Temporary impairment	13
Specific Learning Disability	59
Physical	15
Mental/Psychological	107
Medical Condition	22
Intellectual/Cognitive	9
Hearing (impaired)	5
Hearing (Deaf)	2
Autism Spectrum Disorder	21
Other/Undeclared	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>

It is important to note when reading these data that disability type or experience is self-reported. While some supporting documentation from a doctor, therapist or other health professional is a requirement of registering with Accessibility Services this information is not verified by the service and no further assessments are undertaken by the University regarding a student's declared disability. Further, as for other data reported by Accessibility Services some students may report one or multiple disability types/experiences or none.

A very clear indication from this data is that Mental/Psychological experiences of disability are by far the highest at 107 (38.8% of reported disability types) with Specific Learning Disability being the next most reported disability at 59 (21.4% of reported disability types). While in this DAP there is a significant focus on access to the built environment, these data strongly suggest there also needs to be a concerted effort to understand the barriers experienced by students with mental health and psychological disabling conditions, and neurological and cognitive conditions. Taken together this group of conditions account for 71.1% of students for whom the University physical, social and learning environment has the potential to be disabling.

The overall data across 2021 and 2022 suggests a reasonably static number of students registering with Accessibility Services. As noted above, the proportion of students reporting a disability who register for the University's Accessibility Service is relatively low and the difference between these figures could be illustrative of what kinds of generic or Universal approaches the University needs to invest in to ensure ALL disabled students have access to equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of University life.

## 1.2 Developing the University's first DAP

Creating a DAP has provided Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato with an opportunity to further our efforts to make the University a more inclusive and equitable organisation. The DAP aligns with our University Strategy 2022-2024, Academic Plan 2022-2026, Te Rautaki Māori - Māori Advancement Plan 2022-2026, Pacific Strategic Plan 2021-2025, Research Plan 2022-2026 and the Report of the Taskforce on Racism 2021. These plans, individually and collectively, require us to understand and respond to persisting barriers to access and inclusion for a diverse range of students. There is an especially close link with Objective 2 of the Academic Plan (2022-2026) which is to 'Make the University a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for all'.

The DAP was created both from 'the ground up' and the 'top down'. It had the full support of the senior leadership team, in particular, the Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic who has been



shepherding the Plan. At the beginning of 2022 the DAP Working Group was formed with the express purpose of creating a DAP, that is, “A strategy for changing those practices of tertiary education organisations that might result in discrimination (intentional or unintentional) against disabled people and to improve outcomes for disabled learners in their education journey” (TEC, 2021, p 3). Associate Professor Patsie Frawley (Fellow of the Australasian Society of Intellectual Disability and leader of the University of Waikato’s programme in Disability and Inclusion Studies (Education)) chaired the Group. The Terms of Reference were to:

1. work through the Kia Ōrite toolkit to develop the DAP;
2. review the current situation – including disabled learners’ experiences and policies and practices of the University to identify existing barriers and enablers to access and inclusion;
3. set goals and strategies by asking disabled learners what would make the biggest difference for them to address barriers to access, inclusion and success;
4. consult with staff and management to identify ways to develop the University as a leading accessible and inclusive tertiary education organisation.

In the summer of 2021/22 a research project ‘Learning and living at Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato The University of Waikato; a disabled person’s experience’ was undertaken by Nikita VanDjik a disabled student and president of the University of Waikato Disabled Students Association. The study was supervised by Associate Professor Patsie Frawley and Professor Claire Breen as part of the University Summer Scholarship programme. For this study, six disabled students were interviewed to inform an understanding of access and inclusion for disabled students at the University of Waikato. This research was an important ‘starting point’ for the DAP working group highlighting that barriers to access and inclusion for disabled students included a range of physical barriers within the built environment where students felt ‘... accessibility feels more like an afterthought rather than a priority’; challenges to online access and inclusion due mainly to inaccessible teaching and learning materials, and a significant issue with teaching staff attitudes and approaches to understanding and implementing accommodations for, and adaptations to teaching, learning and assessment. A general finding was that much more could be done to engage with, hear and acknowledge the ‘disabled student voice’ in all aspects of the student experience. Importantly this study also found that where disabled students had support through Accessibility Services their experiences were in the main positive; however, the limited nature of what these services could provide did mean for some students the full scope of their needs may not have been met to date.

The DAP Working Group (eight staff and two disabled students) met regularly over the course of 2022. Upon submission of the DAP to the TEC the Group is being reformed and renamed to become the Access and Inclusion Working Group. The role of this Group is discussed in the next section.

### 1.3 DAP endorsement and accountabilities

The DAP was endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Committee on 28 November 2022 and by the University Council on 6 December 2022 [Please note: this is the plan being worked towards, not a *fait accompli*]. Accountability for delivering the objectives of the DAP is shared across four workstream owners. These workstream owners hold senior positions and will be required to report progress to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic (DVCA). The DVCA will in turn report twice yearly to the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Committee and to the University Council.

The workstream owners’ roles are:

- Director Student Services (in partnership with Manager Accessibility Services) who will be responsible for improving the quality of experience for disabled learners (Objective 1) and increasing learner engagement (Objective 4);

- Director Property Services who will be responsible for creating barrier free access to the University (Objective 2);
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning who will be responsible for making the University a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for disabled learners (Objective 3);
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic (in partnership with Manager, Policy and Governance) who will be responsible for progressing work on policies (Objective 5).

Workstream owners will be held responsible for tasks and deliverables, identifying risks and timeframes, and establishing the necessary relationships to ensure successful delivery. Workstream owners will also be responsible for identifying the financial and staffing capacity necessary for effectively undertaking their assigned actions.

In addition, workstream owners, or their nominees, will be ex-officio members of a new group that will be formed – the Access and Inclusion Working Group. Members of the former DAP Working Group will be invited to be members of the new group. In the process of determining the membership and terms of reference of this new Group the University will be cognizant of the importance of having disabled students and staff with a broad range of intersecting lived experiences of gender, culture and sexualities as members, and that disabled students from across Divisions, campuses and experiences of learning and living at Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato The University of Waikato are represented and able to lead different workstreams. The Access and Inclusion Working Group will draw on the Kia Ōrite Toolkit to progress the University DAP.

One of the first tasks of the Access and Inclusion Working Group will be to establish a range of key performance indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) under each of the DAP's Objectives. These will enable the University to assess our progress towards meeting the objectives. The DAP in the section 'What we will do to achieve this objective' contains some operational information, but it is mainly designed to be aspirations. Therefore, in order that it not become long and unwieldy more specific measures of success will be included in an 'Indicators of Success Appendix'. This Appendix will be produced within six months of the Plan being submitted to TEC.

## 2. Overview of current activities

Over the past year building on the 'Learning and living at Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato' report the DAP Working Group has completed a stocktake in relation to current activities focused on disabled students. This investigation made it clear that the University of Waikato has a number of excellent initiatives and workstreams in place and underway to improve the educational experiences and outcomes for disabled students. However, we know this is insufficient since inequities persist between disabled students in comparison to students who do not present with disabilities (refer to Table 3). These inequities can limit options for, and create barriers to, tertiary education. Furthermore, we know there are a number of other factors that potentially impact on student outcomes, many of which are being addressed through a range of initiatives currently underway at the University – including the Ōritetanga programme (learner success) and Te Aurei programme (transforming the University into an antiracist and inclusive institution) – that will work in parallel with the Disability Action Plan to improve outcomes for disabled students.

### 2.1 Accessibility Services

The University of Waikato Accessibility Services provide advice, support, and services for students with a variety of impairments, disabilities and medical conditions (<https://www.waikato.ac.nz/students/accessibility-services>). The core values of the Service are empowerment, collaboration, professionalism, accessibility and diversity. Although registration is welcome at any time, all students who identify as having a disability, impairments or support needs are encouraged to register with Accessibility Services before coming to University or very early in

their studies. This helps to ensure that the right supports can be met. Accessibility Services support disabled students with long-term, short-term and temporary experiences of disability including, but not limited to the experiences related to impairments and health issues listed below::

- sensory impairment – vision, hearing
- physical impairment – head injury, mobility, speech
- neurodiversity – dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder
- mental health – anxiety, depression, Schizophrenia, Bipolar
- temporary impairment – injuries, Occupational Overuse Syndrome

Alongside a range of other support services available to students including the Student Health Service, Student Learning Services, Accessibility Services aims to form part of student's education support network, helping to make their university experience as successful and rewarding as possible. Section 1.1.4 refers to the data from Accessibility services and reports on the service types offered which include note taking support, providing New Zealand sign language interpreters, making resource material available in alternative formats, arranging alternative test and exam arrangement and providing access to technology liaison staff to assist the development and use of technologies that support independent learning for students with impairments.

Accessibility Services, while being the core provider of additional supports and services (adaptations and developing accommodations) for individual students, also has a role to inform access and inclusion for all students and to co-develop with students and staff approaches that can support groups of students to participate. A current good example of this is the work Accessibility Services are doing with Student Health services and an external provider to develop a peer support and mentorship programme with students with ADHD.

## 2.2 Disabled Students' Association

The University of Waikato Disabled Students' Association has two main foci – advocacy and community. The Association aims to create a space for students with a range of lived experiences of disability to come together and to work towards their own and the broader disabled students' positive journey at the University. They also aim to create a space where students who have feedback for the University (whether it is to do with bullying, educational support, etc) can seek guidance in working towards a resolution. The Disabled Students' Association is promoted through the Waikato Students' Union (WSU) and the disabled student community.

## 2.3 Te Puna Ako - Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning

Te Puna Ako - Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning has been engaging in a continuous process of reviewing and extending their resources and supports for teaching staff involved with inclusive learning including for disabled students. The Centre, building on a research project on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in 2019, has developed a UDL [self-assessment and reflection tool](#) to enable teaching staff to extend their inclusive teaching practices. The themes of inclusive teaching and learning and supporting student belonging have been threaded through many workshops. In 2021, a new inclusive learning paper (TERTL505) in the Post Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching & Learning was introduced building on a paper from 2018. Inclusion is a theme within other PG Cert Tertiary Teaching & Learning papers, and a review is underway to refresh these for 2023. Te Puna Ako has a project working group focused on accessibility and inclusion. This work has the potential to be happening on a University-wide level facilitated by Te Puna Ako.

In addition, Te Puna Ako has run extended workshop series/programmes (specific to different disciplinary contexts) working with teaching teams to develop their inclusive teaching awareness and support of students with impairments. The team also provides one-on-one assistance to teaching staff looking to better support students with impairments. Te Puna Ako is committed to

continuing to build its relationship with Accessibility Services, for example by providing intensive wrap around student learning support plans for students identified by Accessibility Services, as well as offering one-on-one, online and face-to-face student learning support.

Accessible teaching and learning is also supported through approaches that have 'inbuilt' flexibility. Across a range of divisions, schools and units the University has undertaken initiatives to address access to teaching and learning. One example is introducing a number of FLEXI papers across a range of subject areas. Papers coded as FLEXI offer more than simply blended-learning (using technology to enhance learning). They make all learning in a paper available to students either online or face-to-face. On any given day a student can choose whether they want to learn on-line or come to campus for a face-to-face experience. These papers are beneficial for the student body as a whole but particularly for disabled students.

#### 2.4 Accommodation Services

Accommodation Services aim to be responsive to requests from students to meet their access needs. Two services on the Hamilton campus now have accessible bathrooms (one accessible to six students in the Student Village fully-catered accommodation, and one available to a floor of seven students in College Hall self-catered). Both of these have additional accessibility features, e.g., ramps into the buildings, automatic doors into the unit/floor and some door features (width - openings). In Student Village, accessible laundry services (not in the accommodation area) have also been arranged for students with disabilities who are unable to use the student laundry services. Two units at the Orchard accommodation have been retro-fitted with some physical access features including ramps, wider doorways and larger rooms. The Selwyn Street Studios in Tauranga have three units with accessible en-suite bathrooms and other accessibility features. Halls staff, including residential assistants, have a key role in supporting students with disabilities and ensuring that these students can be included in the social life of the halls.

#### 2.5 Property Services

Property services work across the University campuses to develop planning for property work, coordinate building of new buildings, and manage maintenance and refurbishments of existing buildings (and associated areas/environments). Over the years access audits have been undertaken at the University campuses and in particular in relation to new builds (e.g., the Pā and Tauranga campus). There is limited information available about the implementation and review of these audits. In practice there has been some 'project specific' stakeholder engagement about disability access, however, there is currently no ongoing stakeholder engagement with a focus on disability access for the ongoing work of Property Services.

The University has been focused on improving accessibility for students as it undertakes new builds and upgrades across its campuses. Genuine efforts have been undertaken in the planning and design of new spaces to meet accessibility and inclusive learning and teaching needs. In designing new teaching spaces, we have also tried to meet the needs of staff with disabilities.

#### 2.6 The Library

Access to library services is a key contributor to student success and the Library continues to work on enabling access to library resources for disabled students. Shelves have been lowered and the location of library stacks is designed to enable access by students in wheelchairs. Height adjustable desks, an array of different styles of furniture and 24/7 access to computer areas are provided along with zoned areas for noise/silence.

Online access to library resources is provided in a variety of formats and the Library continues to work with publishers and platform providers for better access which will meet the needs of all users.

Scanned material and books sent by mail directly to the student are available. Flexibility with mode of consultation with librarians, in person or remotely with recorded workshops has been implemented with further reviews of service provision in progress.

The Library has recently moved to a user centric approach where it will be creating, refining and reviewing all library services and spaces using User Experience (UX) methodologies and design methods. This places the user at the heart of all that the Library does and will help to ensure it proactively keeps developing services and spaces which meet users' needs.

### 3. Devising policies

Work is currently being carried out by the Student Services Division, Accessibility Services Manager, Policy and Governance Manager, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic and members of the DAP Working Group on a new Students with Disabilities and Impairment policy (see Appendix #). The policy was informed by disabled students and has been subject to consultation with the wider University community. Its purpose is to "outline principles and practices to enable full and equal access and inclusion for disabled students through the supports and services available to them at the University of Waikato".

### 4. Objectives of the DAP

The DAP Working Group identified five main objectives that the University aims to progress over the duration of the Plan. The University is committed to a whole-of-University focus on progressing these five objectives and it is recognised that a degree of focus and resourcing will be required in order to achieve them. However, having these objectives will not preclude the University from also undertaking other work on other tasks that might over the course of the Plan become important to address. Underpinning the actioning of this Plan is a commitment to, and support of disabled students' ongoing participation as advisors, advocates and partners in the DAP.

#### OBJECTIVE 1: BE AN INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND WELCOMING UNIVERSITY

It is vital that the University of Waikato provides a safe and welcoming environment for all. An important principle of inclusion is that all people know they belong in the spaces, places and activities that form the particular environment. Belonging at University, according to a recent article in *Times Higher Education* asks 'Does everyone on campus feel valued, connected and able to be their authentic self'? (West, 2022). Putting learners at the centre of everything that is the work of the University will inform approaches that reflect and articulate what belonging looks and feels like and how to achieve it. For the University of Waikato this means taking an intersectional lens to inclusion – hearing from, engaging with and understanding the multiple and overlapping experiences that are those of our diverse student groups. Proactively engaging with a broad range of lived experiences needs to be evident across all areas of University life ensuring accessibility for all. The expected effect of this is to improve the overall quality of University life for disabled students as well as for all students. The aim is to bring about equitable and barrier-free access to all aspects of University life through not only well-designed inclusive physical environments (see Objective 2) but also academic (see Objective 3) and social environments that reflect the diverse, intersecting identities and lived experiences of our students.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Review, expand and strengthen current mechanisms to genuinely engage with students in partnership, including a focus on co-development of the Disabled Students Association roles and activities and understand the views of whānau and communities
- Engage with stakeholders, especially Māori, from 'the community' helping to ensure that the DAP is tabled at relevant engagement meetings and hui

- Align the DAP with other University policies, plans and strategies (e.g. Te Rautaki Māori/Māori Advancement Plan 2022-2026, Pacific Strategic Plan 2021-2025) that focus on diversity and develop an implementation approach for the DAP that engages with these policies and strategies
- Develop and implement University wide campaigns to raise awareness of diversity and develop a University communication strategy to support this
- Engage with Student Health Services to develop and implement a mental health peer programme in line with the ADHD peer mentoring programme being developed
- Support initiatives put forward by other entities, including central and local Government, and national organisations that will provide genuine and meaningful benefits for tertiary students with disabilities

## OBJECTIVE 2: CREATE BARRIER FREE ACCESS TO OUR CAMPUSES

The University needs to design spaces that comprehensively address access for disabled students using Universal Design principles and approaches. Disabled students have a right to an equal quality of University experience as other students and this means having full access to spaces, and being able to fully participate with equal access. This means thinking about disability access ‘beyond ramps’ and what access means for physically disabled students using wheelchairs, while this remains important. It requires engagement with a broad disabled student voice to include an understanding of access from physical, sensory, cognitive and emotional perspectives AND the overlapping complexities of these experiences for many students.

It is acknowledged that retrofitting existing learning and social spaces to enable fair and equal access can be costly and that the University must operate within budget, but going forward we must always take this into account. All new builds, refurbishments and renovations need to be informed by Universal Design principles and an accessibility lens – frameworks need to be developed in consultation with disabled students, Accessibility Services, Accommodation Services and with advice from a specialist access consultant. It must also be remembered that some learners do not just come to campus for lectures, tutorials, labs or workshops, it is also their home – where they live - and so this objective needs to include both those disabled students who live off campus as well as those who live on campus in the halls of residence.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Develop an ongoing Property Services disability access stakeholder engagement group to provide advice on all property related works including those that relate to Accommodation Services across both campuses
- Commit to a University wide audit of the built environment including all buildings and associated spaces around buildings on both campuses.
- Develop a deeper partnership between Property Services, Accommodation Services and Accessibility Services as this is key to future work to improve accessibility in Accommodation Services
- Inform any future programmes of refurbishment/renovation by universal design principles helping to ensure that the University does not overlook opportunities to provide disabled students with the best spaces possible
- Increase the attention paid to student safety (e.g., any future refurbished/accessible bathrooms need to have any alarm system to reduce the risk for students who might experience issues when using the facility and review existing access and operation of lifts and electronic doors and communications associated with outages and breakdowns of these facilities and equipment)

- Student partnership needs to inform accessibility work through co-developing a co-design approach
- Meet NZ Building Standards (<https://www.building.govt.nz/building-code-compliance/d-access/d1-access-routes/public-accommodation-access/buildings-which-must-be-accessible/>)
- Property Services, Accommodation team and Accessibility teams review all further refurbishment work to be undertaken at Student Village and Bryant Hall
- Develop an accessibility map that clearly indicates the locations of accessible toilets and bathrooms, accessible entrances and exits to buildings and accessible routes within and around campuses and other wayfinding approaches for students with diverse needs
- Student life is a key aspect of living in student accommodation. Having one unit that is accessible for up to six students in Student Village means students who need the accessibility features available in this accommodation are housed together. This forms a 'segregated' type of living situation and isolates students from day to day 'living' and social experiences with a broader student group. There is a need to redevelop existing accommodation services so disabled students can live amongst their peers and also socialise where and how other students do
- Not all social/shared spaces in the Student Village and College Hall are fully accessible - this includes dining (e.g., counter heights, lack of tactile indicators etc) – however, it is noted that for example the kitchen/dining staff are very accommodating and provide support to students to access food and drinks. Redesign food services areas in those accommodation services that provide meals to ensure all areas are fully accessible
- Partner with users of new spaces to learn what else could and should be catered for in the development of spaces and to ensure that the right kinds of universal design principles are captured in the implementation of the University's Campus Master Plan

### OBJECTIVE 3: BE AN INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The University's Academic Plan 2022-2026 Objective 2 is to 'Make the University a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for all'. This objective and the more specific objective in the DAP of making the University a more inclusive teaching and learning environment for disabled students dovetail. This work to ensure that disabled students are fully included in learning environments aligns with recommendations in the Report of the Taskforce; the Report states: "In addressing racism, we need to also address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, ableism and other forms of discrimination" (p. 3). As is acknowledged in the Kia Ōrite Toolkit – A New Zealand code of practice, July 2021 "Intersectional social forces position disabled people inside hierarchical environments already layered with discriminatory practices based on race and ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientations and other social identities." We understand that every student learns differently, and therefore as individual educators and as a University, we must be flexible in our approach in order to achieve this objective. This work will build on the work currently underway as part of the University's Ōritetanga and Te Aurei programmes.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Continue to promote the work of Accessibility Services which collaborates with disabled students and students with with health and other impairments to reach their goals and achieve their full academic potential
- Develop strategies to create accessible physical and online learning environments focusing on issues such as communication with students, physical spaces of learning, course materials, the culture of the teaching space and practical components of papers
- Provide opportunities to bring lecturers together to discuss inclusive teaching with the aim of helping to build an understanding and appreciation of UDL. This will also help lecturers to

feel more confident in seeking out help/advice/resources. This work will be co-developed and co-delivered with disabled students

- Investigate and implement ways to improve and extend use of captioning for lectures and workshops.
- Use the planned upgrade of Moodle to leverage opportunities to improve the accessibility of Moodle course sites for all students.
- Provide more for-credit and not for-credit learning development opportunities for colleagues, in a range of formats, and encourage and enable them to take up these opportunities, so they are better able to support disabled students through understanding their individual learning styles and challenges
- Progress Phase Three of the Ōritetanga programme including enhancing the learner success dashboard functionality and strengthening the study advising programme with a view to providing disabled students full and equal access and inclusion to all teaching and learning
- Actively pursue internal and external funding opportunities for co-research with disabled students and teaching staff to further opportunities for disabled learners.
- Complete an exploratory project determining the equitable status and opportunities for disabled students in work-integrated learning practice across the University of Waikato
- Increase efforts around disabled academic staff recruitment and retention with a view to fostering an academic workforce that comprises disabled academics broadly in keeping with the proportion of disabled student body

#### OBJECTIVE 4: INCREASE LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY LIFE

In order for disabled students to engage fully in university life (on campus and off campus), Universities need to be safe places that are inclusive and free from discrimination of any kind. To progress this in 2021 the National Disabled Students' Association (NDSA) - a non-partisan national body that represents disabled students in universities, polytechnics and other tertiary education providers – was launched.

In addition to this new national association, many institutions including the University of Waikato, also have their own associations or networks. At the University of Waikato this is the Waikato Disabled Students' Association (WDSA). These organisations are invaluable, and the University needs to work in partnership with students to ensure they grow from strength to strength. It is vital that the University puts disabled students and their whānau at the centre of education and this engagement with NDSA and WDSA is one way to help achieve this.

What will the University do to achieve this Objective?

- Provide professional development for staff that is co-developed with and co-facilitated by disabled students and disability studies academics, on the prevalence of disability in education, Universal Design for Learning principles and practices, and how to work with Accessibility Services to adequately support disabled learners on campus and in courses and individual papers.
- Promote both the National Disabled Students' Association (NSDA) and the Waikato Disabled Students' Association (WDSA) through Waikato Student Union (WSU) – this needs to take place both on campus and in the broader student disabled community.
- Seek ways to resource the WDSA to develop and provide peer work, be a referral point and run support service.
- Grow ways to make disabled students more visible and connected to other student and student diversity groups.
- Continue to build a relationship between the WDSA, Te Puna Ako Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Learning and Accessibility Services to ensure continued success of disabled students and visibility.



- Build capacity and opportunity for disabled students’ voice to be heard through WSU - starting with a seat on the WSU student board.

#### OBJECTIVE 5: PROGRESS WORK ON POLICIES THAT IMPACT DISABLED LEARNERS

The University needs to ensure that robust policies, plans and support are in place to support disabled learners to succeed. As stated in Section 1 ‘Context’, the universities operate under the Education and Training Act 2020 which aims to establish and regulate an education system that honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi and supports Māori-Crown relationships. The University of Waikato’s Treaty Statement details how we give effect to the Treaty in our strategy and operations. As is stated in the Kia Ōrite Toolkit – A New Zealand code of practice, July 2021, p. 11) “The 2013 New Zealand disability survey showed that 26% of Māori live with an impairment of some kind. This is the highest rate for any cultural group in New Zealand, despite an overall young age profile.” All work that the University does on policies and procedures related to disabled students will be done with a view giving effect to Te Tiriti.

What will the University do to achieve this objective?

- Finalise the Students with Disabilities and Impairments policy
- Request feedback on the new policy from the wider University community
- Make any required revisions to the policy based on feedback (re-circulate for a further round if feedback has been substantive)
- Seek Vice-Chancellor’s approval for the policy
- Review and make any required changes or improvements to related University policies to reflect this policy
- Ensure that the University has the necessary policies, plans and structures in place to enable it to enact the expectations in the Codes of Practice for the pastoral care of all domestic tertiary students and international students

### 5. Evaluation strategy

The University of Waikato currently collects and monitors data on the participation and achievement of students from Māori, Pacific, and equity groups, including disabled students. Evaluation of the DAP will involve using these data, along with new process and outcome measures developed in collaboration with DAP workstream owners, the Access and Inclusion Working Group, and the University’s Planning, Performance and Analytics Unit. This work will be carried out in 2023 led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic to produce an appendix to the DAP that will be a portfolio of measures that allow evaluation of the DAP against each of the four objectives identified above.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic will, in partnership with the DAP workstream owners and the DAP Access and Inclusion Working Group determine the reporting and monitoring format and frequency. At this stage, the expectation is for the University’s Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group and Council to receive reports annually.

### 6. Allocation of responsibility and resources

The Students with Disabilities and Impairments Policy and related policies and documents such as the DAP place responsibility on all staff and students to enact them. Specific roles and responsibilities under the DAP are set out in Section 1.3 of this Plan. To summarise, accountability for delivering the objectives of the DAP will be shared across four workstream owners, all of whom hold senior positions. They will be required to report progress to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic (DVCA) who will in turn report twice yearly to the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Committee and the University Council.

## 7. Communication of policies and programmes

It is the responsibility of all staff – professional and academic - at the University of Waikato to be familiar with and enact policies, programmes and initiatives that are focused on making equitable education opportunities available to all students. This means adopting a whole-of-institution approach. We understand that our Disability Action Plan represents something of a culture shift because we are attempting to ‘de-traditionalise’ university learning environments. As with our Learner Success Plan (submitted to TEC 8 July 2022) “We are aiming to establish the infrastructure necessary to make learning work for all learners. We need to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment that is flexible and supports learners to be better set up to learn independently and, to a certain extent, at their own pace.” To support this aim and the actions of the DAP we will develop a Communication plan that will tell the stories of our disabled students’ experiences and achievements and follow these students’ stories into their ‘post University’ lives by engaging with the Alumni Office and Divisions.

As we also noted in our Learner Success Plan as we progress our learner success journey over the short and long term we are keen to share information and learnings across the institution as well as with other tertiary education providers. In creating the Disability Action Plan we have drawn on the research and findings of other tertiary institutions internationally as a basis of our plans and we want in turn to add to scholarly knowledge by aiming to author and publish papers, present at key hui, network, engage at strategic meetings of tertiary leaders, share more publicly our web-page with information on our WDSA and initiatives and activities related to disabled learner and in general, make our journey and findings accessible to others so that we are all able to continuously learn from each other’s experiences.

## 8. Future state

The University is committed to achieving improved outcomes for disabled students. Alongside the University’s Ōritetanga programme, the University’s Disability Action Plan is intended to deliver demonstrable improvements in outcomes for disabled students and to progress closing the gap in performance between students who report a disability and those who don’t.

	<b>2021 actual</b>	<b>2022 (mid- year)</b>	<b>2023 Target</b>	<b>2024 Target</b>	<b>2025 Target</b>
Course completion rate	77.8%	78.6%	79.5%	81.5%	83.0%
First year retention	70.4%	TBC	71.5%	72.5%	73.0%
Proportion of students reporting a disability who are registered with Accessibility Services	32.0%	30.1%	34.0%	36.0%	38.0%