



Disability Action Plan 2009 – 2015

October 2009

Foreword

RMIT is a dual sector university which proudly grew out of the Working Men's College established in 1887. It has been providing services to students who have a disability since the early 1980's and this service has now evolved and developed into a sophisticated approach based on a philosophy of inclusion. RMIT University is committed to ensuring that all students, including those who have a disability or a long term medical condition, 'have the skills and passion to contribute to and engage with the world.' (RMIT 2010: Designing the Future)

The RMIT Disability Action Plan 2009 – 2015 aims to ensure that all students can participate in 'a global learning or work experience, access to work relevant learning experience, which they can take into their profession or vocation, and an applied focus to their post graduate research opportunities.' (RMIT 2010: Designing the Future)

RMIT University values and respects its diverse student population and is committed to providing learning opportunities that cater to all of our students. One of the University's priorities is to meet the needs and aspirations of all students, including students who have a disability or long term medical condition, which was reflected in the 2005-2008 RMIT Disability Action Plan and now underpins our follow-on plan, the RMIT Disability Action Plan 2009 - 2015.

It is with much pleasure that I commit the University to ensuring that the tasks and timelines identified in this plan are achieved to make learning at RMIT University a welcome, rich, exciting and dignified educational experience for those in our community who have a disability or long term medical condition.

Professor Margaret Gardner AO
Vice Chancellor and President

October 2009

Context

Underpinning all legislative requirements, guidelines and strategic plans is the need for tertiary education institutions to ensure that all core activities are designed and developed to accommodate the needs of all students, including those who have a disability or long term medical condition. The RMIT Disability Action Plan 2009 – 2015 has been developed under the auspices and guidance of the Disability Action Plan (DAP) Review Committee, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Students, and with representation from across the University. This Action Plan follows on from the RMIT 2005 - 2008 Disability Action Plan.

1. Review of 2005 – 2008 Disability Action Plan

RMIT University lodged a Disability Action Plan with the Commonwealth Government's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in 2005 which identified the Pro Vice-Chancellor Students as responsible for its implementation.

In accordance with the Disability Action Plan, key responsible staff were contacted about the progress made towards meeting the key performance measures for each task identified in the plan. Progress towards reaching designated goals has been positive and some of the highlights of the Plan are as follows:

- A Web Accessibility Compliance Framework has been developed and accepted by the University and is currently being built into operational work plans;
- Special Consideration and Equitable Assessment Arrangement policies have been developed, implemented and evaluated;
- An alternate formatting service has been developed collaboratively between the Disability Liaison Unit and the Library;
- Assistive software technology is accessible from all computers in RMIT's computer laboratories.

2. Development of the RMIT Disability Action Plan 2009 - 2015

The RMIT Disability Action Plan 2009- 2015 has been developed to embrace a number of major legislative and regulatory developments and reflects the social inclusion policies of the Commonwealth and State Governments.

The 2009 - 2015 Disability Action Plan is framed in the context of:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) (ratified by the Australian Government - 17 July 2008)
- Australian Human Rights Commission's, Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and its associated Education Standards (2005)
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's – Equal Opportunity Act (1995) – currently under review
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2006)

It also takes into account the:

- Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee's (AVCC) Guidelines Relating to Student with a Disability (2006)
- AVCC Guidelines on Information Access for Students with Print Disabilities (2004)
- Higher Education Bradley Review Report 2008 and the Commonwealth Government Budget 2008
- Shaping our Future – Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2004-2010
- RMIT 2010: Designing the Future
- RMIT Equity and Diversity Plan to 2010.

The Disability Action Plan 2009 – 2015 has been written to reflect an inclusive practice philosophy and approach with responsibilities for meeting performance indicators held by executive and senior staff members throughout the University. Inclusive practices aim to integrate consideration of the needs of students with a disability into all educational practices. Alongside the focus of working within an inclusive practice framework the Disability

Action Plan will address the RMIT focus on work integrated learning and internationalisation. Progress on the implementation of the Disability Action Plan 2009 – 2015 will be monitored on a six monthly basis by the RMIT Equity and Diversity Committee which reports to the Vice-Chancellor.

Goal of the 2009 - 2015 Disability Action Plan

The purpose of the Disability Action Plan is to ensure that RMIT establishes goals and strategies that meet the objectives of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992):

- (a) to eliminate as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of disability in the areas of:*
 - (i) work, accommodation, education, access to premises, clubs and sport; and*
 - (ii) the provision of goods, facilities, services and land; and*
 - (iii) existing laws; and*
 - (iv) the administration of commonwealth laws and programs; and*
- (b) to ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community; and*
- (c) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.*

To meet these objectives RMIT has established one overriding goal and a number of supporting strategies:

Goal:

RMIT anticipates that all people who have a disability and/or long term medical condition will be involved in all aspects of the RMIT University community and will be included rather than accommodated.

Strategies

1. RMIT's physical and technological environment will allow for, and actively encourage, full inclusion;
2. Teaching staff are expected to address the needs of students with a disability in learning design and assessment. Teaching staff will have access to appropriate information and training to enable this to happen;
3. Services for students, administrative functions and information will be accessible to all students;
4. Online information and resources will be accessible and will meet the RMIT Web Accessibility Framework;
5. Employment, professional development and leadership opportunities will be available to all eligible people; and
6. Feedback from students will be sought on their experiences of an inclusive education community.

RMIT acknowledges that only a small proportion of its staff and students disclose a disability or long term medical condition to the Disability Liaison Unit or the Workplace, Fairness and Diversity Unit. There are many reasons for this, stigma being one, fear of discrimination being another and, in many instances, people are unaware of their conditions. It makes sense, therefore, to teach inclusively, to design buildings and facilities that can be accessed by everyone, to provide information in accessible formats, to make available technology applications that everyone can use and to offer employment opportunities that can attract and retain the best applicants and employees irrespective of whether they have disabilities or long term medical conditions. The 2009 - 2015 Disability Action Plan will go a long way to ensuring that by 2015 RMIT will be a good practice example of an inclusive learning community.

Tasks

1. Learning and Teaching

2. Student Experience

Outcome	Task	Responsibility	Timeframe		Performance measure	Progress and date
			Start	Finish		
An informed RMIT academic & teaching community which embraces & demonstrates inclusive learning & teaching practices.	Inform the University on current inclusive teaching practices.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic College Pro Vice-Chancellors	2010	2015	LTD sessions and programs/activities offered in Colleges and Schools. Relevant resources posted on Learning & Teaching Unit website/s.	
	Address inclusive teaching practice in the Graduate Certificate of Tertiary Teaching.	Pro Vice-Chancellor of Design & Social Context College Head of School, Education	2010	ongoing	Graduate Certificate of Tertiary Teaching addressing & assessing inclusive teaching practices within the course.	
	Report on inclusive teaching initiatives.	Heads of School	2010	ongoing	Examples of good practice in Program Annual Review process.	
	Include information about inclusion in academic and teacher induction programs.	Executive Director, People & Culture	2010	2009	Approaches to inclusion included in RMIT Induction program for teachers and academics.	
	Graduate attributes take into account disability issues.	Director, Learning & Teaching Unit.	2009	ongoing	Feedback on graduate attributes sought from students with a disability or long term medical condition. Feedback will inform the Graduate Attributes implementation plan.	
	Academic policies & procedures address the needs of students with a disability or long term medical condition.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic	2009	ongoing	Adequacy of consultation in policy development process.	
	RMIT Policy Development guidelines and templates encourage policy developers to take an approach that considers people with a disability or long term medical condition.	University Secretary	2009	2009	Guidelines available for policy developers.	
	Implement policy on alternate assessment.	College Pro Vice-Chancellor's Heads of School	2009	2010	Effective implementation of policy as advised by the Disability Liaison Unit.	
	Identify WIL/ placement issues and work collaboratively with other areas of the University (eg careers, DLU, etc) to address them.	Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors, Learning & Teaching	2009	ongoing	Students with a disability or long term medical condition are enabled to undertake appropriate work placements in Australia and overseas.	

Outcome	Task	Responsibility	Timeframe		Performance measure	Progress and date
			Start	Finish		
Students with a disability or long term medical condition are satisfied with their experience of RMIT.	All University events are to be held in accessible venues and/or take account of the mobility and access needs of students, staff and guests.	Pro Vice-Chancellor, International & Development	2009	ongoing	Proportion of University events held in accessible venues. Signing services used at key University events for students (e.g. Graduations, Award presentations, Orientation).	
	Transition Reference Group addresses disability issues.	Chair, Transition Reference Group	2009	ongoing	Needs of students who have a disability or long term medical condition are reflected in the Transition Framework and in matters referred to by the Transition Reference Group.	
	Students with a disability and/or long term medical condition are enabled to complete the Student Experience Survey.	University Secretary	2010	2011	Analysis of SES and reporting of results.	
	Online student administration procedures are compliant with the University's Web Accessibility Framework as appropriate.	Manager, Information and Web Resources	2009	ongoing	Students with a disability or long term medical condition able to enrol and vary enrolments online.	

3. Infrastructure –Information Technology Services & Property Services

Outcome	Task	Responsibility	Timeframe		Performance measure	Progress and date
			Start	Finish		
Where possible, assistive technology software to be available in the Standard Operating Environment for students.	ITS to establish an assistive technology budget line to meet its responsibility for maintenance and upgrading of software.	Executive Director, ITS	2010	ongoing	ITS has established budget line for the maintenance and upgrading of the assistive technology software.	
	ITS to identify key positions with responsibility for assistive technology & include responsibilities in relevant position descriptions & work plans.	Executive Director, ITS	2009	ongoing	Responsibility allocated and reflected in position descriptions and work plans.	
	Make available professional development for Helpdesk & Desktop support staff to ensure they are up-to date with assistive technology service requirements.	Executive Director, ITS	2009	ongoing	Professional development opportunities provided and participation monitored.	
Provide accessible learning spaces for students.	Develop procedures to prioritise room changes to accommodate students with a disability or long term medical condition.	Executive Director, Property Services	2009	ongoing	Syllabus Plus includes information on accessibility of rooms and learning spaces (e.g. lift accessibility, hearing loops). Collaboration between Property Services and Disability Liaison Unit on procedures and their	

					implementation.	
Where possible all RMIT campuses, buildings & facilities to be fully accessible to people who have a disability or long term medical condition.	Develop RMIT building standards to address access issues over and above AS 1428.2 to ensure buildings are compliant to the DDA (1992).	Executive Director, Property Services	2009	2009	Standards developed and implemented in all new buildings, renovations and refurbishments.	
	Work towards ensuring there is at least one accessible toilet in each RMIT multi-storey building that can accommodate people who use large motorized w/chairs or scooters.	Executive Director, Property Services	2009	ongoing	All people on RMIT campuses able to access toilet facilities with ease and with dignity.	
	Property Services annual plan progressively prioritises access issues.	Executive Director, Property Services	2009	ongoing	RMIT buildings progressively become fully accessible.	
	Mobility maps to be made available online with a link to disability@rmit.edu.au if a raised line map is required.	Executive Director, Property Services	2009	2010	Raised line maps available for blind or vision impaired people on request.	
	Audit accessibility to include recommendations to enhance signage and building accessibility information provided via the web.	Executive Director, Property Services	2009	2010	Information plan developed and implemented.	
	Offices and reception counters to be accessible for staff and students who have a disability.	Executive Director, Property Services	2009	ongoing	Number of offices and reception areas made accessible for all people who have a disability or long term medical condition on an annual basis.	

4. Employment at RMIT

Outcome	Task	Responsibility	Timeframe		Performance measure	Progress and date
			Start	Finish		
Improved access to employment, professional development and leadership at RMIT for people who have a disability or long term medical condition.	RMIT actively encourages applications from people who have a disability or long term medical condition.	Executive Director, People	2009	2009	Position Descriptions available as Word documents & include a statement regarding diversity & equity. Position advertisements include a statement regarding diversity and equity	
	Develop tools and resources to assist managers and selection panels to ensure that qualifications and selection criteria are based on the inherent requirements of the position.	Executive Director, People	2009	2010	Tools and resources developed.	
	Relevant information is included in the induction offered to RMIT	Executive Director, People	2009	2010	Induction checklists to include reference to disability &	

	staff who have a disability or long term medical condition.				adjustment.	
	Develop and monitor the implementation of information and guidelines on disability discrimination and reasonable adjustments in the Workplace Fairness Policies.	Executive Director, People	2009	ongoing	Guidelines developed 98% completion of EO modules	
	Increase awareness of the Disability Action Plan & other related activities through the RMIT Leadership Group.	Executive Director, People	2009	ongoing	An increase in disability awareness among the leadership group.	
	Record data on people who have a disability on application for employment.	Executive Director, People	2009	2010	An increase in the number of applicants disclosing their disability at the application stage. More users record details on SAP.	
	People & Culture's systems and processes take into account the needs of and are accessible to people who have a disability or long term medical condition.	Executive Director, People	2009	ongoing	Accessibility of People and Culture systems and processes.	
	Promote change by offering the following training via Open Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disability Awareness ▪ Mental Health awareness skills training for Managers 	Executive Director, People	2009	Ongoing	Number of programs conducted in Open Programs. Number of participants in programs.	

5. Access to Information

Outcome	Task	Responsibility	Timeframe		Performance measure	Progress and date
			Start	Finish		
Ease of, timely and appropriate access to printed study materials for students who have a print disability.	Improve alternative formatting procedures and access to alternative formats.	Director, Library	2009	ongoing	Procedures reviewed and improved by stakeholders as necessary.	
	Develop policies, procedures and standards for the compilation of course readings.	Director, Library	2009	2010	Standards, policies and procedures developed and communicated to teaching and academic staff.	
	Develop and implement priorities for compliance with RMIT's Web Accessibility Framework.	Director, University Information & Web Services	2009	ongoing	Web accessibility guidelines communicated. Priorities for implementation planned, communicated, enacted and reported as appropriate.	
	Collaborate with Vision Australia, CAL and the Australian Publisher's Association on electronic library initiatives and access issues.	Director, Library	2009	ongoing	RMIT Library staff informed about new initiatives in electronic library collections in relation to access issues.	

	Address the need of people using speech recognition and screen enlargement software.	Director, Library	2009	2010	Space made available.	
	Establish a baseline for equipment for each library.	Director, Library	2009	2010	Baseline established.	
	Develop procedures to ensure appropriate software is made available in the Library and computer labs in a timely manner.	Director, Library Executive Director, ITS	2009	ongoing	Procedures developed and communicated to students.	

6. Review, report and refresh the Disability Action Plan

Outcome	Task	Responsibility	Timeframe		Performance measure	Progress and date
			Start	Finish		
By 2015 RMIT will be a good practice example of an inclusive tertiary institution for all people including those who have a disability or long term medical condition.	Monitor progress of implementation of the disability Action Plan every 12 months and report to the Equity & Diversity Committee and Vice-Chancellor.	Chair, Equity and Diversity Committee	2009	2015	Progress report and agenda item for Equity and Diversity Committee at its second meeting each year.	
	Disability Action Plan updated as appropriate and communicated.	Chair, Equity and Diversity Committee	2010	ongoing	An updated Plan presented to VCE in Q3 each year from 2010 so that College and portfolio work plans can reflect the tasks and measures of the Disability Action plan.	