

## DISABILITY GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC STAFF PREPARING COURSES

*(To be hyper-linked to Course Outline Template)*

### **Introduction**

UNSW has a statutory responsibility to ensure that students with disabilities are able to participate in their courses on equal terms with other students. Academic staff can assist the participation of students with disabilities by offering, at their first lecture, to speak privately with any students with disabilities who may require assistance. Academic staff can also contact the Equity Officer (Disability) for advice on the requirements of students with disabilities.

However, academic staff may not always be aware of students with disabilities in their courses, as some students choose not to identify. The more inclusive the design of courses and teaching methods, the more likely the course will suit a diverse range of students, including those with disabilities. These guidelines are intended to assist academic staff to design courses that take into account the needs of students with disabilities. The following UNSW Code of Practice, shortly to be updated, can provide helpful advice. <http://www.equity.unsw.edu.au/codeofpr.html>

### **Administrative Matters/Course Handouts**

- Course handouts should be provided in a text format, e.g. MS Word or RTF (Rich Text Format) as these are easily transcribed into alternative and electronic formats that are accessible to students who are blind or vision impaired. Where possible, this information should be provided to the student by email or on disc.

### **Course Outlines/Course Material**

- All teaching modes to be used in the course should be clearly outlined in the course outline, as some are difficult for students with disabilities e.g. videos create problems for students who are blind/vision impaired or students who are deaf/hearing impaired. These students may need to be given access to the videos prior to, or immediately following, lecture and assistance from someone to explain the material. If this is not possible, the students should be offered an alternative choice to meet the course requirements.
- Videos used in the course should be captioned where possible as this will greatly assist deaf/hearing impaired students. Advice on captioned videos can be obtained from the Australian Caption Centre. <http://www.auscap.com.au/>
- When overheads are used in courses, lecturers should use Arial font with a minimum print size 18, as the size and font are easier to read, particularly for students with vision impairment. Overheads should be made available to students who are blind or vision impaired prior to the lectures, as this will enable a student to follow the lecture more easily. Where possible, this information should be provided to the student by email or on disc.
- If on-line teaching is to be used, or if lecture notes are placed on the web, teaching staff should follow the advice regarding on-line teaching for students with disabilities, available from the Educational Technology and Development Centre at UNSW. The EdTEC web site is <http://www.edtec.unsw.edu.au/>

and information about accessible on-line teaching is under Resources /Flexible Teaching.

Further useful information about web accessibility issues can be found at the following sites <http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/tech.html> <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/oldsite/services/iesd/webteam/access/> and <http://www.w3.org/WAI/References/>

### **Textbooks/Recommended Materials**

Whilst advances in technology have greatly assisted students with disabilities to access education, there are still some major technical obstacles in relation to print material, particularly for students who are blind or vision impaired and students with learning disabilities. Academic staff can help considerably by observing the following guidelines in choosing textbooks and other recommended course material.

- Ensure, where possible, that essential and recommended texts, sets of readings and other course material is ordered well in advance and available at the commencement of session. This would greatly benefit students with a print handicap as transferring materials into Braille; audiotape; electronic formats or large print is extremely time consuming (e.g. transcription times can vary from 6 weeks to 12 weeks). Delays in receiving course material places students with print handicap at a distinct disadvantage.
- Ensure that course material is of good print quality as this can help reduce the time taken to transfer the material to alternate formats.
- Advise students with print handicap about the most relevant course material, as it is not always possible to transcribe all recommended reading material in a course.

Further information about the difficulties experienced by print handicapped students is provided below under 'Resources Material for Academic Staff'. The material comes from a forum held by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, which examined the issues creating barriers to education for the above group of students.

### **Assessment in the Course**

- Some students with disabilities may require their assessment to be carried out in an alternative manner. Examples could include oral examinations instead of written papers; use of sign interpreters during tutorial or thesis presentations; altering conditions of field trips; or allowing substitution of an equivalent value e.g. a written assignment if a student is unable to give a verbal presentation.
- For students whose disabilities that can be episodic and unpredictable, e.g. chronic fatigue or mental illness, extension of assignment deadlines without penalty can assist.
- Some students due to their disabilities, e.g. deaf/hearing impaired or with other communication difficulties may not be able to present verbal presentations. Lecturers should discuss alternatives to verbal presentations with these students e.g. a written assignment, or if a student uses a sign interpreter, organizing for the presentation to be given with interpreter assistance. The Equity Officer (Disability) can provide advice on how to book sign interpreters.

### **Assessment/Examinations/Class Tests**

- Some students with disabilities will require examination accommodations such as additional time, a separate room, use of a computer, or permission to undertake examinations in an alternative manner e.g. substituting a written examination for a verbal one. Lecturers can seek advice about the nature of the accommodations/alternative assessments from the Equity Officer (Disability).

### **Assessments/Attendance Requirements**

- Lecturers/tutors should be aware that meeting the attendance requirement for lectures and tutorials may be difficult for some students e.g. those with mental illness or chronic medical conditions. Students with mental illness for example can have problems attending morning lectures and tutorials (due to effects of medication) and should, where possible, be given preference to enroll in afternoon or evening lectures. Consideration needs to be given to substituting another form of assessment for students, who on legitimate disability grounds may not be able to meet the required 80% attendance rate for tutorials.

A useful guide to alternative assessments can be found at <http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/altass.html>

### **Useful Strategies When Lecturing**

Academic staff can assist students with disabilities during lectures by observing some simple guidelines.

- Face the class when speaking – avoid talking to the board.
- Ensure as much as possible that lighting in the lecture theatre is good.
- If possible tape your lectures and place them in open reserve along with the hard copy lecture notes.
- If putting course material on the web and using on-line teaching, seek advice on accessibility for people with disabilities from EdTEC.
- Read the text on overheads during lectures and ensure that font and print size are large and clear.
- Be willing to provide copies of overheads to students who are blind/vision impaired prior to, or immediately following, the lecture.
- Repeat questions asked during the lecture as this will assist deaf/hearing impaired students
- Always use the microphone as in most lecture theatres the microphone is linked to an audio loop in the theatre. Using the microphone will help students with a hearing impairment.
- Provide reading references for the next lecture and indicate the essential readings.

Further information and strategies for working with students with disabilities can be found in *Inclusive Practices: A Guide for Academics Working with Students with Disabilities*. *Inclusive Practices* is available on the following website <http://central.dot.net.au/~ssands/coop/graphics/contents.htm> The site also contains other publications relating to students with disabilities.

### **Resource Material to Assist Academic Staff Teaching Students with Disabilities**

Useful reference material on disability issues has been hyper-linked throughout the Course Outline Guidelines. The Equity Officer (Disability) also has other resource material covering a wide range of disabilities, including *Managing Oral Examinations*; *Marking Assignments Presented on Tape* and *Access to Scientific Laboratories*, which can be made available to academic staff. A useful website for disability resource material is <http://www.anu.edu.au/disabilities/#booklets>

A recent Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Forum looked at the experiences of tertiary students with visual impairment and print handicap and their access to university materials. The following papers may provide useful information.

- Single Source XML. A New Paradigm For Making Printed Material Accessible

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability\\_rights/education/forum02/Single%20Source%20Paper%2005-2002.htm](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/education/forum02/Single%20Source%20Paper%2005-2002.htm)

- A Disability Liaison Officer's perspective on providing materials in appropriate formats.

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability\\_rights/education/forum02/dlo%20perspective.htm](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/education/forum02/dlo%20perspective.htm)

- A Student's perspective on access to materials.

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability\\_rights/education/forum02/student\\_perspective.htm](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/education/forum02/student_perspective.htm)

Two other web sites of interest, are the National Clearing House on Education for Students with disabilities located at <http://www.deakin.edu.au/tedca/ncet/> and the Students with Disabilities: Code of Practice for Tertiary Institutions at [http://www.qut.edu.au/pubs/disabilities/national\\_code/code.html](http://www.qut.edu.au/pubs/disabilities/national_code/code.html)

**The Equity Officer (Disability) can be contacted at the Equity & Diversity Unit, on 9385 4734 or by email [L.Alsop@unsw.edu.au](mailto:L.Alsop@unsw.edu.au)  
The Equity & Diversity Unit website is at <http://www.equity.unsw.edu.au/>**