

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



SUPPORTING STAFF WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

A TOOLKIT FOR SUPERVISORS

Introduction

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Western Sydney University is committed to providing a vibrant and inclusive place of employment. We work hard to create opportunities for excellence and equality. The University highly values the diversity of our staff and we therefore strive to be flexible, accessible and supportive of all University community members, including those with a disability.

Staff with disabilities have the right to:

- apply for and be fairly considered for jobs on the basis of merit
- have equal opportunity for promotion and career development
- have equitable access to the full range of University employment conditions and the full range of University services
- reasonable workplace accommodations where their disability does not prevent them fulfilling the inherent requirements of the role.

This toolkit is a practical resource to assist supervisors on how best to support staff with disability in the workplace.

The Toolkit for Supervisors is underpinned by the:

- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Fair Work Act 2009 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Disability Inclusion Act 2014 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(NSW\)](#)



Western Sydney University has used the above legislation to make internal policies which should be read with this toolkit, including:

- [Disability Policy](#)
- [Discrimination, Harassment, Vilification and Victimisation Prevention Policy](#)
- [Workplace Flexibility Policy](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Accessibility Action Plan 2018 – 2020](#)

Definitions of Disability

Disability is a difficult term to define as there is no singular definition. The definition is dependent on the context in which disability is being considered. Generally, it is important to remember that the legislative definition of disability is broad and may include circumstances you were not aware were considered as disability.

Western Sydney University [policy](#) considers disability as: “any physical sensory, neurological, intellectual, psychiatric or learning disability, including physical disfigurement, the presence of disease and total or partial loss of to body or a bodily function”.

This is based on the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#) which defines disability, in relation to a person, as:

- a) total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions; or
- b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or
- f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:

- h) presently exists; or
- i) previously existed but no longer exists; or
- j) may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or
- k) is imputed to a person.”

There are other commonly used definition such as:

The [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\)](#): “Any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months.”

The [United Nations Convention](#) on the Rights of Persons With Disability (CRDP) defines people with a disability as including: “...those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

One in five Australians have a disability. These disabilities can be “visible” such as using a wheelchair or cane for mobility. However, approximately 80% of disabilities are “invisible” or not immediately apparent such as mental health, learning disabilities and epilepsy. A disability can be a lifelong condition such as cancer, or a short term one such as a back injury however it is also important to consider deteriorating conditions such as Alzheimer’s’ disease and even childhood/genetic disabilities which have lifelong challenges such as fetal alcohol syndrome.

Disability can be any chronic medical condition, mental illness or other disability including but not limited to:

Anxiety	Arthritis	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
Back Injury	Brain Injury	Cerebral Palsy
Cystic Fibrosis	Depression	Diabetes
Dyspraxia	Epilepsy	Hearing Impairment
Heart Failure	HIV / AIDS	Kidney Failure
Learning Disabilities	Mental Health	Mobility Impairment
Multiple Sclerosis	Muscular Dystrophy	Neurological Disability
Sickle-cell Anaemia	Spinal Cord Injury	Vision Impairment

Prevalence

The current estimate of the rate of disability in Australians aged 15 – 64 is 18.3% ([Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015](#)). The same estimates indicate that 20% of Australian adults had experienced a mental health condition in the past 12 months; 25% of young Australians currently have a mental health condition, and 75% of mental health conditions arise before the age of 21.

Importantly, there is a higher disability prevalence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers showed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are 1.7 times more likely to have disability than non-Indigenous people. The same survey also highlighted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are 1.5 times more likely to live with a more severe disability than non-Indigenous people.

This makes it crucial that the University ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff have ready access to disability-related specialist supports within the institution, where it is required, as a key means of retention and supporting their success.



Disability in the Workplace

Participation rates

In 2016, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) highlighted the ongoing lack of progress in the employment participation rate of people with disability. The commission described Australians with disability as 'significantly underemployed compared to people without a disability' in its ['Willing to Work Report: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination Against Older Australians and Australians with Disability'](#). It also emphasised that this situation has stubbornly persisted despite comprehensive efforts over two decades to address the gap. This is contrary to the many broad sweeping improvements in social inclusion of people with disability, including attainment of higher education.

As an employer, Western Sydney University significantly outperform Australia's low disability employment rate. At our institution, about 10% of our workforce report having disability and request formal workplace adjustments. As a major regional employer, this achievement not only benefits our individual staff and organisation generally, it also represents a significant social and economic return to the broader Greater Western Sydney region.

Obstacles to workplace participation rates

There are various obstacles people with a disability face when seeking and retaining employment including:

- A lack of knowledge and understanding from supervisors and colleagues of challenges associated with having a disability.
- Unintentional negative bias from the employer towards people with a disability in the workplace.
- Inflexible workplace practices and an absence of clear process to obtain reasonable workplace adjustments.

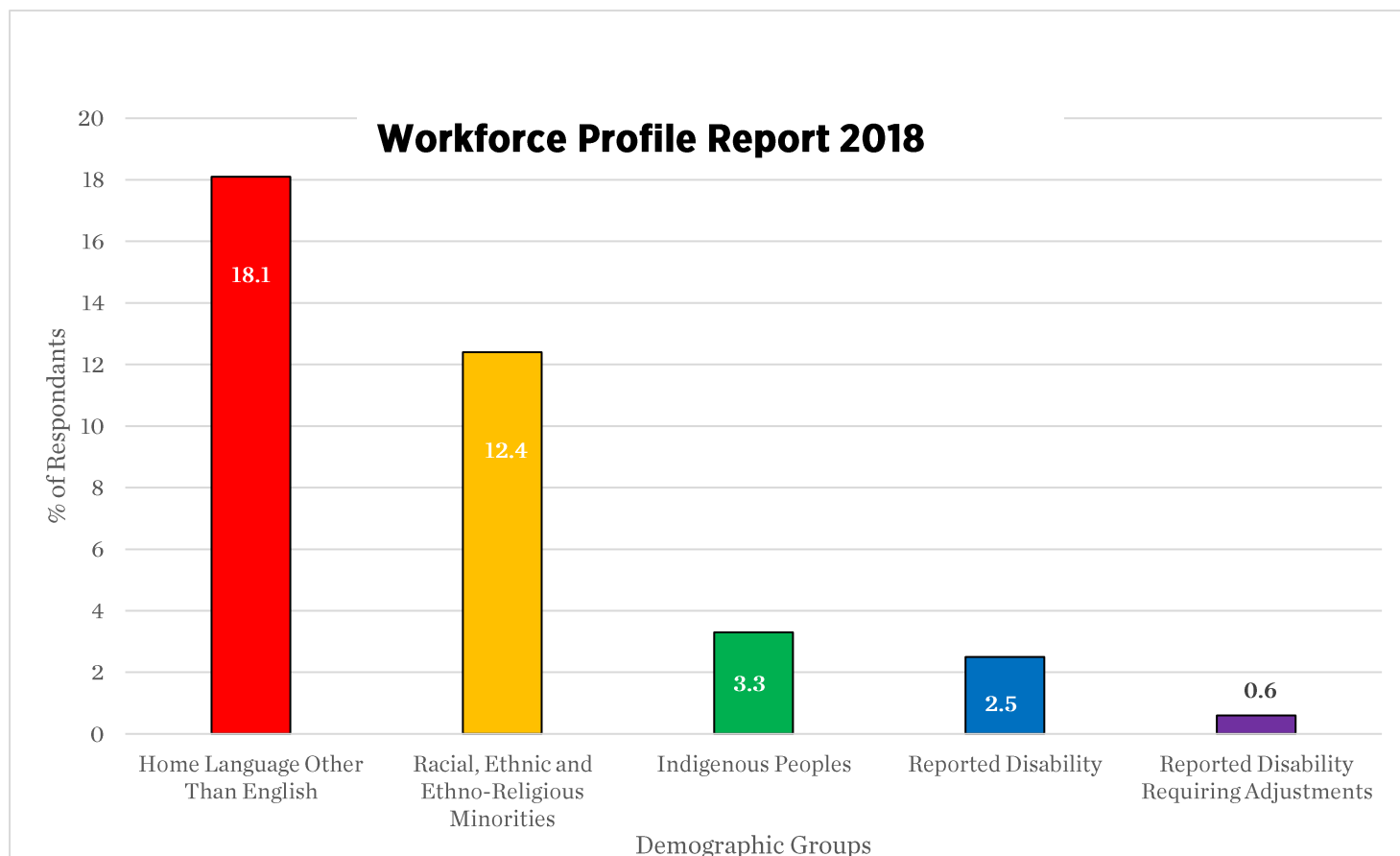
Staff with disability who are also older, women, gender diverse, sexuality diverse, from a culturally or linguistically diverse background and/or Indigenous background often face accumulating barriers and discrimination in employment. In these circumstances, any workplace adjustments put in place should take into account these additional issues. For example, an older woman with a degenerative disability may also be impacted by the physical effects of ageing, this may increase the challenges she encounters in the workplace. This woman may also be facing a low superannuation balance and housing stress, which may make it difficult for her financially to sustain anything less than fulltime salary. To be effective, the workplace adjustments need to accommodate these fuller circumstances

How Supervisors Can Improve Participation in the Workplace

- Be informed about disability and workplace adjustments, this toolkit is a great start. Check out the list of other online resources to help boost your disability knowledge and confidence.
- Challenge negative assumptions you may have about people with disability in the workplace. Be open to understanding the barriers associated and everyday ways you can make a difference, as a supervisor.
- Consider and act on any obstacles to people with disabilities within recruitment processes managed within your team.
- Demonstratively support all employees with a variety of flexible working arrangements.
- Explicitly show an interest in team members' health and wellbeing, including supporting their participation in University health and wellbeing programs.

Demographic Profile Engagement in the Workforce

The below graph demonstrates the percentages of different demographic groups being employed in the public sector according to the [NSW Government \(2018\)](#).



- Information sourced from NSW Government Public Service Commission 2018

This data is collected from employee self-reporting to their employers and relies on individuals disclosing their diversity characteristics. The 2018 Census identified that 2.5% of public sector employees identified themselves as having a disability, this is a decrease from 2017 statistics. This figure representing people with a disability has been decreasing since 2008 as has people with a reported disability who require workplace adjustments.

It is important to understand that workforce participation of people with a disability is a statistic which no workplace will accurately know. This is because, data regarding workforce participation relies on self-reporting having a disability. For many reasons this is often underreported, including a fear of negative workplace attitudes, a view that disability is a personal issue not relevant to disclosure at work, and many people not considering their condition as a 'disability', etc.

Disclosure

It's a Personal Decision

Some people choose to disclose their disability knowing that they may receive adjustments to enable them to undertake the tasks associated with employment. Others may choose to disclose in order to avoid misunderstanding or labelling by others, while some people may use disclosure to create an opportunity for educating others about disability and its impact. Disclosure can also provide an opportunity to find out about disability related services, support, research and other information.

However, many people are wary of disclosing their disability, believing they may be discriminated against, or denied opportunities, such as a job or promotion they really want or being denied certain entitlements. Some people fear their disability may provoke curiosity or unnecessary concern in others.

At Western Sydney University, there is the opportunity for staff to choose to disclose information regarding their disability to the Office of Equity and Diversity. Here, the information gained will be kept confidential in accordance to the [Disability Policy](#) in regard to disclosure and confidentiality. Also, the [Office of Equity and Diversity](#) can help inform supervisors and staff on support available for staff with disability.

New staff at Western Sydney University have the opportunity to disclose their information during the interview process or onboarding paperwork. Also, new staff are able to complete Equal Employment Opportunity survey if the staff member is not wanting to disclose to Human Resources but can be flagged with the Office of Equity and Diversity if they require assistance.

Responding to disclosure

There is no legal obligation for an employee to disclose their disability to an employer *except* where it is likely to affect their performance to meet the core requirements of the job and/or poses a serious and/or imminent risk. Once a disclosure has been made to you as a supervisor, you should offer to consider work-related adjustments to support the person with a disability. It is important to remember that a team member with disability can usually successfully perform their job with appropriate work-related adjustments.

Remember, sometimes, staff disclose their disability even though they don't require any specific adjustments at the time. This may be done to alert you to the possibility of future requirements, or to illustrate their resourcefulness or adaptability. It's important to ask whether the team member needs any support or adjustments and to be open to what is being requested of you, if anything. This is a critical opportunity to speak openly with the staff member and listen carefully to the information shared with you. Avoid making assumptions about the person's disability and how it impacts their work life. If you feel unsure about how to support a staff member in response to a disability disclosure, the [Office of Equity and Diversity](#) can help.



The decision not to disclose

The decision to disclose a disability in the workplace is a highly personal matter. Disclosure is an individual decision, depending on the circumstances, the context and how comfortable the person feels about it. A staff member with disability is obliged to disclose a disability to their employer only if it will affect their ability to perform the duties and/or there is a serious and/or imminent risk. But, disclosing a disability is a critical step in receiving adjustments and support.

It is important to remember that at Western, a staff member can confidentially disclose details of their disability directly to the Office of Equity and Diversity team. During this process the details of the person's diagnosis is kept confidential and only information about the workplace adjustments recommended by a health professional are shared with the workplace supervisor.

Generally, when, how and if disclosure is to occur is affected by factors such as:

- the type of disability
- the type of role and workplace culture
- the need for workplace adjustments or supports
- whether the disability is apparent or not
- how the disclosure might affect the supervisor's perception of the person's ability to perform particular duties
- the demonstrated attitudes of the supervisor and colleagues to people with disability and broader equity, diversity and inclusion issues.

Why Employees Choose Not to Disclose

Employees may choose not to disclose information regarding their disability for a range of reasons such as:

- Fear that disclosure would result in discrimination or being denied opportunities such as a job promotion.
- Experiences of being discriminated against in past positions.
- Fear that the employer would focus on their disabilities rather than their abilities.
- Belief that their employer may have pre-set and unrealistic attitudes about people with disabilities.
- Fear of being treated differently compared to other employees.
- The person may not be accepting of their own disability.
- They do not require adjustments to work, or the disability would not impact their performance.
- They have developed effective strategies in the workplace and therefore do not need to disclose their disability.

How Supervisors Can Assist with Employee Disclosure

Supervisors can assist their employees to feel safe and secure to disclose information by:

- Providing a safe environment for the employee to disclose information without feeling judged or different.
- Listening to what the employee is saying and not make assumptions based on their diagnosis.
- Providing resources about why information is collected and how the information will be stored securely.
- Referring the employee to appropriate services such as the Office of Equity and Diversity.
- Keeping information given by employee confidential.



Reasonable Adjustments

What are reasonable adjustments or work-related adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are essential for employers to avoid direct and indirect discrimination under the [Disability Discrimination Act \(1992\)](#) as it is important to put in place actions to help ensure equal opportunity for people with a disability and those caring for someone who has a disability. At Western Sydney University, these actions are commonly referred to as “reasonable adjustments” or “work-related adjustments”.

The legislation does not specify the types of adjustments required to avoid discrimination. Each case needs to be considered in its own circumstances.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments and work-related adjustments include:

- changes to the physical environment, such as modified workstations
- provision of equipment
- provision of assistive technology and required training
- modifying communication systems or information provision
- provision of interpreters
- flexibility around hours of work and/or breaks
- alternative working location/s
- additional and/or differently structured workplace supervisor support and/or instructions
- mentoring and/or peer support



Informal Arrangements

Informal arrangements can be made between a supervisor and staff member without the involvement of the Office of Equity and Diversity. Examples of these can include;

- Flexible working arrangements e.g. starting times or remote working within the provisions of the [Enterprise Bargaining Agreement](#) and the [University's Flexible Working Policy](#).
- Timetabling adjustments e.g. room allocation or starting time.
- Small or inexpensive equipment e.g. hands-free headset or ergonomic mouse.
- Prearranged flexible hours e.g. leaving early for an appointment.

Flexible Work

Flexible work arrangements are available for staff whether they have a disability or not. Western recognises that being able to balance our work and personal priorities matters. Research shows flexible workplaces have considerable benefits for all employees and for the performance of organisations at large. All staff at Western can apply to work flexibly as per the flexible work measures outlined in the relevant Staff Agreements and University policy.

"Providing flexible working options at our University plays an integral role in developing opportunities for increased staff satisfaction, retention, engagement, and sustained organisational knowledge. A flexible workplace is one that recognises the competing demands of its employees in balancing work commitments with personal priorities. Our University has many options available to staff who require flexible working arrangements and I encourage staff to discuss these options with their Manager or HR Advisor. When properly managed flexible working arrangements serve to benefit the overall productivity of our University."

Professor Barney Glover
Vice-Chancellor and University President

We encourage you to look at the following information:

Internal Information

- [WSU Enterprise Agreements](#)
- [Workplace Flexibility Policy](#)
- [Flexible Working Arrangements](#)
- [HR Flexible Work Options](#)

External Information

- [Fair Work Flexible Working Arrangements](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

Reasonable Adjustment Plans and Staff Workplace Adjustment Fund

Western Sydney University is committed to creating an equitable and inclusive environment for all staff including those with a disability, medical condition or chronic health condition. Staff with an existing disability or an acquired disability, whether it be of a temporary or permanent nature, are entitled to reasonable adjustments to help accommodate their needs in the work environment. Staff who require adjustments should discuss these with their supervisor or [HR advisor](#) and seek advice from the [Office of Equity and Diversity](#).

The University provides a [Reasonable Adjustment Plan \(RAP\)](#) where a staff member with disability requires formal workplace adjustments to accommodate their disability-related needs, in accordance with its legal responsibilities under the [Disability Discrimination Act](#). A RAP outlines the specific workplace adjustments the University commits to undertake in order to help enable staff to make their fullest workplace contribution while maintaining health, safety and wellbeing. This arrangement is similar to the Academic Integration Plans (AIPs) used for our students with a disability.

The Office of Equity and Diversity can assist supervisors with understanding their obligations as per the [Disability Policy](#) and discuss available options. Some staff have requirements for adjustments, however, may not meet the eligibility criteria for a RAP and therefore may benefit from engaging in a flexible working arrangement put in place by you as their supervisor.

The University also has a centralised [Staff Workplace Adjustment Fund \(SWAF\)](#) which is dedicated to funding services and equipment needed for staff with disability with a RAP in place. The RAP process and SWAF is administered by the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED). All equipment purchased by OED remains the property of OED for exclusive use of the staff member being supported. The staff member is responsible for returning equipment or for larger items advising OED so that a removal can be arranged.

A RAP can vary in time frame depending on the individual requirements. Flexible working arrangements tend to be shorter time frames to allow for negotiation and changes in operational needs. RAPs which provide for adjusted equipment tend to be for longer time frames. The policy provides for a period of up to 2 years before review.



Unjustifiable hardship

The University is committed to developing and supporting an inclusive and diverse environment which provides equal opportunity for all staff with disabilities to access, participate and enjoy the benefits of employment.

As a public funded institution, the University has a large pool of resources available to support and make reasonable adjustments to the working conditions of its staff with disabilities. However, in some circumstances, the adjustment requested may not be possible. For example, where the University is likely to experience unjustifiable hardship because of the adjustment.

As outlined in the University's Disability Policy, unjustifiable hardship is defined as;

An exception that allows an organisation to refuse to make an adjustment because the cost involved and the impact on the organisation and/or other people would be too great. In determining whether an adjustment would involve unjustifiable hardship, all relevant circumstances of the situation must be considered. The organisation must prove that an adjustment would cause it unjustifiable hardship, taking into account:

- the benefits or disadvantages that would be caused by making the reasonable adjustment
- the effect of the disability of the student or staff member
- the costs of making the reasonable adjustment in the context of the organisation's financial situation

If this is the case, the University has a responsibility to suggest a more viable alternative arrangement and discuss this with the staff member with disability. Where you believe that an adjustment requested may pose an unjustifiable hardship or is otherwise unreasonable, it is important that as a supervisor you seek advice from the Office of Equity and Diversity.

Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

(1) Temporary Support

A staff member has an injury which impacts on their usual mobility.

Once a staff member is cleared for work from their treating doctor, depending on the severity of the injury, a reasonable adjustment could include:

- If the staff member is unable to drive or access Campus, certain work tasks may be able to be completed at home and the remainder of hours taken as leave.
- If the staff member can access campus, adjustments can be provided in the way of equipment (mobility scooter, adjustment footrests) and/or a temporary re-arrangement of workspace or teaching space to ensure accessibility.
- Alternatively, a combination of support for working on Campus and working from home depending on the role of the staff member.

(2) Vision Impairment

A staff member has a condition which affects their vision.

A reasonable adjustment could include:

- A larger monitor screen
- Technology for screen readers
- Technology for magnifying text
- Technology for scanning document
- Change to lighting in the workspace
- Ensuring office space/teaching space is accessible
- Support when attending meetings at different campuses

(3) Panic Disorder

A staff member has a diagnosed Panic Disorder which affects their mental health and ability to manage certain situations.

A reasonable adjustment could include:

- Time available to attend medical and psychological support appointments
- Flexible start and finish times to accommodate medication side-effects
- Agreement on how the staff member will manage arising situations in the workplace which effect their mental wellness
- Arrange a workplace buddy to be available for support if/when needed through the workday.

The list above is by no means comprehensive and the adjustments listed will not be reasonable in every situation. Each staff member, role and workplace will have specific requirements to be accommodated.

Process of applying for a Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP)

- Contact Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) for advice
Our office is located in building K7 on the Hawkesbury Campus on Bourke St Richmond and can be contacted via email at reasonableadjustment@westernsydney.edu.au.
- The staff with disability to obtain documentation from a medical provider which advises of the disability, medical condition, or injury and how this impacts on them undertaking the inherent requirements of their role. This documentation is to be provided to OED and will be treated confidentially.
- Contact OED for an application form, complete and return to OED via reasonableadjustment@westernsydney.edu.au
- Discuss with the staff with disability and OED what supports may be required
- OED can loan or purchase recommended equipment if necessary
- OED can make referrals for complex assessments to recommend appropriate equipment
- OED can assist with communication with the Office of Estate and Commercial (OEC) if required
- OED can assist with identifying flexible working arrangements
- OED will work with the staff with disability, you as their supervisor, their medical and/or health professional/s, the Office of Human Resources to design and document a set of reasonable adjustments to be implemented within the workplace.

OED can support with equipment at home if staff are unable to attend the workplace due to disability, medical condition, or injury. Unit operational needs and inherent requirements are to be considered.

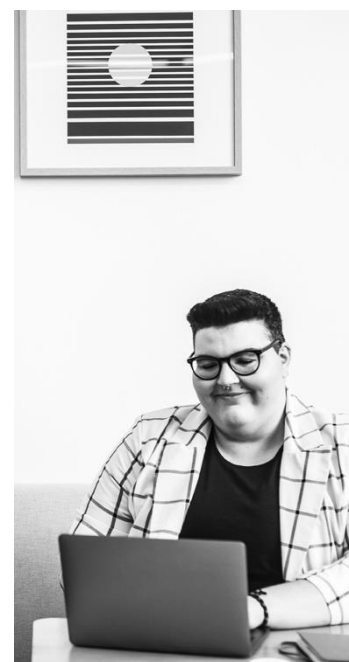
Roles and Responsibilities

Supervisor's Obligations

- Work with the [Office of Equity and Diversity](#) team to work out the feasibility of suggested adjustments.
- Implement agreed adjustments in a timely manner.
- Work collaboratively to implement agreed adjustments (this helps the individual feel supported).
- Conduct a handover where possible if there is a change of supervisor.
- Sign off on the RAP (you are agreeing to the terms of the RAP on behalf of the University).
- Ensure leave requests & workload agreements reflect the adjustments outlined in the RAP when authorising a staff member's timesheet.
- Contact the Office of Equity and Diversity
Our office is located in building K7 on the Hawkesbury Campus on Bourke St Richmond.
You can reach us via our email at reasonableadjustment@westernsydney.edu.au
- Contact the Office of Human Resources for advice if required
https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/human_resources/ohr/about_opc/hrss

Staff Member's Obligations

- Contact the Disability Project Officer at Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)
Our office is located in building K7 on the Hawkesbury Campus on Bourke St Richmond and can be contacted via our confidential email address at reasonableadjustment@westernsydney.edu.au.
- Make a request for a reasonable adjustment.
- Request from your treating doctor documentation which outlines diagnosis and any recommendations for adjustments to be made in the workplace, provide a copy to OED.
- Work collaboratively to implement agreed adjustments.
- Meet with the Disability Project Officer at an agreed time in person or via zoom.
- Advise your supervisor and the OED via our email at reasonableadjustment@westernsydney.edu.au if circumstances change and the existing RAP no longer meets your needs.
- Advise OED via our email at reasonableadjustment@westernsydney.edu.au if the supervisor or workplace location/contact details change.



Office of Equity and Diversity Obligations

- Meet with staff at an agreed time in person or via Zoom.
- Arrange a specialist assessment if required.
- Consider the medical advice and adjustments of the treating doctor.
- Facilitate an ergonomic assessment is completed by the Work Health Safety and Wellbeing (WHS&W) Unit, if required.
- Liaise with supervisors regarding recommendations and reasonable adjustments.
- Liaise with other University units.
- Arrange the purchase and delivery of equipment.
- Advise the University and staff regarding reasonability of adjustments requested.



Frequently Asked Questions

Who can make a referral for a Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP)?

Referrals for a RAP can be made by the staff member themselves, the supervisor, colleague, Office of Human Resources, including the Workplace Health Safety & Wellbeing team.

How long does a RAP last for?

A RAP can last from anywhere from 2 weeks up to 2 years in accordance with University policy. Although, the RAP can be reviewed in the case of significant work or disability-related changes, or the adjustments are no longer effective.

Who is aware that a staff member has a RAP?

The supervisor who is supervising the staff member with a RAP and, where necessary the Office of Human Resources, is aware that the staff member has a RAP in place. *But* people outside the OED are not privy to the details of the diagnosis or condition, unless the staff member expressly allows this information (or specific details) to be shared. The employee will be contacted for consent to share the information if this is ever necessary. To maintain confidentiality, the OED has on file the nominated staff members who are aware of the disabilities. Of course, where there is a serious and/or imminent risk OED may need to share relevant details with necessary contacts. If this is required, only the absolutely essential information will be disclosed and to only those vital to managing the urgent situation.

Are staff members eligible for a RAP if the injury occurred outside the workplace?

Yes, RAPs are available to all staff with either a pre-existing or newly acquired or diagnosed disability, regardless of whether it is a workplace injury or not. However, where there is an arising workplace injury, the University's Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing team at the [Office of Human Resources](#) will lead the workplace injury management process. Office of Equity and Diversity will assist the staff member and their supervisor to put in place ongoing arrangements for after the staff member is fit to return to duties.

Does a RAP cover temporary disability/health condition?

Yes, staff can submit a request for a RAP if they have a disability or health condition of a temporary nature which impacts their ability to perform the required duties of their role. For example, a staff member has broken their leg and needs their office temporarily relocated to help with mobility onto and around campus.

Where are the documents provided to support a RAP stored?

Any medical documentation provided by a staff member to obtain a RAP will be kept confidential by the Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) and remain only on file with the OED. The OED is independent of the Office of Human Resources, Schools, Institutes and other Division-based teams.

Can staff with a RAP undertake work related travel?

Yes, however if they are required to travel as a part of their job their RAP must be upgraded in order to travel. A risk assessment is undertaken prior to travel in consultation with the OED.

How can I help a staff member to work flexibly?

1. Maintain clear expectations

- Establish and negotiate outputs and deadlines with the staff member as you would normally do. As a supervisor you should clearly and explicitly communicate what you expect from the person working flexibly, but remember to check in and ask what they need and want from you.
- An effective way to maintain expectations is for supervisors to have the staff member update them on the progress of longer-term projects. For example, as a supervisor you may have the staff member send a daily/weekly email with a list of projects that have progressed. This may be useful during the initial trial period of a flexible work arrangement, to be ascertain whether the arrangements in place are effective or need adjusting.

2. Encourage staff to stay connected

- When working from home some staff members will value a Zoom call on a regular basis to touch base, share and problem-solve, whilst others will view this as micro-management. A regular, optional Zoom catch up may cater well to most working styles. This strategy can be effective between the supervisor and staff or peer to peer, between the staff member working remotely and a workplace buddy or trusted colleague.
- Where a person is working away from the office, prioritise returning their calls and emails and show them that you are present, and just a quick Zoom chat or a phone call away.
- When staff are working different or less hours than usual, it is important that as a supervisor allow plenty of opportunity for those team members to stay connected with you and other colleagues. For example, consider when team meetings are scheduled to help include as many part-time staff or those who adjust their hours around caring responsibilities, disability needs, etc.
- Consider sharing Microsoft calendars so availabilities can be seen to assist scheduling meetings and synchronising other workplace activities.

3. Build and extend trust with staff

- Research has shown that trust is the most important leadership skill and the most highly valued quality by staff. Trust and good communication can actually result in increased engagement and productivity. In most cases, staff who have been performing members in the 'physical' office are very likely to remain strong performers in the 'virtual' office when working from home.
- Take time for informal conversations – although you are not working in the same physical location or on different work patterns, it remains important to maintain informal channels of communication that you would enter into in the staff lunchroom, hallways, or around the photocopier.

4. Be aware of your WHS obligations

If working from home, liaise with the staff member to ensure that they have appropriate equipment & workspace in order to meet the inherent requirement of the role. If the person is starting or finishing later in the day, make sure that the workspace is safe at those times of day.

- An employer's duty of care under WHS laws apply to mental health too. Psychosocial hazards are anything in the design or management of work that cause stress. Stress is the reaction a person has

when they perceive the demands of their work exceed their abilities or resources. At times, staff working flexibly can work beyond reasonable expectations and/or not disclose if they are struggling to cope with workload. This can be from fear or worry that they may be perceived as underperforming and therefore lose their flexible arrangements.

If in doubt, go back to the individual's Reasonable Adjustment Plan. This will provide you with a solid foundation, guiding your supervision of the staff member to perform the inherent requirements of their role. The Office of Equity and Diversity are always available to contact to discuss any queries or concerns you may have. If in doubt, contact us via our office which is located in building K7 on the Hawkesbury Campus on Bourke St Richmond or via email at equityanddiversity@westernsydney.edu.au

Example of a Request for a Reasonable Adjustment Plan

*This information remains confidentially with Office of Equity and Diversity until your disclosure wishes are discussed with the OED team member. Disclosure is your decision.

Personal Information

Staff ID #:		Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> Other
First Name:		Last Name:	
Position:			
Home Phone No:		Mobile No:	
Office Phone No:			
Staff Email:		Date:	

Workplace Information

College/Division:	▶		
School/Unit:			
Work Supervisor:			
Home Campus:	▶	Building/Room:	
Other campus/es you regularly work on:	▶	Building/Room:	
Supervisor:			

Medical Information

Disability Type: (includes chronic medical condition)	▶		
Additional Information:			
Do you have medical documentation, which: a. is no more than 6 months old; b. describes your disability or medical condition; and c. recommends the types of workplace adjustments needed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y If yes, please submit with request form <input type="checkbox"/> N If no, you will need to obtain medical documentation which is no more than 6 months old; describes your disability or medical condition; and recommends the types of workplace adjustments needed, before a Reasonable Adjustment Plan can be put in place. This should be from a treating registered medical practitioner.		
Medical Documentation Date:	▶		

Treating Physician/Practices:			
Have Work Health & Safety staff undertaken a recent ergonomic assessment of your desk/workstation?			
Are you currently: attending work?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N		
on Sick Leave?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Anticipated date of return, if applicable:	
Other (please tell us anything else that you'd like us to know before we contact you)			

Reasonable Adjustments

How does the condition or disability impact the way you work at Western?			
What type/s of adjustment/s are you requesting the University put in place?			
Is your supervisor aware of your medical condition/disability?			
Do you travel interstate or overseas in your role at Western?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N		
How did you become aware of the services we offer for Reasonable Adjustment at work?			
Have you indicated that you have a disability/med condition on the EEO Survey on Staff Online?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N		
Additional Information:			

CONFIDENTIAL

Locked Bag 1797 | Penrith South DC NSW 1797| Australia

Office of Equity and Diversity
Building K7, Hawkesbury Campus
equityanddiversity@westernsydney.edu.au

Reasonable Adjustment Plan 2020 – DRAFT – [Name]

Name	
Staff ID	
Position	
Department	
School/Division	
Campus	
Staff Directory Link	

Responsible Office	
Position	
Department	
School/Division	
Campus	
Staff Directory Link	

Prepared by	
Date	
Attachments	

Background

Brief summary of initial contact/meeting

Medical documentation (include dr. and date – not medical information)

Reasonable Adjustment

In accordance with the University Disability Policy, the following reasonable adjustments have been identified as necessary to enable the staff member to perform the inherent requirements of their role. (optional: These adjustments are to be made in consideration of operational matters and other Western Sydney University policies and may require negotiation and flexibility from time to time.) The implementation of these adjustments necessitates clear communication between First & Last Name and the responsible officer.

(NB No diagnosis is to be included, except with the express written consent of the RAP holder)

Adjustments

Equipment

First and Last Name will advise the OED of any changes in their role and duties, supervisory arrangements or work location, to ensure that the University's capacity to implement these adjustments is maintained.

Any adjustable equipment required by this plan will be provided by OED and remains an OED asset for name's exclusive use for as long as is required in their employment at Western Sydney University. Name is responsible for ensuring its return to OED if it is no longer required.

Review

This adjustment plan will be reviewed by an officer at OED and First Name every XX months/years. (optional prior to planning for the XX Semester 20XX)

X _____

First and Last Name

Position

School/Division

Date

X _____

First and Last Name

Position

School/Division

Date

Important information-

Job Access is an Australian Government service that provides free information and advice about workplace solutions for employers and employees with a disability, including reasonable adjustments, disclosure of disability, disability employment case studies, tools and checklists.

<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/>

Acknowledgements

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- Jacqui Lentini (National Disability Coordination Officer)
- Megan Wiblen (4th Year Western Sydney University Occupational Therapy Student)

If you have any questions about issues within this resource or feedback on ways to improve the toolkit please contact us at reasonableadjustment@westernsydney.edu.au or the Office of Equity and Diversity at equityanddiversity@westernsydney.edu.au