Waipapa Taumata Rau

The University of Auckland

Disability Action Plan 2022-2025

Submission to the Tertiary Education Commission

8 July 2022

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Contents

1 Background

1.1 Uncovering the issues

Waipapa Taumata Rau the University of Auckland's ambitions for disabled learner success align with [Taumata Teitei: The University of Auckland Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan 2025](). Our strategic priorities and values compel us to understand and respond to persisting barriers to access and inclusion. The University is guided by legislation, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), and the Ministry of Education. We use evidence from research, internal data such as indicators submitted to TEC, consultation and engagement, and national and international benchmarking.

Evidence published by TEC and the Office for Disability Issues describes the continued inequitable educational experiences and outcomes for disabled children in comparison to children without disabilities. These inequities can limit options for, and create barriers to, tertiary education. The evidence also highlights how inequity is further compounded by intersections with other attributes, such as ethnicity and language.

The University's [Disability Programme 2017-2020]() laid the foundations for the Disability Action Plan (DAP) and an increase in the number of disabled learners is already evident. In 2017, 1,367 students (3%) disclosed a disability. This number has steadily risen to 3,420 students (8%) in May 2022. The increase is likely to reflect an increase in both the number of students with disability and their willingness to disclose their disability. The majority of disclosures involve "invisible" impairments. Current disclosure rates are in keeping with national averages for domestic university students in Aotearoa (8%)[1] and domestic tertiary students in Australia (7%).[2]

While these measures indicate progress, Table 1 (overleaf) shows that the Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately affects completion and retention rates for students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities.

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[1] https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-participation
[2] https://www.dese.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/student-data/selected-higher-education-statistics-2020-student-data-0

Table 1 Equivalent Full-time Student completion and retention rates 2018-2022

	Year 2018	Year 2019	Year 2020	Year 2021	Forecast 2022
Successful course completion rate for students with disability	85%	86%	89%	84%	86%
Successful course completion rate for all other students	89%	89%	92%	90%	91%
1st year retention rate of students with disability	82%	83%	82%	88%	81%
1st year retention rate of all other students	87%	87%	88%	86%	86%

1.2 Student Disability Services

Closing gaps to achieve parity in student success is an overarching goal. Increasing uptake of Ratonga Hauātanga Tauira Student Disability Services (SDS) is expected to be an important factor in achieving this goal. In 2021, students with disabilities who accessed SDS had higher completion rates than those who did not (87% and 83%, respectively). Measures of success are discussed further in Section 3.3 DAP evaluation strategy.

Student support through SDS is tailored to suit individuals. A range of services is available for students with disabilities at the University and students are encouraged to register with SDS to access support. Support includes academic support such as notetaking in class, NZ Sign-Language interpreting, test support under special conditions and lab assistance, through to mental health support, provision of accessible parking on campus, and access to specialist equipment. SDS also offers advice to, and advocacy for, students with disabilities on limited full-time study applications to StudyLink, scholarship applications, and alternative study pathways including the Undergraduate Targeted Admission Schemes.

Campus Life is responsible for SDS, specifically the Associate Director Student Engagement and Wellbeing, who is also responsible for DAP Workstream 1. The DAP sets deliverables for raising the awareness of supports available across the University and seeks continual improvement of support services through monitoring and reporting.

1.3 Developing our first DAP

The publication of TEC's Guidance and Toolkit in September 2021 coincided with the final stages of the University's development of the DAP. In summary, the resultant DAP is a culmination of nearly two years' work consisting of:

- engagement with students and staff with disabilities
- engagement with student representatives
- discussion and consultation with a Disability Programme Advisory Group
- engagement and consultation with staff from Ratonga Hauātanga Tauira Student Disability Services and from Te Ara Tautika the Equity Office
- early advice sought from the Executive Committee and senior staff from across the University
- the University's Disability Programme 2017-2020 and an assessment of work to be transitioned to the Disability Action Plan
- prioritisation of deliverables for implementation over 2022-2025 considered from a full schedule of possible tasks. The University Equity Leadership Committee will continue to monitor the full schedule and it will inform the review process for future iterations of the DAP
- consideration of international conventions and national legislation
- benchmarking and good practice across Universitas21, Group of Eight Australian universities, Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, and Aotearoa New Zealand tertiary education organisations
- Tertiary Education Commission guidance and best practice via the Kia Ōrite Toolkit
- University Council endorsement
- University Executive Committee endorsement
- University Equity Leadership Committee endorsement.

An internal-facing version of the DAP workstream tables has been prepared and is maintained as a record of each DAP deliverable and associated task with the following details

- owner and key relationships
- Kia Ōrite Toolkit Alignment (Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5)
- alignment with existing University initiatives
- new work to be undertaken
- measure of success
- expected timeframes
- status updates twice per year
- additional deliverables focussed on staff members with disabilities.

1.4 DAP endorsement and accountabilities

The DAP has been endorsed by the University Council, our governing body, and by the University Executive Committee (UEC) in its role to support strategic equity objectives.

The University Executive Committee appointed the Pro Vice-Chancellor Equity (PVC Equity) as the DAP Lead and delegated governance of the DAP to the University Equity Leadership Committee (UELC). The UELC is chaired by the Vice Chancellor, with the PVC Equity as deputy chair.

Accountability for delivering the objectives of the DAP is shared by four workstream owners. These workstream owners hold senior positions and will be required to report progress to the UELC and DAP Reference Group. The workstream owners' roles are

- Associate Director Campus Life, Student Wellbeing and Engagement
- Director of Learning and Teaching
- Associate Director HR, Staff Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- PVC Equity

Accountabilities are discussed further in Section 3.4 Allocation of roles and responsibilities.

2 Strategic priorities and the DAP

Our ambitions for disabled learner success align with [Taumata Teitei: The University of Auckland Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan 2025](#). Taumata Teitei articulates our commitment to te ao Māori principles, our Vision, and our Values.

- We are guided by principles of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and kaitiakitanga.
- Our Vision is that we will be internationally recognised for our unique contribution to fair, ethical, and sustainable societies.
- Our values are respect, integrity, excellence, and service. These values are lived through our behaviours and actions, with strong and enduring commitments to open intellectual inquiry, collaboration, creativity, and equity and diversity.
- We are committed to providing accessible, equitable lifelong higher education opportunities.

The University's Equity Policy[3] guides our work with a commitment to providing safe, inclusive and equitable study and work environments. The DAP brings to life the Equity Policy, ensuring we have a robust strategy with measurable outcomes for students with disabilities. Development, implementation, and review stages of the DAP reflect the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and particularly Article 3. This article affirms and protects tikanga and relates to the concept of Ōritetanga. In the context of the DAP, Article 3 requires the University to commit to achieving equitable education and employment outcomes for students and staff, with priorities, actions, and success defined by those experiencing disability.

In addition to responding to TEC requirements, the DAP supports the overarching purpose of the University's Equity Policy and provides an important mechanism for monitoring and reporting progress towards achieving equitable access, participation, success, and satisfaction for students and staff members with disabilities. The internal-facing DAP is broader than is required by TEC because it includes deliverables relating to staff members with disabilities as well as students with disabilities. These deliverables are included in the public-facing webpages that outline the DAP but are not included in this document.

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[3] University of Auckland's Equity Policy has been in place since 2017. The Policy is currently being reviewed to align it with Taumata Teitei. Following comprehensive consultation, a new Policy is expected to be published at the end of 2022.

3 Roadmap for implementing the DAP

The disability action plan guidance issued by TEC sets out five key components for any disability action plan. Our roadmap for implementation considers each of these components:

- clear evidence of use of the Kia Ōrite toolkit and the best practice standards it describes
- goals and targets
- evaluation strategies
- allocation of responsibility
- communication of policies and programmes.

Apart from the DAP's communication plan, all components are embedded activities under DAP Workstream 5.

3.1 Best practice under the Kia Ōrite Toolkit

Sections 1, 2 and 4 of the Toolkit were particularly beneficial in developing deliverables and identifying priorities. Sections 3 and 5 provide useful best-practice guidance to workstream owners and those working with them to deliver the DAP. Use of the Toolkit facilitates structure and effective collaboration and engagement.

Workstream 5 includes a task requiring all responsibility holders to read and implement relevant sections of the Kia Ōrite Toolkit, so that those involved in delivering key task/s are aware of the context for Kia Ōrite and best practice approaches. This task has been completed by all current workstream owners.

Each deliverable and task has been linked to one or more Kia Ōrite best practices. Alignments with Kia Ōrite are recorded in an internal-facing project management document and have been shared with accountability holders.

3.2 Goals and timeframes

Goals are described in the DAP as 'deliverables' and can have one or more associated tasks. Deliverables are grouped into five workstreams outlined in subsequent sections.

The DAP evaluation strategy is currently being developed as part of Workstream 5 and will include targets and measures of success for deliverables. Key types of indicators have been identified:

- Learner indicators
    - Participation: A rising proportion of learners are students with disabilities
    - Achievement: Rising retention and completion rates for students with disabilities
    - Employment: A rising proportion of disabled learners entering the workforce at the conclusion of their studies
- Organisational indicators
    - Awareness: Disability understanding is embedded in staff induction and professional development
    - Accessibility: Physical and digital accessibility are monitored and enhanced in a cycle of continuous improvement.

All the workstreams support improved outcomes against these indicators. Workstreams are implemented concurrently, and sequencing of tasks is informed by any contingencies between them. Sequencing of workstream tasks also considers where they represent entirely new work, align with existing activities, and where the task aligns with work that is due to commence during the life of the DAP. For example, work on some priorities, such as physical accessibility, was initiated as part of the Disability Programme 2017-2020. Each DAP workstream owner has identified likely timelines and it is anticipated all tasks will have commenced by the end of 2023. The Disability Action Plan webpages will be updated every six months to show the status of each deliverable.

3.3 DAP evaluation strategy

The University currently collects and monitors data on the participation and achievement of students from Māori, Pacific, and equity groups, including students with disabilities. Evaluation of the DAP will involve using these data, along with new process and outcome measures developed in collaboration with DAP workstream owners, the DAP Reference Group, the University's Planning and Information Office, and where appropriate, the TEC relationship manager. This work will be carried out in 2022 as part of Workstream 4 to produce a portfolio of measures that allow evaluation of the DAP against each of the indicators identified above.

Workstream 5 will determine the reporting and monitoring format and frequency, with guidance from the UELC. At this stage, the expectation is for the UELC to receive and publish reports annually.

3.4 Allocation of roles and responsibilities

Equity policies and related documents such as the DAP place a responsibility on all staff members and students to uphold them. Specific roles and responsibilities under the DAP are set out in Table 2.

Table 2 DAP roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
UELC	Governance and scrutiny. Workstream 5 establishes and maintains the Plan with appropriate governance. As approved by the University Executive Committee, governance for the DAP rests with the UELC.
Students and staff with disability	Students and staff with lived experience are central to the development and implementation of the DAP and its future iterations. • A Reference Group associated with implementing the plan is currently being assembled and will be comprised of a representative group of students and staff with lived experience and expertise in disability. The Reference Group will be co-led by Māori. The DAP Reference Group will provide advice and scrutiny to the implementation of the DAP, while the networks will support representatives to guide specific workstreams and tasks within the DAP. • A Students with Disabilities Network will be established under Workstream 1.
Workstream owners	Hold accountability for deliverables and tasks, identifying risks and timeframes, and establishing critical relationships to facilitate successful delivery. Workstream owners are responsible for identifying the financial and staffing capacity necessary for effectively undertaking their assigned actions.

3.5 Communication of policies and programmes

An internal-facing Communications and Engagement Plan to promote the DAP has been drafted. It identifies channels for promoting and raising awareness of the DAP, including the use of dedicated University webpages for the DAP.

It also highlights the need to promote complaints processes alongside the published DAP. Workstream 4 seeks to improve complaints processes relating to physical access, and will also promote existing complaints and feedback forms.

Workstream 1: Student experience

Workstream Owner: Associate Director Campus Life, Student Engagement and Wellbeing

What will be delivered?	How will it be delivered?
The University has a robust strategy for raising awareness of and improving supports for students with disabilities.	Create student-facing communications and/or marketing in alternative formats to: • Improve awareness of supports across physical and digital spaces, including designated contacts and independent advocacy services • Encourage students to identify specific support requirements as early as possible • Clearly state processes for recruitment, selection, admission, enrolment, funding, and withdrawal • Maintain complaints and appeal processes that are widely available
An increased number of students with disabilities enter study with the University through identified pathways.	Enhance understanding of pathways for students with disabilities through: • Strategic focus on increasing the number of Māori students with disabilities • Collaboration with Schools and Community Engagement • Promotion of undergraduate scholarships for students with disabilities • Accessible application processes • Promotion of UTAS for students with disabilities • Promotion of pathways such as the Tertiary Foundation Certificate
Students with disabilities have a sense of community and belonging at the University.	Engage with students with disabilities to identify and provide suitable student-centred study spaces across all campuses.
Students with disabilities are supported into meaningful employment, in line	Investigate good practices for increasing employment opportunities for students with disabilities, including employment at the University of Auckland.
with the attributes and skills envisioned in the graduate profile.	Enhance support for students with disabilities to act independently and self-advocate for meaningful employment.
	Consider how to monitor and report the transition of students with disabilities into meaningful employment.

Workstream 2: Learning and teaching

Workstream Owner: Director Learning and Teaching

What will be delivered?	How will it be delivered?
Learning and teaching in the digital environment is inclusive and accessible, and student experience is equitable.	Engage with students and staff with disabilities to inform an assessment of gaps, an inclusivity and accessibility audit of the University's digital Learning and Teaching platforms such as Canvas, and develop a programme of work to prioritise and address any accessibility gaps.
	Define good practice for flexible learning, especially technology-enhanced learning and learning assistance, and consider issues for staff in achieving this good practice.
	Work across the University to provide a more consistent student experience of Canvas, including the development of minimum requirements that are based on a Universal Design for learning framework and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
	Establish and embed good practice training for inclusive and accessible learning and teaching across the University. In-house training should involve staff and/or students with disabilities.
The University has embedded good practice for inclusive flexible learning and teaching.	Investigate and report on good practices for inclusive learning experiences that are adjacent to or separate from digital learning and teaching, including but not limited to field trips, practicums, and work-based learning.

Workstream 3: Staff experience

Workstream Owner: Associate Director Human Resources, Staff Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

What will be delivered?	How will it be delivered?
Students with disabilities have a sense of community and belonging at the University.	Enable all staff to provide inclusive and accessible materials, resources, and services across all mediums and platforms, and incorporate Universal Design principles into their ways of working.
	Improve information-sharing about best practices for generalist, specialist, and other support staff.
	Embed disability awareness in all existing staff onboarding and professional development programmes, with students and/or staff involved in developing in-house training.
	Enable inclusive and accessible communications, marketing, and event planning practices by guiding and supporting their adoption among key stakeholders across the University.

Workstream 4: Systems and policies

Workstream Owner: Pro Vice-Chancellor Equity

What will be delivered?	How will it be delivered?
Enhanced systems and use of data/information about students with disabilities, supporting evidence-based policy and practices.	Investigate and implement good practice qualitative and quantitative data gathering and reporting to enhance strategy, resourcing support, and outreach for students with disabilities.
	Better understand the experiences of students with disabilities who identify as Māori, including through engagement with whānau, and as a priority address any gaps in provision and support.
	Maintain appropriate processes and staff training so that data and information are collected and used appropriately, in accordance with legislation and relevant University privacy policies and procedures, and the purposes for collecting data are clearly communicated to students and staff.
Campus built environments and facilities are accessible for students, staff, and visitors with disabilities.	Complete the agreed audit of built environment accessibility, identifying as a minimum: • Compliance with NZS 4121:2001 Design for Access and Mobility: Buildings and Associated Facilities. • A plan with timeframes for meeting accessibility gaps and for improvements above minimum compliance standards, and which considers good practice.
	The personal safety of people with disabilities is enhanced by appropriate systems, communications, and procedures for evacuation. These include effective and monitored: • Personal emergency evacuation plans • Building assistance register for people with disabilities • Staff training on the evacuation for people with impairments or disabilities.
Responses to built environment accessibility complaints are managed efficiently and effectively.	Identify and agree a coordinated whole-of-institution system for efficiently and effectively reporting and responding to all built environment accessibility complaints.

What will be delivered?	How will it be delivered?
The University has a suite of policies, guidelines, procedures, and planning processes which are accessible to all, and support the access, success, and participation of all students and staff.	Pro-actively partner with students and staff with disabilities, so that their lived experiences inform the review of relevant University policies, strategies, guidelines, procedures, and planning processes.
	Policies and procedures for course selection and admissions, funding, and withdrawal, including withdrawals without penalty, and associated complaints and appeals processes are clear, available, and accessible.
The University's Procurement Strategy and Procurement Policy, and their implementation, are consistent with the Equity Policy and the Disability Action Plan.	Procurement planning, sourcing and management decisions explicitly recognise and respect the experience of students and staff with disabilities.

Workstream 5: Leadership and governance

Workstream Owner: Pro Vice-Chancellor Equity

What will be delivered?	How will it be delivered?
The development, implementation and review stages of the Disability Action Plan reflect the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi.	Māori are partners in the development, review, governance, and implementation of the Plan.
The Disability Action Plan is implemented and monitored by appropriate and effective governance, engagement, and reporting structures.	Agree institutional governance structures, such as Sponsor, Business Owner/s, Project Manager, and Reference Group.
	Reporting and monitoring procedures for implementation of the Plan reflect Kia Ōrite best practice.
	Through engagement with students and staff with disabilities, establish the Reference Group with agreed membership, terms of reference, reporting, and administration support. The Reference Group will include students and staff with disabilities, including different types of disability.
	Funding and resources are identified to implement the Disability Action Plan.
	All Responsibility Holders read and implement relevant sections of the Kia Ōrite Toolkit, ensuring those involved in delivering key task/s are aware of the context for Kia Ōrite and best practice approaches.