

Reasonable accommodations for disability – guidelines

‘Disabled people’ and ‘people with disabilities’ have been used interchangeably throughout this document. This recognises that some people prefer identity-first language, while others prefer person-first language.

Reasonable accommodations are adjustments made to the University environment that:

- Support disabled people to participate on an equal basis with others; and
- Can be reasonably made available in the circumstances.

This may include changes that enable or support people with disabilities to:

- Undertake their work and/or study
- Be considered for appointment, promotion, transfer, training, or other opportunities
- Enjoy equitable terms and conditions with people in comparable circumstances
- Use University facilities or participate in University programmes.

Many people will need reasonable accommodations at some point in their lives due to temporary or permanent disabilities, illness, or age-related impairments.

Implementing reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities often also benefits other groups of people and, in many cases, everyone.

These guidelines complement:

- [Te Ara Tautika, The Equity Policy](#) – and the University’s commitment to being an environment where members of its community can thrive
- The University’s [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Policy](#) and [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Procedures](#).

The guidelines provide information on key queries you may have, and case study examples of when accommodations might be provided.

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Key information

Disability definition

The University defines 'disability' as any physical, psychological, cognitive, or sensory impairment which, in interaction with social and systemic barriers, restricts a person's full and effective participation in university life on an equal basis with others.

Why reasonable accommodations may be required

University environments, including its structures, systems, processes and practices, can interact with a person's disability, creating barriers to their participation.

Examples of such barriers include:

- Lighting that is too bright causing sensory overload
- Noisy or busy work/study environments causing fatigue
- Font that is too small for people with vision impairments
- Digital information that cannot be interpreted by screen readers
- Spaces that are too small for wheelchair access.

Reasonable accommodations remove or mitigate barriers where it is reasonable to do so.

Failure to provide reasonable accommodations may amount to unlawful discrimination and breach the Human Rights Act 1993.

When to request reasonable accommodations

People seeking reasonable accommodations should discuss their situation with the University as soon as possible. For instance, before commencing work or study, or when the need for accommodations occurs. Early contact can help ensure timely consideration and, where relevant, implementation.

How to request reasonable accommodations

The [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Policy](#) and [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Procedures](#) set out processes for requesting, considering, and make decisions about reasonable accommodations:

- Current staff members requesting accommodations for their day to day work should speak to their line manager or, if they prefer, [Staff Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) (Staff DEI)
- Current or prospective students should contact a Student Service - [Ratonga Hauātanga Tauira, Student Disability Services \(SDS\)](#) or [Inclusive Learning](#)
- Staff requesting accommodations for situations other than their day to day work should speak to a relevant point of contact at the University - as should prospective staff members, graduands, and members of University Council.

When making a request for accommodations, it can be useful to:

- Explain the reasons why you are requesting accommodations. What are the difficulties or barriers you anticipate experiencing, or are experiencing, with participating in the current environment?
- Describe any changes that you would like made or what might make things easier.
- Be prepared to discuss alternative accommodations options.

Support and helpful information

People seeking reasonable accommodations can be supported by whānau and/or others of their choosing throughout the reasonable accommodations process.

Options for staff support include:

- [Staff Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [The Employee Assistance Programme](#)
- [The Disabled Staff/Staff with Disabilities Network](#)
- [A relevant faculty or LSRI Associate Dean/Director Equity and Diversity](#)
- Other staff members
- A relevant union delegate/organiser
- A professional association.

Students can seek support from:

- [Ratonga Hauātanga Tauira, Student Disability Services \(SDS\)](#)
- [Inclusive Learning](#)
- [AUSA](#)
- [Te Papa Manaaki, Campus Care](#)

- [The Auckland University Disabled Students Association](#).

Helpful information:

- [Workbridge](#) provides details about different disabilities and how they may affect people in the workplace
- The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training provides advice on:
 - [Specific disabilities](#) as well as teaching and assessment strategies to assist
 - [Inclusive teaching](#) including providing reasonable accommodations for [assessment and exams](#). Special conditions for tests and exams are a type of reasonable accommodation. However, they have a separate process and are covered by the University's [Special Conditions for Tests and Examination Policy](#) and [Special Conditions in Test and Examinations Procedures](#).

Expectations of University staff supporting disabled people with reasonable accommodations

Respectful and collaborative engagement

Some people worry that sharing information about their disability could lead to bias, discrimination, negative treatment, lost opportunities, or others making incorrect assumptions. The University recognises and understands this. Guided by [Te Ara Tautika, The Equity Policy](#), the University strives to address discrimination, and be a place where people with disabilities feel valued and respected, and able to confidently share their personal details when requesting accommodations.

All staff are encouraged to attend Disability Confidence Training, the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Training, and Privacy 101 – An introduction to privacy at the University. These courses are available via Hono. They seek to address barriers that perpetuate disability discrimination, and provide a general overview of how to support inclusion of people with disabilities and protect sensitive information.

The [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Policy](#), and [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Procedures](#), include requirements to help ensure appropriate, constructive, and collaborative engagement with people requesting accommodations. They emphasise focusing on mitigating or removing the barriers that they are experiencing, rather than their disability. There are also options for support, and lodging concerns/complaints, if things are not progressing in accordance with these requirements.

Complying with privacy requirements

The [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Policy](#) provides that staff should hold and use information relating to accommodations requests and decisions in accordance with the requirements of the University's [Disposal Authority](#) (staff intranet) and its:

- [Privacy Statements](#)
- Policy, and associated procedures and guidelines.

These help ensure fair and responsible use of personal information, in line with:

- Data minimisation – only collecting and retaining personal information that is really needed to meet lawful purposes

- Transparency – always being open about the personal information collected and how it is processed
- Security – taking all reasonable steps to ensure that personal information is protected against loss or unauthorised processing
- Use limitation – using and sharing personal information only in the ways we say we will, and only where necessary to meet lawful purposes
- Rights focused – ensuring people can exercise their important privacy rights, including to access and correct their information.

Protecting information

Information relating to a disabled person's accommodations request and/or reasonable accommodations should only be shared with people who have a legitimate need to know this information to perform duties under the Reasonable Accommodations for Disability [Policy](#) and [Procedures](#). For instance, people may need information about an accommodations request to assess, arrange, procure and/or implement reasonable accommodations. It is important to discuss and agree with the disabled person what information to share, how it will be shared, and with whom it will be shared. Disclosure should only:

- Occur on a need-to-know basis
- Provide the minimum amount of sensitive information required.

Some examples are provided below, describing when it might be ok to share certain information about accommodations. However, disclosure may not be appropriate in every similar situation. The particular circumstances, University privacy requirements, and views of the person with a disability, are key to helping determine whether disclosure is appropriate/required.

Examples

Disclosure to aid implementation

A student with ADHD and anxiety may have accommodations for extended time for assignments and access to a quiet space for presentations. They may agree to share this for the purposes of undertaking group work, to help ensure:

- That adequate time is allowed for providing their contributions
- Adjustments to presentation formats, such as allowing pre-recorded segments
- A supportive and low-pressure environment during meetings.

The focus should be on helping the group to work inclusively, not the student's disability or diagnosis.

Disclosure about accommodations without providing identifying information

A staff member may have reasonable accommodations to attend faculty meetings remotely, due to a chronic health condition that affects their mobility and energy levels. Their name and their disability do not need to be shared. The meeting organiser only needs to know that an option for remote attendance is required in order to:

- Set up hybrid meeting technology
- Ensure materials are shared digitally in advance
- Encourage inclusive facilitation practices.

Disclosure for procurement

Disclosure about a person's disability may be unavoidable in order to procure equipment which supports their participation. However, in some situations, it may not be appropriate to share their name with others before this point in the reasonable accommodations process.

Balancing perspectives

Considering accommodations requests and providing reasonable accommodations generally involves balancing peoples' different perspectives. It will often be the case that everyone's requirements can be met.

For instance, a staff member may have a cognitive disability affecting memory and information processing. They request written instructions, advance notice of meetings, and a quiet workspace to reduce distractions. Their line manager would like to ensure the staff member can join and collaborate with the team. The staff member and line manager agree:

- Tasks will be assigned through a project management tool, Trello, with clear instructions. This benefits the staff member and also the rest of the team
- Agendas are sent out three days before meetings, which also benefits the whole team.
- Collaboration time is scheduled, where the staff member joins the team but they can otherwise work in a quiet zone.

Good practices

- Follow the [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Policy](#), [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Procedures](#), and these guidelines
- Hold meetings about accommodations in a private space
- You don't need to know about the person's disability. Focus on understanding what supports are required. This might include asking what has helped them in the past and/or what they use in other environments
- Avoid making assumptions. People experience the same or similar disabilities in different ways
- Ask for help when you are unsure about things – see the list of contacts provided earlier in this document.

Medical and other evidence

Personal information, such as medical certification or other assessments, can help the University understand what accommodations will be most beneficial in supporting the person with a disability. The University recognises the costs and time associated with obtaining this information, and will only request it when important for decision-making.

Medical or other evidence may not be required. This is typically the case when:

- Accommodations are easy and affordable to implement
- There is clear evidence of impairment.

Issues that decision-makers should consider

Accommodation options and solutions

Staff involved with decision-making should collaborate with the disabled person to:

- Identify accommodations options that might support them
- Secure appropriate reasonable accommodations.

Sometimes, several:

- Options may need to be assessed
- Reasonable accommodations may be required.

It is not the disabled person's responsibility to identify and implement reasonable accommodations, although they will often have helpful views about what works for them. The University must consider and implement what can be provided.

Reasonableness

Accommodations must be provided where it is reasonable to do so. This involves considering all relevant circumstances. In particular, think about how providing various accommodations might affect the matters in the 'Decision-making' section of the [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Policy](#). Thorough and genuine consideration of the various issues is key.

Part of assessing what can reasonably be provided includes looking at the benefits that accommodations may bring – to both the person with a disability and others. Reasonable accommodations may:

- Benefit the University as a whole by encouraging diversity, providing equitable opportunities, and making it more attractive to a wider range of students and staff
- Lead to improvements and/or efficiencies in the way things are done
- Assist other staff members and/or students, now or in the future. For example, meetings where only one person speaks at a time benefit everyone at the meeting, in addition to people with impaired hearing.

In general, accommodations are unlikely to be provided if they:

- Are personal items that are regularly used both inside and outside of the University – apart from reasonable accommodations for the purpose of working from home
- Have significant negative effects on the efficiency, productivity, success and competitiveness of the University
- Incur unreasonably high costs, particularly in relation to the size of the University, available finances, or its financial viability
- May result in inappropriate detriment to others which cannot be avoided or mitigated
- Seek to change the essential requirements of work/study
- Involve maintaining a job which would otherwise be altered or abolished
- Require the creation of a different job, or promotion or transfer to a different job.

Consider alternatives where a request for specific accommodations is refused. For example, someone with a sensory processing issue may be highly sensitive to noise and visual distractions. They may request a private office to reduce sensory overload. This may not be possible due to space limitations. However alternative accommodations could include:

- Relocating their desk to a quieter corner of the shared office space
- Providing noise-cancelling headphones and a desk privacy screen
- A flexible schedule allowing them to work during quieter hours.

The aim should be to significantly improve their ability to concentrate and manage stress. Collaborating with the staff member can lead to creative, effective solutions. This may be an iterative process.

It is important to note that:

- Decisions about accommodations may sometimes vary from previous decisions. This is because:
 - Assessing what is reasonable depends on the context and circumstances at the particular time of the request
 - Circumstances often evolve and change
- Accommodations that are agreed for one person may sometimes conflict with those of another person. In these cases, the University will work to find the best possible solution for everyone.

Costs

The costs of providing reasonable accommodations will vary, depending on what is required. In many instances no, or only minor, costs will be incurred.

Faculties, LSRI and service divisions generally fund reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities in their area. SDS and Staff DEI may cover costs in some instances.

Common examples of accommodations

Physical adjustments, such as:

- Ensuring access to a building or equipment
- Reorganising workspaces to improve accessibility, or respond to sensitivities such as to noise, light or smell
- Ensuring good ventilation
- Providing a quiet space
- Adjusting lighting or temperature
- Removing allergenic products or preventing contamination of food preparation areas
- Providing a safe, private space for storing and administering medication
- Providing relevant equipment and furniture for instance, an ergonomic chair or height adjustable desk.

Providing assistive technology such as:

- Magnification equipment
- Microphones at meetings
- Navigation aids
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Screen reader technology

Modifying the way a job is done, for example by:

- Changing tasks
- Allocating or swapping non-essential aspects of the job to another employee
- Allowing flexible working arrangements - including more frequent breaks, working from home, shorter workdays, working in a different area, or time to attend medical appointments¹
- Giving instructions in writing as well as verbally
- Providing support through a mentor, on-the-job coach, or specialist workplace assessor

¹ Flexible work arrangements should be made under the [Flexible Work Policy and Procedures](#).

- Using a sign language or remote video interpreter for interviews.

Making adjustments to how we teach, such as:

- Ensuring Canvas courses meet the University's baseline standards
- Providing alternative formats, such as large print, audio books or video transcriptions
- Ensuring good colour contrast in teaching materials
- Allowing for alternative assessment tasks, assignment deadline flexibility, oral assessments, or presentations by video to the lecturer or in a small group only
- Providing for different communication preferences
- Changing the teaching environment, such as enabling front row seating, or allowing for personal assistance, the ability to move in class, and sensory considerations
- Allowing for flexible attendance
- Providing support through captioning, fieldwork assistants, lab assistance, note taking, NZ Sign-Language Interpreter
- Providing teaching content in advance, group work adjustments, in-class support
- Providing special conditions for tests and exams².

Accommodating for environmental and food sensitivities by:

- Having air purifiers, heaters, fans, noise-cancelling headphones, lighting, alternative furnishings and furniture
- Avoiding contact with allergens where food is prepared and served
- Discussing catering for functions with attendees so disabling reactions can be avoided and food preferences are considered.

Supports for recruitment, for instance:

- Having an accessible physical location or online option
- Providing additional time to complete the interview and/or assessments
- Enabling whānau and/or support people to accompany candidates
- Providing candidates with interview questions before their interview
- Providing breaks as needed
- Having an interpreter or sign language interpreter
- Ensuring appropriate technology is available
- Providing materials in alternative formats such as large print.

Having low stimulation and sensory spaces – for example at events or conferences - to:

- Help reduce sensory overload from, for example, bright lights, loud sounds, strong smells
- Provide a predictable, calming environment
- Allow for emotional decompression and stress relief, helping manage symptoms like anxiety, panic, or emotional overwhelm.

Supports for travel, such as:

- Booking flights at times that support a disabled person's needs – such as early check-in, or allowing for a delay in travel after a long conference
- Supporting – partially or fully - upgrades for long flights
- Enabling a support person to accompany the person with a disability.

² Special conditions for tests and exams should be made under these [policy](#) and [procedures](#).

What will be appropriate, and can be provided or changed, depends on the circumstances of individual cases.

Special conditions for tests and exams, and flexible working

Special conditions for tests and exams, and flexible working arrangement, are important reasonable accommodations. However, they have separate processes and are therefore covered by the University's :

- [Special Conditions for Tests and Examination Policy](#) and [Special Conditions in Test and Examinations Procedures](#)
- [Flexible Work Policy and Procedures](#).

Changes to someone's position or role at the University, or line manager changes

In general, people with disabilities can keep using their agreed reasonable accommodations where they:

- Transfer to another University employment position
- Cease being a student but are employed by the University.

In some cases, adjustments may need to be made. These should be considered in line with the [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Policy](#) and [Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Procedures](#).

Staff members who become students can contact SDS for support.

A change in line management should not in itself require reviews or changes being made to agreed reasonable accommodations.

The processes

Summaries of the processes for staff and student accommodations requests are provided below. This information is also set out in flow chart form.

Accommodations requests from staff – process summary

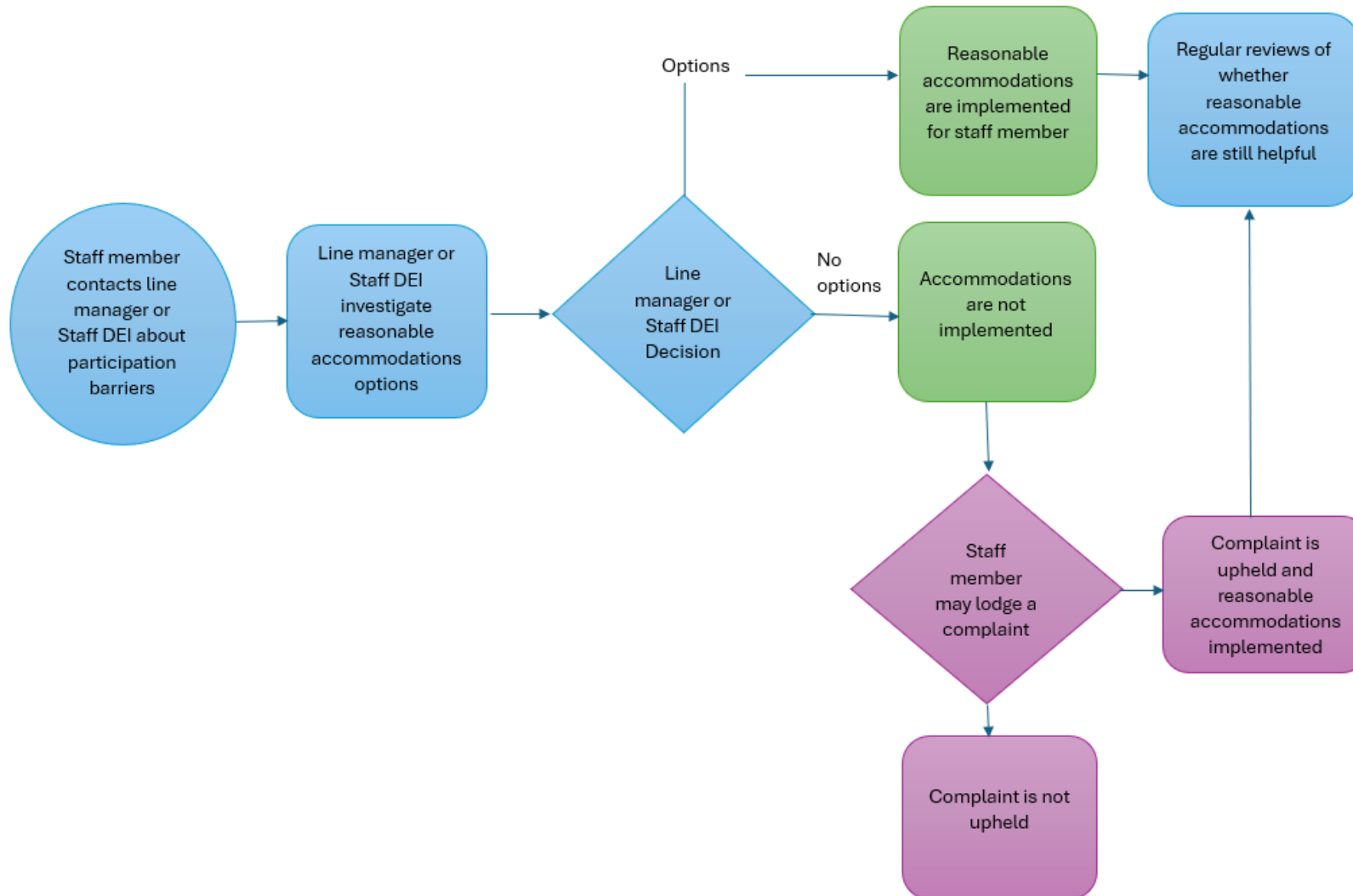
1. Staff members speak to their line manager, or Staff DEI, about barriers to their participation, and complete first part of the Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Request form.
2. Line manager, or Staff DEI, investigates reasonable accommodations options.
3. Line manager, or Staff DEI, make a decision about what can be provided and complete next section of the Reasonable Accommodations for Disability Request form.
4. Where reasonable accommodations are implemented, reviews and updating the form should take place – at least annually.
5. Staff member can lodge a complaint about the accommodations process and decisions. Reasonable accommodations will be implemented where a complaint, about a decision not to provide accommodations, is upheld.

Accommodations requests from students – process summary

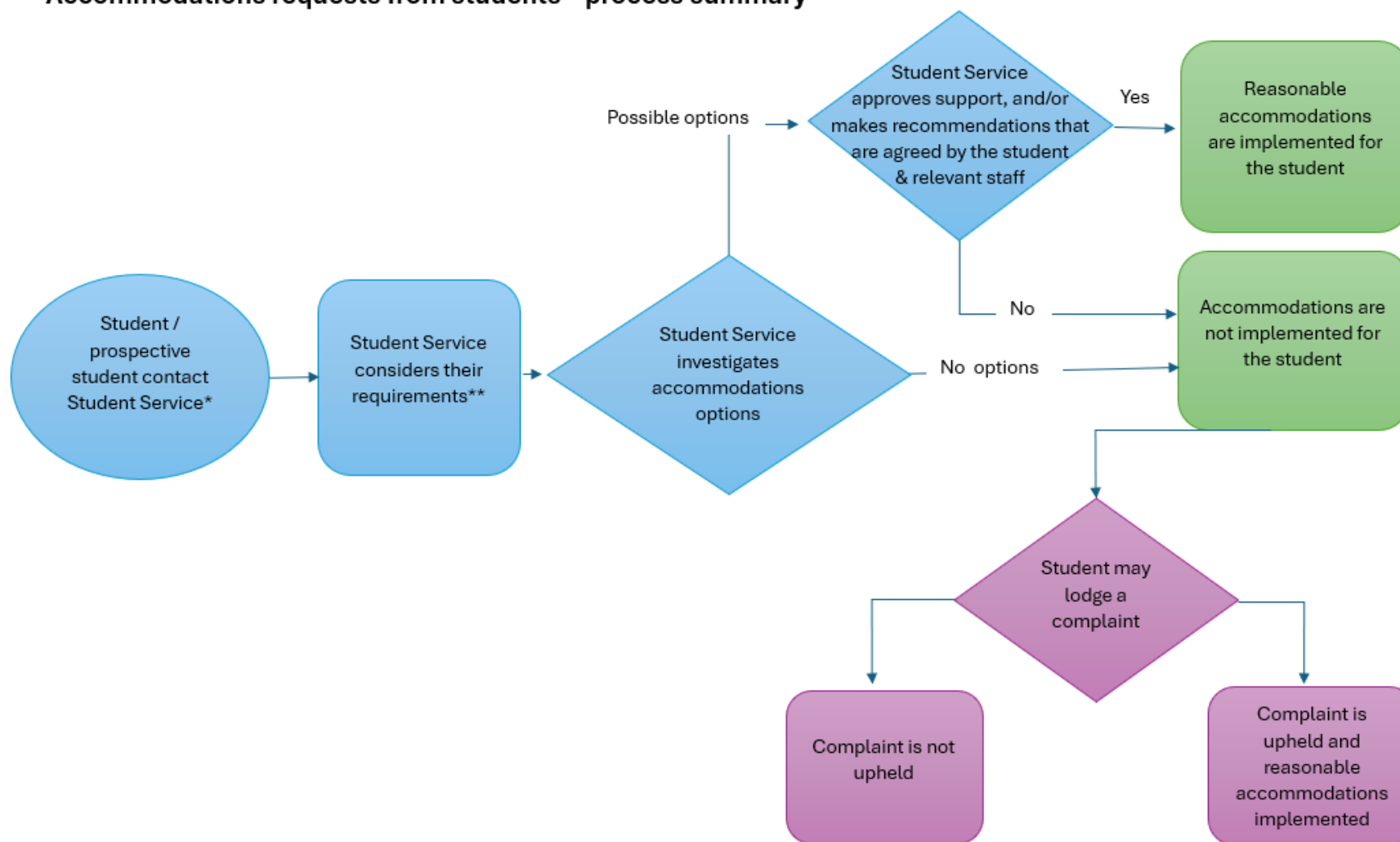
1. Student /prospective student contacts a Student Service – either Student Disability Services or Inclusive Learning.
2. Student Service considers the student's/prospective student's requirements.³
3. Student Service investigates reasonable accommodations options.
4. Where possible reasonable accommodations options exist, the Student Service may:
 - Approve support; and/or
 - Make recommendations for agreement with relevant staff and the student/prospective student.
5. Reasonable accommodations will be implemented for the student/prospective student where the Student Service has:
 - Approved support; and/or
 - Made recommendations that are agreed by the student/prospective student and relevant staff.
6. Students/prospective students can lodge a complaint about accommodations decisions or processes. Reasonable accommodations will be implemented where a complaint, about a decision not to provide accommodations, is upheld.

³ In some cases, depending on the nature of the programme or course being undertaken, the Student Service may direct the student/prospective student to other relevant staff who can consider their request.

Accommodations requests from staff – process summary



Accommodations requests from students – process summary



*Student Disability Services or Inclusive Learning

**Depending on the nature of the programme or course, the Student Service may direct students to other relevant staff who can consider their request