



## *Disclosure Prior To Enrolling*

### **Getting Ready To Study**

Most people find the process of choosing post secondary educational options challenging.

There are a range of issues that need to be considered. These include what to study, where to study, how to study, full time or part time, distance or online study and final career options.

Students with a disability also need to consider the possible or perceived impact their disability may have whilst undertaking further study. Disclosure of disability is another decision that has to be considered. It is essential that students with a disability consider all their options when choosing post secondary education pathways.

It is important for all students, including students with disabilities, to start with a good plan when considering post-secondary education. The following steps identify the processes involved in developing appropriate education options for ALL students:

### **Interests And Skills**

Students need to know their interests and skills and to identify potential occupations of interest to ensure they choose the right course and subjects.

### **Career Goals**

Students may choose particular courses to achieve a particular career outcome. It is important for students who are seeking a career outcome to investigate their particular career goals. It can be invaluable for students to spend time speaking to others who are currently employed in their area of interest, to find out about specific roles or tasks associated with the chosen career.

Other students may choose to study to acquire knowledge for personal gain and further development. Investigation of career goals therefore may not be required.

### **The Right Course And Subjects**

Students need to investigate a range of study options, including subjects, pre-requisite requirements and modes of study. Students may also need to seek assistance from academic, career and counseling staff to identify the best course and subjects to achieve their career goal.

It is important for students who are seeking a career outcome to investigate the core requirements of registration boards with appropriate professional or authorising bodies prior to enrolment. This information will ensure that the pathway to the expected career outcome is achieved. Core professional requirements may be obtained from professional bodies, registration boards, specific professional departments and/or education institutions.

It is important for students who choose to study for personal gain need to also investigate the core course requirements of the course and whether they can be met. If the core requirements cannot be met, such as practicum placements, students need to talk with the education institution to see whether alternative pathways can be developed to undertake the academic course requirements without fulfilling the professional requirements of the course.

## **The Right Institution**

Students need to choose the institution which will best meet their educational needs and preferred mode of study. This often requires attending open days at several institutions, speaking to careers advisors, finding out about prerequisites for their chosen course and any other practical requirements of the course such as excursions and practicum's. It may also involve checking out other issues such as physical access, transport, parking, accommodation etc. Students should make themselves familiar with university or TAFE campuses and the services available.

## **Special Entry/Equity Schemes**

There are a number of university and TAFE special entry or equity schemes, which may provide another opportunity for students to access the institution of their choice. These schemes tend to be available for a limited number of applicants. They often take into consideration factors such as illness, financial hardship or other issues that may have impacted on a person's ability to compete with other applicants through the usual application methods.

Special entry/equity schemes and their requirements vary from institution to institution and students should check with the individual institution. The following categories may be taken into consideration with special entry/equity schemes:

- Age and educational background
- Financial hardship
- Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islander
- Disadvantaged groups including disability
- Women entering non-traditional fields of study
- Ethnicity
- Rural and remote students

## **Scholarships**

A number of post secondary education institutions also tend to offer scholarships, which may be equity based and/or achievement based. Application processes for scholarships tend to be individually developed by each education institution. Scholarships are awarded to provide assistance and access to students who are academically able and, who through economic, social or other disadvantage such as disability, have significant difficulties in participating in post education study.

To access information about scholarships, contact the individual education institution and /or refer to their website information.

## **Disability Support Services**

For students with a disability, it is important to find out about disability support services provided by the institution of their choice prior to enrolment. This ensures an awareness of educational and personal supports that are available if and when you choose to disclose your disability.

If you choose to disclose your disability prior to enrolment to access disability support services, it is highly recommended that this occurs with the disability support staff as soon as possible. Disclosure at this time can provide an opportunity for you to discuss specific issues such as enrolment procedures, application timelines, course pre-requisites and requirements, any possible education related adjustments required, mentoring supports and modes of study.

It often takes considerable time for disability support services to plan and implement individual education related adjustments in the study environment. Therefore disclosure of disability at pre-enrolment time can enhance successful education outcomes for students with disabilities.

All personal information disclosed to the education institution is handled in a confidential manner, unless the student has provided written consent to have information disclosed.

## Why Students may choose to Disclose Prior to Enrolment:

***Matthew is hoping to qualify as a primary teacher and has found a course at a university in the city. He is confident it is the right course for him and he now needs to find out about access to buildings on the campus he would like to attend. He has therefore decided to contact the Disability Support Unit to discuss his needs and to arrange a visit.***

Students may choose to disclose to an education institution prior to enrolment to:

- obtain information about available support services available at the education institution
- find out how to access services once they are enrolled
- discuss their specific needs with disability services staff to ensure appropriate services are provided
- discuss course core requirements to ensure that the course chosen is appropriate
- assist in the transition from secondary education to TAFE or university

## Why Students May Choose NOT to Disclose Prior to Enrolment

***Zain has decided that he would prefer to study part time for the first year of his course, because he has found managing his ongoing medical condition and full time study very demanding. He has also decided that he won't disclose his disability at this stage as he believes he is able to manage the workload without additional adjustments.***

Students may choose NOT to disclose to an education institution prior to enrolment for several reasons including:

- they may not require any additional support or services
- they may wish to wait until they are certain which institution they will be attending
- they may be uncertain whether to contact disability support services at this time (*Note: accessing disability support services prior to enrolment is considered good practice for students with disabilities*)
- they may not know who will have access to their personal information (*Note: refer to the Privacy Act document on this website (<http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/ndco/disclosure/pdfs/leg/privacy.pdf>) about the right to obtain information about what happens to personal information and disability specific information that the institution collects about them.*)
- they feel they may experience discrimination and not be accepted into their chosen course (*Note: refer to the*
- *Disability Discrimination Act document on this website (<http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/ndco/disclosure/pdfs/leg/dda.pdf>). Education institutions must ensure that students with a disability receive non-discriminatory treatment, including during the enrolment process*)

## What To Disclose Prior To Enrolment

It is not always essential to disclose specific medical or personal information about a disability prior to enrolment. What is most important and helpful is to provide information about how your disability impacts on your capacity to study and what supports are needed to assist in providing the optimum environment for study to occur.

Prior to enrolment, students may choose to disclose to staff in disability support services at University or TAFE or directly to Faculty or Course Information Officers:

### Disability Support Services

Disability support services are specifically set up within TAFE and university environments to provide information, support and practical assistance to students with a disability.

These services also provide support to academic and other staff working with a student with a disability. From time to time they may provide professional development support for teaching staff in the education institution.

When a student contacts the disability support service, all personal information such as information about their disability will remain confidential. Personal information about students will not be given to others without their written consent.

## Faculty or Course Information Officers

Faculty or Course Information Officers tend to be available to prospective students to discuss course content and requirements. Students with disabilities may choose to disclose to these staff members to determine whether that they can meet the course requirements, practical components of the course and professional requirements.

## The Purpose Of Disclosing Prior to Enrolment

The main purpose of disclosing a disability before enrolling is to:

- find out about available services and support available at the education institution
- discuss specific needs in order to identify appropriate adjustments to the study environment
- discuss academic requirements and practical components of the course as well as possible professional requirements

It is not usually necessary to provide a detailed account of the disability or medical condition, but what is most helpful is being able to provide a clear statement of how the disability impacts on the student's capacity to study and what specific supports would be helpful.

If a student wishes to disclose their disability prior to enrolment, it is essential that they state their purpose in disclosing their disability. This ensures that the disclosure can achieve a beneficial outcome. Disclosure is most effective when the student is

***“...knowledgeable about their disability and (is) able to articulate both their disability-related needs and their (skills).” (1)***

## Student Rights And Responsibilities When Disclosing Prior To Enrolment

**Students have a right to:**

- seek information about disability support services prior to enrolling, in order to facilitate the transition to further education.
- discuss education related adjustments in relation to their disability
- discuss the core academic and practical requirements of the course and how they will manage this.
- Discuss their educational needs and supports in a non-judgmental environment that respects their rights to have input into the educational process.

**Students have a responsibility to:**

- investigate and fully understand the academic and practical requirements of the course they hope to undertake. There may be appropriate adjustments that can be made to enable the student to fulfill the requirements of the course.
- investigate registration board core requirements with professional or authorising bodies if a student is planning to undertake a course to obtain a particular career.
- be aware that disclosing prior to enrolment does not remove their responsibility to disclose on the enrolment form, or contact the disability support unit once they enrol, **if** they want to receive disability specific support.

## Role and Responsibilities Of Staff Prior To Enrolment

**Role:**

- to meet or discuss with the student any identified issues and inform them about study options, support structures and their responsibilities in accessing these services if they require them
- to inform students about choices of disclosing their disability in the education environment, such as if and when to disclose and to whom to disclose to, and the associated rights and responsibilities
- where appropriate may start to develop a preliminary 'Plan of Action' with the student. This entails identifying education related adjustments and support structures with the student and planning for the implementation of these in the education environment.

## Responsibilities:

- to advise students of available support services
- to keep all information confidential, unless the student has provided written consent to have information disclosed
- to be non intrusive and respectful of the student's right to privacy.

## Responsibilities Of Educational Institutions:

- course coordinators or heads of school need to ensure that the core academic and practical requirements of the course/program are clearly stated and explained. This information needs to be made freely available to all prospective students.
- course coordinators or heads of school need to ensure that the core requirements for registration with appropriate professional or authorising bodies is made available. This information needs to be made freely available for all prospective students.
- it is important to know that Universities, TAFE's and other tertiary institutions must ensure that students with a disability receive non-discriminatory treatment. This includes the provision of appropriate educational adjustments. This is a requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992).

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) makes it unlawful for an educational authority to:

Discriminate against a **person** on the grounds of a person's disability or a disability of any of the person's associates by:

- a. Refusing or failing to accept a person's application for admission as a student
- b. In the terms or conditions on which it is prepared to admit the person as a student, *section 22 (1)*

It is unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a student on the ground of the student's disability or a disability of any of the student's associates:

- a. by denying the student access, or limiting the student's access, to any benefit provided by the educational authority; or
- b. by expelling the student; or
- c. by subjecting the student to any other detriment, *section 22 (2)*.

For information about the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 refer to the Disability Discrimination document in this Resource (<http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/ndco/disclosure/legislative/dda.htm>) or refer to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission website at [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability\\_rights/legislation/index.htm](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/legislation/index.htm).

## Footnotes

- (1) Scholl & Mooney, Undated Draft Document, Disclosure in work based learning programs  
<http://www.cew.wisc.edu/ya/pdf/brief3.pdf>
- (2) Disability Discrimination Act 1992  
[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability\\_rights/legislation/index.htm](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/legislation/index.htm)