

# Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020

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*We will provide exceptional value to our diverse community of students by guiding them to achieve their career aspirations through personalised, flexible, well-supported and industry relevant learning opportunities.*

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**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY**  
Melbourne, Australia



## Acknowledgement of Country

Victoria University (VU) acknowledges the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) and Wathaurung (Wadawurrung) on our Melbourne Campuses, and the Gadigal and Guring-gai people of the Eora Nation on our Sydney campus. These groups are the custodians of University land and have been for many centuries.

We acknowledge that the land on which our campuses stand is the place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. The Kulin and Eora people's living culture had, and has, a unique role in the life of these regions. VU supports the aim of Reconciliation Australia to build better relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the benefit of all Australians.

It is important that staff, students and visitors understand and respect the significance of recognising the traditional owners of University land.

## Message from the Director Student Services

*VU aims to be a great University of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by being inclusive. We will provide exceptional value to our diverse community of students by guiding them to achieve their career aspirations through personalised, flexible, well-supported and industry relevant learning opportunities. Achievement will be demonstrated by our students' and graduates' employability and entrepreneurship.*

*(VU Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020)*

Victoria University (VU) has proudly demonstrated its commitment over many years to making equity and diversity values real for students with disability and reflects the philosophy of cultural competence and inclusion. Our continuing aim is to reflect best practice in the education sector.

VU's commitment in the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 that we will be “dedicated to student access” is reflected in the Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020. Our aim is to inspire the development of new strategies that provide a supportive and inclusive educational experience for students with disability, ensuring they are supported to successfully achieve their goals.

This 2016 – 2020 Accessibility Action Plan for Students continues our commitment and focus on inclusive teaching, learning and service delivery to enable students with either a disability or health condition to actively participate in all aspects of their studies. This includes students studying at Victoria University and our Victoria University Polytechnic.

I am delighted to continue our commitment to building a vibrant, inclusive and progressive VU for our students.

*Naomi Dempsey  
Director, Student Services*

## Contents

Introduction .....	5
Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020 .....	5
Contextual Overview .....	8
Summary of Action Areas .....	9
Work Plan: Action Area 1 .....	10
Work Plan: Action Area 2 .....	11
Work Plan: Action Area 3 .....	12
Work Plan: Action Area 4 .....	14
Work Plan: Action Area 5 .....	15

### Introduction

The 2016-2020 Accessibility Action Plan for Students is an ongoing response since 2001 when the University responded to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* (DDA) by lodging its first Disability Action Plan with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now the Australian Human Rights Commission). The Australian Human Rights Commission states the advantages to the institution of producing a Disability Action Plan: Action Plans have the capacity to produce the systemic change, which is required to eliminate disability discrimination whether it be direct, or unintentional and indirect. Through an Action Plan, a tertiary education institution may reduce the risks of having complaints made against it under the DDA. An Action Plan will also assist a tertiary education institution better to meet its objective of providing high quality educational services to the whole community, including people with disability.

The second Plan (2006 – 2009) recognised the *Disability Standards for Education (2005)* (the Standards) formulated under the DDA. These Standards clarified the rights of students and the responsibilities of education providers for enrolment; participation; curriculum development, accreditation and delivery; student support services; and elimination of harassment and vilification. The intention and effect of the Standards is to give students with disability the same rights as other students.

The third plan (2010 – 2015) responded to the several external and internal changes. External changes include the *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 (Cth)* and advice provided by the Australian Human Rights Commission on World Wide Web Access.

Internal policy changes for students include the Student Equity and Social Inclusion Policy, which provides the foundation policy for all equity programs. The policy commits the University to the promotion of equity and social justice by taking positive action to promote social inclusion and prevent discrimination and harassment.

### Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020

The fourth VU Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020 has two streams covering the areas of Education and Employment, as defined in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* (DDA). This document is the student plan, which covers the area of Education. The plan focuses on supporting students with disability who are currently enrolled as well as students with disability who intend to enrol in the future.

The Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020 features an emphasis on “Accessibility”. This change follows trends across the tertiary sector and shifts the focus to inclusive teaching, learning and service delivery. Focusing on inclusive practice across the University community is a major enabler for students with a health condition or disability to engage in all aspects of study life.

The Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020 continues Victoria University’s commitment to inclusion and provides a robust road map to remove barriers to access and participation for students with a health condition

or disability. The Accessibility Action Plan lays the foundation for creative and responsive solutions that galvanise a supportive and inclusive educational experience for VU students with disability. This Plan aims to ensure that potential students with disability gain access to Victoria University on the same basis as prospective students without disability, and that their journey to success is underpinned by accessible support.

The Accessibility Action Plan demonstrates the University's commitment to making its equity and diversity values a lived experience for students with disability and embeds respect for difference in our institutional culture.

**In recognition of its obligations to people with disability under federal legislation, the University has prepared this Accessibility Action Plan to contribute to the achievement of the objects of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*:**

- to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the basis of their disabilities in education, and in particular access to premises, work, accommodation and the provision of facilities, services and land;
- to ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disability have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community; and
- to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

Consultation process with stakeholders, including external disability practitioner networks, led by Accessibility Services began in 2016. Students registered with VU's Student Accessibility Services participated in a survey to provide the University with insights into the priorities of students, staff, carers and visitors who are living with disability. The student voice has been used to plan appropriate support and to create an inclusive and diverse culture that provides opportunities for access, participation and contribution on an equal basis.

Feedback from students and stakeholders helped shape the goals and actions for the Plan, so that it addresses the real priorities of students, which included:

- reducing barriers to persons with disability accessing education;
- promoting inclusion and participation in the VU community; and
- achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with disability.

**Action items for students were developed addressing identified priorities across five areas:**

- **Culture and Inclusiveness**
- **Student Support & Engagement**
- **Learning and Teaching**

- **Physical Access**
- **Digital Information and services**

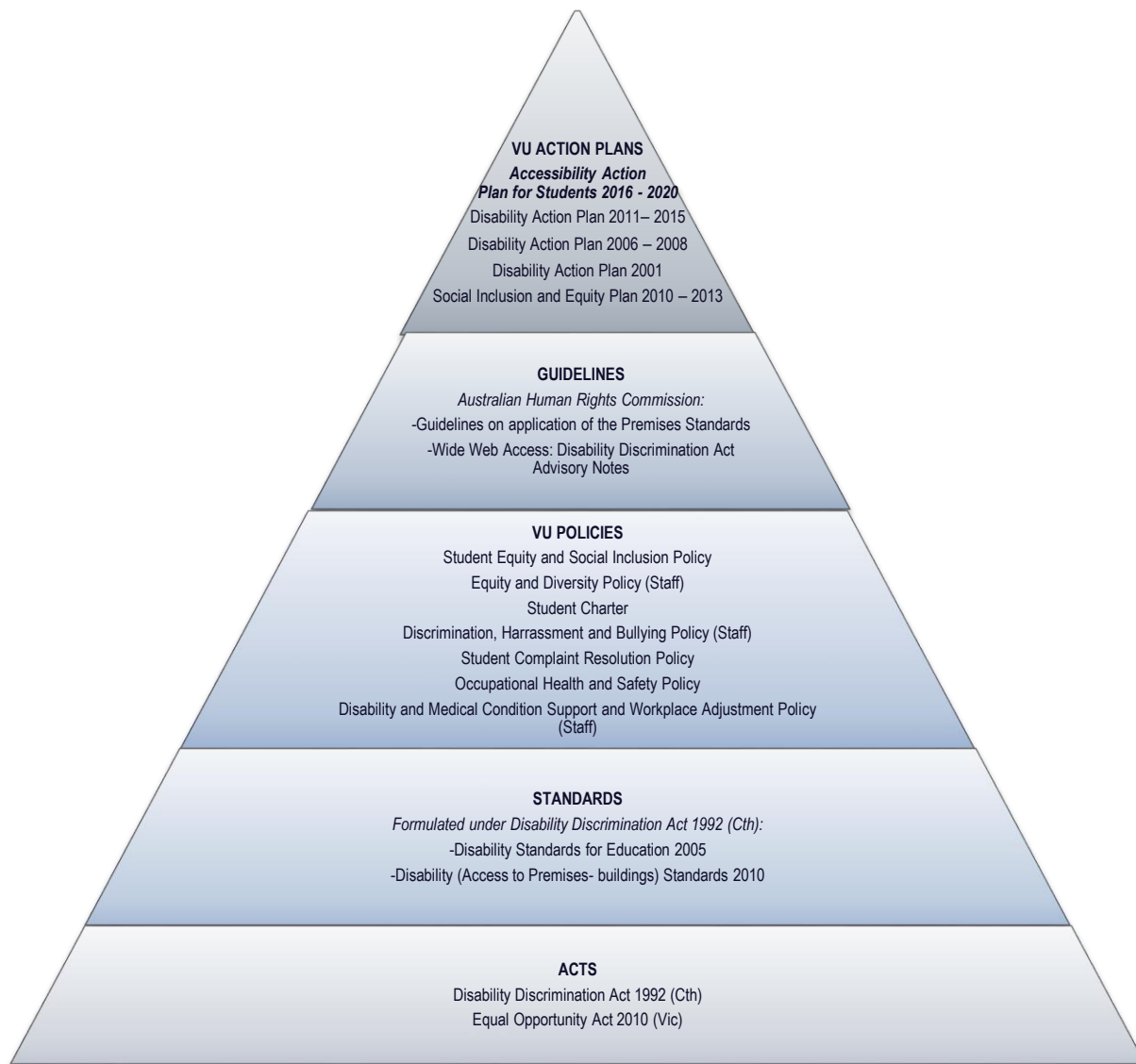
An Accessibility Action Plan Working Group has been established to ratify the Plan and sets annual priorities.

In adopting and implementing this Accessibility Action Plan for Students, VU acknowledges the contribution of all stakeholders, including consultation with VU staff and students, the Disability Service Managers Network & Australian Tertiary Network on Disability.

***The Accessibility Action Plan demonstrates the University's commitment to making its equity and diversity values real for students with disability and reflects the philosophy of cultural competence and the acceptance of and respect for difference.***

## Contextual Overview

This Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020 is consistent with applicable acts, standards, policies and guidelines. The following pyramid illustrates the context and framework for Victoria University’s compliance with its legal obligations regarding both students and staff with disability:





## Summary

Victoria University has five Action Areas and has identified targets for each:

Action Areas	1. Culture of Inclusiveness	2. Student Support & Engagement	3. Learning and Teaching	4. Physical Access	5. Digital information and services
<b>Targets</b>	<p>1.1 Develop a communications schedule to promote the Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020 and monitor and report on implementation and achievements.</p> <p>1.2 Embed a culture of inclusiveness and respect for people with disability and carers in university policies, publications and online.</p> <p>1.3 Promote a culture that embraces diversity and is inclusive through awareness raising, consultation, policy review, events and publications.</p>	<p>2.1 Communicate directly with students who identify as having disability at enrolment about support services and facilities at VU.</p> <p>2.2 Ensure services actively support and are accessible to students with disability.</p> <p>2.3 Monitor participation, progress and completion of students with disability.</p> <p>2.4 Ensure people with disability can participate on an equal basis in student life.</p> <p>2.5 Support students with disability to develop their careers as employees and entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>3.1 Ensure eligible students with disability and carers are able to access reasonable adjustments when required and improve student experience with Access Plans.</p> <p>3.2 Improve available information about inherent requirements for units of study.</p> <p>3.3 Ensure that course design and delivery undergoes continual improvement, review and monitoring to enable the University to meet and exceed state and national standards relating to accessibility and participation of students with disability.</p> <p>3.4 Promote resources and provide workshops and training for academic staff on Inclusive Teaching strategies.</p> <p>3.5 Support the development of accessible learning and teaching resources.</p>	<p>4.1 Ensure the built environment is accessible and enhances the experience of students, staff and visitors with disability on our campuses.</p> <p>4.2 Work to progress modification of existing built environments, facilities and grounds for compliance with current accessibility standards where heritage and other restrictions allow, incorporating best practice where possible.</p> <p>4.3 Identify, prioritise and implement access improvements.</p> <p>4.4 Update Campus maps and signage.</p>	<p>5.1 Ensure online environments are accessible for people with disability.</p> <p>5.2 Increase visibility and accessibility of Disability Support and enhance online resources available for staff and students.</p> <p>5.3 Facilitate access to assistive technology and equipment.</p>

**Action Area 1**

Culture and Inclusiveness			
<b><i>We will promote a culture of inclusiveness and respect for all members of our university, including people with disability and their carers.</i></b>			
Action	Responsibility	Targets	Timeline
Promote a culture that embraces diversity and is inclusive through awareness raising, consultation, policy review, events and publications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Director, Student Life &amp; Wellbeing</li> <li>Senior Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	<p>Launch and promote this Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020.</p> <p>Monitor and report on implementation and achievements.</p>	<p>2017 (December)</p> <p>Quarterly</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Director, Student Life &amp; Wellbeing</li> <li>Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for the <i>Accessibility Action Plan for Students 2016 – 2020</i> .	2017 (December)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Director, Student Life &amp; Wellbeing</li> <li>Senior Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	Consult with VU staff and students with disabilities, and provide advice to incorporate inclusion and accessibility considerations into University-wide planning, projects and service design.	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy Unit</li> <li>Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	Review policy that enshrines access and participation of students with disability in all aspects of education, support and student life at Victoria University.	2018 (December)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager Communications/Web Services</li> </ul>	Review VU internal and external publications, materials and online resources to ensure they use appropriate language and include positive images of people with disability and carers.	2018 (September)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Future Students</li> <li>Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	Develop and deliver an Inclusion Training Program for Prospective Student Teams.	2018 (September)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager, Communications – Web Services</li> </ul>	Provide advice, leadership and guidance on digital accessibility for all areas and check for AA compliance for the public VU website ( <a href="http://www.vu.edu.au">www.vu.edu.au</a> ).	2018

Action Area 2

**Student Support and Engagement**

***We will ensure that all students can access support services and participate in university life, focusing on supporting students with disability to develop their careers as employees and entrepreneurs. We will ensure that our services actively engage with people with disability and their carers.***

Action	Responsibility	Targets	Timeline
Ensure services actively support and are accessible to students with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Centre for Student Success</li> </ul>	Investigate options for providing additional tutoring to students with disability through Academic Support & Development.	2018 (June)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Director, Student Life &amp; Wellbeing</li> <li>Senior Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	Produce reports summarising issues from annual Disability Services Student Satisfaction Survey. Use feedback to inform improvement of VU teaching and learning, support services and facilities.	2018 (July)
		Train Student Mentors to engage with students with disability, focusing initially on students on the Autism Spectrum.	On-going
Monitor participation, progress and completion of students with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager, Business Support and Reporting</li> <li>Senior Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	Monitor participation, progress and completion of students with disability to inform improvement of teaching and learning, support services and facilities.	On-going
		Inform students who identify as having disability at enrolment about Accessibility Services and other support facilities at VU.	On-going
Ensure people with disability can participate on an equal basis in student life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager, Student Life</li> </ul>	Develop guidelines for accessibility and inclusion for on- and off-campus events run by Student Life and affiliated clubs and societies.	2018 (August)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager, Learning Hubs</li> </ul>	Promote targeted Careers Education opportunities for students with disability and support students with disability to develop their careers as employees and entrepreneurs.	2019 (March)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager, Learning Hubs</li> <li>Student representative</li> </ul>	Establish closer collaboration between Accessibility Services and Careers Education including shared professional development; a staff liaison and a	2019 (March)

		student Disability Ambassador to promote opportunities and events.	
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**Action Area 3**

Learning and Teaching			
<b><i>We will enhance the learning experience of students with disability by providing inclusive and accessible educational environments, including online environments, and enhancing course design and delivery standards to address barriers.</i></b>			
Action	Responsibility	Targets	Timeline
Ensure online environments are accessible for people with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Connected Learning</li> </ul>	Develop accessibility guidelines for online teaching materials to support the <i>Learning And Teaching - Minimum Standards For Online Presence Procedure (Project)</i> .	2019 (January)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, IT Operations</li> </ul>	Investigate options for transcription technology to apply to lecture capture.	2018 (September)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager, Communications – Web Services</li> </ul>	Ensure that information about VU courses is published in accessible formats online.	2016
Improve available information about inherent requirements for units of study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directors of Teaching and Learning</li> </ul>	Identify and publish inherent requirements, initially for key units of study, with the aim of publishing information for all units of study by 2019.	2019
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager, Counselling &amp; Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	Review support and information available that assists prospective and current students to assess their ability to meet inherent requirements of units of study.	2018 (October)
Ensure students with disability and carers are able to access reasonable adjustments when required and improve student experience with Access Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate Director, Student Life &amp; Wellbeing</li> </ul>	Develop a process to assist students communicate with academic staff about Access Plans as they transition between study periods.	2018 (March)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directors - Teaching and Learning</li> </ul>	Provide information, resources and guidance to academic and teaching staff about managing	On-going

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Coordinator, Accessibility Services</li> </ul>	reasonable adjustments and other arrangements outlined in Access Plans.	
Ensure that course design and delivery undergoes continual improvement, review and monitoring to enable the University to meet and exceed state and national standards relating to accessibility and participation of students with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directors of Teaching and Learning</li> </ul>	Continually review course design, course delivery and support standards, taking into account accessibility and participation of students with disability, as per the <i>VU Learning and Teaching Quality and Standards Framework</i> .	On-going
Promote inclusive teaching practice and universal design through staff professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager, Counselling &amp; Accessibility</li> </ul>	Promote resources and provide workshops and training for academic staff on Inclusive Teaching strategies.	On-going
Support the production and publication of accessible learning and teaching resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager, Counselling &amp; Accessibility</li> </ul>	Support the development of accessible learning and teaching content.	On-going

Action Area 4

Physical Access			
<i>We will ensure our built environment is accessible and enhances the experience of students, staff and visitors who live with disability.</i>			
Action	Responsibility	Targets	Timeline
Ensure the built environment is accessible and enhances the experience of students, staff and visitors with disability on our campuses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Facilities</li> </ul>	Where practicable, conduct audits of buildings and campuses against Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 to ensure accessibility compliance.	On-going (annual workplan)
		Ensure all existing and new building works comply with relevant standards and legislation to ensure access for people with disability.	On-going
		Extend designated accessible parking and work with stakeholders to ensure that where reasonable, appropriately located parking space is available to people with disability at all campuses.	On-going
Work to progress modification of existing built environments, facilities and grounds for compliance with current Building and Accessibility Standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Facilities</li> </ul>	Ensure that up-to-date accessibility maps are available for all campuses on web.	On-going
Ensure that adequate signage is in place to assist people living with disability to navigate VU campuses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Facilities</li> </ul>	Publicise the process for notifying issues related to access or facilities, using a variety of communication channels.	2018 (July)

Action Area 5

Digital Information and Services			
<i><b>We will ensure students, staff and visitors are able to access and use Victoria University’s digital information and services.</b></i>			
Action	Responsibility	Targets	Timeline
Provide accessible digital information and services consistent with consistent with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Web Services &amp; Communications</li> </ul>	Ensure the public VU website ( <a href="http://www.vu.edu.au">www.vu.edu.au</a> ) meets Level AA standards based on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. Assist with developing accessibility guidelines and supporting materials for key University digital systems and services.	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ITS, PMO, web/communications</li> </ul>	Ensure key University digital systems and services meet Level AA standards based on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. Where accessibility cannot be included in the system, alternative options to assist students with disability will be undertaken.	On-going
Procure accessible products.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMO Director - ITS</li> </ul>	Incorporate accessibility standards into VU’s Strategic Sourcing and Procurement including in relevant tender and contract documentation. All application related PMO RFPs to include an accessibility clause to meet W3C AA standards unless otherwise agreed.	On-going
		Communicate VU accessibility requirements to vendors, and at time of purchase and renewal seek advice on plans to become compliant.	On-going
PMO Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMO Director - ITS</li> </ul>	PMO Methodology to include accessibility review PMO staff to receive training to improve awareness and capability in this area.	On-going