

HEPP71 Disability and Special Needs Student Support Services

PURPOSE

SCEI-HE will ensure that access to learning resources does not present unexpected barriers, costs or technology requirements for students, including for students with special needs and those who study off campus.

This policy outlines SCEI-HE’s responsibilities and support services that ensure that students have access to learning support services that are consistent with the requirements of their course of study, their mode of study and the learning needs of student cohorts, including arrangements for supporting students with disabilities, psychological or physical.

The policy identifies the personnel, process and forms applicable to the rendering of ‘**equitable learning services and plans**’ for students requiring special study assistance.

It is important that the student advise SCEI-HE staff of their disability or special needs at the time of enrolment, so that accommodation of such needs may be made in advance of course commencement and for the duration of the course.

SCOPE

This policy covers the whole Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education) (SCEI-HE) community, including staff, students, and stakeholders. This policy applies to:

- education (teaching and learning, enrolment, student management, student services, curriculum development and delivery)
- the provision of specialised goods and services in support of students who present with special study needs and/or a disability that may affect study and course progression

DEFINITIONS

Assistive Technology	Any technology, whether hardware or software based, that may assist the student with reading, writing, listening, accessing course materials and lectures and aid course progression.
Disability services and support	The support mechanisms are available and accessible, in all academic, psychological and physical aspects, in support of students who present with disabilities or special needs relevant to study and course progression.
Equitable Learning Plan	A (primarily) academic plan that gives structure to the special assistance and support services that have been assigned to and in support of the student with special needs and/or disabilities. It is an agreement between SCEI-HE and the student, with responsibilities for both parties.
Reasonable adjustment	A term to describe the extent and scope of course and assessment modification the academic and campus management are required to accommodate.
SCEI-HE	Southern Cross Education Institute (Higher Education)

POLICY

SCEI-HE assures students that regardless of disability or special needs, each student will have free and easy access to all facilities, floors, lecture theatres and educational resources required for full participation and successful progression through and completion of their enrolled course.

Additionally, and importantly, SCEI-HE enables reasonable adjustments to be made to assessment procedures for people with special needs, such as people with disabilities or with language or literacy difficulties.

Under the Disability Standards for Education 2005, education providers must make reasonable adjustments for people with a disability, to the maximum extent that those adjustments do not cause that education provider unjustifiable hardship. While 'reasonable adjustment' and 'unjustifiable hardship' are different concepts and involve different considerations, they both seek to strike a balance between the interests of education providers and the interests of students with and without disability.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 includes a very broad definition of disability, including illness or disease, past disability and present disability. Students could have a range of disabilities or inconveniences such as:

- Learning disabilities
- Sensory impairments (including vision, hearing or speech impairment)
- Physical or mobility impairments
- Psychological or psychiatric impairments (or mental illness)
- Disabilities, such as cerebral palsy or head injury, which may result in multiple impairments
- Medical conditions such as HIV or AIDS, cancer, or chronic fatigue syndrome (which may result in multiple disabilities)
- Intellectual disability
- Being the primary carer for an individual with a disability

Disclosure of a disability is the choice of the student and is not a requirement for participation in an accredited course of study. Any information about a student's disability is shared and decisions about reasonable adjustment made collaboratively with the student, trainer, campus or training manager and the SCEI-HE counsellor. Consideration in the decision-making process will include students' special needs such as:

- Writing
- Reading
- Hearing
- Communicating with others or getting ideas across
- Moving or manipulating objects
- Paying attention / staying on track
- Sitting for long periods
- Moving around the learning environment
- Remembering / retention
- Dealing with frustration

Support Services and Special Learning Accommodation may include:

Adjustments to your study conditions

- Course materials in other formats: If you have trouble reading printed material, we can provide your course materials in another format.
- Note takers and other assistance staff
- Additional writing or reading time in exams
- Someone to write or read for you
- The use of a computer
- Your exam paper in a different format
- A private room for your exam
- Ergonomic furniture

Assistive technologies

When registered with a disability or as a special needs student, SCEI-HE can:

- Discuss which technologies are most suitable for your issue
- Show you how they work
- Assist in acquiring the technologies

There are a range of technologies that may assist, in the case of reading, writing or listening difficulties.

- **Dragon speech recognition software;** if you have difficulties typing and writing. It converts speech to text: the computer ‘types’ what you say into a Word document. This allows you to use the computer with minimal use of keyboard or mouse.
- **Claro Read;** if you have difficulties reading print materials. It Reads electronic text to you in a life-like voice. Additional features can assist you with reading and writing tasks.
- **Zoom Text;** if you have low vision or disabilities that make it difficult to view information on computer screens. It increases the size of text and information on your computer screen, reads text aloud to you in a life-like voice and changes the contrast and enhances other commonly used features on computers to make screens easier to read.
- **Furniture;** ergonomic furniture may be an option if the student has short or long term physical special needs.

What SCEI-HE Cannot Provide

It is beyond the resources of SCEI-HE to provide the applicant with:

- Case management for medical, professional counselling or physical disabilities
- Taking on an advocacy role in relation to individual grievances
- Support that substitutes teaching and learning (e.g., private tutoring)
- Personal care

PROCESS

Steps toward an Equitable Learning Plan

SCEI-HE treats every case relating to reasonable adjustment individually.

Identification and Registration

The steps toward accommodating Equitable Learning needs are:

1. Students may initially inform SCEI-HE of their disabilities through the SCEI-HE counsellor and by identifying the disability in the Application to Study form
2. The student will then make an appointment to see the SCEI-HE counsellor or assigned Equitable Learning appointed staff, to guide the student through the forms and processes that will lead to an Equitable Learning Plan for the duration of their course.
3. Once the student's disability or special need is identified, the student will complete an Equitable Learning Registration Form. This form formalises the request for special consideration and support services outlined in 'Policy' above, and helps align the student's needs with staff relevant to the procurement of equitable learning technologies, personnel and/or support technologies. The form asks for information about your disability or special needs from your health practitioner, for confirmation, detail and advice regarding how SCEI-HE may assist.
4. Academic support staff will develop an Equitable Learning Plan for the student, based on the needs identified and confirmed in the Equitable Learning Registration Form. This plan includes any study adjustments that the student may require.

Procurement and Approval

5. Once approval of assistive technologies, hardware and/or academic assessment modifications have been authorised by the relevant Management staff, based on review of the Equitable Learning Registration Form, the Student Financial Accounts Manager will review the request with the Campus Manager.
6. If authorised by the Campus Manager, Student Financial Accounts will make the recommended purchases.
7. If the Equitable Learning Plan recommends adaptive study and assessment design, then final authority rests with the Academic Director, who will test alignment of the adaptive study and assessment design with the accredited Learning Outcomes of the course.

Potential Privacy Issues

8. It is not mandatory that the student divulges their disability to SCEI-HE, but if they do, the HEPP34 Privacy Policy applies.
9. The student only needs to inform SCEI-HE of the special needs or disability if it might negatively impact their studies and quality of learning experience if they do not.
10. SCEI-HE staff are subject to the Information Privacy Act 2000 and the Health Records Act 2001.

Mental Health Supportive Services

For all members of SCEI-HE community:

- The SCEI-HE counsellor will provide emotional support for all staff and students with a disability or special needs support
- The SCEI-HE counsellor will guide students with disabilities and special needs through the forms and processes that will lead to an Equitable Learning Plan for the duration of their course
- The SCEI-HE counsellor will have a referral system in place for students who are in need of further, professional, external mental health care

ACCESSIBILITY

Students are encouraged to advise the SCEI-HE counsellor of any difficulty they find in accessing the classrooms, toilets and general built environments associated with attending classes. The following accommodations exist at sites registered for Higher Education course delivery.

Floor Access

There are eight-person capacity elevators operating between each floor at each of the following campuses:

- 155 Boundary Road, North Melbourne, Vic
- 41 Boundary Road, North Melbourne, Vic
- 52 Chetwynd Street, North Melbourne, Vic.

Wheelchair ramps are provided at the higher education registered campus at 155 Boundary Road, North Melbourne, Vic.

Toilet Facilities

Ambulant toilet facilities are fitted at the higher education registered campus at 155 Boundary Road, North Melbourne, Vic.

Kitchen Facilities

Student Kitchen facilities are provided for students and staff at all campuses.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Counsellor	Sourcing of suitable services and/or staff that may assist. Providing mental health support services.
Student Financial Accounts	Accountable for the finance approval, purchase and allocation of identified resources
Course Coordinator	Accommodation of special study and assessment (academic) needs to the specific course of study
Academic Director	Accountability for the process of Disability and Accessibility Support Services, in line with the Threshold Standards 2015.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

HEPP34 Privacy Policy
HEFOR16 Application to Study Form
Equitable Learning Registration Form

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011.
<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00271>
Disability Standards for Education 2005 <https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005>
Information Privacy Act 2000 <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/vic/E000605>
The National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018, known as 'the National Code 2018 - Standard 8 (specifically 8.22.1)

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Academic Director and Course Coordinator is responsible for the development, compliance monitoring and review of this policy and any associated procedures and guidelines.

Author	Academic Director
Created	September 2019
Amended	May 2020; February 2021; February 2022
Approved	Approved by the Academic Board, 10 February 2021
Effective Date	September 2019
Version	V1.0; V1.1; V1.2; V1.3
Review date	May 2022; February 2023; February 2024