



Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2024-26

Vision

The University of Wollongong (UOW) is a leader in empowering staff and students with a disability to fully participate in and contribute to the workplace and learning environments.

Disability Inclusion at UOW

The UOW Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) aims to identify and reduce barriers to enable people living with a disability to fully contribute to the University. It outlines the actions that UOW will take over the **next three years** to transform the culture of the University through the application of a co-created program of actions and initiatives. UOW is committed to ensuring the talents and perspectives of people living with a disability are recognised and seen as vital to our university's learning, teaching, research activities and it's physical, digital, living and communication environments.

At UOW we use the United Nations definition, "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". As per the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) this includes persons with a physical disability, intellectual disability, mental illness, sensory disability, neurodiversity, neurological disability, learning disability, physical disfigurement, or immunological disability.

The University strives for a proactive capacity-building stance on the provision of services and opportunities for people with disabilities. Therefore, effective approaches that are strengths-based, rather than those that seek merely to minimise deficits, are embraced by the University. Every member of the UOW community is responsible for the implementation of the DIAP and will be led by the EDI Team, the Student Equity and Success Team and supported by the Disability Inclusion Network (DIN) Working Group.

The UOW Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2024-26) is supported by the following principles:

- Uphold a human rights-based approach, recognising, and reinforce that our actions are fundamentally ensuring people's human rights are met.
- Create a culture of accountability and responsibility for implementing our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) actions.
- Co-design disability related strategy, policy, initiatives, and programs with key stakeholders with disability, respecting the voice of people with lived experience.
- Develop the capacity and capability of the UOW community to embed universal design and embrace inclusion.
- Treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect and support them to realise their individual capabilities at UOW.
- Ensure people with disabilities have access to the full range of educational and employment opportunities at UOW, to maximise their learning and career development.
- Recognise that people with disabilities have rights to privacy, confidentiality, and individual choices about disclosure.
- Create work and study environments that are free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.
- Enhance competitive advantage by attracting the best students and staff regardless of (dis)ability.
- Ensure compliance with relevant disability related legislation.



The late Professor Justin Yerbury (AM)

"My husband, Professor Justin Yerbury, was a disabled academic at UOW for many years. Justin fought with courage and dignity to find a cure to the disease he himself lived with. He showed the world what a completely paralysed person on life support could achieve. But he didn't only fight for himself and against the disease, he relentlessly fought against inaccessibility and discrimination. UOW stood with Justin against ableism and inequity, but in the wider world, this wasn't always so. We experienced discrimination in lots of ways and places, and in 2020, Justin took the NHMRC to task over the fairness of their policies of achievement relative to opportunity, who subsequently changed their policies and funding criteria. Together, we authored a paper in Trends in Neurosciences called "Disabled in academia: To be or not to be, that is the question" highlighting the challenges of academics living with disability and neurodiversity. In developing this DIAP, UOW has considered our call for a reframing and normalising of disability in the context of inclusion and diversity. Justin was a true fighter in so many ways and I hope his advocacy for disability rights will form part of how he is remembered". **Dr Rachel Yerbury**

The DIAP has five key goals to guide the University to uphold its access and inclusion principles and responsibilities as a leading education provider. These align with the goals in the [UOW Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Framework](#) and with the [Equity Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#).

Goal One - Provide an inclusive learning experience and promotes disability inclusion and accessibility principles in research, teaching and learning

The University provides an inclusive learning experience, supports, and promotes the success of researchers with disability, and uses disability inclusion and accessibility principles in teaching and learning. We provide inclusive and accessible educational environments, making reasonable adjustments to meet the specific needs of people with a disability and carers at UOW. We promote inclusive and accessible practices and actively identify and address barriers to ensure everyone has access to education and research opportunities across UOW's various programs.

#	Action Item	Strategic Alignment	Deliver by
1.1	Provide guidance and implement accountability processes to ensure that teaching staff comply with the University's legal obligations around provision of educational adjustments.	WCAG 2.1, EDI Strategic framework Goal 2	Q3 2024
1.2	Develop resources and source training for staff to enable them to work and engage effectively with both staff and students with a lived experience of disability.	WCAG 2.1, EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q2, 2024
1.3	Design and implement approaches to improve accessibility of digital assets, curriculum and assessment, and the design of learning resources through broader adoption of inclusive pedagogies (e.g., Universal Design for Learning (UDL).	WCAG 2.1	Q4 2024
1.4	Develop an approach to support researchers, higher degree research students, and staff with a lived experience of disability to engage in research on an equitable basis with their peers.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q4 2025
1.5	Develop a quality assurance monitoring approach for digital accessibility within the online learning environment, to ensure consistency of support for students.	WCAG 2.1, EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q2 2026

Goal Two – Provide equitable opportunity to obtain and maintain employment at UOW through best practice barrier-free recruitment and supports for people living with disability.

The University is an employer of choice for people with disabilities, they have the same opportunities all candidates to obtain and maintain employment at UOW. The University's people management systems and processes include best practice barrier-free recruitment and supports for people living with disability, and carers. UOW aims to increase and retain the number of people with disability working at UOW to reach the stated employment targets.



#	Action Item description	Strategic Alignment	Deliver by
2.1	Develop centralised processes and procedures, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requests for Workplace Adjustments; Workplace Adjustment Management Plan; Workplace Adjustment Procedures for Staff Members with lived experience of a disability; Disability Support Plan in the form of Disability Passports; Exploring budgetary mechanisms to support provision of workplace adjustments for staff with lived experience of a disability; Guidance for managers on their responsibilities regarding workplace adjustments 	EDI Strategic framework Goal 1 & 2, TEQSA	Q4 2024
2.2	Increase the capability of staff to ensure that disability related enquiries received from staff and students are monitored and managed appropriately.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q2 2025
2.3	Engage with a Disability Employment Agency to increase the percentage of job applicants with a lived experience of disability. Following the implementation of Reasonable Adjustment procedures.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 1	Q2 2026
2.4	Promote and proactively support career progression and promotion for all staff with a lived experience of disability.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 1	Q3 2025

Goal Three - The University's communication and digital environment is accessible to people with disabilities

At UOW, people with disability receive information in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people. We ensure that our policies, systems, and processes are inclusive of people living with a disability, and carers, and that positive and enabling language and images are embedded within university policy, procedures, and documents. The University's communications and administrative practices will consider the needs of our students, staff and visitors living with disability, and carers. We aspire to being a leading provider of accessible information and technology.

#	Action Item description	Strategic Alignment	Deliver by
3.1	Implement accessibility service standards and disability awareness training for all staff in a customer-facing environment.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q1 2025
3.2	Enable all academic and teaching staff to complete training on Universal Design for Learning and to embed principles of accessibility and inclusion.	WCAG 2.1, EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q4 2024
3.3	Audit university-level digital and online resources and systems against Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 and establish a plan for prioritising and addressing non-compliance.	WCAG 2.1, EDI Strategic framework Goal 2	Ongoing
3.4	Digital accessibility training for staff responsible for digital assets, website content, marketing, and communications.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q1 2026
3.5	Update guidance for brand, templates, marketing and communications, and social media to include accessibility advice and content.	WCAG 2.1, EDI Strategic framework Goal 2	Q3 2026
3.6	Review People and Culture policies, procedures, and guidelines to improve disability inclusion and access, prioritising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment: Ensure that candidates with a lived experience of disability are not disadvantaged through unconscious bias, and instead are proactively supported and lived experience is recognised in selection criteria for roles Flexible work: Specify availability of adjustments for people with a lived experience of disability, and carers. Workload: Guide and facilitate determination of staff workloads to accommodate additional activities undertaken by staff with a lived experience of disability. 	GEAP, Parents and Carers AP, EDI Strategic framework goal 1 & 2	Q4 2026

Goal Four - The university has a culture that is safe, welcoming, supportive, and engaging for students, staff, and visitors with disability

UOW demonstrates a commitment to becoming a leader in disability inclusion and accessibility. We support a positive and inclusive environment for all, including people living with disability and carers. We actively seek input from staff and students with a disability when developing and implementing policy, processes, and guidelines.

#	Action Item description	Strategic Alignment	Deliver by
4.1	Audit and creation of online resources with accessibility lens, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance for managers to support their staff with lived experience of disability; A support package for staff with a lived experience of disability; and The use of close captions in videos/recordings. 	WCAG 2.1, EDI Strategic framework Goal 2	Q3 2025
4.2	Celebrate people with a disability by acknowledging days of significance, research and innovation, and individual achievements of students, staff, and alumni.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 5	Ongoing
4.3	Support for DIN Advisory Group to further develop and enable an agile, staff-led, supportive community for people with a disability at UOW	EDI Strategic framework Goal 5	Ongoing
4.4	Require all staff across all areas of the University to complete disability awareness training, including first aid officers, customer or student support and teaching roles.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q4 2025

Goal Five – Provide an accessible environment, ensuring that people with disability have equitable opportunities to access buildings and facilities

The University provides an accessible environment for everyone. UOW ensures that people with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access UOW's buildings and facilities, and that our built environment is safe and accessible for our staff, students and visitors who live with disability.

#	Action Item description	Strategic Alignment	Deliver by
5.1	Review process for continuous improvements to existing buildings and facilities to comply with the principles of universal design.	WCAG 2.1, EDI Strategic framework Goal 2	Q4 2026
5.2	Development of sensory and quiet spaces for staff and students at UOW.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 5	Q4 2024
5.3	Develop new template and guidance for Personal Emergency Plans (PEPs), accompanied by a communications strategy to increase uptake by those requiring a PEP.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 2	Q3 2024
5.4	Demonstrate the University's commitment to creating an inclusive environment and accessible campuses, by committing to an audit for compliance for at all UOW campuses. With a focus on clear and consistent signage (e.g., font size and colour contrast, braille, etc.), guidance on accredited assistance animals, accessible parking.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 4	Q1 2025



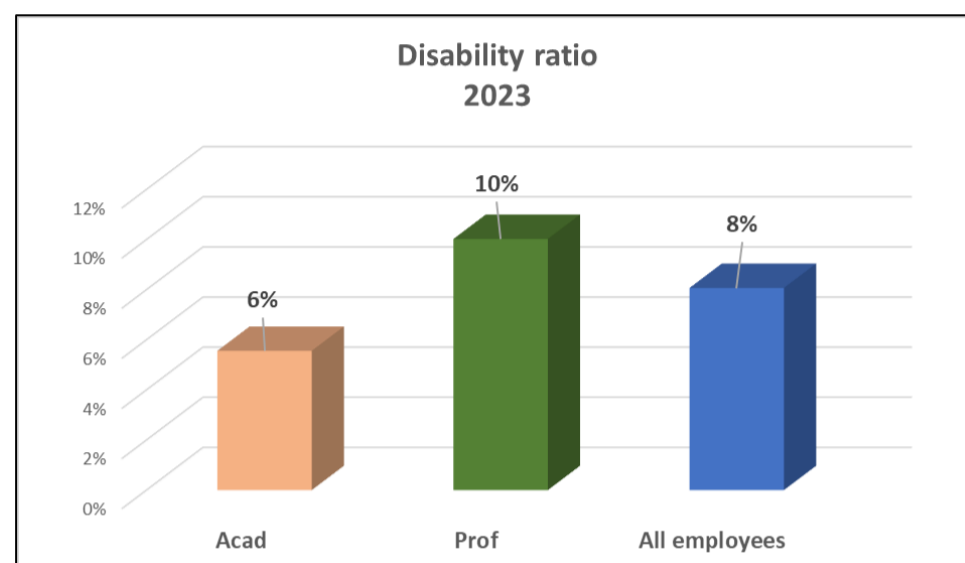
5.5	Reporting on progress of infrastructure works to the University community.	EDI Strategic framework Goal 2	Q1 2025
5.6	Review and improve current use and awareness of SafetyNet to report physical accessibility issues on campus and implement communications to raise awareness of the process.	SARC Action Plan, EDI Strategic framework Goal 2	Q2 2025

UOW Demographics and Targets

In Australia, 15 per cent of Australians of working age have a disability. At UOW our 2023 data shows us as above average for the higher education sector, with Academic (6%) having a lower representation than Professional (10%) staff. However, the aim is for the UOW workforce and student population to reflect the general community, and so our targets for 2028 have been set to make a strong move towards 15 per cent.

Staff Living with a Disability Ratios

UOW	2023 (March)	Proposed 2029 Target
Academic	6%	9%
Professional	10%	12%



Acronyms

CPCO	Chief People and Culture Officer
DIAP	Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2026
DVCA	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic and Student Life
GEAP	Gender Equity Action Plan 2024-2026
SARC	Safe and Respectful Communities Team
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UOW Strategy	UOW Strategic Plan 2020-2025
UOW	University of Wollongong
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

The content in this action plan is subject to resourcing and context, and as such may be adapted accordingly. The Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2024-26) will be complemented by an implementation plan and a tracking and reporting database.

EDI Workforce Team

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[Equity Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\)](#)