

ACOM

Student Disability Support Policy

1. Purpose of the policy

The Australian College of Ministries (ACOM) is committed to continuing to support a diverse and inclusive community based on the principles of equity and non-discriminatory practice. The College aims to create and maintain a learning experience that is inclusive of the needs of students with a disability and which optimises their participation, retention and success through accessible and equitable learning, teaching and assessment practices.

The College is required to comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)*. This policy outlines the rights and responsibilities of staff and students in relation to the provision of reasonable adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment.

2. Relevant definitions within this policy:

Disability has the same meaning as section 4(1) of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*.

Alternative Exam Arrangements means a variation to the location, time or conditions of examinations.

Disability Officer means the appointed staff member to handle and/or coordinate the review of the student's case for disability support and develop an *Access Plan* to implementation suitable student disability support.

Reasonable Adjustments are measures or actions to assist a student with a Disability to participate in learning, teaching and assessment on an equivalent basis to other students that are determined as reasonable in accordance with clause 1.

Access Plan refers to the formal written statement prepared by the *Disability Officer* which outlines the impact of a student's Disability and the Reasonable Adjustments that will be required by the student to enable equitable access to learning, teaching and assessment.

Inherent Requirements are the capabilities, knowledge and skills that are essential to achieve the core learning outcomes of a program or to satisfy curriculum requirements

3. Determining Reasonable Adjustments

- a. Whether an adjustment is reasonable will be determined in accordance with the *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)*. This will involve taking into account all the relevant circumstances and interests, including the student's Disability; the effect of the proposed adjustment on the student and on anyone else affected, including the College, staff and other students.
- b. Notwithstanding the above, an adjustment is *not* reasonable if it would:
 - i. compromise the integrity of the program or course or assessment requirements and processes; or
 - ii. remove or bypass any *Inherent Requirements*.

4. Provision of Reasonable Adjustments

- a. Students are eligible for *Reasonable Adjustments* if they have a Disability or an ongoing medical condition.
- b. The College will provide *Reasonable Adjustments* to eligible students (subject to clause 4c). Reasonable Adjustments can include, but are not limited to the physical environment, teaching delivery and format and utilisation of assistance equipment.
- c. The College will not provide *Reasonable Adjustments* to eligible students if they would impose unjustifiable hardship on the College or other students.

5. Implementing Reasonable Adjustments

- a. Prospective and enrolled students should contact the *Disability Officers* at their earliest opportunity in order to ensure that *Reasonable Adjustments* can be made available within required timeframes.
- b. Students must submit such documentation or assessments as required by the *Disability Officer* to confirm the nature of the student's Disability and identify the measures or actions that are appropriate for the student. This documentation will usually be a professional assessment provided by a qualified clinician and must include specific recommendations for the type of adjustments that would be most beneficial to the student. A broad diagnosis by a General Practitioner will usually not suffice.
- c. An *Access Plan* will be prepared by the *Disability Officer* in consultation with the student. The *Disability Officer* may consult with program co-ordinators or other appropriate faculty staff in order to determine whether a proposed adjustment would be reasonable in accordance with clause 3b.
- d. In order for *Reasonable Adjustments* to be negotiated and implemented, students must provide a copy of their Access Plan to any academic staff that may need to negotiate reasonable adjustments as and when required. Reasonable Adjustments will not be provided if the student does not provide a copy of the Access Plan to the relevant

academic staff.

- e. Examples of *Reasonable Adjustments* in current practice in the Australian University sector that might be applicable include (but are not limited to):
 - i. allowing the student to speak their thoughts (via recording or live) and accept as an oral presentation, or use that as a basis for what they will attempt to write down.
 - ii. accepting bullet points where appropriate to capture comprehension and critical analysis rather than formal writing.
 - iii. training the student in the use of Grammarly as an online writing coach
 - iv. providing a tutor to help in the process of writing (some struggle with step-by-step thinking and need assistance to plan, structure, and break up an assignment into smaller chunks).
 - v. granting a regular extension to give more time for cognitive processing or waiving the late penalty after submission of an assignment.
 - vii. providing access to alternative print formats if required.
- f. When *Alternative Examination Arrangements* are required, the student must make an appointment with the *Disability Officer* prior to the deadline specified by the *Disability Officer* in order that the *Alternative Examination Arrangements* can be arranged.

6. Confidentiality

- a. Information provided to the *Disability Officer* regarding the nature of a student's Disability will not be disclosed outside of the relevant ACOM staff whose knowledge is essential to providing a *Reasonable Adjustment* or *Alternative Examination Arrangements* unless:
 - i. the College has reasonable grounds for concern about the health or safety of the student or other persons; or
 - ii. the student gives express consent; or
 - iii. disclosure of the information is required by law; or
 - iv. it is necessary for the College to obtain legal advice.
- b. Information regarding the functional impact of a student's Disability may be included in the Access Plan and shared with University staff solely for the purpose of determining what *Reasonable Adjustments* can be made to assist the student with their learning, teaching and assessment.

7. Grievances

- a. A student who wishes to appeal a decision made pursuant to this policy should follow

the ACOM Student Grievance Policy via the Registrar.

8. Significant Legislation

Disability Standards for Education 2005

<https://education.gov.au/disability-standards-education>

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth).

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/

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