

# AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

## ACCESS & EQUITY HANDBOOK

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### IMPORTANT NOTES

A.C.O.A.E. RTO has produced this handbook to benefit of the A.C.O.A.E. RTO Community. It contains important information for students and staff and it outlines how A.C.O.A.E. RTO complies with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), especially as it applies to education.

The procedures and policies referred to within this Handbook are an important part of the College's way of dealing with students and staff with needs for adjustments to their College experience. Full policy documents are found on the College website and should be referred to in conjunction with this Handbook. Please be aware that policies are constantly updated and it is advisable to check the website for any new policies or any important changes to policies relevant to you.

## WELCOME

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A.C.O.A.E. RTO is committed to creating a flexible and caring learning environment for all students to participate fairly in their study. The College aims to provide an holistic and innovative approach to supporting students identifying with specific needs to equally participate in their educational pathway in A.C.O.A.E. RTO.

The Access and Equity Program (AEP) exists to enable the equal participation of every student, focusing on increasing social inclusion and advocating for the individual student's rights. The three branches of the Program incorporating students with disabilities and medical conditions; students identifying as English as a Second Language learners; and students requesting any Special Adjustments, enable all students to participate fully and equally in College life at A.C.O.A.E. RTO.

The Program values that Student's come First, Delivering, Happiness, and Ambition to succeed. The fundamental principle behind the program is focusing on the needs of the student, as the students within the AEP know the truth of their own situation better than anyone. Inherent in the AEP is the focus on responsibility — both of the student and that of the College and how the participants in this partnership can most benefit each other.

This Handbook assists students to obtain necessary resources to ensure the best possible study outcomes and access to life within A.C.O.A.E. RTO.

If you are not sure if you need assistance, or what assistance A.C.O.A.E. RTO can provide or if you are concerned about disclosing your needs, you are welcome to have an informal chat with Student Services or College Manager before making any decisions.

Wishing you the best in your future,

College Manager

## WHAT IS Australasian College of Advanced Education RTO ACCESS AND EQUITY PROGRAM?

A.C.O.A.E. RTO values and supports all members of the community regardless of disability, medical condition, or special needs. A.C.O.A.E. RTO expects all members of its community to support and assist all other members irrespective of individual differences. Access and Equity/ College Manager use the Access and Equity Program (AEP) to connect students with a disability or medical condition with the aim of assisting them to achieve their personal and educational goals. The AEP also helps A.C.O.A.E. RTO comply with our College's equity and access commitments, as well as the disability legislative requirements under Commonwealth law.

Accordingly, the primary aim of the AEP is to facilitate the fair participation of students with disabilities or specific needs enrolled at A.C.O.A.E. RTO. All students are full members of the College community and should be engaged to do their best during their studies.

The AEP is designed to enable equal participation for students with a:

- Disability
- Medical condition
- Psychological condition
- Barrier to social inclusion requiring reasonable adjustments.

## WHICH PART OF THE PROGRAM IS RELEVANT TO ME?

The AEP covers all areas of enabling social inclusion for students of the College. Below is a list of examples that are relevant to the program which may help you decide if you require assistance in a specific area. Please note: these are only some examples of each part of our program, not a full list of students we support.

### Students with a disability or medical / psychological condition

- Can provide relevant documentation from a qualified healthcare professional
- Students who identify needs due to a medical condition (both temporary and permanent) (e.g. chronic illness or a broken limb)
- Students who identify needs due to a disability (both learning and physical) (e.g. visual impairment or Dyslexia)

### Students with a need for Reasonable Adjustments

- Students who identify with any barrier to their social inclusion, whether for cultural, religious or social needs such as cultural beliefs that may impact on their interactions in a clinic environment

## What Is A Disability And How Does The Law Deal With It?

A.C.O.A.E. RTO defines “disability” in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth) (DDA)\*. In broad terms a disability involves an alteration to a person’s functioning and includes:

- hearing impairment
- vision impairment
- physical impairment
- specific learning impairment
- psychiatric impairment
- neurological impairment
- intellectual impairment
- chronic medical conditions causing impairment, such as heart disease, diabetes or chronic fatigue syndrome

Disabilities can:

- be temporary or permanent
- be apparent or hidden
- be slight, moderate or severe, or
- exist in the past or present.

The DDA and its 2009 amendments protect every Australian from disability-based discrimination. It can prevent people from being treated inequitably in the following sectors/areas:

- Employment
- Education
- Access to premises used by the public
- Provision of goods, services and facilities
- Accommodation
- Administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs

In terms of education, the DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate on the ground of a person’s disability by:

- refusing or failing to accept the person’s application for admission as a student OR, changing the terms and conditions on which it is prepared to admit the person as a student
- denying or limiting a student’s access to any benefit provided by the educational authority
- restricting enrolment or excluding from the program or subjecting the student to any other detriment.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) also published a set of Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth)\*\* which were formulated under the DDA. These Standards help clarify the obligation of education and training providers and help ensure that students with disabilities are able to participate fairly in education. These DEEWR standards are broken down at <http://www.ddaedustandards.info/index.php> in an easy-to-understand format. \*\*

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/Pages/disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx>

*The Mission of the Access and Equity Program: “To Provide a safe learning environment, that supports each student to achieve their goals”*

### THE STUDENT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE AEP

A.C.O.A.E. RTO strongly believes in the individual's right to advocate for their own needs, and as such we envision the role of the AEP as enabling students to access the resources, support, and adjustments they need to participate fairly and succeed in their study. While the Manager will point students to the appropriate resources, processes, and forms, the student must initiate and provide an ongoing contribution to these processes. The student's registration with the AEP and participation in the access and equity process are critical in obtaining a fair and equitable solution – the students themselves must effectively power the process with the Management there to guide and assist them.

### THE EXPERT IN THEIR SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS IS THE STUDENT

As the student will be the best expert on their personal support needs, A.C.O.A.E. RTO relies on students (and the practitioners who assist them, where relevant) to identify areas where they may not be able to participate equally and may need adjustments.

It is the role of the AEP to bridge the gap between A.C.O.A.E. RTO as an institution and the student as a member of the community, and thus the management serves as an ongoing facilitator between the student and the College.

### THE ACCESS AND EQUITY MANAGER AS A POINT OF CONTACT AND ASSISTANCE

A.C.O.A.E. RTO has an appointed Student Adviser known as the Access and Equity Manager. This Manager aims to assist a student in identifying their needs and applying for adjustments. The Access and Equity Manager primary function is to serve as a primary point of contact, advocacy and assistance for:

- informing students of their rights and responsibilities
- informing students about what documentation they must provide and by when in order to enrol in the AEP, and directing them to the

### Access and Equity Program Registration Form

- informing students of relevant policies and procedures relating to their need for support
- helping students self-identify how their disability or medical condition could impact on their ability to study, areas where they may be academically disadvantaged, or areas where they do not have equal access using the **Access and Equity Program Registration Form**
- working with the student, the needs they identified, and the recommendations of their health practitioner (where relevant) to draft a **Reasonable Adjustment Plan**
- providing one-on-one support and advocacy for Access and Equity students and the AEP itself within the College community
- helping students to apply for reasonable adjustments to or alternative assessments
- helping students request alternative learning materials

### RECOGNISING THAT EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT

As each individual's support needs are not the same, the services provided in the AEP will be specialised to meet the needs of each student who registers with the service. In particular, services are largely influenced by how significantly and pervasively a need for support will impact on a student's learning or their ability to participate fully in campus life. The information that is provided in the registration for AEP, alongside the information provided to the Access and Equity manager, will determine the level of support the student may require.

Some students join the AEP to have a contact person at the College with background knowledge of their circumstances; they may not require any permanent adjustments in place. This is up to the student.

### THE ROLE OF THE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT PLAN (RAP)

The Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP) is a critical component in assisting students to receive fair and equitable opportunities to participate in study and campus life at the College. A number of variables must be considered when creating a RAP. These include consideration of the course

enrolled into, the inherent requirements of the course, the student's available resources, their individual coping strategies, and the nature of their support needs. The AEP facilitates the assessment of the impact of special needs on a student's ability to study and participate. The RAP supports the student to identify, apply for, and implement adjustments to reduce the impact of their disability or medical condition by implementing adjustments in teaching methods, assessment conditions, and facilities.

### **ROLE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (FOR STUDENTS IDENTIFYING WITH A DISABILITY OR MEDICAL CONDITION)**

A.C.O.A.E. RTO requires the opinion of a Qualified Health Professional (with relevant training and experience in the field of disability or health relevant to their condition) when enrolling a student into the AEP and creating a RAP. Both the healthcare practitioner's recommendations, and the student's self-identified needs, are utilised by the Access and Equity Officer in drafting the RAP.

### **THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF**

Academic staff and the College Manager, Student Services may also be involved in composing reasonable adjustment plans. Under certain circumstances, academics may need to provide expert guidance on how teaching methods and materials can be adjusted to be more inclusive, without compromising the academic integrity or graduate attributes required to graduate from the enrolled course. This planning would be in accordance with maintaining the student's privacy and the degree of disclosure would be at the student's request, unless deemed necessary by the College Manager under the provision of a Duty of Care.

### **WHAT PRINCIPLES GUIDE THE ACCESS AND EQUITY PROGRAM?**

The Access and Equity Program is guided by the desire to provide all students with:

- the opportunity to participate and compete equally with their peers in all course activities
- the opportunity to realise their academic and social potential

- the opportunity to participate fully in College life where practicable
- skills that they will be able to carry into employment and community, in line with Professional Body requirements
- the opportunity to obtain a qualification that is uncompromised in its academic integrity
- The opportunity to maximise their independence

The AEP is a mechanism for:

- reducing physical barriers on campus and in the classrooms
- reducing academic barriers through support and adjustments
- reducing attitudinal barriers through information and training

### **WHAT ARE SOME COMMON BARRIERS PREVENTING EQUAL PARTICIPATION?**

A student with a disability or medical condition may experience barriers to learning and inclusion. The following list provides some examples of common barriers:

- Maintaining regular attendance may be difficult
- The student may suffer from social isolation as they are less likely to attend on-campus classes, functions, or after social activities after class
- The impact of the specific support needs of the student may make it difficult for a student to meet deadlines
- The student may have a difficult time meeting the requirements of practical placements
- The student may perform poorly with timed assessments
- The student may have a difficult time maintaining a full subject load
- The student may have issues with concentration or organisation

Traditional learning materials and modes of delivery may not meet the needs of the student.

### How Can We Help?

The AEP coordinated through an Access and Equity Officer is in place to assist students with specific requirements to fully participate in study at A.C.O.A.E. RTO. This is a process that involves eliciting appropriate information from students, relevant staff, and health care professionals and services, and using this information for advising, supporting and advocating.

Because identifying barriers to equal participation is an individual experience, there is no specific or linear approach to the support we can offer. Thus, each Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP) will be individually formulated after discussion with the student, and relevant staff, and a review of relevant medical documentation. RAPs can be reviewed at any time, particularly if the student's situation changes. The support available will depend on the student's needs, the academic context, and what the College can reasonably accommodate as an adjustment.

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR AEP ASSISTANCE?

To be eligible for the Access and Equity Program the student must meet the following criteria :

- The student must **be enrolled** at A.C.O.A.E. RTO and have paid all required fees **and**
- The student must review and sign the inherent course requirements of their chosen course of study **and**
- The student must have **a disability or medical condition** as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) that will impede their academic progress. The definition of disability as used within the Disability Act is very broad and includes people who have a physical, learning, sensory, psychiatric disability, or medical condition. A disability can be permanent or temporary **OR**
- The student must have **other need for adjustment** that will impeded their academic progress or equal participation in campus life **and**
- The support need **impacts on, or has the potential to impact on the student's studies or participation in campus life in** some way **and**

- The student must **provide documentation of their disability or medical condition** from a qualified healthcare professional with relevant training and experience in a field of disability or health relevant to their condition using the Access and Equity Program Registration Form (Part B) **and**
- The student **must choose to enrol in the Access and Equity Program** by submitting the Access and Equity Program Registration Form and attending an appointment with an Access and Equity Officer.

To maintain registration in the Access and Equity Program, the student must meet with an Access and Equity Officer at least once each teaching period.

A.C.O.A.E. RTO will work with students in order to develop a strategy for maximising learning engagement inclusiveness in the teaching activities of their course of study. Some of the services the AEP can provide are listed below:

### PRE-ENROLMENT COUNSELLING

Prior to enrolling with A.C.O.A.E. RTO, prospective students may request a meeting with the local Access and Equity Manager. The Access and Equity Officer can discuss the inherent course requirements, the needs of the individual, and discuss possible adjustments that can be made before enrolment into a course is finalised.

Information that is disclosed about regarding disability or need for support cannot, and will not, be used to deny entry into a course at A.C.O.A.E. RTO.

A.C.O.A.E. RTO will not prohibit a student from studying a course even if their disability, medical condition or other need for adjustment prevents them from meeting the requirements necessary to graduate from the course, or to become accredited in their recognised area of work after graduating.



## THE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT PLAN (RAP)

A Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP) helps the College to collate information from a number of sources on how individual identification of needs might affect one's study and reasonable adjustments that might be made. The RAP forms the basis for all AEP services and requests for adjustments. Determination of what is a "reasonable adjustment" is outlined in the Disability and Special Needs Policy, Reasonable Adjustment Policy.

### **The RAP is based on:**

- Information provided on the **Access and Equity Program Registration Form** and in the interview with an Access and Equity Officer
- Documentation and recommendations must be provided from a qualified healthcare professional on Part B of the **Access and Equity Program Registration Form**
- Information provided to the College from relevant services (e.g. Royal Society for the Blind)
- Information provided by relevant A.C.O.A.E. RTO staff

### **The RAP is used to:**

- Document and summarise the tools or strategies that have been identified as facilitating fair and equitable participation in studying at A.C.O.A.E. RTO
- Facilitate the request for additional or alternative teaching
- Document any specific needs in terms of adjustments to the College's facilities

### **Who gets to see the RAP? Where does it go?**

- The RAP is stored in the student database for reference by the relevant Access and Equity Manager and can be provided to staff when Adjustments need to be implemented. A copy of the approved RAP will be provided to members of the teaching staff who you are in direct contact with the students on the AEP at the start of each teaching period. The RAP is also provided to relevant operational staff (such as an examination invigilator) as required.

The RAP is not circulated or available to all staff, however it contains no confidential information. If released to lecturers or other relevant staff, the RAP will only be used as the basis for applying an approved reasonable adjustment to an assessment or any other teaching and learning materials

## ASSESSMENT ADJUSTMENTS

In some circumstances it may be necessary to seek changes to subject assessment tasks in order to accommodate the impact of identified support needs. A.C.O.A.E. RTO enables students to request changes to their assessment formats where reasonable during their registration in the AEP.

Some examples of assessment adjustments include:

- Alternative examination arrangements
- Additional time for both written, practical and online examinations
- Changes to assignment methods
- Use of a scribe
- Sitting in an alternative room
- Extensions on assignments
- Rest breaks
- Use of computer.

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The AEP can recommend hardware or software that may assist a student to better participate in a class and help facilitate their use in A.C.O.A.E. RTO classrooms. Not all students with a disability or chronic medical condition use assistive technology to support their studies.

It is important to note that the cost of such assistive technology would usually be borne by the student, unless it is already used or to be implemented as a support mechanism for all students at the College. Technologies can range from low tech and inexpensive, to high tech and costly.



Some common examples of assistive technology are:

- Thick black pens (good contrast on white paper to assist reading)
- Magnifying aids, such as a monocular viewer, magnifying glasses
- Recorders to record classes due to inability to focus and take notes at the same time
- Use of computers to replace handwritten activities
- Use of A.C.O.A.E. RTO Online facilities to review classes and consolidate learning, especially if attendance is irregular
- eBooks and Audio Books.

The Access and Equity Manager may also recommend software such as:

- Computer screen reading software
- Computer screen enlargement software
- Voice recognition software to convert talk to text.

### ATTENDANCE ADJUSTMENTS

Some students may have difficulties getting to or sitting in class due to their special needs.

A.C.O.A.E. RTO may be able to provide:

- Flexibility with attendance hurdles
- Flexibility with late notice of non-attendance due to reasons directly related to ones identified needs
- Advance notice of field trips, practical assessments, or mandatory classes with discussion of alternatives if the task is not appropriate for a student with a medical condition or other identified need to participate in.

### COURSE MATERIALS ADJUSTMENTS

Some students may request extra course materials or course materials in a different format.

Adjustments to course materials are subject to availability and copyright restrictions.

Examples of learning material adjustments include :

- Provision of alternative, more accessible, formats for written material
- Provision of notes and materials in an appropriate format
- Copies of slides and lecture notes
- Access to A.C.O.A.E. RTO Online recordings of lectures and resources so the student can focus on content rather than note-taking tasks.

Please note the conversion of materials into alternate formats can be a lengthy process and students are required to provide a minimum 4 weeks' notice if this service is requested.

### TEACHING ADJUSTMENTS

Academic staff can make reasonable adjustments to their teaching in order to better include a student with a special need. Students should discuss their needs with the Access and Equity Manager as soon as possible so that academic staff can be informed of the best way to utilise inclusive teaching techniques in advance.

Teaching adjustments may include:

- Allowing the student to record the classes - when the lecturer and fellow students have agreed to being recorded within the classroom environment
- Extra assistance with practical work
- Assignment of a "study buddy" to assist with study on campus
- Allowing the student to stand and sit (move around) during class
- Ensuring the student can sit at the front or back of the lecture room
- Wearing an FM transmitting microphone that the student provides
- Using contrasting colours on the board (i.e. not red or green).

An Access and Equity Manager can liaise with lecturing staff, tutors, and supervisors, and detail the agreed adjustments specific to the individual student's needs. It is important that all students familiarise themselves with the subject outlines of their enrolled subjects so that they are aware of the expectations and learning outcomes required of each subject. Students will then be able to consider the kind of adjustments required and discuss them with the Access and Equity Officer.

### **FACILITIES ADJUSTMENTS**

Students have a right to be able to access classrooms and other areas of the College that are required for their academic study. The student must notify Student Services, or campus management as soon as any potential barriers to access are discovered. The Access and Equity Manager will work with Facilities Management to help improve physical access to the buildings and grounds on any campus where reasonably possible.

### **REFERRALS AND LIAISON WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

The Access and Equity Program can assist with internal and external referrals for counselling and academic support. Access and Equity Officers will not counsel students, they can refer students to A.C.O.A.E. RTO Student Assistance Program - SAP

The Access and Equity Program can also liaise with other external specialist agencies such as Vision Australia, the Deaf Society etc to assist in generating referrals to those agencies for assessment and follow up as required. These agencies may also provide support or advice in terms of extra assistance such as Notetakers, Auslan Interpreters and Participation Assistants.

### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATION**

Students within the AEP can also apply for Special Consideration for Assessments, as other students are able to, in cases of acute illness or other extenuating circumstances. They should liaise with

their Access and Equity Manager, and can ask, under some circumstances, for their Officer to advocate on their behalf

### **TRAINING AND ADVICE**

The AEP can facilitate a number of general advice and information services including providing information on:

- Disability Awareness for staff or students
- Information on the Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Information on the DDA and the rights and responsibilities of students
- Advice on Disclosure of Disability
- Advice on Inclusive Education Practices
- Assistance with Physical Access Issues.

### **WHAT WE CANNOT DO**

Although A.C.O.A.E. RTO will do everything in its power to assist students with specific requirements, students also have certain responsibilities. They are expected to utilise the subject outlines applicable to their study and consult with their qualified healthcare professional (where relevant) in providing appropriate supportive documentation and support. The College believes in a student's rights and responsibilities, and A.C.O.A.E. RTO strives to train independent learners. We balance this with our desire to provide equal opportunities to all students. Consequently, we expect students to communicate and advocate for their needs, and the College in turn will respond to these needs, as far as reasonably possible.

Accordingly, the AEP does not:

- Provide complaint resolution
- Provide support that substitutes teaching and learning
- Provide career advice
- Provide counselling.

We do, however, provide information on how to access these services.

## Do I Want To Disclose My Needs?

Whether to disclose a disability, medical condition, or other need for adjustments could be a difficult decision to make, and students with a disability or long-term medical condition will face the decision of disclosure throughout their lives. Some students may choose to stay anonymous and hope to complete their study without any support, while other students choose to disclose their need for support at the start of their studies as it provides for maximum opportunities for adjustments. Students also need to decide whether they want to disclose information to other students and teachers. **A student has no obligation to inform the College of their disability or medical condition unless it represents a health risk to other staff or students** (e.g. contagious infectious disease). However, if a student chooses not to disclose their special needs, the College may not be able to provide them with the adequate support to successfully complete their chosen award.

### UNCERTAINTY ABOUT DISCLOSURE OF YOUR NEEDS FOR ADJUSTMENTS

Disclosure is an individual decision, and it is dependent upon the circumstances, the context and how comfortable the person feels about it. In determining whether disclosure should occur or not, students need to:

- Reflect on whether they think their special needs may impact on their ability to study at A.C.O.A.E. RTO or participate in College life
- Explore the availability of services at A.C.O.A.E. RTO
- Consider their rights, responsibilities, and the possible advantages and disadvantages of disclosure
- Consider the impact of their special needs on other people – peers, staff, and clients.

### REASONS FOR DISCLOSING YOUR NEEDS

The most important question when deciding whether or not to disclose personal information is "What outcome do I hope to achieve?"

Students often disclose their need for support:

- In order to discuss their specific needs with an Access and Equity Officer to ensure appropriate assistance and services are provided
- To notify Student Services and/or teaching staff that they may require assistance in the future, such as during examinations, etc.
- To help identify specific supports that will assist them in completing their course
- To help prevent them from such concerns that may impact upon their course progression such as non-attendance or not achieving a pass grade
- Because course requirements including practical units may highlight issues in relation to an individual's support needs
- Because their personal circumstances and therefore their special requirements may change, such as a student acquiring a disability and/or medical condition
- Because their current circumstances may deteriorate and the impact on their study increase
- Because they feel confident that disclosing will not lead to discrimination.

### REASONS FOR NOT DISCLOSING

Many students choose not to disclose because:

- Their current support needs does not impact on their capacity to undertake study.
- They believe they will not need any additional support or adjustments during their studies.
- The student already has sufficient strategies and support in place.
- They believe A.C.O.A.E. RTO already uses sufficiently inclusive and flexible learning practices to enable them to participate without adjustments.

Students may also choose not to disclose because of personal concerns including:

- Concern about drawing attention to themselves from staff and students

- Concern they will be treated differently or their support needs will not be understood
- Concerns they will be stereotyped or marginalized
- Concerns their disclosure may result in discrimination
- Concerns resulting from past negative experiences of disclosing
- Concerns their support needs will overshadow their abilities as a point of focus.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT DISCLOSE MY NEEDS?

Where a student has not disclosed their need for support, teaching and other staff are **not able** to provide educational-related or facilities-related adjustments. It is not the responsibility of staff to justify why no education-related adjustments were provided during the period when the student had not disclosed their need for support.

- Nondisclosure may have consequences including:
- The inability to negotiate any education-related adjustments to materials, teaching, or assessment.
- Difficulty implementing supports and adjustments quickly should a student's condition suddenly deteriorate and needs increase.
- Teachers may interpret the impact of the support needs, disability or medical condition as poor performance or difficult behavior
- Impact upon group work
- A lost opportunity to raise awareness and support for students with support needs, language barriers, disabilities or medical conditions.

### WHOM SHOULD I INFORM IF I DECIDE TO DISCLOSE?

There are a number of mechanisms through which students can disclose a need for support, including during the admissions interview upon enrolment, making an appointment to see an Access and Equity Manager, or confiding in a member of academic staff.

Generally, Access and Equity Manager can act as an excellent source of information and they can act as a central resource to document students need for support. Access and Equity Manager can also provide information on potential adjustments for those considering joining the AEP. Students may at any time change their mind about disclosing specific requirements, or they may remove themselves from the AEP through directly contacting the College Manager or Student Services with a request in writing.

### On enrolment

At the time of enrolment students are asked a number of questions, including whether they may have any specific requirements as a result of a disability or chronic medical condition or require any further support.

### Access and Equity Manager

Access and Equity Manager or college Manager help formulate strategies to assist students in planning their studies and assist in applying for reasonable adjustments to teaching, assessments, and facilities. They can also offer external referrals for additional support.

### Academic Staff

Teachers regularly adapt to different needs in the classroom environment, tending to respond very well to the needs of students. They can be helpful allies in accommodating changes which can better help support students with specific requirements.

### HOW WE PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY

A.C.O.A.E. RTO has policies in place to protect personal information and to eliminate discrimination wherever possible. Information supplied will be used to support any applications made by students for academic or facilities adjustments during study at A.C.O.A.E. RTO . To enrol in the AEP students must understand and agree to A.C.O.A.E. RTO privacy and confidentiality policies, which can be found on the Website

A.C.O.A.E. RTO will not record or release personal details unless authorised by the student. Access to information disclosed will be strictly limited to Access and Equity Manager, College Manager,

Student Services and only available to those who require the information for changes/amendments to current study requirements. If deemed necessary to protect the safety and duty of care of the student, this information may be required to be given confidentially to other staff members by decision of the College Manager *only upon liaison with the student directly.*

### HOW TO REGISTER IN THE ACCESS AND EQUITY PROGRAM

Prospective students are able to indicate a disability, medical condition or other special need by noting this on enrolment paperwork, or by directly contacting an Access and Equity Manager and requesting additional information.

It is recommended to join the AEP as soon as enrolment with The College is finalised or as soon as a disability, special need or medical condition becomes apparent. Some services may take time to organise whilst others can be put in place quickly.

Disclosing the following information will need to be considered before meeting with an Access and Equity Manager.

The type of information that students may disclose include:

- What your disability/medical condition/specific need for adjustment is
- Why the student is choosing to disclose their support needs
- How the disability, medical condition or need for support may impact upon one's study or access to campus facilities
- The type of education-related adjustments that may be required while studying
- Examples of how education-related adjustments have benefited the student in previous educational settings (e.g. at school).

### HOW TO REGISTER

1. Make contact with Access and Equity Manager to discuss enrolling in the Access and Equity Program. The Access and Equity Manager will discuss the program as well as the rights and responsibilities of the student and the College.
2. When enrolling into the Access and Equity Program, documentation about the disability/medical condition and is required as well as suggested adjustments that may be required. This is provided by having a qualified healthcare professional (with relevant training and experience in a field of disability or health relevant to the condition) complete Part B of the **Access and Equity Program Registration Form**.
3. The completed **Access and Equity Program Registration Form** will be discussed and collected by the Access and Equity Manager, who can then advise on creation of a personalised RAP relevant to the need of the student applying. The form asks the student to describe the disability/medical condition/special needs and to consider any adjustments that may be needed in terms of facilities, teaching arrangements, and course materials. Students should consider the types of assessments the subjects involve, whether they involve group or individual work, and whether they involve practical work experience or practical work.
4. Students are now able to work with the Access and Equity Manager and any relevant Advisors to draft a **Reasonable Adjustment Plan** for your study at A.C.O.A.E. RTO. This document records the needs and adjustments suggested in your **Access and Equity Program Registration Form** including the recommendations from your Qualified Health Professional (in the case of students identifying with a disability or medical condition), and will be used to support any alterations in teaching, materials, or facility changes requested over the course study at A.C.O.A.E. RTO.



## WHAT TO DO ONCE REGISTERED

### ***Informing your teachers about your specific requirements***

The Access and Equity Manager liaises on the student's behalf with academic staff however it is the choice of the student as to whether information about the disability/medical condition is provided to individual teaching staff. All relevant teaching and operational staff will be provided with a copy of the approved RAP at the start of each teaching period. This document does not disclose any information provided in confidence to the Access and Equity Manager during registration.

We recommend that registered students remain in contact with their Access and Equity Manager throughout their course, particularly if amendments to the RAP are required.

It is essential that registered students meet with the Access and Equity Manager at least once every teaching period to maintain registration in the AEP.

### ***Actively plan and manage your study load***

It is recommended that students map out the entire semester for each class time, assignment due date, and how easily they think they will manage the requirements of their program of study. Having a realistic view of study load by planning ahead of the semester to identify any potential barriers to being successful should be completed at the start of each teaching

period. Further direction can be gained through discussions with the Access and Equity Manager. This is also a good opportunity for students to conduct a review of the RAP. This review will enable the RAP to reflect any adjustments required for specific assessments, within specific subjects in that teaching period.

Students should consider:

- Whether they should study part-time instead of full-time, especially in the first study period
- Whether they need to change their study load
- Whether their study load will allow them to balance their personal, work, family, study, and health needs and responsibilities
- Recommendations from their Qualified Health Professional pertaining to their studies.

It is important to be aware of key dates such as:

- Census date – students must make any changes to their enrolment before Census date, otherwise the full cost of a subject will be charged.
- Assessment dates - we suggest students map when their assignments are due and exams are scheduled on a calendar at the beginning of each teaching period.



### ***Be familiar with Emergency and Evacuation Procedures***

It is important to be familiar with emergency evacuation procedures. Floor plans and emergency procedure notices are posted on the walls of buildings with emergency exits clearly marked. If this information is required in an alternative format, this can be requested via the Access and Equity Manager.

Individuals with hearing impairments should discuss their emergency procedure requirements with an Access and Equity Manager, in order for the College to be prepared in the case of an emergency evacuation. This information is also included at Orientation.

### **REQUESTING ADJUSTMENTS OR ASSISTANCE**

#### ***What are Reasonable Adjustments?***

Reasonable adjustments may be made to accommodate a student with a disability or special need and reduce the impact of a disability or special need on a student's academic success. Adjustments may include modifications to the learning environment, teaching method, or assessment conditions to increase the participation of a student without compromising the academic standard or the inherent course requirements.

Reasonable adjustments may be made to assist a student with a disability or special need to successfully complete a subject or course, however it may not be possible for the student to achieve 100% of the inherent course requirements. This means that while students with a disability or special need may receive provision for reasonable adjustments to achieve the inherent course requirements, it may not be possible to receive a passing grade in some circumstances.

Wherever practicable, reasonable adjustment to requirements of a College policy or procedure will be made to meet the needs of a student with a disability or special need. To determine if an adjustment is reasonable, the following must be considered:

- A student's disability, and any barriers, needs, or challenges that may affect the student throughout a subject or course
- The views of the student or the student's advocate
- Whether the adjustment will impact on the academic standards or inherent course requirements
- Whether the adjustment creates an undue advantage for the student, or an undue disadvantage for another student
- The costs and benefits to all parties of making the adjustment including possible impacts on college capital expenditure and/or operational budgets
- The 'willingness to pay' the costs associated with the adjustment on behalf of either party.

The College is not obligated to make any adjustment or accommodation that may impose an unjustifiable hardship on the College. Students with a disability or special need may be required to provide additional medical or specialised documentation to substantiate the reasonableness of the adjustment.

#### ***What if I want new adjustments?***

Reasonable adjustments should be negotiated in a timely manner. Students are expected to meet the terms of the agreed adjustments once they have been established unless their individual circumstances have changed which necessitates a revised adjustment. It is best to contact the Access and Equity Manager as soon as reasonable to request any new adjustments.

#### ***What if I need to request an adjustment of the facilities?***

Students who need to request a distinct adjustment to facilities (e.g. private area for any medical or special needs reason) should contact their Access and Equity Manager.

If a class is located in a non-accessible location, contact should be made as soon as possible with the Access and Equity Manager to arrange for a class in an accessible location or to make modifications to the facilities where this is



practicable or possible.

Where there are temporary obstructions to access, these can be brought to the attention of the Access and Equity Manager who will contact Facilities Management to attempt to rectify any impediments. Where classroom equipment is unsuitable, the Access and Equity Manager can attempt to work with Facilities Management to modify the classroom where reasonable.

#### ***What if I need to request an adjustment to the teaching?***

After meeting with the Access and Equity Manager to discuss self-identified needs, and the recommendations of the qualified healthcare professional, (where relevant) a Reasonable Adjustment Plan is formulated. The RAP can identify areas where adjustments may be required of the teaching style of the lecturer. The AEP can provide a vehicle through which any adjustments to assessment tasks or other requirements are provided with all parties. If a RAP has been formulated, the Access and Equity Officer can be contacted to revise the plan

#### ***What if I need to request alternative formats to, or additional course materials?***

Members of the AEP are able to request alternative or additional materials for specific subject when formulating a RAP. Additional materials may not be available depending on availability and copyright regulations.

Please note that the conversion of materials into alternate formats can be a lengthy process and students are required to provide a minimum of 4 weeks' notice if this service is requested. Where the College needs to liaise with publishers to organise materials, this process could take 12 weeks or longer. Requests for adjustments to course materials must be made as early as possible

#### ***What if I need to request an adjustment to an assessment task?***

In some circumstances adjustments can be made to assessment tasks to ensure equitable access to assessment to all students. Adjustments can include variations in the structure, format,

duration, and venue of assessments, and may include rest breaks and alternative formats. Adjustments are intended to minimise the impact of a student's ability to participate equally in assessments. However, they will not be 'easier' or lower the academic standard being assessed. Instead, they allow students to participate in the assessment in a more equitable form through different accommodations.

Adjustments to assessments **should be planned** and discussed with the Access and Equity Manager during regular review meeting **at the start of the teaching period**. For students with an existing disability/medical conditions, the completed application for adjustments should be completed by the end of Week 3 of each teaching period.

For students who develop a disability/medical condition during the course of a teaching period, an application for adjustments should be received at least two (2) weeks before the due date of an assessment if reasonably possible.

Students should review the subject outlines before or at the start of each teaching period in order to plan and identify potential barriers or difficulties. Where a student's condition changes significantly just before or during the time of an assessment they should apply for an extension using the *Application Form for Extension of Written Assessment Item*. Making adjustments to assessments is a planned, proactive process where students identify potential difficulties and plan their academic needs

Some examples of adjustments include:

- Extra time for resting/writing
- Bite size food/drink
- Reader/Scribe
- Large text / Electronic format
- Large print and/or coloured exam paper
- Permission to move about/exercise
- Seating in front or back of room
- Special lighting.

### **What if I need to request an extension on an assessment?**

A student can request an extension to an assignment when they are unable to complete an assignment on time due to the effects of a condition or needs they have registered with the AEP.

Where students foresee the need for adjustments to assessments they should request an appointment with their Access and Equity Manager for finalisation within the first three weeks of a teaching period or as soon as changes arise.

Students should only request an extension to an assessment where their condition is fluctuating and worsens unexpectedly, where they develop a new disability or health condition, or where some other extenuating circumstance arises. The decision to grant the assignment extension lies with relevant academics. On receipt of a request for an extension, the Access and Equity Manager will send an extension request to the lecturer or subject coordinator directly.

Students who have already received an extension for an assessment are not able to apply for another extension through this process. Additional applications should be through direct contact with the College Manager or Student Services & Retention.

### **What if I need to apply under special consideration or appeal my grade?**

Requests for Special Consideration and the Grievance processes, whilst standard A.C.O.A.E. RTO processes, are considered to be external to the AEP. However, the Access and Equity Manager can assist with providing the relevant information regarding these processes. Students may use either process to inform the Training Manager or Student Services of personal difficulties resulting from a disability, illness or need for adjustments that have affected an assessment. Normal policy and process will be followed, but nevertheless the disability/medical condition will be given due consideration, as appropriate.

### **What if I need to withdraw from a subject?**

Cancellation fees are charged for withdrawing from subjects prior to census dates. Refer to the Fees Policy. Special circumstances **may** be

applicable for those students who wish to apply for fee refund/waiver post census date. Information regarding this is available via the Remission of Financial Liability due to Special Circumstances Policy Information regarding A.C.O.A.E. RTO policies and procedures is available via website: [www.ACOAE.com](http://www.ACOAE.com)

Deferral or withdrawal from a program of study for any length of time may result in the relevant fee being charged. Cancellation fees apply to all students.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Like all students at A.C.O.A.E. RTO, students with support needs must comply with the **Student Code of Conduct** and be respectful of other members of the College community. The Charter outlines clearly what it is meant to be a student member of the A.C.O.A.E. RTO community and outlines a student's responsibilities, including:

- To be respectful, fair and value equality irrespective of disability or cultural background to all members of the college community.
- Be well informed about course requirements and seek academic assistance if in doubt.
- Take responsibility to self-manage enrolment and course planning, using advice provided by the College though its personnel and web services.
- Actively engage as diligent learners and participate in all teaching and learning activities including submission of all assessments in a timely manner.
- Be informed of all current policies and procedures, support services and academic requirements and seek guidance if unsure.
- Support continuous improvement through the provision of honest and constructive feedback on academic and support services.
- To pursue scholarly activity and professional practice which contribute positively to the profile of the College and the profession at large.
- To contribute to their local community and create partnerships in a manner that is representative of natural medicine philosophy and A.C.O.A.E. RTO values.

The Student Charter and Code of Conduct is further outlined on the website:

[www.ACOAE.com](http://www.ACOAE.com)

More specifically to the AEP, students are responsible for:

- Awareness of the inherent requirements for registration, if planning to undertake a career that involves registration with a professional or authorising body
- Providing required documentation to the College in a timely manner
- Considering in advance (where the need for support is pre-existing), areas where they may need support or adjustments
- Advising the Access and Equity Manager in a timely manner of their needs in relation to their disability/medical condition/language barriers, including education-related adjustments and information
- Applying for any adjustments they feel they may need

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE COMMENCEMENT OF EACH TEACHING PERIOD**

### ***Update status with the AEP***

As outlined above, it is a requirement in order to maintain registration with the AEP that registered students meet with the Access and Equity Manager at the beginning of each teaching period to update their status in the program. It is also a good opportunity to bring College staff up to date with any changes to current circumstances. This meeting will ensure that the Access and Equity Manager is aware of the current status of the student's needs so that they may put in place processes to receive the best possible opportunity to study effectively at the College.

### ***Request and review the Subject outlines for the teaching period enrolled***

Students are advised to review the subject outlines for each subject they enrol in. They should look for any aspects of the subject where they might have difficulty. If they believe any assessment tasks

may be difficult to complete due to their need for support, they should discuss any concerns within the first three weeks of the teaching period with their Access and Equity Manager.

It is helpful to:

- Chart all the dates and types of assessments on a calendar
- Look at the requirements of the assessments and in class activities
- Familiarise oneself with important College dates
- Meet with key teaching staff in each subject
- Attend all lecturers for enrolled subjects

## **Engaging Students At Australasian College of Advanced Education RTO**

The following material may assist to provide clarification on some points already covered. Please do not hesitate to contact the Student Services team if further information or explanation is required.

## **ACCESS AND EQUITY**

A.C.O.A.E. RTO through its policies and processes, as well as its Access and Equity Program, will seek to ensure:

- All students are recruited in an ethical and responsible manner which is consistent with the requirements of the curriculum
- Student selection decisions comply with equal opportunity legislation
- Entry principles are inclusive, rather than exclusive, and courses are designed to maximise students' ability to succeed.
- Appropriately qualified staff assess the extent to which the applicant is likely to achieve the stated competency standards and outcomes of the course, based on their qualifications and experience
- It meets the needs of individuals and the community as a whole through the integration of access and equity guidelines and, within reason in the private tertiary environment,

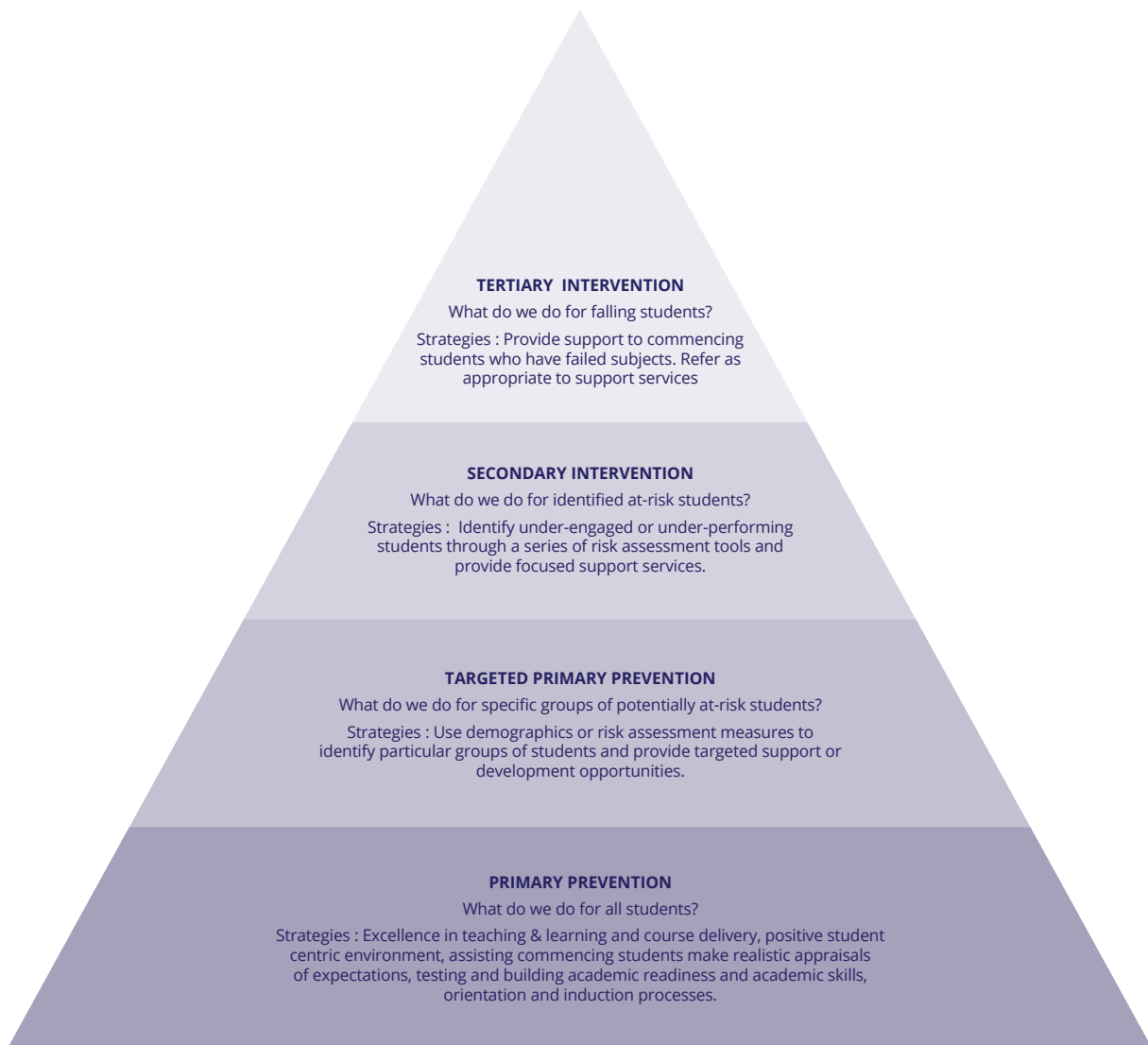
seeks to establish strategies to increase access for people from minority groups

- Principles of social justice are addressed appropriately in all aspects of the course implementation
- Vocational needs of students are taken into account in the program structure where possible in order to provide for appropriate time allocation for practical application of knowledge and skill, maturational factors and (where possible) personal need factors; and
- A.C.O.A.E. RTO provides a sound base of support for personal and social needs of students including equal opportunity provisions in relation to education and work, study skills, personal development, resource facilities, and access to counselling and specialist services.

#### **WHAT ELSE DOES Australasian College of Advanced Education RTO DO TO ENSURE ACADEMIC SUCCESS?**

A.C.O.A.E. RTO complies with all legislative requirements and provides a number of services for students with disabilities/medical conditions or other support needs where these do not represent unreasonable hardship to staff or the business operation of A.C.O.A.E. RTO.

Additionally, Student Services and Academic staff undertake a variety of strategies aimed at Students at Risk to assist with early identification of poor performance and ensure intervention strategies are implemented to assist students who are failing to achieve academic success. Intervention strategies range from primary prevention to tertiary intervention and include orientation/ induction through to appropriate referral to Support Services.



### AUDIO RECORDING OF CLASSES

On occasion students will be unable to participate fully in learning experiences due to reasons relating to a disability (as defined under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992) or other special need.

Where a need for support exists and the student has registered for the Access and Equity Program, students may request to audio record their lessons. Such a request would be allowed only when it is deemed that to audio record the lesson would not interfere with the operation of the class, and the lecturer and all students in the class agree to this occurring. In such instances, the Access and Equity Manager would provide written permission to the student to be allowed to tape record a lesson.

Where a student is enrolled in more than one subject, the above process must occur for each and every subject in which the student is enrolled.

### **REFERRAL FOR TUTORING ASSISTANCE**

Some students who experience difficulty with study and/or who identify as having a learning difficulty may require additional assistance to successfully complete their subject/s. In such circumstances the lecturer will provide whatever assistance is reasonable and equitable.

If further in-depth assistance is required, the student should contact their local Access and Equity Manager, Senior Lecturer or Trainer to discuss tutoring assistance. The College can offer referrals to academic tutors to assist students

### **REFERRAL FOR COUNSELLING**

Some students who experience difficulty with study and/or who identify as having difficulty may require counselling support to successfully complete their subject/s. In such circumstances the lecturer will provide whatever assistance is reasonable and equitable.

If further support is required, the student is referred to College Counsellor.

College Counsellor supports A.C.O.A.E. RTO students with support in dealing with life issues which may impact upon their wellbeing and subsequent ability to study, through access to a confidential counseling service available at the college 3 days a week. Included in the program are up to 3 sessions per year (normally 1 hour in duration) at no cost to the student.

A.C.O.A.E. RTO advocates an early intervention model through self-referral or referral by an A.C.O.A.E. RTO representative to assist students in resolving a broad range of issues before they cause deterioration in study performance, safety or personal well-being. Confidentiality is assured when accessing the program, so students can be confident that their identity and details won't be shared with A.C.O.A.E. RTO, unless agreed upfront via written consent or in circumstances where counsellors are legally obliged to share details of the session, such as when a student poses a risk to self or others assistance. The College can offer referrals to academic tutors to assist students.