



MACQUARIE
University
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA

Student Accessibility Action Plan

2025–2028



Acknowledgement of country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which Macquarie University is situated, the Wallumattagal people of the Dharug Nation, whose cultures and customs have nurtured, and continue to nurture, this land since time immemorial. We also acknowledge the Elders, past and present, and pay our respects to them. We further honour and pay our respects to the spirits of this land and its waterways.

We humbly ask that all members of the Macquarie University community are granted the capacity to *wingarū* (think), to learn and to walk safely upon this *ngurra* (land). In the spirit of reconciliation and inclusion, we strive to walk together as a diverse community, honouring both cultural heritage and the rights of all people to equitable access and opportunity.

Executive message



At Macquarie University, we believe that education is most powerful when it opens doors, removes barriers and gives every member of our community the chance to thrive. Our *Student Accessibility Action Plan 2025–2028* (SAAP) reflects this belief and marks an important step in improving the experience of students with disability, and in embedding accessibility across university life.

Students with disability remain underrepresented in higher education, in Australia and elsewhere. While progress has been made, more is needed. The SAAP is a deliberate commitment to accelerating this work. It recognises the diverse strengths, perspectives and aspirations that students with disability bring to our community – and affirms our responsibility to create an environment in which those strengths can be realised.

The plan has been shaped by the voices and lived experiences of our students. Their insights have sharpened our understanding of where change is needed most. This act of co-design reflects our aspiration to be a collaborative and inclusive institution, committed to delivering a high-quality educational experience for all.

As a key deliverable of *The Macquarie Advantage* education strategy, the SAAP reinforces our commitment to delivering education that is academically excellent, future-ready and aligned with the evolving aspirations of our students. By strengthening inclusion, improving access to support and removing barriers to participation, the SAAP helps ensure that accessibility is integral to our educational mission.

The plan also supports Macquarie's whole-of-university approach to diversity, inclusion and belonging. It positions accessibility as a cornerstone of our culture and recognises that genuinely inclusive environments are built through consistent, practical and systemic action.

Launching this plan on the International Day of People with Disability underscores its significance and highlights our commitment to ensuring that every student feels valued, supported and able to participate fully.

The *Student Accessibility Action Plan 2025–2028* is, above all, a commitment to building a university where all students can flourish. I am grateful to everyone who contributed to its development and to all who will help bring it to life.

Professor Rorden Wilkinson
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC)
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Overview

Students with disability are an integral part of the higher education community, bringing diverse perspectives, strengths and lived experiences that enrich university life. Despite increasing participation rates, many continue to face barriers to access, inclusion and academic success. Participation has steadily increased over the past decade, yet students with disability remain underrepresented in higher education.

Our commitment to accessibility is guided by the principle of ‘nothing about us without us’. This ensures that lived experience of disability informed the *Student Accessibility Action Plan 2025–2028* and that future decision-making, project planning and evaluation will continue to be guided by the plan’s objectives.



21.4% of Australians live with disability – approximately **5.5 million people**.¹



Only **17%** of Australians aged 20+ with disability have a bachelor degree or higher, compared with **35%** of those without disability.²



In 2023, **13%** of undergraduate students in Australian universities identified as having a disability, up from **10%** in 2021.³



In 2025, **4746 students** identified as living with disability at Macquarie University.



In 2025, more than **2700** students registered for support via our Student Wellbeing Accessibility Service.

¹ adcet.edu.au
² humanrights.gov.au/?a=46519
³ aihw.gov.au

Legislation, governance and participation

LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE

Macquarie University is dedicated to creating an inclusive learning environment where all students have equitable access to education. We recognise our responsibilities under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

In line with the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*, we strive to deliver learning and support services that meet the diverse needs of our student community, helping to ensure that every student can succeed academically.

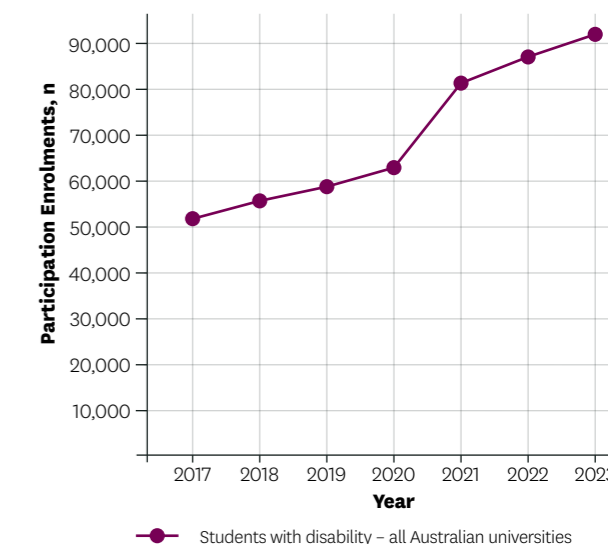
Our *Student Accessibility Action Plan 2025–2028* goes beyond compliance. It reflects the University’s commitment to building a respectful, ethical and inclusive culture, and to improving the experience of students – one where diversity is embraced and every member of our community is valued and heard. Our approach is informed by a range of legislative and policy frameworks, including:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth)
- *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010*
- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*
- *Australia’s National Disability Strategy 2021–2031*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW)
- *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines*
- *AVCC Guidelines for Students with a Disability*⁴
- *Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education*
- *Macquarie University Student Accessibility Policy*
- *Macquarie University Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Framework 2024–2028*
- *Macquarie University Sexual Safety and Wellbeing Action Plan 2024–2026*
- *Australian Universities Accord 2024*
- *The Macquarie Advantage* education strategy
- *Macquarie University Support for Students Policy*
- *Our University: A Framing of Dynamic Futures*
- *Macquarie University Operating Plan 2025–2030*

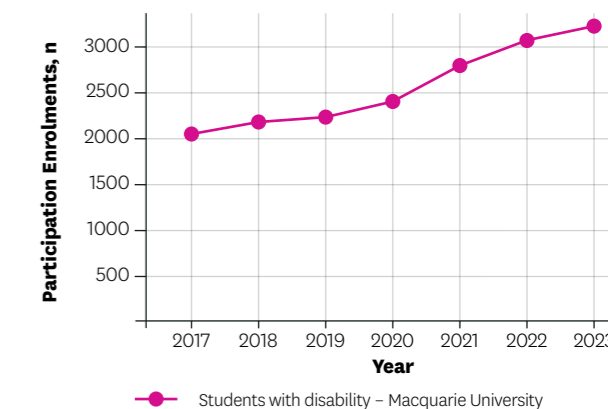
Through this action plan, Macquarie reaffirms its commitment to removing barriers, promoting equity and ensuring that all students are given the opportunity to prosper in their education journey.

PARTICIPATION ENROLMENTS – STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY ACROSS ALL AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES (2017–2023)⁵



PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY AT MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY (2017–2023)



⁴ adcet.edu.au/resource/5351/file/1/AVCC_Disability_GuidelinesMay06.pdf
⁵ aces.edu.au/data/interactive-tool/

Enabling success

Delivering on the ambitions of the *Student Accessibility Action Plan 2025–2028* (SAAP) requires a collaborative, whole-of-university approach. The SAAP will be embedded across multiple areas of our operations and reflects our shared commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment.

To ensure effective implementation, a SAAP working group will be developed with representation from a variety of relevant departments.

The Student Wellbeing team in the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Dean of Students) portfolio will coordinate the implementation of the SAAP; facilitate collaboration across other portfolios, faculties and diversity and inclusion committees; and provide data for internal and external reporting.

The SAAP is a key deliverable of *The Macquarie Advantage* education strategy. Progress will be monitored and reported on by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

The SAAP was developed in close alignment with the University's broader *Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Framework 2024–2028*. An annual report of the SAAP will be provided to the University's Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Steering Committee.

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Guiding principles

- 1. EQUITY AND ACCESS**
Ensure all students with disability have equitable access to education, services and facilities. This includes physical, digital and attitudinal accessibility.
- 2. INCLUSIVE DESIGN**
Embed inclusive design principles across teaching, learning and campus environments to benefit all students, not just those with disability.
- 3. RESPECT AND DIGNITY**
Treat all individuals with respect, recognising the inherent dignity and diverse experiences and needs of people with disability and promote a culture of inclusion and belonging.
- 4. INTERSECTIONALITY**
Acknowledge that disability may intersect with other identities and experiences (including race, gender/gender diversity, sexuality, experiences of Gender-based Violence, and socioeconomic status), and tailor support to reflect these overlapping experiences. Importantly, students with a disability will actively participate in the consultation around the development of the University's Whole-of-Organisation Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan.
- 5. SELF-DETERMINATION AND EMPOWERMENT**
Support students with disability to make informed choices about their education, future employment and participation. Respect autonomy and lived experience.
- 6. TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE**
Respond to disability-related needs and disclosures with sensitivity, confidentiality and care, recognising the potential of trauma and systemic barriers.
- 7. COLLABORATION AND CO-DESIGN**
Understand that the successful implementation of this plan will take a whole-of-university approach and recognise the importance of engaging people with lived experience of disability in the design, implementation and evaluation of this plan.
- 8. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**
Monitor progress through measurable outcomes, regular reporting and open communication, ensuring that the Macquarie Executive Group provides continuous leadership, input and accountability associated with the plan's implementation.
- 9. CULTURAL CHANGE**
Promote disability inclusion as a shared responsibility across all faculties and departments and at the individual level.
- 10. LEGAL AND POLICY ALIGNMENT**
Align with responsibilities outlined by legislation, frameworks and university policy.

Focus areas and objectives

We acknowledge that disability intersects with other aspects of identity, and we strive to ensure our policies, practices and culture reflect this diversity. Through the implementation of actions across six focus areas, we aim to remove barriers to access and promote equity across all areas of university life.

1.

INCLUSION AND BELONGING

- Partner with the Hidden Disability Sunflower Foundation⁶ to raise awareness of the support needs for students with hidden disability.
- Provide a readily available guide for staff and student groups across campus on how to implement inclusive and accessible events and meetings.
- Increase activities to promote student wellbeing, and develop social media to further promote the initiatives across the University community.
- Provide opportunities for lived experience buddy programs.
- Ensure information about support services is widely promoted and embedded into multiple sources to enable access to Macquarie's support services.
- Provide opportunities for individualised and neuroinclusive events at large events such as Open Day and Kickstart, as well as during campus tours, to support transition activities for potential and new students.
- Develop and implement a policy and procedures for the use of support and companion animals at the University, including guidelines for staff, students and campus facilities.

2.

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Review the Individual Education Access Plan (IEAP) adjustment process to reduce steps required by students to implement adjustments and balance confidentiality and empowerment.
- Increase Student Wellbeing Skillshops to provide students with the knowledge and tools to support their wellbeing for learning.
- Provide wellbeing education workshops to postgraduate and graduate research students to help them balance wellbeing with the demands of research, thesis completion and supervisor relationships.
- Provide in-person training for staff on delivering trauma-informed support services to students.
- Establish clear pathways to timely support for students requiring assistance.

3.

PHYSICAL ACCESS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Improve communication processes relating to temporary restrictions or barriers to access across the campus, such as lift outages.
- Develop wayfinding technology to improve accessibility and promote safety across the campus.
- Enhance room profiles to enable the location of suitable learning and teaching facilities, study spaces and meeting areas conducive to individual needs.
- Undertake an environmental audit of the campus and service points from a neuroinclusive lens to identify improvements and opportunities that make the campus more accessible to everyone.
- Ensure that classrooms and study spaces meet the diverse furniture needs of all students.

4.

DIGITAL ACCESS, SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

- Embed a procurement procedure to ensure all student-facing university systems are accessible and user friendly, and include user testing with people who have lived experience of disability before being launched.
- Establish clear escalation procedures for situations where a student needs support using university systems because of the impacts of their disability.
- Revise website information so it is available in multiple formats – such as captioned videos and written instructions – to meet the needs of all students.
- Establish and promote support pathways for enrolment and class registration for students with disability.
- Review the special consideration process to make it easier for students, particularly those with disability and IEAPs.
- Use technology to support on-demand responses relating to university processes.

5.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

- Develop consistent approaches to iLearn design to ensure students can readily access learning materials and reduce cognitive demands.
- Provide opportunities for educators to develop capability in universal design for learning, inclusive design principles and inclusive teaching to improve the experience of students with disability across learning and assessment activities.
- Improve access to learning, assessment and research materials and resources by providing technologies that convert information into accessible formats that meet the diverse needs of students.
- Review assessment extension request processes for students receiving IEAP adjustments.
- Develop ways to improve communication of course requirements so that students can make informed decisions about their enrolment.
- Embed technology to assist in responding to FAQs in a timely manner.
- Provide assessment information at the start of session to help students plan effectively, balance their studies and promote wellbeing.
- Improve communication about supplementary exam dates to allow students to plan ahead.

6.

OTHER INITIATIVES SUPPORTING ACCESS AND INCLUSION

- Promote ongoing education opportunities to the wider university community on disability awareness, including dedicated training around the prevention and response to Gender-based Violence.
- Promote events and activities throughout the year that raise disability awareness and support student wellbeing.



Thank you to all the students and staff who took the time to participate in the consultation process.

An extended thank you to the team in the Office of the Dean of Students who are working on the action plan's implementation.

Support

If you are a Macquarie University student and would like more information about our support services or the *Student Accessibility Action Plan 2025–2028*, contact the Student Wellbeing Accessibility Service on wellbeing@mq.edu.au or (02) 9850 7497.

If you need this document in another format, such as braille or large print, email accessibility@mq.edu.au.



References

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), Federal Register of Legislation
legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest

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adcet.edu.au/resource/5351/file/1

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adcet.edu.au/resource/5351/universities-australia-avcc-guidelines-relating-to-students-with-a-disability-2006

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education.gov.au/highereducationGBVcode/action-plan-genderbased-violence-higher-education

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Macquarie University Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Framework
mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/vision-strategy/other-university-initiatives/diversity-inclusion-and-belonging

Macquarie University Sexual Safety and Wellbeing Action Plan 2024–2026
mq.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/1303182/Sexual-Safety-and-Wellbeing-Action-Plan-24-26.pdf

Australian Universities Accord 2024
education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord

The Macquarie Advantage education strategy
mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/vision-strategy/the-macquarie-advantage

Macquarie University Support for Students Policy
policies.mq.edu.au/document/view.php?id=384

Our University: A Framing of Dynamic Futures, Macquarie University
mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/vision-strategy/our-university-a-framing-of-dynamic-futures

Macquarie University Operating Plan 2025–2030
mq.edu.au/about/about-the-university/vision-strategy/operating-plan



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