

## **DISABILITY ACTION PLAN COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP BRIEFING SHEET JUNE 2003**

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The strategic planning meeting of the UTS Disability Action Plan Committee held on 29 April 2003 identified key priority areas related to Communication. The priorities are:

- Improve the promotion of disability-related services, policies and programs to staff with a disability and to supervisors / managers (Key strategy 2.6)
- Continue to provide disability awareness training, addressing both generic disability awareness and disability-specific issues, for UTS academic and support staff (Key strategy 4.1)
- Promote knowledge of good practice in the provision of appropriate accommodations for people with disabilities, and in teaching and assessment strategies for students with a disability (Key strategy 4.4)

*In addition the DAPC committee:*

- Noted the significant level of work already planned by the Equity and Diversity Unit and others across this area (especially Key Strategy 2.1).
- Agreed that there would be value in the Equity and Diversity Unit analysing the key strategies, related review recommendations and other activities and advising the committee of those areas which current and planned activities did not address.
- Agreed that there would be value in grouping and assessing all of the of strategies and activities focussing on consultation across the plan.
- Noted the importance of Key Strategy 4.6 and agreed that it would be considered in the broad assessment of strategies and activities focussing on consultation as noted under Priority Area 3.

The Communications Working Group will be primarily responsible for progressing and reporting on the following identified issues (cross referenced to recommendations (R) from the DAP review 1997-2002):

1. Provide disability awareness training and other information / resources for managers and supervisors, with an emphasis on the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation as outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act (R 51 & R 55)
2. Improve the promotion of disability-related services, policies and programs to staff with disabilities and to supervisors / managers (R 53)
3. Further consideration be given to identifying issues and needs relating to specific disabilities at UTS, and addressing these. Disability Awareness Training should address the issue of "invisible disabilities" (R 25)
4. Improve the integration of disability awareness issues within existing UTS training and development activities e.g. development programs for new academics; the Assessment Project of the Teaching and Learning Committee (R 28)
5. Continue to provide professional development focusing on specific disability issues from time-to-time. Consider scheduling "best practice" sessions by external agencies, e.g. Royal Blind Society, Australian Quadriplegics Association, on a regular basis to keep staff up-to-

date on best practice, latest developments in assistive technology and current issues for people with particular types of disability (R 29)

6. Ensure HRU staff, particularly those in recruitment roles, undertake regular training on disability awareness and key employment-related disability discrimination issues (R 50)
7. Continue to provide disability awareness training for Security personnel addressing both generic and specific disability issues (R 105)
8. Ensure students and industry-based casual academic staff are aware of the University's privacy and confidentiality requirements in relation to students with disabilities (R 40)
9. Implement a project to promote awareness of flexible work policies and practices, and their importance in accommodating staff with disabilities (R 60)
10. Establish an e-mail network for staff with disabilities to promote more effective communication / consultation. Take appropriate steps to ensure the full confidentiality of participants in the network (R 45)
11. Improve the internal marketing / communication of the Disability Action Plan and information about disability services to managers, supervisors, academics, and to UTS staff and students and to prospective staff and students with disabilities (R 97)
12. Review disability-related content in orientation information provided to casual staff, to ensure casual academics in particular are familiar with University policy and expectations in relation to people with disabilities (R 32)

Recommendations noted in the DAP 2003-2007 which are Communications issues although do not require leadership from the Communications working group include:

- The following three Recommendations, which are to be carried out by the Library Working Group, in consultation with the Communications Working Group:
  13. Consult regularly with students with disabilities to identify and address access issues and service needs (R 66)
  14. Continue to regularly review the operation of the Special Needs Rooms in the University Libraries, including consultation with students about adaptive technology requirements (R 68)
  15. Further explore strategies to effectively orient students with disabilities to the Library, with a focus on publicising the services and facilities that are currently available (R 69)
- Disability Awareness Training for Academic Staff – the following priority Recommendations are to be addressed by the disability awareness sessions targeting academic staff, which are under development by EDU.
  16. Develop and implement disability awareness sessions targeting academic staff. Ensure sessions targeting academic staff cover best practice in teaching and assessment of students with particular types of disabilities. Key UTS groups to be targeted include faculty-based Academic Liaison Officers, Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning), Responsible Academic Officers. Explore the possibility of providing more formal recognition for staff who participate in disability awareness training e.g. a Certificate / Diploma. (R 26)
  17. Liaise with other universities to identify training packages / approaches that have been effective in targeting academic staff (R 31)
  18. Ensure disability awareness training addresses the issue of "invisible disabilities" (R 30)
  19. Develop resources to raise the awareness of academic staff of specific issues impacting on participation in group work by students with disabilities (R 22)
  20. Document and publicise good practice in the provision of reasonable accommodation within the learning environment for students with disabilities. Promote knowledge of teaching and assessment strategies appropriate for students with disabilities (R 36)

- It is envisaged that Recommendation 72 (“Consult regularly with students with disabilities to identify and address CIT access issues and service needs, particularly when considering the establishment of new initiatives / services”) will be led by ITAG, in consultation with the Communications Working Group.
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