If you have a disability, medical condition, learning disability, or are dealing with personal circumstances that affect your study, Equitable Learning Services may be able to provide you with assistance.

Our Equitable Learning Advisors can arrange to put in place services and educational adjustments to make things more manageable so that you are able to complete your course requirements.

Over 1000 students currently receive assistance because they have a disability or are a carer of a person who has a disability.

We assist students:
- living with disabilities
- with long- or short-term health concerns and/or mental health issues
- who are primary carers
- from low SES backgrounds
- of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities
- from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds
- from rural and remote backgrounds
- who are the first in their family to undertake a bachelor-level degree.

Our services are free and confidential, so register for support as early as possible.

Answers to frequently asked questions

Below you will find some commonly asked questions. If you have any further questions, please contact us for a confidential discussion.

What is a disability?

It’s not uncommon for some people to discover they have a learning difficulty or medical condition while at university. ‘Disabilities’ is a broad term used to cover a wide range of professionally diagnosed illnesses, learning difficulties, injuries, medical and mental health conditions. You may be affected permanently or have symptoms that occur from time to time. Your disability could be one or more of the following:

- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Anxiety disorder (including Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)
- Autism spectrum (including Asperger’s Syndrome)
- Depressive disorder
- Eating disorder
- Hearing impairment
- Learning disability
- Medical condition
- Neurological condition
• Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
• Physical disability
• Psychiatric condition
• Psychological condition
• Psychotic disorder
• Vision impairment

Depending on the severity of your condition, you may require long- or short-term assistance with any of the above. If we are not the best suited to assist you, then one of our staff will let you know who to contact both on- and off-campus.

If you are still unsure if you have a disability or if we can help you, contact us to have a confidential chat.

Disclosure – do I have to tell?

Formally telling UNSW that you have a disability is called disclosure. You may have already done this when you ticked a box on the University Application Centre’s (UAC) application form for university.

You are under no legal obligation to disclose that you have a disability at any time. Be aware that if you choose not to disclose, you will not be able to receive educational adjustments while at UNSW.

There is extensive information to help you decide whether to disclose or not, such as Choosing your Path – Disclosure is a personal decision.

We would like to reassure you that having a disability does not put you at a disadvantage. Your rights to education are protected by Federal and State anti-discrimination legislation and the Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA).

If you did not disclose that you had a disability on your application form, you can still register for educational adjustments. Registering for services will be considered ‘disclosing’.

The nature of your disability will not be disclosed to any of your lecturers, tutors, other students or UNSW staff, unless you give permission.

To put some services in place, it is necessary for your Equitable Learning Advisors to notify your lecturers and tutors of the type of support you require. This will only be done with written permission from you.

What are my responsibilities?

If you are enrolled at UNSW, then you have secured a place at one of Australia’s top universities. Whatever course you are doing, there will be heavy demands on your time: studying, meeting your course criteria and completing exams.

Managing your disability or condition at university can sometimes be difficult. We can support you through university so you can demonstrate your academic ability. All students, with or without a disability at UNSW:

• must meet course requirements
• are marked to the same standard
• will have to undertake assessments which may include exams.

It is up to you to manage your disability and to get the most out of your studies by using the services and adjustments available to you. You will need to plan ahead, meet deadlines, read your emails and keep in contact with our team to ensure you get the maximum benefit from your educational adjustments. At UNSW, you will be looking after yourself and making your own decisions. This includes decisions about how you manage your disability.

Should I complete my degree in the minimum time?

Managing your time is the most difficult aspect of your university life. It is sometimes a mistake to assume you must complete your degree in the shortest possible time. You should allow 10 hours per week for each course (including classes and private study). You will also need to factor in your other weekly time commitments such as employment, sport and volunteer work. Discuss your proposed workload with your Equitable Learning Advisor to ensure you have realistic expectations of meeting all your commitments.
What should I do if I need emergency medical attention?

It's important for your health and safety that you receive the correct medical attention you require in the event of an emergency wherever it may occur on campus. If you have a serious or life-threatening condition that could require unexpected medical intervention, then it is essential you discuss this with your Equitable Learning Advisor. Together you can agree on an appropriate course of action, should emergency assistance be required.

Is there disabled parking available on campus?

Yes, disabled parking is available on campus. Mobility permit holders may park in any unreserved bay on campus as per the Roads and Maritime Service's Mobility Parking Scheme. A reserved mobility parking bay may be also be made available for a fee. These bays are marked “RESERVED PERMIT NUMBER XX” and are not available to other permit holders. For more information, see Estate Management – Parking.

UNSW is not responsible for disabled parking stickers. If you require disabled parking, you will need to apply for a parking permit with Roads and Maritime Services.

Educational adjustments

When you register for educational adjustments, you will have an appointment with an Equitable Learning Advisor and receive a comprehensive assessment of your disability, the impact it is having on your studies, and the services available to you.

If you need assistance, register with us as early as possible to ensure you get the help you need.

What are educational adjustments?

Making changes to a university work or study environment to ensure people with a disability have equal opportunity is commonly referred to as ‘reasonable adjustment’, ‘reasonable accommodation’, ‘provisions’ or ‘educational adjustment’.

At UNSW, we call the services put in place for you by your Equitable Learning Advisor ‘educational adjustments’.

These adjustments may be one or more of the following: exam adjustments, alternative formatting, note-taking, assistive technology, classwork support etc.

What types of educational adjustments are available?

Please note: You must be registered with ELS to receive educational adjustments. Your lecturer, tutor or the School is unable to put any adjustments in place for you without authorisation/notification from Equitable Learning Services.

The main areas of adjustment are:

- classwork support
- exams
- assistive technology
- alternative formatting
- note-taking.

Will my educational adjustments be the same as I had in school/other institution?

If you received educational adjustments from another university, institution, the Board of Studies, or equivalent in Australia or overseas, they may not be the same provisions you will receive at UNSW.
Your adjustments will be put in place based on your current documentation and the interview with your Equitable Learning Advisor.

How quickly will my educational adjustments be put in place?

It depends on what you need. Some provisions can be put in place straight away. Others may take many weeks to organise.

If you only come in the day before an assignment is due or your exam is being held, we may not be able to help you at that time. If you require alternative formatting or a sign interpreter, you must contact us as soon as you enrol with UNSW.

It’s best for everyone if you make an appointment as soon as you enrol and before term starts. Registering early enables us to get things in place so you receive the maximum benefit from your educational adjustments.

How do I manage my educational adjustments?

It is important that you take responsibility for managing your educational adjustments. They are in place to assist you with your studies. It will save you a lot of time and stress if you:

- enrol as soon as enrolments open and register with us as soon as possible, so your educational adjustments can be put in place early
- remember to turn up on time and be available for all your appointments with your Equitable Learning Advisor
- let us know early if you can’t make your appointment
- notify your Equitable Learning Advisor as soon as possible if there are any changes to your circumstances or condition
- send your Letter of Support to the relevant Course Coordinator as soon as you receive it
- respond quickly if we contact you via email or telephone.
- tell us immediately if you withdraw or change courses as this can affect many of your provisions, such as formatting new course material, booking interpreters, etc.
- bring in your textbooks or course material for alternative formatting (if required) well before the teaching session begins
- keep appointments with your tutors and our service providers, and contact us if you are unable to make a session
- look after equipment you are loaned.

If changes to any of your educational adjustments are required, you must provide your Equitable Learning Advisor with new or updated documentation from your medical or professional practitioners to support those changes.

How do I keep informed about my educational adjustments?

With over 52,000 students at UNSW, the most efficient way to communicate to students is through the student email system. Like everyone else, we know you will receive emails that are not relevant to you. However, if you receive information from Equitable Learning Services or your Equitable Learning Advisor, you must read it as soon as possible. You will be receiving a lot of information electronically, so there are three things that are important to remember:

1. The university will only send emails to your student zMail account. All information about your courses, educational adjustments, exams, etc. is sent to this account.
2. To know what’s going on, you need to check and read your student emails at least twice a week – even during term breaks. You must read and respond to emails the university sends you. Often there are things you have to do before a deadline. You will miss out on important information if you do not open your zMail account regularly. You can link your student email account to your personal email account.
3. Our office and your Equitable Learning Advisor will send you emails regarding your adjustments. You can reduce your stress levels considerably by opening your emails from us as soon as you get them. If you do not open your emails, read them and follow the request or information the emails contain. You risk delaying the implementation of your provisions for your exams, coursework, note-taking, alternative formatting, etc.

How do I change my educational adjustments?
You may require educational adjustments for the whole time you are studying at UNSW or for just one or two terms. Sometimes you may experience a setback with your disability; a condition may recur or worsen or require you to be hospitalised for treatment, etc.

If your studies are interrupted or your needs change, please let your Equitable Learning Advisor know as soon as possible. Your educational adjustments may be reviewed or adjusted to suit your circumstances.

Any changes to your educational adjustments may need to be supported by new or updated documentation.

See also

Support for:

- future students—applying for and preparing yourself for university
- new international students—what you need to do before you come to Australia.