

Preparing for TAFE

A guide for Students with a Disability in Victoria



Australian Government
Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations



National Disability Coordination Officer Program

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About TAFE in Victoria

The Victorian Government believes that all Victorians should have opportunities to acquire qualifications as a key to workforce participation and economic opportunity.

The Victorian Government has committed to providing unlimited subsidised places in TAFE for all people aged 20 years or younger.

During 2010, the government will also subsidise training places for any qualification higher than the highest qualification a person already holds for enrolments by those 20-24, enrolments at diploma or advanced diploma level, for eligible retrenched workers or those referred through the Skills for Growth program for small to medium enterprises. Other funding sources are also available during 2010 for government funded places but may be limited in number. TAFE institutes are able to provide advice.

From 2011, for people aged 20 years and over, the Government will subsidise TAFE places for all training at the foundation skills level and for any qualification higher than the highest qualifications a person already holds.

TAFE courses in Victoria are designed to meet the needs of people who are:

- developing or improving literacy, numeracy, and language skills in foundation and preparation studies
- developing initial vocational skills in introductory courses at Certificate I and II levels
- building on current skills at Certificate III and IV levels
- deepening skills for higher-level work roles and responsibilities in diploma courses and higher.

The TAFE course directory which lists the courses that are offered at all Institutes of TAFE in Victoria is available through Skills Victoria at www.skills.vic.gov.au/tafe_students/directory.

Individual Institutes of TAFE have their own course and admission guides, available through their websites.

While some people are very clear about the training and study they require to achieve their vocational goals, there are also many people who are not sure about the areas of study or training they want to pursue.

Most institutes of TAFE in Victoria have careers counsellors who are available to help prospective students make the right choices about future study options.

Studying at TAFE

Courses in TAFE are delivered in a range of ways.

1. Flexible delivery

Flexible delivery is simply a flexible approach to providing education and training. It means that, within reason, you may have the opportunity to negotiate the time, place and method of learning that best suits your needs.

2. Flexible delivery may suit you if you:

- have a disability which prevents you from attending classes
- cannot attend regular classes
- have transport difficulties.

Flexible delivery can give you greater control over your learning. You know best how your disability affects your ability to study. It is important that you communicate your resource and learning needs and negotiate outcomes that best suit your requirements.

Open learning/distance education

Distance education, sometimes referred to as open learning or study by correspondence, gives you the opportunity to undertake a course of study while you balance your other commitments. This mode of study means that you can undertake a course of study without having to attend face-to-face classes on campus. You can study from home or in a remote area without having to relocate. You can be a part-time or a full-time student. You may choose to do your entire course by distance education or to do some by distance and some face-to-face. Not all courses can be studied by distance.

Online learning

Online learning is a way of providing flexible learning and teaching through a course, unit, or lesson made available through the internet. Often, online student chat rooms are also set up to facilitate student discussions and contact with the teachers of the course. Not all courses are available online.

Classroom-based learning

Face-to-face, classroom-based learning is the traditional method of learning and teaching. Often, courses that are delivered face-to-face also have components of online or flexible delivery built into them. Field placements are a requirement of some courses, and are an opportunity for students to experience the workplace under supervision.

Trainees and apprentices

Trainees and apprentices complete training while they learn the skills of their trade in the workplace. The training component can be offered either in the workplace or off-the-job. The trainee or apprentice attends TAFE as part of off-the-job training. The time spent in formal training varies depending on industry requirements. For example, it may involve attendance at TAFE for one week a month, or one day a week.

Workplace-based training

Workplace-based training is structured training that is delivered in the workplace by the teachers of TAFE. A teacher will visit the workplace and deliver training to individuals or groups. Employers usually arrange workplace-based training with Institutes of TAFE.

Recognition of prior learning

Institutes of TAFE offer recognition of prior learning (RPL). RPL is a process that matches the things you have previously learned against the skills and knowledge that you learn from a course of study.

People learn in different ways and RPL takes your skills, education and experiences into account, regardless of where these were gained. RPL can give you credits in a course of study which may reduce the time it takes to complete your course. If you want to apply for RPL, please contact the skills recognition officer at an institute of TAFE or visit a Skills Store.

Skills stores in Victoria are located at:

Central Melbourne

(03) 9919 7886 skillsstore@vu.edu.au

Eastern Melbourne

(03) 9286 9768 skillstore@bhtafe.edu.au

North Western Melbourne

(03) 9655 4863 skillsstore@vetassess.com.au

South Eastern Melbourne

1300 135 008 skillsstores@linkemploy.org.au

Ballarat

1300 236 345 skillstores@bestcd.org.au

Bendigo

1300 236 345 skillstores@bestcd.org.au

Central Gippsland

1300 733 279 cgskillsstores@gippstafe.vic.edu.au

East Gippsland

1300 735 616 egskillsstores@egtafe.vic.edu.au

Geelong

1300 778 673 skillsstore@gordontafe.edu.au

Goulburn Ovens

1300 877 545 skills@gotafe.vic.edu.au

South West Victoria

1800 611 724 skillsstore@swtafe.vic.edu.au

Sunraysia

(03) 5022 3770 skillsstores@sunitafe.edu.au

Wodonga

1300 550 905 skillsstores@wodongaskills.com.au

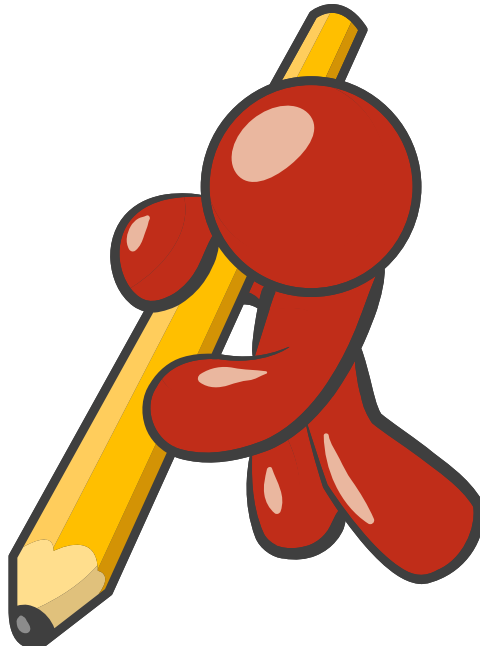
The Victorian Government has made a guarantee that all people who begin their TAFE studies at the preparation level will be subsidised with government funding from 2011, with guaranteed places available in 2010 for those under 20. Other government funded places are also available in 2010 and TAFE institutes can provide advice.

Foundation courses

Foundation courses are also referred to as pre-vocational or preparatory courses. These courses are available at most Victorian TAFE institutes. Foundation courses are designed to ease you back into the educational environment if you have had a long break from studying, or if you feel that you did not develop sound study skills in your previous education experience.

Foundation courses help you to gain essential learning and study skills before you move to higher-level TAFE courses.

Contact your local institute of TAFE to discuss the foundation courses that are available to you.



The Australian Government believes that all people with a disability have the right to participate in education and training. The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (the Education Standards) were formulated by the Attorney-General under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA). The Education Standards provide a framework on which students with a disability can ensure that they are able to access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

Selection into a course and your rights

Dave

Dave was 15 years old when he went to TAFE to undertake an eight-week prevocational course. Dave had been referred to TAFE by his year level coordinator at his school who was worried that Dave did not have the learning capacity to undertake studies at year 10 or higher.

During the eight-week course in TAFE, Dave was identified as having indicators of a learning disorder. The Disability Liaison Officer and other specialist staff from TAFE supported Dave through a formal assessment which confirmed his learning disorder. Dave was provided with alternative learning methods, such as speech-to-text and screen-reading software. Dave prospered with the learning tools and successfully completed three television broadcasting modules as a component of the prevocational course.

Dave went on to complete a Certificate II in Information Technology on a part-time basis in TAFE. He has since secured ongoing, full-time employment in a warehouse and has gone on to undertake further studies in warehousing. Dave attributes his ability to succeed to his opportunity to learn how to learn in the prevocational course in TAFE.

According to the Education Standards, institutes of TAFE must ensure that, as a prospective student with a disability, you are able to seek admission to and enrol in a course on the same basis as a prospective student without a disability.

In doing so, representatives of the TAFE must consult with you to determine whether the disability will affect your ability to fulfil the course requirements. Based on the outcome of this consultation, the TAFE representative must then decide if adjustments need to be made to make sure that you can participate on the same basis as a student without a disability. This is often done in consultation with you and the TAFE's Disability Liaison Officer (DLO).

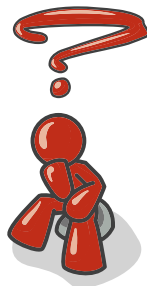
It is also important to understand that not all applicants to a course will automatically receive admission to that course. Most TAFE courses:

- have essential minimum entry requirements
- base their selection on an expectation that students will successfully complete the course
- have a limit to the number of places that are available in each course.

Selection may also be based on academic results, prior work or life experiences, other abilities, or a combination of these. Selection decisions cannot:

- exclude you on the basis of your disability
- exclude you based on the cost of providing appropriate support services for you (unless to do so would cause unjustifiable hardship to the educational provider)
- be based on the likelihood of your future employment after you have completed your chosen course of study.

However, you may be precluded if you cannot meet the minimum entry requirements or undertake the inherent requirements of the course.



Disclosing your disability

Disclosure is a dilemma that most students with a disability face. It is important to know that TAFEs are committed to promoting an environment where diversity and difference are valued and respected.

In a TAFE environment, confidentiality is taken very seriously. TAFE staff understand that they must seek your permission to tell anyone else about your disability and why. For example, the DLO may want to inform the teaching department to make sure that appropriate reasonable adjustments (for example, alternative exam arrangements or extended time to complete assessment tasks) are put in place for you so that you can complete your studies. By talking with the DLO, you can make sure that the exact nature of your individual needs is kept confidential but you still receive appropriate accommodations.

It is important to realise that you are not in any way obliged to disclose your disability. However, if you choose not to do so, TAFE staff may not be able to meet your specific needs as they will not know what your needs are. It is also important to think about what you want to achieve by disclosing and to whom you want to disclose your disability. How much you tell TAFE staff and others about your disability is up to you! This should be on a 'need to know' basis. People do not need to know about your disability or medical condition if it does not impact on your learning. You do not need to disclose anything if it is not relevant to your learning needs.

Enrolment

Most TAFEs ask a disability-related question on their enrolment forms. This information is used to assist with appropriate planning and budgeting for the supports needed to help students with a disability during their studies. Statistics are sent to the relevant government bodies but you are not identified in any way as having a disability in any of the TAFE administrative functions. Identifying your disability on your enrolment form is also a good way of alerting the institute of TAFE that you may require some adjustments in the learning and teaching environment. The earlier that disclosure occurs, the earlier the relevant adjustments can be put in place to support your learning and participation.

Disability support and the DLO

Each institute of TAFE in Victoria employs at least one DLO. DLOs are responsible for making sure that TAFEs provide learning and teaching environments where students with a disability are able to study, free from discrimination or harassment. The DLO works closely with students with a disability who require reasonable adjustments or other support to fully participate in their studies and campus life. The DLO also helps students and teachers to determine and provide appropriate reasonable adjustments, for example, by modifying or adapting assessment tasks, extending the time allocation for exams, providing materials in alternative formats such as text in MP3 audio file, in braille, or in enlarged print. The DLO works closely with teachers and course coordinators, supporting them to provide an inclusive learning and teaching environment.

If you believe that you will need help while you are studying in TAFE, it is important that you discuss your situation with a DLO as soon as you can, so that you can be provided with the best possible assistance. Try to contact the DLO before your course commences. This increases your chances of having adjustments in place early.

The DLO will work with you, your course coordinator, and your teachers to determine the appropriate reasonable adjustments that will minimise or remove barriers so that you can participate fully in your chosen study area.



A reasonable adjustment is a measure or action that is taken to help a student with a disability to participate in education and training on the same basis that other students are able to participate.

If a person with a disability needed to have adjustments made in order to participate equally in TAFE life, and that adjustment could reasonably have been provided but was not, then a finding of indirect discrimination can occur.

What are reasonable adjustments?

You have every right to expect that reasonable adjustments will be made to assist you to undertake your studies so that you can achieve the expected course outcomes. Determining what constitutes a reasonable adjustment is often quite difficult. There is no simple way to define reasonable changes to assessment and course work, given the broad range of possible disabilities and the diverse range of skills required to undertake and/or demonstrate competencies in TAFE courses.

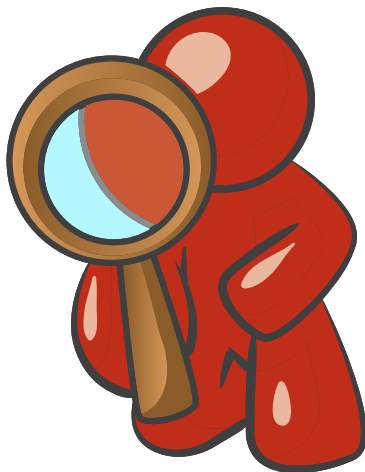
Determining appropriate adjustments often requires negotiation and interpretation between you, the course coordinators, teachers, and the DLO about what is reasonable. At times, industry experts may also be consulted. There are no hard and fast rules.

In determining whether an adjustment is reasonable, consideration is given to:

- your disability and your views
- the effect of the adjustment on you, including the effect that it has on your ability to achieve the learning outcomes of the course and to participate in courses or programs and achieve independence
- whether the adjustment will lower the academic standards of the course
- the effect of the proposed adjustment on anyone else affected, including the educational provider, staff, and other students
- the costs and benefits of making the adjustment.

The following are some examples of reasonable adjustments provided by institutes of TAFE to students with a disability:

- modification of the physical environment, for example, provide a ramp
- change to course design, for example, substitution or modification of an assessment task, or provision for extended time to complete tasks
- change to class schedules and arrangements, for example, relocation of classes to an accessible venue
- modification of computer equipment and provision of assistive computer equipment, for example, a track ball mouse or a large screen
- provision of assistive technologies such as voice-to-text software, or screen and/or text reading software
- provision of information or course materials in an accessible format, for example, text in audio, Braille, large print, or electronically.
- change to teaching practices, for example, teachers may wear an FM microphone to allow a student to hear lectures
- provision of a class assistant, note-taker, research assistant, tutor, or sign interpreter
- extension of time and facilitation of exams in alternative venues which may be quieter and smaller, with fewer distractions
- alteration to the format of assessments, for example, divide a 1000-word essay into three, 300-word essays or replace exams with assignments
- provision of oral assessments so that students with a disability are able to give their answers verbally rather than writing them.



Disability Support Workers in TAFE

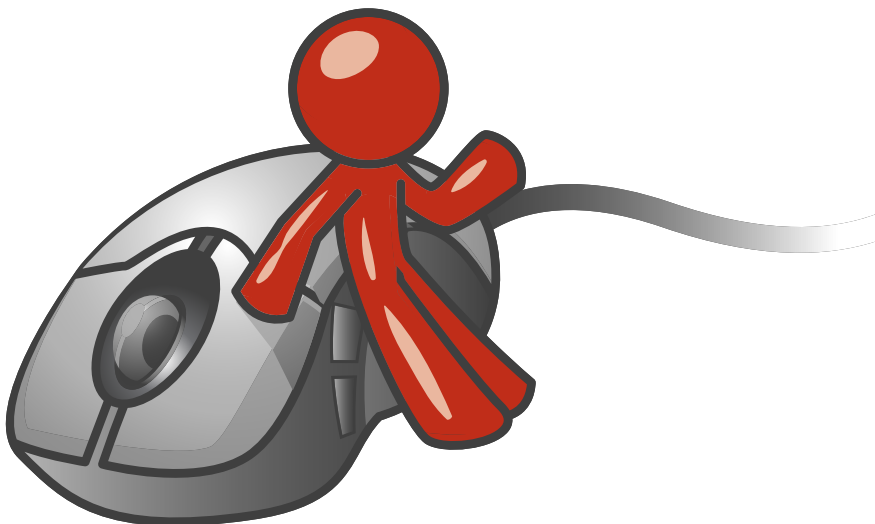
The DLO supervises a team of Disability Support Workers who are employed to provide direct assistance to you. The support that you receive is directly aligned with the reasonable adjustments that have been determined will best meet your needs.

The Disability Support Worker role has a number of different dimensions which include note-taker, class participation assistant, reader, library assistant, personal assistant, sign interpreter, adaptive technology support person, alternative format support person, tutor, and mobility and orientation guide. The disability support role varies and is dependent on your academic support needs. Some of the support roles that are most often provided are outlined below.

Assistive technology assistant

Assistive technologies can overcome many access barriers in education for students with a broad range of disability. Disability Support Workers are trained to understand how assistive technology works and can teach you how to use a range of software.

Many TAFEs have a technology area where you can receive one-on-one tutoring in the use of assistive technology.



Note-taker

A note-taker not only provides you with notes but also enables you to devote your full attention to the teacher, classroom discussions, auslan interpreter, and other learning activities.

A note-taker is provided for a range of reasons. For example, you may:

- have a physical disability and be unable to write
- be hearing-impaired and need to watch the interpreter
- have a learning disability and have difficulty writing.

Orientation and mobility guide

Disability Support Workers can provide mobility guide assistance if you are unable to independently navigate your way around campus or move quickly between different locations. Guiding a person with vision impairment successfully requires specific training which is provided for Disability Support Workers who undertake this task.

Participation Assistant

The Participation Assistant is responsible for providing high-quality support for you that is broader than just note-taking. Tasks assigned to this role vary and can include research and library assistance, one-on-one tutoring, preparing the learning environment, and providing emotional support if you experience extreme anxiety.

Sign interpreter

Sign interpreters facilitate communication between a person who is hearing-impaired and a hearing person by translating (voicing) spoken English into Auslan (signing) and vice versa.

Disability Access Plans

Disability Access Plans are also sometimes referred to as Disability Support Plans. The Disability Access Plan provides information to teaching and support staff so that they can adapt their learning and teaching approaches to accommodate your needs.

The DLO will work with you, your course coordinator, and sometimes your carer or parent to develop an appropriate access plan. It is important that all of your teachers are kept informed about your needs. The Disability Access Plan is one way that this can happen.

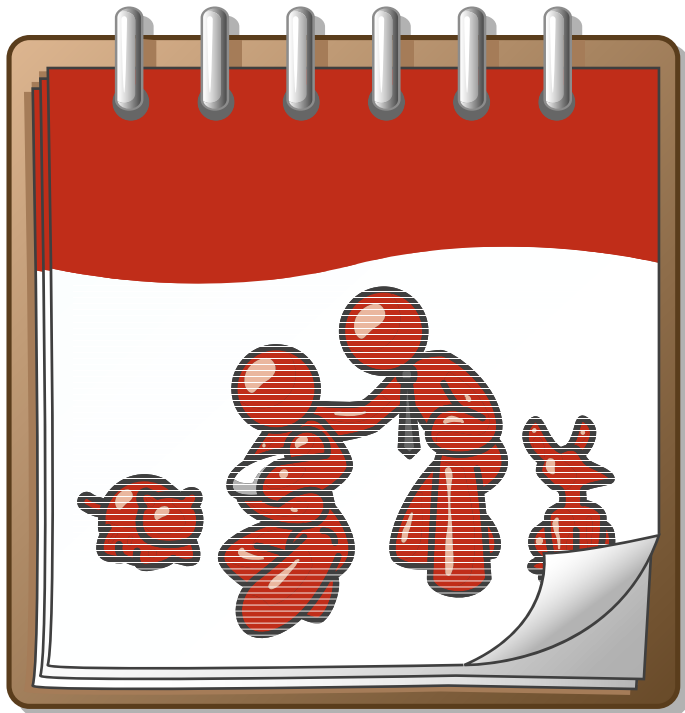
You are the most important person in this process. It is important that you discuss any concerns you have as soon as they arise. It is also your responsibility to disclose your needs and to work with staff to address these needs.

All the information in the Disability Access Plan is confidential and does not contain any information regarding the nature of your disability. It only contains information about the impact that your disability may have in the learning environment and information about how teachers can make reasonable adjustments to ensure that you have the same opportunity to succeed in your studies as students without a disability.

For the DLO to be able to generate a Disability Access Plan, you will be asked to provide current documentation from a relevant health professional to confirm that you have a disability and what its impact is on you in relation to your studies. This information can be from a professional of your choice, for example, a general practitioner, a medical specialist, or an allied health professional.

You also need to give some thought to the assistance that you think you will require while you study in TAFE. You often know best what adjustments will work for you in the learning environment.

Institutes of TAFE are providers of adult education. Therefore, the person who has the major responsibility for your welfare is you. Although TAFE staff will assist you to achieve your goals in any reasonable way, it remains your responsibility to make sure that the Disability Access Plan process is working for you. If you feel it is not working for you, it is important that you contact the DLO to discuss your concerns and any changes to your plan. If your course coordinator and teachers are concerned that the supports provided through the Disability Access Plan are not adequately supporting you, they may also want to talk with you and may ask to meet with the DLO to explore alternative ways of providing the best support for you.



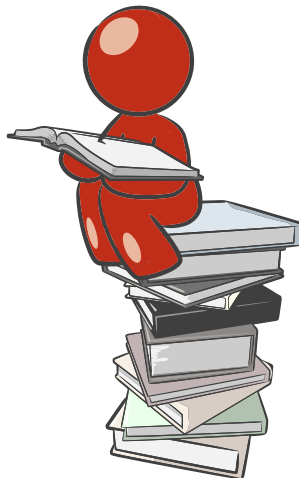
Student services in TAFE

TAFE provides a range of additional services for students while they study in TAFE, including services for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- young people and early school leavers
- mature age students who are returning to study
- international students.

Other services provided by Institutes of TAFE may include:

- career guidance officers
- counselling services
- child care
- financial assistance such as student loans, and information about VET FEE-HELP and Centrelink benefits
- learning and study support
- libraries
- on-campus accommodation and/or information about off-campus accommodation
- youth pathways officers
- welfare officers.



Preparing for TAFE

Making the move from school to TAFE is a big change for anyone. The change is an even bigger one for students with a disability. Success often depends on good planning and preparation. It is important to plan ahead for any disability supports you may need.

Step 1 Select a course

Thoroughly explore the courses that interest you.

Talk with careers counsellors and find out exactly what the course involves. Consider your abilities and strengths and explore how these can be used to help you to succeed. There are several websites that are designed to help students think about their directions and goals after school.

- careertips.net.au was designed especially for students with a disability.
- myfuture.edu.au allows you to explore future career and study options by helping you to identify your personal strengths and preferences.

You can also contact an institute of TAFE near you to find out if there are information sessions or opportunities to attend taster/orientation days to really explore different vocational areas. These may also help you to decide on an area of interest. Remember that most TAFEs have careers counsellors who can assist you to find the right course for you.



Step 2 Decide if you will need assistance

When you have decided about a course, you will need to identify the areas where you may need assistance. The first question to ask yourself is, 'will I need to talk to a DLO or will I manage independently of support?'.

Complete the following checklist to help you decide if you will benefit from talking with a DLO at TAFE about assistance.

Will I need ...	Yes	No
assistive software or equipment to support my studies, for example, screen or text-reading software, voice-to-text software, modified track balls, ergonomic equipment, etc.		
learning materials in alternative format, for example, in large print, Braille, electronic, or audio format?		
mobility orientation to the campus?		
a sign interpreter?		
a note-taker in class?		
a personal reader or reading materials provided in audio format?		
assistance to research and use the library facilities?		
the TAFE to provide hearing loops or FM radio communication systems for teachers?		
accessible classrooms, laboratories, and walkways?		
alternative examination arrangements, for example, a reader and scribe, extended time, exams on computer?		
additional assistance with learning, for example, one-on-one tutoring or access to additional group tutor sessions?		
alternative assessment options such as oral or visual presentation instead of essay format?		
to alert someone of my medical condition to ensure appropriate actions are taken if I become unwell?		
to store medication on campus?		
access to handouts and other learning materials before classes are held?		
assistance to communicate with others?		

Will I need ...	Yes	No
personal support such as toileting, assistance at the cafeteria?		
alarms installed in toilets to alert others if I need assistance?		
special consideration if I need time off from studies because of poor health, anxiety, or stress related to my condition?		
a safe place to retreat to if I am feeling high anxiety or stress?		
Am I uncertain about whether or not I will need assistance?		

Step 3 Meet the DLO

If you answered yes to any of the questions in the checklist, you are advised to make an appointment with the DLO as soon as you can so that an appropriate access/support plan is put in place, enabling you to fully participate while you study in TAFE. A list of contact numbers for DLOs in Victorian Institutes of TAFE is provided in this guide on page 27.

If you did not answer yes to any of the questions in the checklist, you may still like to talk with the DLO just to have a support person who you can touch base with during your studies. Or you may feel that you do not require any form of assistance, in which case you do not need to contact the DLO.

Before you meet with the DLO, make a list of your needs. Work through all of your daily activities. Make particular note of the activities with which you must have assistance. Following are some questions that you may want to ask the DLO during your first meeting.

Chronic illness or medical conditions

- What documentation do I need to provide about my condition?
- What alternative arrangements can I make if I am unable to complete my assignments or assessments on time?
- What do I need to do if I am unable to attend classes?
- What happens if I need a break?
- Are there first aid officers on campus?
- Can I store medication safely on campus?
- Is there someone who can coordinate my emergency care plan?

Hearing impairment

- Is the lighting in classrooms adequate?
- Are hearing loops, FM systems, or amplifiers available in classrooms and lecture theatres?
- Are Auslan interpreters available? If not, is there an alternative service provided?
- Can I make arrangements to have note-takers in my class?
- Are video learning materials captioned?
- Do I have access to personal readers?

Learning difficulty or disability

- Is a note-taker available if I need one?
- Are printed learning materials and course materials available in accessible formats?
- What assessment considerations are available?
- What computer software is available?
- What types of alternative assessments are available?
- What learning support will be available to me on campus?

Mental health and psychiatric illness

- Who can I talk to if I just need to talk?
- What do I do if I need a break?
- Who do I talk to if I need some time out?
- Where can I go on campus if I feel anxious?
- Will accommodations be provided if I am unwell and falling behind in course work?

Mobility or physical disability

- Are toilets wheelchair-accessible?
- Are alarms installed in toilets to alert others if I need assistance?
- How user-friendly is the campus for a person with my disability?
- How long will I take to reach the lecture theatres, classrooms, or workshops?
- Can classes be relocated if necessary to ensure better access for me?
- Are aisles, study corrals, and entrances wide enough for wheelchair access?
- How is personal/attendant care organised while I am in TAFE?
- Is there accessible transport to the campus?

Vision impairment

- Will I be able to find my way around the campus easily?
- Is the campus equipped with tactile indicators?
- Is there a local service to provide orientation to the campus?
- Can campus maps and other printed materials be provided in alternative formats?
- How do I arrange to have textbooks, course notes, and other printed materials provided to me in a format that suits my needs in a timely manner?
- Are Braille, print enlargements, and scanning facilities available on campus?
- What type of computer facilities, equipment, and software are available?
- Where can I toilet my guide dog?
- What arrangements do I need to make with administrative and lecturing staff for my guide dog?
- Who will help me negotiate for lectures to be provided on disk or tape rather than on paper so that I can use them at home, at a pace that suits me?

Step 4 Developing the Disability Access Plan

It is important that you meet with the DLO to talk about the impact of your disability on all areas related to your studies and your life on campus. This discussion helps to make sure that appropriate and reasonable adjustments are put in place.

A Disability Access Plan will be developed from that meeting. During this process, you and the DLO will determine who needs to be advised of the reasonable adjustments that need to be put in place. You will be asked to give permission for the DLO to share some information with the people who you decide 'need to know'.

This is an important part of the support process. The people who you decide need to know are an important part of ensuring that you have every opportunity to succeed in your studies. For example, when teachers are advised that a student has difficulty with reading, they will understand why it is important to provide all reading material for classes, including handouts, in electronic format. In this case, the student can access the learning material using text-reading software. If teachers did not know, they may not consider providing information electronically. The student may then be excluded from having access to the information or could be dependent on someone else to read for him/her.

In most situations, the DLO will also request a statement or report from a medical practitioner. These reports are also used to guide the development of the Disability Access Plan. Statements from the medical practitioner are not shared with others, although the DLO may mention in a report if the medical practitioner recommends a particular reasonable adjustment.

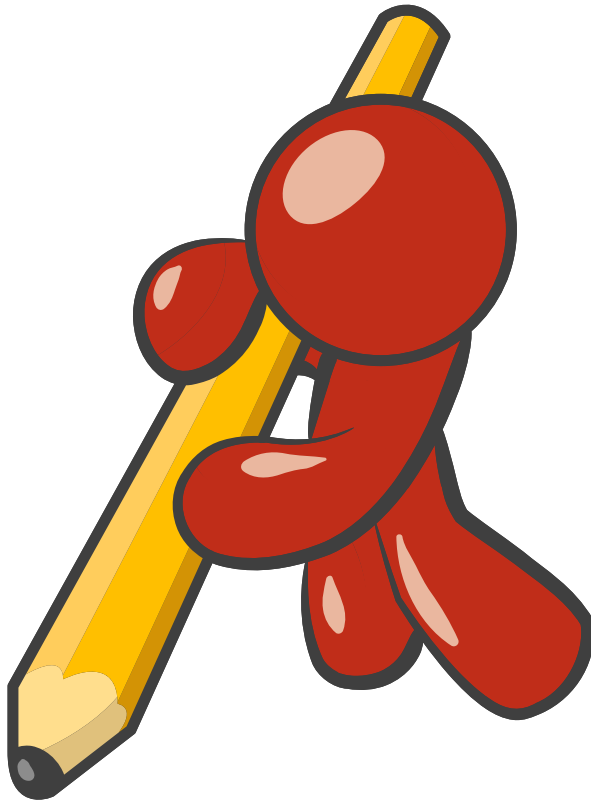
Step 5 Staying engaged and successful in your studies

The Australasian Network of Students with Disabilities (ANSWD) is a national student organisation for TAFE or university students with a disability. ANSWD helps to make sure that students with a disability have reasonable access to education by working with staff at Institutes of TAFE across Australia and New Zealand. ANSWD aims to encourage a learning environment that is equal for all students. You can find more information about them at www.answd.com.

ANSWD has developed a series of steps for new students to follow, to assist them stay connected and to succeed in their studies. These are outlined in brief below.

- Set up a safety net early (for example, introduce yourself to the DLO, teachers, and tutors).
- Do not wait to receive help. If you have problems, talk them over with the appropriate person before they are out of control.
- Start your work early (in case life or health impedes working later).
- Make use of the range of learning, academic, and personal support available at your institute of TAFE including personal counsellors, academic and learning advisors, and disability services.
- No-one will do these things for you (search out your own support mechanisms).
- Strive to become an independent learner.
- Participate fully in class. Complete all required reading beforehand, and make sure that you ask for your reading material in a format that suits you.
- Good time management is a vital skill, so organise your time well.
- Be realistic about what you can expect of your body and your brain. Do not put yourself down if you need to study part-time, or even defer for a short time.
- Work out how you learn best, and work on developing up the weaker areas
- Be organised and plan ahead. It is better to ask for help early than after the wheels have fallen off.

- Make sure that you know about all the services available to meet individual needs.
- Do not ever give up! There are plenty of cases where doctors and specialists have told students that they cannot do something and then they go right ahead and do it anyway!
- Know your strengths and your abilities.



Financial support

Sometimes, even with the best planning, financial difficulties can interfere with your ability to complete your studies. It is important that you are aware of all of your financial entitlements. A range of financial support is available to students who meet specific criteria. Information is provided here about some of the financial supports that are available to students with a disability.

Often, institutes of TAFE also have a number of grants that they can access on behalf of students. Please check with the student services team at your institute of TAFE about any grants or financial incentives to which you may be entitled.

Centrelink

Contact the following by phone for information about allowances and concessions.

Youth allowance	13 24 90
ABSTUDY	13 23 17
Disability, sickness, and carers	13 27 17
Pensioner Education Supplement	13 24 90
TTY service freecall	1800 810 586

The TTY service is for people who are hearing or speech-impaired. Access to this service is via a teletypewriter machine only.

For more information, go to www.centrelink.gov.au.

Disability Support Pension

If you cannot work full-time because of a long-term disability or illness, you may be eligible for a Disability Support Pension (DSP). This benefit is for people over 16 years of age, who meet an income and assets test, and who have the necessary level of impairment to qualify.

If you have come to Australia from another country and had your disability at that time, you must be a permanent resident for ten years to qualify. At the time of printing, people who are vision-impaired may qualify for the DSP regardless of their income and assets. People who receive the DSP also receive a Pensioner Concession Card which makes them eligible for a variety of discounts and free services.

Phone Centrelink on 13 10 21 and make an appointment to visit a Customer Service Centre. Or phone 13 27 17 for more information about the DSP.

Education Entry Payment

The Education Entry Payment is a taxable payment of \$208 (as at October 2009) which is paid to assist people who have started or will start an approved education course, and who have not received this payment in the last 12 months and have continuously received their payments from Centrelink for at least four weeks.

Eligibility criteria apply to this payment. It is generally payable to people who receive a Carer Payment, a Disability Support Pension, a Parenting Payment (single), Newstart, or a Youth or Widow Allowance.

Fees

A majority of courses offered at TAFE institutes have government subsidised places for students who meet the eligibility criteria. Courses that are not nationally recognised or are conducted as full fee for service courses are not government subsidised and the fees are not regulated by the Victorian Government.

Students who meet the eligibility criteria for a government-subsidised place are charged fees according to the 2009 ministerial direction about fees. Students who do not meet the eligibility criteria are not eligible for a government subsidised training place and are charged fee-for-service rates.

Students at diploma and advanced diploma level, whether they are in a government-subsidised place or paying fee-for-service, may be able to apply for VET FEE-HELP (an Australian government-managed student loan) if they meet the eligibility criteria. Students repay their VET FEE-HELP debt to the Australian Government through the tax system once their income reaches the minimum threshold level for repayment (which for 2009/2010 is \$43,100).

Fees in government-subsidised training - courses commencing in 2010

Level of study	Minimum fee	Maximum fee	Concession applies?
Foundation	\$50	\$500	Yes
Certificate 1 and Certificate II	\$105	\$875	Yes
Apprenticeships and traineeships	\$57	\$903	Yes
Certificate III and Certificate IV	\$120	\$1000	Yes
Diploma and advanced diploma	\$225	\$2000	Yes, for an apprentice or trainee, otherwise, VET FEE-HELP may apply

There is an overall tuition fee cap of \$2000 for government-subsidised study undertaken in 2010 by an individual student.

Students who commenced a course prior to 1 July 2009 and have continued in that course, without an unauthorised break, are eligible for fee maintenance. The fee maintenance rates are a minimum of \$56 and a maximum of \$896 in 2010.

In addition to tuition fees, TAFE institutes can also charge fees for student amenities and materials, within parameters outlined by the Victorian Government. The cost of these fees are to be itemised.

Concessions

Students in a government-subsidised training place who have a Health Care Card, a Pensioner Concession Card, a Veterans Gold Card, or who are the dependant spouses or children of a person who holds the Health Care

Card or Pensioner Concession Card are entitled to a concession rate for tuition fees in government-funded courses at certificate levels I-IV. Concessions at diploma and advanced diploma level are available for apprentices and trainees only.

Indigenous students in government-subsidised training places always pay the minimum fee for the course category in which they are enrolled.

Health Care Card

If you do not qualify for a Pensioner Concession Card, you may be eligible for a Health Care Card which will give you access to pharmaceutical concessions and other discounts.

Phone Centrelink on 13 27 17 for more information.

Loans

Some TAFE institutes offer financial assistance to students who are experiencing financial difficulties that may jeopardise their studies. Information about loan funds for this purpose is usually provided by the TAFE's student services department.

Mobility Allowance

A Mobility Allowance may be paid to people who are over 16 years of age and who, because of a disability, are:

- unable to use public transport without substantial assistance from others for at least the next 12 months
- working or undertaking training for at least eight hours per week.

Contact the disability officer at your nearest Centrelink Customer Service Centre for further information and an application form, or call 13 10 21.

Multi Purpose Taxi Program

The Multi Purpose Taxi Program makes transport more accessible for people with a severe and permanent disability. You can use this program if you:

- live in Victoria
- have a severe and permanent disability that restricts your ability to use public transport independently
- have a pensioner or healthcare card from Centrelink.

The Multi Purpose Taxi Program offers half-price taxi fares to its members, paying up to \$60 per trip. Some members have a yearly limit.

Members are given a card. They have to show the card when they first get into a taxi. The cards cost \$16.50 and are valid for six years. Travel can be for any reason. Victorian members can get the same discount interstate for a limited number of taxi trips.

Pensioner Education Supplement

The Pensioner Education Supplement (PES) is a payment that helps with the cost of full-time or part-time study. People who receive the Disability Support Pension may be eligible for PES if they are enrolled in and undertaking an approved course of study.

Phone Centrelink on 13 24 90 for more information.

Travel concessions

Anyone with a Victorian Health Care Card can buy concession fares on public transport services in Victoria and on the interstate legs of V/Line coach services. Tertiary student concession cards are also available, for a half-year or a full year. Students who are enrolled in courses of between 10 and 20 weeks duration can obtain a half-yearly card. Most student services departments at TAFEs will have information about travel concessions and the appropriate application forms.

Youth allowance

Students who are not eligible for the DSP may be eligible for the Youth Allowance. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be eligible for ABSTUDY.

If you have a reduced study load because of your disability, you may still qualify for Youth Allowance or the Newstart allowance, providing you meet Centrelink's eligibility criteria and provide documentation.

Up-to-date information and application forms are available from Centrelink's customer service offices. Contact Centrelink on 13 24 90 and make an appointment to discuss your application and how to best substantiate your claim. Or visit www.centrelink.gov.au.



Disability legislation and standards

Students with a disability are protected from discrimination while they participate in education through the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Standards in Education 2005*.

The legislation and standards are designed to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination on the grounds of disability in education by removing barriers for people with a disability through:

- ensuring course design, curriculum, and assessment processes do not exclude people with a disability
- providing student services for people with a disability
- preventing and appropriately responding to acts of discrimination and/or harassment against people with a disability
- providing accessible information about courses and enrolment procedures
- providing appropriate reasonable adjustments to facilitate opportunities for people with a disability to fully participate in their studies and in life on campus.

Under the legislation, all institutes of TAFE have a legal obligation to ensure as far as possible that prospective and existing students with a disability have the opportunity to access TAFE on the same basis as other students and achieve outcomes that are not dissimilar to those of their peers without a disability.

Complaint resolution

If you feel that you are being discriminated against or harassed because of your disability while you are studying at an institute of TAFE, you can seek advice from a:

- student services officer
- teacher or course coordinator
- access and equity officer
- disability liaison officer.

Institutes of TAFE are committed to provide proper and fair avenues for resolving student concerns in a quick and effective manner. Each institute of TAFE has policies and procedures that outline the steps towards resolution. These policies and procedures are available to students.

If, after you access support through your institute of TAFE, you still feel that the matter has not been adequately resolved, you have the right to contact the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission advice service.

Advice line	Weekdays 9am-5pm (Wednesdays 9am-1pm)
Phone	03 9281 7100
TTY	03 9281 7110
Email	complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au

Contact details of DLOs at Institutes of TAFE across Victoria

Institute of TAFE	Address	Disability Office Phone	Disability Office Fax
Bendigo TAFE Bendigo, Castlemaine, Echuca, Kerang, Kyneton, Maryborough	PO Box 170 Bendigo 3552	03 5434 1526	03 5434 1627
Box Hill TAFE Elgar, Elgar East, Nelson and Whitehorse	Private Bag 2014 Box Hill 3128	03 9286 9893 03 9286 9894	03 9286 9892
Central Gippsland TAFE Yallourn, Warragul, Leongatha, Morwell, Chadstone, Churchill	PO Box 3279 Gippsland Mail Centre Morwell 3841	03 5127 0250	03 5133 6182
Chisholm TAFE Berwick, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Frankston, Noble Park, Rosebud, Wonthaggi	Student Services PO Box 684 Dandenong 3175	03 9238 8435 03 9212 5269 03 9212 5269	03 9238 8415 03 9212 5201
East Gippsland TAFE Bairnsdale, Fulham, Sale	PO Box 886 Bairnsdale 3875	03 5142 2411	03 5142 2499
Gordon TAFE Geelong	Private Bag 1 GMC Geelong 3221	03 5225 0835	
Goulburn Ovens TAFE Shepparton, Benalla, Seymour, Wangaratta, William Orr-Park and Christensens Lanes (Wangaratta), Bright	Fryers Street Shepparton 3630	03 5833 2538	03 5833 2551
	Docker St Wangaratta 3677	03 5723 6174	03 5723 6100
Holmesglen TAFE Chadstone, Moorabbin, Waverley, Dingley	PO Box 42 Batesford Rd Holmesglen 3148	03 9564 1649 03 9564 1972	03 9564 2092
Kangan Batman TAFE Broadmeadows, Essendon, Moreland, Coburg, Richmond, Craigieburn, Docklands	Private Bag 299 Somerton 3062	03 9279 2564 03 9279 2478 03 9425 5626 03 9279 2279	03 9279 2590
Northern Metro TAFE (NMIT) Collingwood, Epping, Greensborough, Heidelberg, Fairfield, Preston	Room A118, 77-91 St Georges Rd Preston 3072	03 9269 1401 03 9269 1324	03 9269 1530

Institute of TAFE	Address	Disability office phone	Disability office fax
RMIT City, Bundoora, East Bundoora, West Brunswick, Fisherman's Bend, Warrnambool, Hamilton	Disability Liaison Unit RMIT University GPO Box 2476V Melbourne 3001	03 9925 1089	03 99251091
South West TAFE Warrnambool, Hamilton, Portland, Glenormiston, Sherwood Park	PO Box 674 Warrnambool 3280	03 5564 8964	03 5564 8982
Swinburne TAFE Pahran, Croydon, Hawthorn, Lilydale, Healesville, Wantirna	Swinburne University of Technology (TAFE Division) 369 Stud Rd Wantirna 3152	03 9214 6964 03 9210 1181	03 9210 1142
Sunraysia TAFE Mildura, Swan Hill, Kerang, Robinvale, Ouyen	Student Services Unit PO Box 1904 Mildura 3502	03 5022 3629	03 5022 3600
University of Ballarat (TAFE division)	PO Box 663 Ballarat 3353	03 5327 9757 03 5327 8092 03 5327 8323	03 5327 9779 03 5327 8004
University of Melbourne (TAFE division) Burnley, Dookie, Glenormiston, Gilbert, Chandler, Werribee, Longrinon, McMillan, Warragul, VCAH, East Melbourne		03 9250 6866	
Victoria University (TAFE Division) City, Footscray, Melton, Newport, South Melbourne, St Albans, Sunbury, Werribee, Yarraville	PO Box 14428 Melbourne 8001	03 9919 2228 03 9919 2529	03 9919 2099
William Angliss TAFE Melbourne	555 Latrobe Street Melbourne	03 9606 2232	03 9606 2522
Wodonga TAFE Mt Beauty, Rutherglen, Wodonga	87 McKoy Street Wodonga 3690	02 6055 6663	02 6055 6388

National Disability Coordination Officers

There is a National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) in each region of Victoria. The NDCO works with individuals, schools, institutes of TAFE, universities, employers, employment services and disability-specific community organisations to:

- improve transitions for people with a disability from school to further study and employment
- increase participation by people with a disability in tertiary level education and employment
- establish better links between schools, institutes of TAFE, universities, employers, and disability service providers.

The NDCOs for Victoria are listed here and can be found at www.ndcovictoria.net.au.

National Disability Coordination Officer Program – Victorian Network

The National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) program aims to improve the transition of people with a disability who are aged between 15 and 64 years into further education, training, and employment. The NDCO in your region (see page 40) can help provide information, coordination, and referral for people with a disability. The Victorian NDCO website provides a range of useful resources and information for students with a disability who are transitioning through school and on to employment. Visit www.ndcovictoria.net.au

Region	Contact details	Phone
Inner Northern Melbourne	Inner Melbourne VET Cluster 197 Coventry Street South Melbourne 3205	03 9686 2354
Western Melbourne	RMIT University Room 28 Building 94 Level 3 Cardigan Street Melbourne 3000	03 9925 3531
Eastern Melbourne	RMIT University Room 27 Building 94 Level 3 Cardigan Street Melbourne 3000	03 9925 5269
Southern Melbourne	Skills Plus Level 2, 54-58 Well Street Frankston 3199	03 9784 0400
North-Central and North-West Victoria	University of Melbourne 21 Nixon Street Shepparton 3630	03 5823 6624
South-Western Victoria	University of Ballarat Mount Helen Campus Room F216, Building F University Drive Mount Helen 3350	03 5327 9337
Wodonga to Gippsland and Outer South East Melbourne	Wodonga TAFE Building A 87 McKoy Street West Wodonga 3690	02 6055 6919 02 6055 6924

Other useful information and contacts

Adaptive Technologies

There are a range of adaptive technologies that can improve participation and success in education for people with a disability. EduApps is an initiative developed by the JISC Regional Support Centre in Scotland. It expands on the already very successful AccessApps. EduApps extends the AccessApps philosophy of free, portable software in your pocket to include bundles of applications that are specifically designed for teachers (TeachApps) and learners (LearnApps). The current program hosts over 90 open-source and freeware software applications which can be entirely used from a USB stick on a computer that has Windows® installed.

These applications can be downloaded from www.eduapps.org/.

Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) provides information and resources to support the work of disability practitioners in the post-secondary education and training sector. The website also incorporates resources for students.

Visit www.adcet.edu.au/

Disability Employment Services

The Disability Employment Service (DES) provides specialist assistance to job seekers with a disability who require ongoing support to find and maintain employment. DES is delivered by a network of large and small organisations around Australia.

As a job seeker, you can be referred to DES if you:

- have a permanent (or likely to be permanent) disability
- have a reduced capacity for communication, learning, or mobility
- require support for more than six months after placement in employment.

For more information about how DES members can help you, or to locate your local service, please contact JobAccess on phone 1800 464 800 or visit www.jobaccess.gov.au.

Disability Standards for Education 2005

The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* were formulated under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and came into effect in August 2005. The standards clarify the obligations of education and training providers to ensure that students with a disability are able to ‘access and participate in education without experiencing discrimination’.

Please visit the following website.

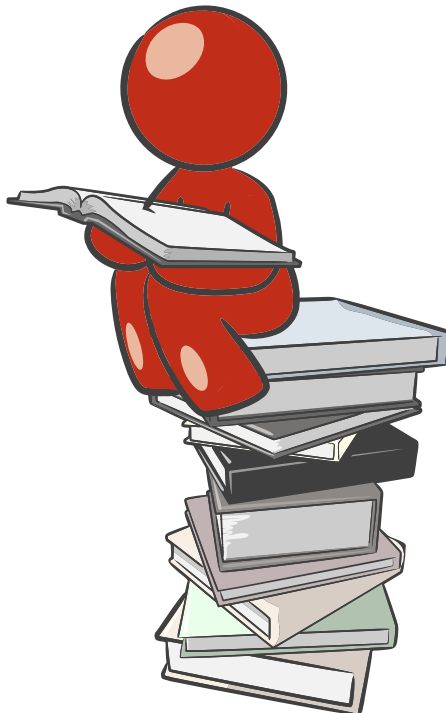
www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/programmes_funding/forms_guidelines/disability_standards_for_education.htm

Futures for Young Adults

Futures for Young Adults (FFYA) provides information, advice and support for up to three years to young people with a disability who are leaving school. The aim of FFYA is to support young people as they make the transition from school to adult life. It also aims to assist them to plan ahead, set goals, and make informed decisions about their futures and the range of post-school options they can explore.

Please visit the following website.

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/supports_for_people/being_part_of_my_community/futures_for_young_adults



Special Entry Access Scheme

People with a disability, chronic medical condition or psychiatric disorder are encouraged to use Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) when applying for TAFE or University programs (courses) through VTAC.

SEAS is VTAC's online system for making an equity admissions application to a TAFE or University in Victoria. SEAS, is only available for Australians Citizens, Permanent Residents and Permanent Humanitarian visa holders.

After making your VTAC application online you can then apply for SEAS online at the VTAC website. As part of your SEAS application you will need to provide information on how your circumstances have affected your access to education. You will also need to provide documentation for each category you apply under in SEAS. Documentation needs to be sent to VTAC by the closing date (see VTAC website) as VTAC will not accept documentation after this date. To find out what documentation is needed for each category visit the VTAC website at: www.vtac.edu.au

All people who apply under SEAS make a statement about how their circumstances have affected their access to education. It is important to focus on the educational impact that particular circumstances have had on your access to education. Also in your applicant statement you will need to discuss your capacity to succeed at study in TAFE or University. This may include discussion about previous work experience in relation to the area of study you are applying for, as well as any other courses you may have completed.

Transition information

Many people with a disability, whether they have just left school or are at a later stage in their lives, plan to continue their education. As students with a disability, they will need to be well informed about their rights and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities that post-secondary education facilities have to them.

Being well informed helps you to make sure that you have every opportunity to enjoy the benefits of the post-secondary education experience.

For further information about successful transition, visit www.adcet.edu.au/Student_Resources/

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

The role of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is to help resolve individual and representative complaints about discrimination, sexual harassment, and racial and religious vilification by offering a conciliation process that is confidential, impartial, free and simple.

It also provides education about equality of opportunity, racial and religious tolerance, and human rights and undertakes projects and activities that aim to eliminate discrimination, and racial and religious intolerance. Phone the commission on 03 9281 7111 or email complaints@veohrc.vic.gov.au

