

Adjustment Policy

Purpose	This Policy is to outline the principles and provisions relating to assistance which is provided to staff and students whose circumstances require an element of flexibility in respect of a range of workplace and AITC requirements to ensure they have equitable access.
Location	The policy is maintained on the AITC ownCloud
Responsible executive	CEO
Responsible office	CEO's Office
Contact officer	TBA
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Related documents	AITC Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy AITC Staff Welfare and Wellbeing Policy AITC Student Support, Welfare and Wellbeing Policy AITC Workforce Plan
Authority	Approved by Council

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the principles and provisions relating to assistance which is provided to staff and students of the Australian Institute of Technology and Commerce (AITC) whose circumstances require an element of flexibility in respect of a range of workplace and AITC requirements to ensure they have equitable access to: employment opportunity and career success in the case of staff; learning facilities, resources and support, and to success in their study endeavours in the case of students.

2. Principles

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the *AITC Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy*, which sets out the principles relating to the AITC's commitment to providing open and equitable access as both an employer and a provider of higher education to staff and students with a disability. Under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*, 'disability' includes physical, psychological or neurological disease or disorder as well as illness, whether temporary or permanent. Provisions for being in breach of the Act cover situations where the employer or education provider fails to make such reasonable adjustment.

In a student context, equitable access refers to changes to/adaptation of the student learning environment, and adjustment to AITC policies, guidelines and in some cases educational program requirements which facilitate the ability of students with a disability or other barrier to education to learn safely and productively. This involves providing equitable access to and ability to take advantage of the learning events, learning resources and associated technologies which are available to the student body.

In a staff context, reasonable adjustment refers in a similar way to changes to/adaptation of the workplace environment to facilitate a staff member being able to work safely and productively, with access to the normal resources available to AITC staff for carrying out their roles effectively. Seen

through a broader lens, the concept is framed within the context of ensuring the opportunity for successful career development.

3. Application of Principles

3.1 Students

In a higher education context, reasonable adjustment impacts two generic areas; one relating to the learning environment, facilities and resources; the other to the requirements set out within the educational programs themselves.

3.1.1 Learning Environment

To satisfy the requirements of reasonable adjustment in the learning environment, a student's disability, as defined in the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*, is taken into account in ensuring they are able to access teaching classes, tutorials and ICT laboratories and use the equipment, facilities, ICT and software in a way that does not impair their ability to learn.

In this context reasonable adjustment may comprise, for example;

- rearrangement of the learning space;
- provision of specially designed ergonomic furniture/desk/seating;
- assistance to move from class to class to meet their class timetable;
- provision of remote head phones to wear during classes;
- provision of digital video/audio recording of lectures and tutorials;
- provision of speech recognition software;
- provision of a reader, interpreter/signer or writer to assist in assimilating lecture/tutorial materials;
- adjustment to library storage/shelving where appropriate;
- adjustment to student self/group study, and student amenity facilities; and;
- adjustment to restroom access and facilities.

3.1.2 Educational Programs

The guiding principle in relation to educational programs is that there can be no diminution of standards for successfully completing and graduating from programs of study. It means having robust but flexible and creative alternatives to assess competence and the meeting of academic standards. In this context, the emphasis from a reasonable adjustment perspective is to make appropriate provision for all students to have an equal opportunity to complete the assessment requirements of programs on an even a footing as possible. This may require, for example, adjustment to assessment so that students are able to demonstrate their knowledge, and have it effectively assessed in a different way (e.g. verbally, practically or through video evidence rather than in written form). In all cases it is AITC policy to ensure assessment requirements are expressed in plain English and are clear, and not open to misinterpretation.

In special cases there may be provision for students to demonstrate or partly demonstrate their competence in areas of assessment through external certification. In this situation, prior approval must be obtained from Academic Board.

It may also involve more practical assistance in the way of additional time to complete assessment, access to an interpreter or reader, conducting of assessment in an alternative environment to other students, or provision of adaptive technology equipment, and extended breaks during assessment.

In all cases the provisions are commensurate with the nature of the student's disability or learning disadvantage.

3.2 Staff

For AITC staff, reasonable adjustment also has two dimensions, one relating to the physical work environment and resources; the other to personal and career development aspects.

3.2.1 Workplace Environment

Reasonable adjustment in respect of the working environment encompasses a similar suite of elements conceptually as those outlined for students, for example:

- rearrangement of the office work space;
- provision of specially designed ergonomic furniture/desk/seating;
- provision of additional equipment to facilitate hearing, speech, writing and communications;
- provision of digital video/audio recording of relevant information materials (e.g. induction and training resources where relevant);
- provision of speech recognition software;
- provision of a reader, interpreter/signer or writer to assist in aspects of the role as defined in position descriptions;
- adjustment to staff restroom and amenity facilities.

3.2.2 Personal and Career Development

To ensure equal access to opportunities and facilities for career progression, the personal and career development elements of the AITC's staff performance management and staff development frameworks provide for the reasonable adjustments required in this area for affected staff. This may include e.g. an alternative on-line form of a development program or activity, and any adjustments required to undertake duties in roles at a higher level. In the area of ongoing scholarship, such provisions may extend to assistance with the logistics of travel to attend the premises of industry partners and/or to attend conferences, to collaborate with discipline colleagues outside the AITC, and to prepare and present academic papers.

3.3 Student and Staff Off-campus Arrangements

By the nature of a staff member or student's disability there may be a case for provision to be made either temporarily or on an ongoing basis for them to undertake their studies or work from home. Providing the arrangements are supported by medical evidence, AITC will make the necessary arrangements in relation to the student's study provisions and requirements to facilitate the access to learning resources, recorded lectures and one-on-one tutorial support (e.g. via zoom) which will allow a student to complete their studies. In this situation AITC will liaise with the relevant authorities in relation to confirmation of visa attendance requirements.

In the case of a staff-member, similar provisions will be made to allow the undertaking of work from home with appropriate arrangements for maintaining work team and supervisor communications and supervision which aligns with the *AITC Staff Professional Development Policy*.

For both staff and students, provision will be made for ensuring there is an undertaking or confirmation in relation to the OHS suitability of the home study or workspace.

4. Adjustment Planning and Approval

The Student Support Officer is the first point of liaison with students in considering the question of reasonable adjustment and is the liaison point with the Academic Dean in developing a proposal for consideration by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Discussion may involve other academic staff, but this should be undertaken in all cases in strict confidence in respect of the student's disability. In the

case of staff members, the CEO provides the straight-line liaison in considering the question of reasonable adjustment.

All reasonable adjustment proposals are approved by the CEO, on recommendation from the Academic Dean in the case of students and from the CEO in the case of staff members. Approval is considered based on a full submission setting out the background, circumstances and specific elements of the AITC, academic program or workplace environment which are affected in the context of the student or staff member's disability. Medical evidence is required in support of any approvals. Approvals may be made for the entire period of study or employment, or for shorter periods subject to review.

In all cases where reasonable adjustment is extended, an Adjustment Plan is developed. The plan sets out the agreed terms of the adjustment arrangements extended to the student or staff member in order to reduce the impact of their disability on their study or work. The plan includes specific details of the adjustments involved, as well as the academic or staff contact (typically the Course Coordinator), who is responsible for ensuring the plan is enacted, and is the first line contact for liaison with the student or staff member concerned.

In the interest of privacy, plans do not include details of the student or staff member's disability or diagnosis but must set out the details of the adjustment to access being extended. The plan also includes details of resources made available to the student or staff member's supervisor or person responsible for managing the provisions of the plan. Plans are made available electronically to facilitate the student being able to enact the provisions relating to examination situations. The Student Support Officer is the first point of liaison in such situations and would assist the student to bring the plan's provisions to the notice of relevant Unit Coordinators and exam supervisors/invigilators.

Reasonable Adjustment Plans are reviewed monthly by the Academic Dean in the case of students and CEO in the case of staff to ensure they are effectively meeting the needs of the student or staff member, and then further reviewed periodically in a time frame agreed between the individual, their supervisor and the CEO. A report is provided to the CEO annually on reasonable adjustment plans. The Council is briefed annually on adjustment provisions and their outcomes and effectiveness by the CEO.

In all cases where the adjustment sought by the student or staff member is not considered 'reasonable' under the Act, the AITC is not obliged to fulfil the request and this may involve the student or staff member being excluded from studies or employment respectively. These situations are fully and carefully documented and approved by the CEO.

5. Relevant Legislation and Standards

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)

Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 Domains 1 and 3

SGSTC