

Access Considerations

Accessibility encompasses:

- the environment leading into and within the classroom or campus
- access to learning.

Physical access suitable for people with physical disabilities benefits everyone and often helps address occupational health and safety requirements as well.

Ergonomic furniture, page turning devices and document holders may be helpful. Extra time or a scribe may be needed for someone prone to fatigue or with poor dexterity. The student may also have a carer or personal assistant.

Absence or lateness may be caused by transport problems, weather conditions, waiting for lifts or personal care assistance, lift or wheelchair breakdown.

Assistive Technology

Voice or speech recognition programs allow the user to dictate information into the computer through a microphone and, to varying degrees, control the computer by voice.

Some examples:

Dragon Naturally Speaking
and Dragon Dictate

<http://www.dragonsys.com>

<http://www.voicerecognition.com.au/>

Adjustments may need to be provided to enable a person with a disability to gain equitable access to education. Reasonable adjustments may include:

- modifying or providing equipment
- modifying assessment procedures
- changing course delivery
- modifying educational premises.

Adjustments must be determined in consultation with the student concerned.

For further advice contact your
TAFE NSW Teacher/Consultant

Other sources of support

Spinal Cord Injuries Australia

<http://www.scia.org.au/>

Northcott Society

<http://www.northcott.com.au/>

Disclosure: It's a Personal Decision

<http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/rdlo/disclosure/>

Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission

www.hreoc.gov.au

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Disability Standards for Education 2005



Physical Disability Awareness

Some advice and strategies for teachers

TAFE NSW

TAFE NSW

What is a Physical Disability?

A physical disability is one that affects a person's mobility and / or dexterity. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates that at least 6% of Australians over the age of 5 years have a physical disability.

Physical disabilities can be permanent, intermittent or temporary. Physical disabilities can be caused by:

- congenital factors
- trauma/accident
- infection
- degeneration
- disease
- chronic medical conditions.

Physical disabilities vary from person to person and may include problems with balance, gait and co-ordination; dizziness and weakness; pain and paralysis. Aids such as crutches, a walking stick or a wheelchair may be used. Sometimes, people with physical disabilities may have involuntary movement of the muscles. Some conditions may go into remission; others may come and go with no particular pattern, or there may be gradual deterioration.

Among the most common permanent disorders are partial or total paralysis, amputation, severe spinal injury, types of arthritis, cerebral palsy, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, post-polio syndrome and spina bifida. Additionally, some respiratory and cardiac diseases may affect mobility. Any of these may impair strength, speed, endurance, coordination and dexterity.

Positive interactions in the learning environment

- Do not assume people with a physical disability cannot comprehend.
- Look at the person directly.
- If you think the person may require some assistance, ask first and be willing to accept 'no' for an answer. If the person says 'yes', ask what kind of help would be appropriate.
- If waiting is necessary, and the person does not use a wheelchair, ask if the person requires a chair.
- If learning resources need to be carried, it may be helpful to offer to carry them for the student.
- If you are in a lift when a person with a physical disability is entering or leaving, it may be helpful to hold the door open to ensure the person's safety.
- People who require taxis to get around may need to book the cab by phone, or be advised when the cab arrives.

People using wheelchairs

People who use wheelchairs have varying degrees of difficulty with mobility. Some use their arms to propel the chair; others use a motorised wheelchair, which is usually heavier and cannot be easily lifted or folded into a car.

- Respect the person's personal space. Stand or sit clear of a wheelchair, as it is often considered a part of the person's body space.
- Do not use the term 'wheelchair bound'. Say: 'a person who uses a wheelchair' or 'a wheelchair user'. (A wheelchair is an enabling device not a restriction.)
- Be aware that heavy doors can be awkward or impossible for a person in a wheelchair.
- Offer to reach things on high shelves.
- If possible and appropriate, sit down to speak with a person in a wheelchair so that you are at the same eye level.
- Use of a wheelchair usually means it takes longer to get from one place to another; bear this in mind if the person is late for a class.
- If the person carries their pads, notebooks and pens in a bag hung over the back of the chair, they might appreciate an offer of assistance to get items out or put them away.