

2020 Review of the Disability Standard for Education 2005: Community Consultation Questionnaire

Your experiences in people with disability in education and training

Qn.10) What has been your experience of people with disability **accessing and enrolling in education and training?**

South Metropolitan TAFE has a strong culture of inclusion and many happy students who have participated successfully from first point of contact on the website through various courses and programs to final graduation. Central to this positive student experience is the College's focus on promoting access to information, services and communication for all customers and the Disability Access & Inclusion Plan underpins this focus. We believe that a continuous improvement approach is necessary based on monitoring feedback and customer comments and using the information learned to improve our service delivery and physical and digital accessibility.

Our experience has also shown that people with disability may enrol in a course for various reasons. Although most students enrol to gain a qualification, not all do. Some students enrol simply for the value of participation and inclusion. There could be better understanding around the motivation/purpose if a student accesses and enrolls in education and training. Requirements that form barriers to students enrolling in courses should be removed. For example, a requirement that states students must be able to lift as industry, they would be required to hoist an elderly person for showering. This could exclude a student with physical limitations from enrolling who does not want to work in industry but has enrolled for participation and inclusion.

Qn. 11) What has been your experience of students with disability **participating in education and training?**

SMT has an excellent track record supporting students to participate equitably in training. Our approach focuses on individualised study support and consultation and assists students to develop the necessary skills to work confidently and independently. While disclosure of disability is voluntary our experience indicates that increasing numbers of students are disclosing and seeking support and being empowered to participate.

Qn. 12) What has been your experience of students with disability being **supported in education and training?**

It is our experience as a State Training Provider that appropriate and targeted support can make a vast difference in a student's learning experience and in some cases it can make all the difference between failure and success. Promotion and messaging are critically important to ensure that students are aware that support is available and that it is both voluntary and confidential. At SMT we employ a multi-modal approach of website messaging, use of social media platforms, individual emails to student accounts and class talks. Further, Student Support staff work closely with academic staff to assess sometimes undisclosed needs as early as possible in a semester so that interventions can be made and appropriate support implemented timeously with the approval of the student.

Qn. 13) What has been your experience of students with disability experiencing **harassment and/or victimisation in education and training settings?**

Our experience has been minimal. The reason for this is that South Metropolitan TAFE demonstrates a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and victimisation on our campuses and simultaneously has in place a robust complaint management policy. All students are encouraged to provide feedback and/or submit a complaint if this is appropriate to any matter concerning them or

their studies. Should an incident of harassment or victimisation arise it is dealt with promptly and efficiently. In addition, Student Support Services offers advocacy to students registered with a disability and the availability of this service offers further protection to enrolled students. The combined effect of strong policy, procedure and follow up promotes a safe environment for all students and few regrettable incidents of harassment and victimisation.

Qn. 14) What has been your experience of compliance with the Disability Standards for Education 2005 among education providers?

As a leading WA adult learning provider SMT demonstrates a commitment to providing all students with quality, accredited training and compliance with the Disability Standards for Education 2005. Academic and support staff have access to a range of professional development which focuses on excellence in training delivery, customer service, support and compliance. Support Services staff work closely with academic staff to arrange referrals and provide advice about reasonable adjustment where appropriate. This is particularly important in the management of complex cases, chronic conditions and co-morbidity where management of student expectations about the level and nature of support is required. We have found that this type of approach generally results in a best practise focus on continuous improvement that goes far beyond basic compliance.

SMT is also of the view that compliance provides a good “minimum standard” tool in cases where the motivation for sustaining quality training outcomes for all students may not be so strictly implemented and for this reason it is important.

Qn. 17) Are there any particular actions that you think could be taken to increase awareness of the Standards and/or to make sure they're better understood?

- Promotion of The Standards amongst all users is essential if they are to be more widely recognised and understood. As a provider we are of the opinion that due to the increasing use of social media platforms, employment of these tools to stimulate discussion and increase awareness would likely be an effective promotional strategy. While providers are generally aware of the Standards and compliance obligations in general, our experience indicates that although students and parents are usually aware of their right to an equitable learning environment to some extent, they often lack knowledge about the specific obligations of the education/training provider.

Improving the Standards

Qn. 18) Before we ask for your thoughts on how the Standards might be improved, do you have any feedback or experiences on how the Standards have helped people with disability access and participate in education and training on the same basis as people without disability?

- Making an assessment such as this is difficult because although anecdotally there has been an increase in the number of people with disability accessing education and training since 2005, uncertainty remains with regard to whether this increase is due to familiarity with the Standards or whether it is due to other reasons such as an increase in disclosure rates generally or proactive promotion of the availability of disability support to students. Although the information is anecdotal, our experience at SMT indicates that only a very small percentage of students currently mention the Standards when providing feedback or making a complaint.

Qn. 19) How do you think the Standards could be improved to help overcome other barriers that may exist for some students with disability when accessing and participating in education and training? For this question, we particularly want to know how the Standards could help to overcome barriers that may exist for the following groups:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - People from culturally diverse backgrounds
 - People who speak a language other than English at home
 - People who live in regional, rural and remote locations
 - People from low income households
 - People who are LGBTIQ+
- The creation of an easy English version of the Standards, similar to the easy English version of the National Standards for Disability Services would be a good start. Whilst there is a condensed Fact Sheet available, the language and phrasing used, in our opinion is probably challenging for some consumers in the specific cohorts mentioned.
 - The creation of versions of the Standards in languages other than English could also be a useful consideration.

Qn. 20) How do you think the Standards could be improved to help better respond to situations such as COVID-19 or natural disasters?

SMT's view is that the Standards need to have some degree of flexibility and room for interpretation in order to be valuable across a range of different scenarios. Whilst they need to be robust, they also should not be too prescriptive if the intention is to remain relevant and helpful to both individual and organisational users.

Qn. 21) How do you think the knowledge and capabilities of educators and education providers could be strengthened to ensure they comply with the Disability Standards for Education 2005?

There are a number of ways in which this could be achieved:

- Greater focus and discussion of the Standards and their purpose and application in the Certificate IV TAE.
- Development of eLearning modules which could be offered to Educators as part of ongoing Professional Development or refresher courses each year.
- Introduction of certification audits against the Standards, like the quality assurance process that disability organisations must undergo with the NSDS with a third-party certification body.

Qn. 22) Lastly, are there any other ways you think the Standards could be improved?

- Clarity around the supports the education provider is responsible for and the NDIS is responsible for. There is currently an enormous grey area around this.
- Uncertainty around the Standards and the application to work placement settings.
- Clarification around Assistance Animals in education settings. The DDA does not currently provide adequate guidance to education and training providers about Assistance Animals and the rights and responsibilities of all parties in relation to animals on campus other than guide or hearing dogs and additional guidance from the Standards would therefore be valuable.
- The inclusion of standards setting baseline digital accessibility requirements for education & training providers would be of assistance. Critically, there is a need to ensure that websites

and learning management platforms interface well with assistive technologies and screen readers and that captioning is standard.