

Practice Illustration

Providing Support Services – With Evidence of Disability

Practice scenario

The student enrolls in a Graphic Design course. On the registration form, they tick the box to indicate that they have a disability and will need support. A staff member from the registered training organisation (RTO) follows up with the student. They call them on the phone and ask them to come in to discuss what possible supports and adjustments might be needed.

When asked about the decision to tick the box, the student explains they have a mental health issue. They say it developed in their mid-teens after an extended bout of glandular fever. Symptoms of depression and anxiety then began to emerge. As the student progressed through school, the symptoms became more erratic and intensified. This pattern led to a diagnosis of clinical depression and anxiety.

The student explains that they missed chunks of school. They had reasonable adjustments provided in the final year. The reasonable adjustments included extensions of time for completing assessments in all subjects. In Art and Drama, written analysis substituted for some performance requirements. In Art, large assessment tasks were broken down into smaller components for assessment. In English Literature, the exam was completed on a computer.

The student has evidence from their general practitioner (GP) about their condition. It outlines the types of impacts anxiety and depression have on their learning.

The RTO staff member asks the student about other strategies that were available at school. The student explains that they used planning tools to map assessment requirements and due dates. They also had support at school to 'unpack' the assessment tasks. This helped break down tasks into smaller steps that were then scheduled across the term. The student support team at school also checked in weekly to monitor progress. Check-ins were a time to review and adjust the plan as necessary. The student said they started school at 10 am due to the impact of medication. The student said medication often made them 'groggy' in the mornings. They would always have a nap after school for an hour or so. The student would like similar adjustments during their course.

Better practice response

The RTO staff member notes these requested adjustments and strategies, as well as the impacts verified by the GP. As a starting point, the staff member talks to the student about the way the RTO delivers and assesses the course. This includes information about the various types of interactive learning and assessment activities, and expectations about interaction, communication and participation.

They also inform the student about other services and supports available. This includes information about the student counsellor and study sessions. These two services can assist with planning and unpacking assessments.

The staff member then explains the process for requesting and negotiating adjustments and supports. They indicate that these negotiations need to occur with each trainer and assessor as each unit of competency will have unique requirements.

After discussion, there was agreement about the following general supports and adjustments:

- evidence is not needed when requesting an extension
- extensions are granted for two weeks rather than one week
- trainers and assessors will follow up if the student does not submit on a due date.
- the student can be late for morning classes, but they are responsible for catching up
- the student can miss classes if they email the trainer and assessor within 24 hours of the session
- trainers and assessors will provide learning materials for a missed class if notified
- trainers and assessors will notify the student before classes with interaction and communication requirements
- the student can turn off their camera for online classes without interaction requirements
- the student can privately message trainers and assessors for online question and answer activities.

The RTO staff member talks to the student about sharing information about their disability. The student decides they will email each trainer and assessor to make a time to meet with them. The RTO staff member provides the student with the names and emails of each of their trainers and assessors, identifying who would be delivering and assessing each unit.

The RTO staff member supports the student to develop the email. It outlines their mental health condition, the periodic nature of the condition and how it impacts their learning. They explain that when commencing new classes, the anxiety is often overwhelming. Based on this, the student feels it would be helpful to meet each trainer and assessor before class. This meeting is also a good opportunity to discuss the student's needs and supports.

The RTO staff member documents the discussions and agreements as well as any relevant information in the Student Support/Learning Plan. The student signs the plan and is given a copy to attach to the emails to their trainers and assessors.

The RTO staff member speaks with all trainers and assessors who will take classes for this student. They inform them the student will make contact via email to make a time to meet. The email will include their Student Support/Learning Plan.

In preparation for this meeting, trainers and assessors should consider:

- key aspects of training and assessment
- inherent or core requirements
- potential pressure points for the student (e.g., periods in which many assessments may be due)
- potential solutions and alternatives for managing these requirements.

Action and Evidence

Trainers and assessors will also need to document any discussions and agreements. These will be unit-specific supports or reasonable adjustments.

The RTO has taken reasonable steps to ensure the student has access to support services and that this access is on the same basis as a student without a disability. This includes available internal and external services and supports. RTOs should document how they inform students about the services and supports available.

In this scenario, the RTO provides information about the training and assessment strategies and practices, as well as the supports and services available. This provides context to discuss the student's needs and requests for support and empowers students to share information about their needs. In this way, the RTO is supporting student independence as an adult learner.

Please note: Every student's particular circumstance will be unique, and the illustration of practice is indicative and offered as guidance only.

Links to the relevant legislation and standards to meet RTO obligations

[*Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cth\) \(DSE\)*](#)

Making reasonable adjustments – Part 3: The Standards require education providers to make reasonable adjustments where necessary. A reasonable adjustment is a measure or action taken by an education provider in relation to applying for enrolment, participating in the course or program, or accessing services and facilities. The education provider must ensure the student with disability can access, use and participate on the same basis as a student without disability. There is no requirement to make unreasonable adjustments.

Standards for Enrolment – Part 4: The education provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the prospective student is able to seek admission to, or apply for enrolment in, the institution on the same basis as a prospective student without disability, and without experiencing discrimination. Enrolment includes marketing, course information, communication and counselling, assessment of learner needs, disclosure, and fees information.

Standards for Student Support Services – Part 7: The education provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the student is able to use support services used by the students of the institution in general on the same basis as a student without disability, and without experiencing discrimination. This includes having available internal and external services and supports, informing students of what is available, and providing access to specialised services and supports as necessary.

2025 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs):

[*National Vocational Education and Training Regulator \(Outcomes Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations\) Instrument 2025*](#)

Outcome 2: VET students are treated fairly and properly informed, supported and protected.

Outcome Standard 2.1: VET students have access to clear and accurate information concerning the organisation, the relevant training product, and students are made aware of any changes that may affect them.

Outcome Standard 2.2: VET students are advised, prior to enrolment, about the suitability of the training product for them, taking into account the student's skills and competencies.

Outcome Standard 2.3: VET students have access to support services, trainers and assessors and other staff to support their progress throughout the training product.

Outcome Standard 2.4: Reasonable adjustments are made to support VET students with disability to access and participate in training and assessment on an equal basis.

Outcome Standard 2.5: The learning environment promotes and supports the diversity of VET students.

Outcome Standard 2.6: The wellbeing needs of the VET student cohort are identified and strategies are put in place to support those needs.

Please note: RTOs registered by the *Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority* or the *Training Accreditation Council Western Australia* may refer to the following websites for requirements specific to you.

[*Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority*](#)

[*Training Accreditation Council Western Australia*](#)

Disclaimer

The 'supporting students with disability resources' provide guidance on legislation and policy for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) regarding vocational education and training for students with disability, but they should not be considered legal advice or impose additional legal obligations. RTOs should seek tailored legal advice to understand their specific obligations.

This resource is funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations through the Supporting Students with Disability in VET project.