

Practice Illustration

Reasonable Adjustments – Oral Communication

Practice scenario

The student identifies as having a diagnosis of autism and being non-verbal. The student emails to ask about core oral communication requirements in their course and to explore possible reasonable adjustments.

The first unit the student will complete is about:

- interacting and communicating with a diverse range of customers
- assisting with basic enquiries and contributing to a service culture.

One element and associated performance criteria focuses on engaging customers. It states the learner must:

- greet customers in a polite and friendly manner within designated response times and make them a priority over other workplace duties
- clearly communicate with customers using appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication
- adapt communication style to appropriately communicate with customers from diverse backgrounds.

The performance evidence requires the student to demonstrate the ability to complete tasks outlined in the elements and performance criteria of this unit in the context of the job role, effective communication techniques and positive body language.

The foundation skills are explicitly mapped in the unit of competency.

The element and criteria specify both verbal and non-verbal communication, and the foundation skills state oral communication. Registered training organisation (RTO) staff have concerns about this interpretation and whether reasonable adjustments are possible.

Better practice response

The trainer and assessor and quality manager review the unit of competency. They also consult the Companion Volume Implementation Guide, which states:

Inherent requirements are the fundamental parts of a course that must be met by all learners in order for them to be deemed competent. They are the abilities, skills and knowledge learners need to undertake the course – those components which, if removed, would compromise the learning outcomes. Learners with disability should be provided with reasonable adjustments to enable them to meet these inherent requirements, provided this would not cause unjustifiable hardship to the RTO. However, if a learner cannot meet the inherent requirements, even with adjustments, then they cannot undertake the course. Learners should be given as much information as possible to allow them to make informed decisions about whether they will be able to meet inherent course requirements.

Reasonable adjustments must:

- be discussed with and agreed to by the learner with disability
- benefit the learner with disability
- maintain the integrity of the competency standards
- be a reasonable expectation in a workplace or training and assessment environment.

The Companion Volume Implementation Guide does not specify advice about foundation skills and inherent requirements.

The trainer and assessor and quality manager meet with the student and their associate. Together they review and discuss the unit of competency requirements. They ask the student and their associate to suggest ways in which they may be able to meet the unit requirements. The associate asks whether the student can use assistive technology (e.g. text to speech).

The RTO staff members speak with the relevant curriculum developers who suggest contacting industry partners to check validity of the adjustment. They also emphasise that reasonable adjustments must not compromise the integrity of a unit.

The RTO staff members also consult industry partners to see whether the suggested use of assistive technology is acceptable in the workplace. Industry representatives indicate that the use of chat bots and online chat features is becoming increasingly common in some specific settings and roles. Following this line of thinking, text-to-speech assistive technology may be viable. The RTO staff members document these discussions.

The student, their associate, the trainer and assessor and the quality manager meet again. They agree the student will use text-to-speech assistive technology to complete the assessment task. The RTO staff document the agreement in the Student Support/Learning Plan.

Everyone agrees that the adjustment is reasonable because it:

- was discussed with and agreed to by the learner with disability
- will benefit the learner with disability
- will maintain the competency standards (e.g. oral communication can be achieved using assistive technology)
- be reasonable to expect in a workplace (e.g. industry supports the use of assistive technology as an adjustment)
- is not creating an unjustifiable hardship
- does not impact upon or harm others.

When implementing the reasonable adjustment, the assessor is diligent. They observe and document key performance requirements. The student completes each aspect of the task with another staff member acting as the customer/client. This helps ensure the integrity of the assessment. On the assessment tool, the assessor records details of how the reasonable adjustment was implemented.

Action and Evidence

In this scenario, RTO staff members need to ensure the assessment approach is fair and flexible, while maintaining the integrity of a course or unit. They must be accountable for their decisions when identifying core (inherent) requirements and possible reasonable adjustments. By consulting with industry and sector specialists, the RTO staff members were able to consider all aspects of the performance requirements balanced against the needs and capabilities of the student and the needs of industry. In this way, strong industry relationships support RTOs to meet their obligations.

The RTO can document this consultation and collaboration in the Student Support/Learning Plan. It can also be evidence of industry engagement. RTOs should have policies and procedures that help staff consult, negotiate, determine, document and implement reasonable adjustments. This includes templates and sections on assessments tools to record implementation.

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 \(Cth\) \(DSE\)](#)

Standards for Participation – Part 5: The education provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the student is able to participate in the course or program provided by the educational institution, and use the facilities and services provided by it, on the same basis as a student without disability, and without experiencing discrimination.

Standards for curriculum development, accreditation and delivery – Part 6:

The education provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the course or program is designed in such a way that the student is, or any student with disability is, able to participate in the learning experiences (including the assessment and certification requirements) of the course or program, and any relevant supplementary course or program, on the same basis as a student without disability, and without experiencing discrimination.

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.

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