

Practice Guide

Curriculum – Inclusive Design and Development

Overview

Inclusive design and development of training and assessment aims to reduce or remove barriers to learning. It should enable students to participate equally, confidently and independently, while reducing undue effort for trainers and assessors when supporting students with disability.

What is accessible, usable and inclusive curriculum?

Many things influence how training and assessment is designed and developed. These influences include the availability of resources, educational technologies, platforms and tools, as well as the capability of the registered training organisation (RTO) staff.

Wherever possible, all aspects of courses and training and assessment practices, should be accessible by design.

Inclusive design and development of training and assessment materials, resources and experiences incorporate the principles of:

- accessibility
- usability
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

This approach anticipates that students will have a wide range of learning approaches, abilities and experiences. Inclusive design and development can help ensure courses are responsive to this diversity and variability. It can also help reduce the need for reasonable adjustments and extra learner supports.

Understanding the diversity and variability of the cohort is an essential starting point for effective and appropriate course design. It helps to address this diversity and variability through design.

Learner diversity might include:

- cultural background
- age

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- gender or sexual orientation
 - faith or religion
 - disability
 - socioeconomic status
 - race/ethnicity.

Learner variability might include:

- cognitive abilities and strategies
- learner experiences and achievements
- social supports
- resilience
- access to technologies and resources
- levels of interest and motivation
- language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) levels/skills/competencies.

If the design and development of training and assessment considers the diversity and variability of students, it is more likely to be inclusive.

Courses are delivered using a wide range of methodologies, including face-to-face sessions, online learning, study in the workplace or a blended methodology that incorporates two or more of these. Consider whether you're training and assessment strategy is enabling participation or creating barriers for certain students.

Reviewing the qualification and units of competency, and any associated guidance documents, helps identify the intended learning outcomes and requirements. This may highlight other key considerations. For example, potential modes and methodologies, logistics, limitations, inherent requirements, flexibility, context and alignment with real-world experiences.

Consider whether your assessment design is inclusive. Are your assessments fair and flexible, allowing for alternative approaches, different equipment types, different settings, and, where possible, other options? Are there multiple ways for students to demonstrate the range of their knowledge, understanding and skills?

Ensure training and assessment materials and resources are accessible and usable. Utilise functions that exist within standard software such as the Accessibility Checker in Microsoft or via external web-based resources such as the Document Accessibility Toolbar (DAT) for Microsoft Word created by Vision Australia, or the Adobe Accessibility features when developing PDFs. If your RTO has learner, equity, disability or information and communications technology (ICT) services or personnel, consult them about what is available on the RTO systems.

You may need to engage with external agencies or services to help develop this capability. You can also remind students about the Microsoft Learning Tools such as Immersive Reader and the Dictate and Read Aloud functions.

Additionally, the development and provision of scaffolding tools such as exemplars, instructions, class notes and study guides support inclusive teaching and maximises the learning opportunities of all students.

Practice considerations and checkpoints

Inclusive design and development is all about intentional and purposeful design. It helps reduce barriers to learning and assessment and increases learner engagement. It also demonstrates why content, activities and assessment have been chosen to support the learning experience.

When designing training and assessment, consider the following questions:

- Does the design facilitate learning for all students?
- Are training and assessment materials and resources, platforms, and technology and tools accessible and inclusive?
- Is instructional detail provided? Are instructions informative, precise, and aligned to the task requirements?
- Are learning and assessment tasks achievable in the time allocation?
- Is there sufficient challenge in the content, learning, and assessment tasks?
- Is there adequate scaffolding and support available for learners to achieve the outcomes?
- Are materials and resources created in an accessible format first so they can be published again in alternative formats (e.g., large print or Braille)?
- Have barriers been identified and addressed?
- Are there digital tools (e.g., laptop/internet data/apps) to support access and participation? Is there support for students to gain the skills to access these digital tools?
- Are there variable aspects to suit individual learner needs and preferences?
- Are there opportunities to explore new ways of learning?
- Do the principles of UDL underpin the design and development of the training and assessment strategy?
- Have accessibility checking and user testing been undertaken to assess the accessibility and usability of resources, materials, tools, and technologies?
- Do the RTO's policies, procedures and strategies support the development of accessible and inclusive training and assessment materials?
- Is feedback from learners being gathered about the accessibility, usability, and inclusiveness to inform design and development?

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- Does course design consider reducing cognitive load – the amount of information that learners can manage at any time (e.g., avoiding content, learning activities and assessment that does not contribute to achieving the learning outcomes)?
 - Are critical training and assessment elements highlighted (e.g., 'must know' versus 'nice to know')?
 - Does mixed media contribute to a varied experience (e.g., listen or watch versus read)?
 - Is previous, current and future learning (and real-life application) connected?
 - Is there consistency of structure and navigation (where appropriate)?
 - Does the design consider the different challenges students may encounter?
 - Does the training and assessment approach provide for, and reflect, diverse perspectives and allow students to demonstrate their learning in more than one way?

Links to the relevant legislation and standards to meet RTO obligations

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\) \(DDA\)](#)

The DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of disability in education.

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

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:

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

Outcome 1: Quality training and assessment engages VET students and enables them to attain nationally recognised, industry relevant competencies.

Outcome Standard 1.1: Training is engaging, well-structured and enables VET students to attain skills and knowledge consistent with the training product.

Outcome Standard 1.4: The assessment system ensures assessment is conducted in a way that is fair and appropriate and enables accurate assessment judgement of VET student competency.

Outcome Standard 1.8: Facilities, resources and equipment for each training product are fit-for-purpose, safe, accessible and sufficient.

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*](#)

Benefits

- Student – reduction in barriers to learning and a more positive learning experience.
- Trainer and assessor – reduction in the need to adapt or adjust the learning, increased student engagement and independent learning.
- RTO – reduction in complaints about barriers; enhanced reputation as an inclusive education provider.

Training and resources

- [*Inclusive Teaching - Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training \(ADCET\)*](#)
- [*e-Learning: VET Educators Supporting Students with Disability*](#)
- [*e-Learning: Universal Design in Tertiary Education*](#)
- [*Document Accessibility Toolbar – Vision Australia*](#)
- [*Accessible PDFs – Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training*](#)

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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