

## Disability Equity Policy

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Current Version:	25/05/2023	Officer Responsible:	Executive Director – Academic, Innovation and Research (AIR)
Past Revisions:			
Review Cycle:	5 years		
Applies From:	Immediately		

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

The core values of Ara | Te Pūkenga<sup>1</sup>, Hono, Hihiri and Aroha, along with our key objectives of placing the ākonga at the heart of everything we do, form the basis of Ara's response to ensuring equity for all ākonga.

First principles have been established to strengthen the values-based approach to ensuring equity for disabled ākonga across Ara and throughout the ākonga journey. These first principles will guide support practices, together with accommodations and adaptations to course delivery to ensure equity of opportunity and increase the potential for success. Any new initiatives relating to the support and participation of disabled ākonga will have these first principles as the foundation.

## 1.2 First Principles

**Self Determination** – Disabled ākonga are in control of their learning journey and have the freedom to make informed choices throughout the process. Embracing the notion of Tāngata whaikaha – sharing optimism and feeling enabled.

**Beginning Early** – Invest early in working with disabled ākonga in order to establish timely and sustainable learning pathways that enable a range of skills to be developed that lead to further opportunities. Work with whanau and other ākonga to build community and develop natural supports.

**Ākonga Centred** – Ensure disabled ākonga are at the centre of all processes relating to their learning journey. This involves ensuring support practices are tailored to their individual needs and learning goals, together with taking a whole of life approach where practicable.

**Easy to Use** – Disabled ākonga have supports and associated processes that are simple to use, flexible and fit for purpose.

**Mana Enhancing** – The abilities and contributions of disabled ākonga form the basis for how relationships are formed, with a focus on an optimistic future where success is celebrated.

**Relationship Building** – Ensuring all processes and systems build and strengthen relationships with Ara kaimahi and disabled ākonga, together with their whanau, and employers.

To increase participation and improve the learning experience and outcomes of disabled ākonga, Ara is committed to ensuring that disabled ākonga can access Ara facilities and services, enabling disabled ākonga to participate and contribute fully to the Ara community. Ara will endeavour to eliminate barriers in all aspects of the learning environments.

<sup>1</sup> From herein referred to as Ara

### 1.3 Scope and Application

- a This policy applies to all disabled and/or impaired ākonga, including those potential, enrolled, or attending classes/using services of Ara, as well as all Ara graduates, kaimahi, visitors, and contractors that engage with Ara.
- b Key documents to sit under this policy will be the Ara Disability Strategy and Action Plan. These documents will be reviewed annually.

### 1.4 Formal Delegations

There are no formal delegations associated with this policy.

### 1.5 Definitions

**Impairment** – the functional limitation within the individual caused by a physical, mental, cognitive, or sensory condition.

**Disability** – the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the *impairments* other people have (New Zealand Disability Strategy). The use of the term “disabled ākonga” reflects Ara’s commitment to embracing the social model of disability.

**Disabled Ākonga (Learner)** – are people who have an impairment and have been or are at risk of being disabled by an inaccessible society or social institution.

**Discrimination** – denial of participation or human rights to disabled people based on a reason related to their disability. It includes detrimental treatment of an individual or group based on their actual or perceived membership of a certain group or social category. Discrimination may be conscious or unconscious, direct, or indirect.

**Equity** – fairness and justice within a safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environment that enables people to achieve their potential.

**Disability Services** – the service within Ara to support and advocate on behalf of disabled ākonga.

**Reader/Writer** – a person employed by Disability Services to assist disabled ākonga with reading and/or writing during tests and exams.

**Assistive Technology** – any item, piece of equipment, software or product system that is used to support disabled ākonga in their daily lives, including education.

**Learning Environments** - encompasses digital, physical campus-based and work-integrated learning environments, and all aspects of the learning process, including programme and course design, curriculum, delivery, assessment, and support strategies,

**Note-taker** – a person who attends learning sessions to take notes for a disabled ākonga for whom the taking of notes is difficult or impossible.

**Ara Kaimahi (Staff)** – a person engaged for paid employment with Ara by way of an employment agreement.

**A Social-ecological Model** – assumes that disabled people are a part of multiple communities and environments. As such, support should be provided through these environments to enable full participation, self-determination, and quality of life.

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**Reasonable Accommodation** – refers to the necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure persons with disabilities are treated on an equal basis with all others.

<p><b>Related Ara Procedures and Forms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APP301 Learner Responsibilities and Rights</li> <li>• APP301b Flowchart</li> </ul>	<p><b>Related Ara Policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APP301 Learner Responsibilities and Rights</li> <li>• APP504 Regulations Governing Admission and Enrolment</li> <li>• APP505 Assessment</li> <li>• APP514 Withdrawals, Refunds and Compassionate Consideration</li> <li>• APP515 Class Session Recording and Release Policy</li> <li>• CPP105 Acceptable Use and Conduct for ICT Users</li> <li>• CPP109 Disclosing Personal Information about Students and Staff</li> <li>• CPP117 Raising Problems or Complaints</li> <li>• CPP211 Code of Professional Practice</li> <li>• CPP209 Harassment Prevention</li> </ul>
<p><b>Related Legislation or Other Documentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and Training Act 2020</li> <li>• Privacy Act 2020</li> <li>• Health and Safety at Work Act 2015</li> <li>• Official Information Act 1982</li> <li>• Human Rights Act 1993</li> <li>• UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.</li> <li>• New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026</li> <li>• The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021</li> </ul>	<p><b>Good Practice Guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kia Ōrite Achieving Equity: New Zealand Code of Practice for an Inclusive Tertiary Education Environment for Students with Impairments</li> <li>• Te Rito Part Three: Insights from disabled Learners and staff – opportunities to enhance success for Te Pūkenga disabled learners.</li> </ul>
<p><b>References</b></p>	
<p><b>Notes:</b> First version approved 25/05/2023.</p>	

## 2 Principles

- 2.1 Ara is committed to enabling disabled ākonga to reach their full potential by ensuring that all interactions are characterised by respect for their rights, dignity, privacy, confidentiality and equality and by providing equitable access to all facilities, services and learning environments.
- 2.2 Ara follows the principles of the Kia Ōrite Code of Practice for an inclusive tertiary environment for ākonga with impairments (see Appendix A) and commits to establishing and implementing a Disability Strategy and Action Plan for the institution.
- 2.3 This policy is based on the premise of the Human Rights Act 1993 and the United Nations Convention on the rights of disabled people.
- 2.4 In line with the Privacy Act 2020, information about ākonga will be collected from the individual and used only for the purpose for which it is collected. The person disclosing the information should be aware of this purpose. The information should not be disclosed to other people unless the ākonga has authorised the disclosure to said people. Ākonga should have an opportunity to view the information collected and have the opportunity to correct mistakes or provide revised information.

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### **3 Associated Procedures for Ara Academic Policy on: Disability Equity Policy**

Contents:	3.1	Responsibility of Academic Department
	3.2	Responsibility of Director Disability and Inclusion and Disability Services
	3.3	Responsibility of Ākonga with Disability and Impairments

#### **3.1 Responsibility of Academic Departments**

Academic Departments are responsible for ensuring an equitable learning environment by:

- a Exploring all possibilities and making all reasonable adjustments to enable disabled ākonga to participate in the learning environment. Decisions impacting on the inclusion of disabled ākonga will be made through a consultation process involving ākonga, department, Disability Services and other parties as necessary.
- b Creating and maintaining management systems that provide accurate information about the participation and progression of disabled ākonga.
- c Ensuring that designated, trained contact(s), with effective channels of communication with senior managers, exist for disabled ākonga.

#### **3.2 Responsibility of Director Disability and Inclusion and Disability Services**

- a. Director Disability and Inclusion is responsible for developing a Strategic Disability Action Plan that will cover a three-year period and corresponding annual operational plan that informs the Disability Services annual implementation plan.
- b. Disability Services is responsible for developing an annual implementation plan to achieve a fully inclusive educational environment in collaboration with disabled ākonga and key stakeholders from within and outside of Ara. These plans will have measurable goals and targets and will be reviewed and reported on annually.
- c. Engaging (or attempting to engage) with ākonga who self-identify as having a disability. This could include, but is not limited to, email, text or phone communication to initiate a conversation around possible support requirements.
- d. Supporting eligible prospective and enrolled ākonga at Ara who have a temporary or permanent disability (s).
- e. Work in personalised way with every disabled ākonga based on the first principles to establish the aspirations and support requirements for a successful learning journey.
- f. Developing a personal plan in collaboration with disabled ākonga and department and communicating that support plan to the relevant staff within the academic department, with ākonga consent.
- g. Co-ordinating with other Ara departments/services as required to ensure understanding of ākonga requirements and support e.g., Programme Tutor, Department Support.
- h. Organising specialist accommodations where possible. This includes access to specialised equipment and *assistive* technology (such as voice-activated software) and specialist services such as Braille transcription, sign language interpreting and reader-writers for term tests.

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- i. Ensuring the organised and formal provision of practices to support the wellbeing and safety of disabled ākongā, particularly in relation to Outcomes 3 & 4 of the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021.
- j. Capability development opportunities and support to assist kaimahi in enabling successful outcomes for ākongā will be provided through Disability Services in consultation with wider capability development networks.

### 3.3 Responsibility of Disabled Ākongā

- a. It is strongly recommended that any ākongā with a disability or impairment discuss their situation with Disability Services at the earliest opportunity, normally before commencing study, or at the beginning of their study, or when an injury/illness occurs.
- b. All disabled and/or impaired ākongā seeking support through Disability Services are required to provide verification and/or relevant documentation of their impairment or medical condition to assist Ara in providing a personalised service. All conditions must have lasted or will be deemed to last for six months or more, be more than minor or trivial in nature and have an impact on a person's ability to access education. This will help to ensure the most effective supports and accommodations are in place to create the best possible ākongā experience.
- c. Disability support strategies will be developed in partnership with ākongā. Accordingly, ākongā will be encouraged to be proactive in negotiating and developing solutions. Ākongā are encouraged to discuss their learning needs with the Programme Leader, tutor and other staff as appropriate.
- d. Ākongā should advise Disability Services of any change in their circumstances that could alter the support, accommodations or resources required, and of any difficulties arising with the support or accommodations provided.
- e. Ākongā who are receiving Disability Services support are required to notify the service when changes occur to their study that may impact on their ability to access disability support i.e., timetable, location, course/programme.

### 4.1 Implementation and Monitoring

- a. Implementation of this policy will be achieved through:
  - Development of Strategic Disability Action Plan that will cover a three-year period.
  - Development of annual operational Disability Action Plan.
  - Regular updates of progress with implementation of Disability Action Plan.
  - Adherence to other related policies as outlined above.
- b. Monitoring of this policy when issues/circumstances arise will be overseen by the:
  - **Disability Advisory Group** - charged with advising on the strategy that underpins the Disability Action Plan and ensures that all policies, procedures and planning processes incorporate the needs of disabled ākongā to create a fully inclusive and equitable educational environment.
  - **Disability Working Group** - responsible for operationalising and monitoring the progress of the Disability Action Plan and other related procedures and practices to ensure they promote inclusion and equity.
  - **Disabled Learners Advisory Group** - to facilitate a strong ākongā voice that provides input into key initiatives, decision making and resolution of issues.

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