

Disability Strategy Unitec & MIT 2022 – 2024

Background

The 2013 New Zealand Disability Survey estimated that one in four New Zealanders were disabled. The survey reported that Māori and Pasifika people had higher disability rates generally.

Disabled people are over-represented in negative education related statistics on achievement, progression, and attainment. Disabled learners aged 16 – 39 have lower average course completion rates (at 55%) than non-disabled learners (at 62%). Education and employment outcomes for disabled Māori are worse than any other ethnic group.

In June 2020, 48.2% of young disabled people were not in employment, education, or training, compared with 10.6% for non-disabled.

According to Statistics NZ and the Tertiary Education Commission, disabled learners are among the most educationally disadvantaged groups in Aotearoa. However, in 2019 the Tertiary Education Commission found that if disabled learners get the right support, they are equally likely to complete their post-secondary qualification as non-disabled people.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2008, Article 24, commits New Zealand to “ensure an inclusive education system at all levels”. Legislation requires that disabled people be given equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to the full range of social, political, and cultural activities.

The Disability Strategy recognises Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the underpinning principles of partnership, participation, and protection. We strive to achieve equity for disabled Māori and full participation and leadership at all levels of tertiary education.

The Disability Strategy upholds the application of the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021 and aligns with the obligations under this code.

On 1 April 2020, Te Pūkenga - New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology was established. Under the Education Act 2020, one of the functions of Te Pūkenga, as outlined in their charter, is to “*meet the needs of all of its learners, in particular, those who are under-served by the education system, including (without limitation) Māori, Pacific, and Disabled Learners*”

In 2020, Te Pūkenga conducted focus groups to understand the Disabled Learner's journey and experience in vocational education in Aotearoa. In August 2021, Te Rito – Insights from learners and staff- opportunities to enhance success for Te Pūkenga disabled learners, was released. The report was informed by over 300 participants in 45 focus groups across Aotearoa and identified eight opportunities for change. Access for disabled people, to the goods, services and facilities provided by tertiary education organisations, must be planned and not an afterthought.

The Te Pūkenga Operating model “*will advance equity and address inequity, especially for Māori, Pacific, and Disabled Learners*”. Te Pūkenga is committed to creating enabling environments through access to information, communication, and physical spaces and tools that consider the needs of learners with different impairments.

In July 2022, Te Pūkenga will submit a Disability Action Plan to TEC along with their investment plan.

Defining Disability

This Strategy uses the NZ Disability Strategy 2016 - 2026 definition of Disability, which embraces the Social Model of Disability. *'Disability is not something individuals have, individuals have impairments, they may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, learning, or other impairments. 'Disability is something that happens when people with impairments face barriers in society'.*

This definition aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, of which New Zealand is a signatory, *"Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."*

There is diversity within disability and disability is intersectional. It is acknowledged and respected that, not all those who fit the above definitions of disability, identify with disability-focused language.

This Strategy uses Identity First language, as "disabled people" which is consistent with underpinning documents referred to in this Strategy. It is an identity that is used with pride and connects people to a community, a culture and history. Person First language puts the person first before any reference to disability. The choices disabled people make about how to describe and define themselves is deeply personal and therefore language used should be adjusted accordingly.

The Disability Project 2021-2022.

In January 2021, Disabled Learners became a learner priority group. In June, a joint working group was tasked with developing a draft Disability Strategy by December 2021. An expert panel of disabled learners was established as an integral part of the working group providing direction, guidance and lived experience. A steering group of senior stakeholders was established, comprising Heads of Departments and Directors from across the institutions. The Learner expert panel developed a research strategy (survey and focus groups) to elicit learner and staff perspectives on the content of the Disability Strategy and the priorities needed to enhance and improve the educational context for disabled learners and staff.

The Access and Inclusion Survey was piloted and then distributed across both institutions. Approximately 900 responses were received and analysed using NVIVO to identify themes. These voices created the principles and outcomes of the strategy. Existing Disability Strategies were synthesised and woven through the Strategy to ensure alignment with national and local initiatives.

Vision

Led by the principles and values of both institutions, we manaaki the success of our disabled learners, staff, and communities. We study and work in a caring, non-disabling, inclusive community where disabled people are valued, participate, contribute, and become all they can be.

Strategic Priorities 2022

- Raise learner outcomes to improve the success of all learners, achieving parity for priority groups.
 - Provide high quality learning, teaching, and applied and targeted research to develop and grow work-ready lifelong learners who maximise relevance to employers
 - Engage and inspire staff so they are proud to work for our organisation and are equipped with the capabilities to support quality learning
 - Focus on helping learners prepare for the disrupted future of work, address sustainability, and safety and wellbeing.
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Principles

This strategy reflects our combined institutional values and principles.

Kaitiakitanga
Guardianship



Whakaūria te mahi tahi; ukaukatia te mātauranga. He kaitiaki katoa tātau.

"Everyone is a kaitiaki (guardian) tasked with maintaining beneficial relationships/work methods, and sustaining the knowledge we work with."


Mahi Kotahitanga
Co-operation



Ko tāu hoe, ko tāku hoe - ka mānu te waka.

"Only with a combined effort, can our expedition begin."

Ngākau Māhaki
Respect



Mā te ngākau māhaki e mau roa ai te whakaute.

"Respect endures when compassion and humility are shown."

Rangatiratanga
Authority and Responsibility



Rangahia te pūkenga, rangahia te wānanga, rangahia te tirahou.

"Weaving skills, weaving knowledge, weaving people capabilities."

Wakaritenga
Legitimacy



Ko te angitū, he toa nā te wakaritenga.

"Success, the champion of quality."



MANAAKITANGA



WE ARE EXCELLENT



WE ARE CONNECTED



WE ARE REAL

The Strategy principles are:

Guided by the collective voice of over 900 learners and staff who responded to the Access & Inclusion Survey and participated in Steering Group discussions.

Underpinned by Te Noho Kotahitanga values, MIT values, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2008, the NZ Disability Strategy 2016 - 2026, the Tertiary Education strategy 2020, Te Rito – Insights from Learners and Staff 2020 and the Education Code of Practice 2021.

Key principles:

- i. Disabled learners/staff are included in **decision making** and **consulted** to determine the effect of policy and practices on their ability to access, enter and achieve in the tertiary environment. “Nothing about us without us”.
- ii. Demonstrate visible senior leadership who champion disability and inclusion.
- iii. Ensure all learners and staff uphold their personal responsibility to **remove barriers** and promote **equity** and **inclusive practice**. It is recognised that family/whānau can play a pivotal role in this process.
- iv. Ensure Disabled learners and staff are fully **supported** to thrive and meet their full potential
- v. Remove **barriers** and **increase accessibility** in all environments.
- vi. Create a positive, safe, and **inclusive** culture around disability
- vii. Create an institution of choice for disabled people by committing to **Universal Design** and external charter marks, for example The Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark, The Hearing Accredited Workplace programme. Accessibility tick, the Accessibility charter.
- viii. Engage and involve staff, learners, networks, forums, **partnerships**, and community/**external** organisations to develop disability and inclusion initiatives.
- ix. Recognise the **diversity and intersectionality** of disability particularly with mental health and well-being.
- x. Promote **awareness** of disabilities and positive messaging of disabled staff and learner success
- xi. **Train** staff and learners on the range of disabilities and best practices for supporting disabled people.

Outcomes for the Success & Inclusion of Disabled learners & staff

These are directly aligned to the NZ Disability Strategy, Tertiary Education Strategy 2016-2026 and the recommendations from Te Rito Insights from Learners and Staff 2021.

1. **Education:** Disabled learners and staff have access to the full range of educational and employment opportunities to maximise their learning and career development.
 2. **Employment** – Disabled learners have the skills, knowledge, and pathways to succeed in work. Disabled staff have a safe, accessible, equitable and inclusive workplace. We are an employer of choice for Disabled people.
 3. **Health and Wellbeing** – Disabled learners and staff have a safe, supportive, and empowering environment that supports both physical and mental health.
 4. **Rights protection** - Disabled learners and staff participate in environments free from all forms of discrimination and harassment, consistent with relevant legislation, National Strategies, and institutional policies.
 5. **Barrier free access** – Barriers to accessibility are properly identified, addressed, and removed. Adopt Universal Design principles and practice across all environments.
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6. **Attitudes** - Disabled learners and staff are treated with dignity and respect as individuals and can realise their individual potential. Through education and action, we reduce and eliminate stigma and discrimination.
7. **Choice and control** – Disabled learners and staff are actively involved in the development of policy and processes. Information is accessible and timely to facilitate participation, contribution and informed decision making.
8. **Leadership** – Disabled learners and staff have opportunities to demonstrate leadership. Decision making on disability issues is informed by robust data and evidence. We have an organisational culture that recognises, and values disabled people.

The Disability Strategy covers a 3-year period which aligns with organisational equity outcomes.

This Strategy should be aligned and embedded into key organisational strategies.

The organisational Disability Action Plan will be the primary vehicle for the implementation of this Strategy.

Links to relevant documents:

[UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

[NZ Disability Strategy 2016 - 2026](#)

[The Tertiary Education Strategy 2020](#)

[Faiva Ora 2016-2021 National Pasifika Disability Plan](#)

[Whāia Te Ao Mārama 2018-2022: The Māori Disability Action Plan](#)

[Te Rito Insights from Disabled Learners 2021](#)

[Education \(Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021](#)

[NZ Disability Survey 2013](#)

[He hauā Māori: Findings from the 2013 Disability Survey](#)
