

Managing your study with a disability, medical or mental health condition

A guide for students

ENQUIRIES
Equity & Diversity
Peribolos East
La Trobe University
Victoria 3086

T 03 9479 2900
F 03 9479 1246
E equity@latrobe.edu.au
latrobe.edu.au/disability

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Welcome

Registering for Disability Support Services is a great first step in getting the support you need to be successful in your study. We realise that it can be challenging managing University study, work and life when you have a disability, medical or mental health condition. Equity & Diversity aims to help you achieve to the best of your abilities.

We hope this document will give you an outline of what supports are available to you, how to activate your supports and some tips on being successful in your study.

The Table of Contents on the first page can help take you quickly to the sections that are important to you. However, we recommend that you put some time aside to read the whole document so that you can be fully across the things you need to know. In addition, you can always dip back into it if something comes up and you can refresh your memory of the details.

How Equity & Diversity can assist you

Equity & Diversity support students who have a disability, medical or mental health condition, or who care for someone who has a disability or who is frail aged (this is so much to write every time, so we are going to shorten it, and from now we will just say 'disability'). We support students throughout their University journey, from Pathways programs to PhDs.

Eligible students need to register with Equity & Diversity to get supports. You can make an appointment with a [Disability Advisor](#) or [register online](#). We want to make it easy for you, so we offer face-to-face, Zoom (it's like Skype) and phone appointments.

You will need to provide supporting documentation, which can be a letter from a relevant health practitioner that complies with the [Health Practitioner Statement Guidelines](#) or a completed Health Practitioner's Statement which can be found on our [disability support website](#). If you are not sure that you have the right documentation, please contact us and we can advise you.

Things to do while waiting for an appointment with a Disability Advisor

For your first appointment

1. complete the [online registration form](#)
2. make sure you have your medical documentation ready – check out the website for details
3. bring along the details of your subjects and subject coordinators to your first appointment
4. make sure you have logged on to LMS and know how to use University systems and if you are having trouble get help from [Ask La Trobe](#).

Extensions on Assignments

If you need an extension on an assignment, have you submitted a request via the online [Extension Request portal](#) or directly to your academic? If it is before the 3-day submission deadline prior to the assessment date you may not need further assistance. Use your LAP as evidence for your extension. Usually information on how to get an extension is in your LMS under your Subject Outline.

Special Consideration

If you want to apply for [Special Consideration](#), look at the website to make sure you meet the criteria. Remember your application usually needs to be submitted within 3 working days, so you may need to do this before your appointment. You can send through supporting documentation after you have submitted your original application.

Academic study support

[The Learning Hub](#) is the place for every student, at every level, on every campus to develop and extend academic skills. The Learning Hub offers you fundamental skills help, small group and one-to-one advice from Peer Learning Advisors, Student Learning Lecturers, English Language Development tutors, Library Learning Advisors and other expert tutors. In addition, the online help at Studiosity can give you feedback on your assessments. Just type 'Learning Hub' or 'Studiosity' into the 'Search' field of your My LMS page.

Alongside subject LMS resources, there are additional resources like [Achieve@Uni](#) and [LinkedIn Learning](#), which has thousands of training programs, which you can access for free with your student login.

There are also many useful materials on the [Student Learning Website](#). You can also contact your Academic and make an appointment to discuss any difficulties.

Tips for being successful with your study

If you have a disability, mental health issue or medical condition there are things you can do to improve your chance of success.



Select the right subjects and the number of subjects that is manageable for you. If you are not sure you are in the right course or subjects speak to your course coordinator or make an appointment through [Career Hub](#).



Attend all classes and if it is online make sure you listen/watch or catch up with every lecture - keep up to date as the weeks progress. Try to participate in group work. This way you can make friends or connect with other students.



University systems such as LMS, University email, Allocate+, Turnitin are important so learn these early. Get help from [ASK Services](#) if you are struggling.



Being organised is one of the most important factors in being successful at university. You can create a schedule for each semester for all your

assignment due dates, test dates, or project deadlines. Look at this every day. Keep organised filing systems for each subject or assessment. Here are some tips on [how to enhance your studying environment](#).



Be aware of your limitations such as knowing you will take longer to complete assignments and having to start working earlier than normal. So, set aside time for working on assessments and studying that is convenient for you. Put this time in your schedule. If you can't do marathon study sessions make sure you pace out your study schedule so you can study effectively.



Get help early if you come across a concept or have an assessment that you don't understand, don't be afraid to ask for clarification. You can contact your lecturer directly by emailing them to set up an appointment time. You can also ask for help from the approachable and friendly [Peer Learning Advisors](#). The [Student Learning](#) and [Starting Out at Uni](#) websites also have lots of helpful resources.



Use your support networks and get advice or help from friends, fellow students, your family or support services at the University. Be proactive in using these supports. If you need to access La Trobe support services, get in early when the problem is small. Definitely seek help if your problems have escalated.



Keep in contact with your Disability Advisor if things are not going well. They can help you prioritise your work, seek extensions or additional support and suggest other helpful strategies. Be familiar with your Learning Access Plan and ensure you fulfil the responsibilities you have to get this implemented. Make sure you check your emails regularly and respond promptly.



Polish your time management skills, it's a key factor in student success. Learn how to balance study, work, family and social life and set realistic goals for yourself. See [6 top tips for time management](#).



Deal with procrastination. Procrastination is a pitfall to achieving your goals. If you plan on doing an activity, stick to your schedule. As the old saying goes "don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today". Procrastinating causes stress and leads to assessments not being in on time and of course, more stress. Set your goals, prioritise them and stick to them. Get help from a PLA or [Counselling](#) if you need assistance.



Deal with social media and the distractions of technology. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, gaming and other distractions can get in the way of getting your work done. You may need to use willpower to resist the temptations. Consider turning off notifications, find apps to help with this, or even turn your phone off, and plan times to interact with social media. **Stick to the plan** (see Polish your time management skills).

* Icons from www.flaticon.com

Your Disability Advisor is there for you

When you register with Equity & Diversity, you will be connected with a Disability Advisor (DA) who will be there to support you throughout your University journey. If your DA is unavailable, another DA can always assist you. If you want to see a DA face-to-face just let us know.

Depending on your individual needs, your DA may provide a range of supports that can be written in a Learning Access Plan (LAP). These could include:

- Alternative Exam Arrangements (AEAs)
- Extensions on assessments
- Negotiating with academics
- Provision of reading materials in an accessible format
- Accessibility equipment
- Notetakers and other support staff
- Advice and referral to other University support services.

Remember, you need to be proactive to get the appropriate support in a timely fashion. Contact your DA early if issues or difficulties arise.

Understanding your Learning Access Plan (LAP)

After you have completed your [registration](#) and discussed your needs with your DA, you may be given a Learning Access Plan (LAP). The LAP is a set of *recommendations* for adjustments to ensure your learning support needs are met. The recommendations in your LAP are based on the medical documentation you provide, the impact of your disability and your individual needs.

It is important that you give your Disability Advisor as much information as possible, so they can assess and support you with your disability and develop an appropriate LAP.

Recommendations for support may include modifications to participation in classes, ability to apply for extensions, modified exam conditions or support during placements. We call these 'reasonable adjustments'. However, when we recommend reasonable adjustments, it is important to maintain academic standards, and ensure equity for other students. Therefore, modifications to your LAP may need to be made in consultation with your academics.

When making recommendations in a LAP, the DA ensures that adjustments:

- take into account the effect of your condition on study
- consider the impact of the adjustments on anyone else affected
- do not compromise the academic integrity of the course
- encourage your independence
- consider your rights, responsibilities and privacy.

Your DA will email you an electronic copy of your LAP. It then becomes your responsibility to distribute this to relevant academics as required. Academics need to know what supports you

need so that they can respond in a timely manner. It is recommended that you give your LAP to your academics as soon as you receive it or at the start of each semester.

Some students don't require a LAP and your DA will discuss this with you at the time of your appointment.

Exams and in-class tests

Many subjects have exams or in-class tests as part of the assessment process. Where appropriate, your DA may recommend some Alternative Exam Arrangements (AEAs) to minimise the impact of your condition. Examples of AEAs include additional time, a room with less students, ergonomic furniture, scribes and alternative format reading materials.

- Examinations conducted during the formal examination period, at the end of each semester, are organised by Student Operations and Equity & Diversity work in collaboration with them to implement your AEAs.
 - You need to be registered early so we can make arrangements before the end of semester.
 - You need to respond to emails about your AEAs close to the end of each semester.
- Your Academics organise and manage in-class tests in accordance with your LAP.
 - In order to give academics time to organise the AEAs, you must advise them of your LAP at least two weeks prior to in-class tests/examinations to confirm the use of alternative arrangements.
 - If they do not get adequate notice, they may not be able to provide the adjustments.

Getting extensions when you need them

There may be times when you are not able to meet deadlines for submitting assessments. When this happens, you need to apply for an extension in a timely manner (usually at least 3 days before it is due). You need to find out the usual process for extensions in your study area.

If you have a LAP, you may be able to use it as a supporting document. If the reason you are requesting the extension is unrelated to your LAP, you will need to provide alternative documentation and apply through the usual process, often through the LMS.

If you are applying for an extension less than three days before the due date, or after the due date, you may need to apply for an extension through the [Special Consideration](#) process. It is advisable to be aware of the strict conditions that apply to applications for Special Consideration. If you are unsure about this you can submit a question through [ASK La Trobe](#) or contact your [Disability Advisor](#).

Remember, while you may be entitled to some extensions, there are academic policies preventing extensions being unreasonably long. For example, if all students in a subject are set the same assignment task, it is not possible to extend a submission date past when these

are returned to other students. It is another reason to get assessments started early and if you are still struggling, speak to your DA for advice.

Special Consideration

[Special Consideration](#) is a process used when you experience serious, adverse, unforeseen or exceptional circumstance that have an immediate impact preventing you from submitting an assignment on time, requesting an extension on time, or sitting an exam.

If you already have a LAP, you will need to demonstrate that;

- there is a significant exacerbation to your condition which prevented you from applying in time or completing on time
- you experienced unforeseen or exceptional circumstances, not related to the LAP.

BEWARE: Your application may be rejected if your medical documentation does not clearly indicate an exacerbation of a condition or cover the time of the submission of your assessment.

We recommend that if possible, you discuss any application for Special Consideration with the relevant academic prior to submitting it.

If you are concerned or unsure of the best course of action, or your application is rejected, you are encouraged to contact your DA.

For more information, search 'special consideration' on the website.

Managing group assignments

Group work assignments are wonderful learning opportunities and can help build knowledge, confidence, skill and abilities that you will take into future employment and life. However they can have challenges which you might like to consider before you start work together.

Depending on the nature of your disability or condition you may need to consider disclosing the impacts on yourself and your study to other students. If you are unsure about whether this is the right thing to do, or how to do this you can discuss this with your Disability Advisor.

Be sure you understand the aims and the outcomes of the assessment before you begin. Decide early who is doing what part and clearly understand what is required of you. Give thought to how you will communicate with your team, what works best for you in relation to time and your availability, whether you can attend meetings face-to-face or electronically. Your contribution may also involve a presentation at the end. There are great resources on [presentations](#) and [teamwork](#) through the library [achieve@uni](#) guides.

It may be possible to adjust some group work assignments to make them work for you, however in some areas of study group work is an inherent requirement of the course and may not be able to be modified. Thinking ahead and having these discussions before the assessment commencement is very important.

Clear, calm and respectful communication between group members is essential. If you are having problems with your groupwork or your condition is having a significant impact on your participation, discuss possible solutions with your academic staff or your Disability Advisor. Get help early - communication is key.

Placements, Practicums and Work Integrated Learning

Depending on your course, you may be required to participate in placements or have an opportunity to engage in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs. Sometimes the things that you need to support you with study can be quite different to what you need in a workplace placement situation.

Recommendations about your placement may be included in your LAP, or in a LAP specifically designed for your placements. For example, you may need adjustments to location, timing, equipment or supports. Ask your DA to discuss these with you each semester and get in early as it can take many months to ensure some adjustments are in place. Remember the University has to work with external organisations who offer placements to students, which can take time.

How to be prepared for placements

Think about your needs well ahead of the placement time and speak to academic staff. It can take a long time for the University to find an organisation that can accommodate your needs, find the right supportive environment or the right supervisor. Your Disability Advisor can also discuss the pros and cons of disclosure, help you manage any risks that may impact on your success, and assist you if there are problems while you are on placement.

If you are having problems, issues or concerns while on placement, connect as soon as possible with both your DA and relevant academic - failing or doing poorly on a placement can have a significant impact on your course progression and success in future employment.

Being a carer for a person with a disability

We understand that being a [carer of someone who has a disability](#) or a frail aged person, can be physically and emotionally tiring and that you may find it difficult to keep up with your studies. Your DA will discuss the impact of your caring role on your studies and develop a LAP that incorporates appropriate recommendations. Whilst carers are ineligible for AEA's, your LAP may cover extensions, class attendance and placements.

To register, you need to be providing personal care, support and assistance to a person with a disability or somebody who is frail aged and substantially dependent on you for ongoing care. However, you are not considered a carer just because you have a partner, are a parent, or are helping with aspects of care for a person. If you are not sure, give us a call and we can talk you through this.

Getting help with your academic work

There is a lot of help available to get you started, keep progressing and get your assessments done. Don't be afraid to get help when you need it, communication is key.

A good place to start is the [Learning Hub](#). You can access information about the Hub by typing 'Learning Hub' into the 'Search' field of your My LMS page. There are the Peer Learning Advisors, known as PLAs, who can assist with time management, developing a study plan, getting started on your assignments, planning your approach and helping you get unstuck if things are getting difficult.

The Library is a great place to start and, on most campuses, the Learning Hub is physically in the library as well as online. They can help you with writing skills, study skills, English-language and maths skills and heaps of other things.

There is also **Studiosity**:

- An Australian based online academic support service
- Available for online chat Sunday to Thursday 3.00 pm – 12.00 am
- Opportunity for you to submit a written assignment for feedback on language, grammar and structure, not on content
- Free service, search '**Studiosity**' on your My LMS page

There is also a great [Academic Referencing Tool](#) and [Assignment Calculator](#) to help you keep on track.

Physical Access

La Trobe has many campuses across Victoria as well as Sydney and La Trobe online. For information about how to get to your campus and find parking and disability access, check out the website at www.latrobe.edu.au/campuses and look for the mobility maps for your location.

If you have a significant mobility impairment or use a wheelchair, make sure you let your Disability Advisor and academic staff know of your needs. This way they can be sure to schedule your classes in an accessible venue. Give everyone plenty of notice as it may take time to move class schedules around to ensure your classes are in an accessible location.

If you find it challenging finding your way around campus, ask your DA how we can assist.

Remission of Debt

If you withdraw from a subject after the [subject census date](#) you may apply to have any fees you have paid refunded to you.

If you are a **domestic** Commonwealth Supported HECS-HELP or FEE-HELP student, you may be eligible to apply for a remission of debt because of special circumstances if you:

- withdraw after the subject census date
- were unable to finish or withdraw from a course.

Special circumstances

Special circumstances are medical, personal, family, employment or course related issues. You will need documents to prove your circumstances - see examples below.

Special circumstances are not:

- lack of knowledge of HECS-HELP, FEE-HELP or university procedures and rules
- being unable to repay a HELP debt.

If you are an **international** student holding a student visa please read the information relevant to you on the [Refunds](#) website.

For more details and to find the [remission of debt application form](#) go to the website.

Leave of Absence (Intermission)

You can apply for a Leave of Absence (up to 12 months depending on the circumstances) if you're experiencing significant difficulties in your personal or academic life – financial, emotional, medical, employment or study related.

Before taking a Leave of Absence

Discuss your plans with:

- your course adviser (contact [Ask La Trobe](#) to arrange a discussion)
- your DA, [counselling](#) or [careers services staff](#)
- [La Trobe International staff](#) if you are an international student holding a student visa.

Note that taking leave may impact your course in the following ways:

Study plan and subject selection

If you miss prerequisite or core subjects you may need to wait until the following semester or year for them to be available again, which may cause delays in completing co-requisite subjects.

Maximum length of time to complete a course

There is a maximum length of time allowed to complete most courses - usually twice the standard course length, plus one year. If leave or part-time study puts you beyond the maximum timeframe, you may not be eligible to complete your course.

For more information and to [make an application](#) go to the website.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Equity & Diversity collects and maintains personal and health information in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, and the Health Records Act 2001. The LAP is a confidential document that is held by the student and Equity & Diversity, which can be shared with others with your permission.

Equity & Diversity is committed to protecting and maintaining the privacy, accuracy and security of your personal information. Any sharing of your personal information must comply with [La Trobe University Privacy Policy](#).

You have a right of access to, and correction of, your personal information in accordance with privacy legislation and the Privacy Policy. Please direct any enquiries to privacy@latrobe.edu.au.

Rights and Responsibilities

As a student with a disability, you are entitled to supports to enable you to participate on the same basis as other students. Moreover, La Trobe University is committed to providing equitable access to education as set out in the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#).

As a student, you have responsibilities that are set out in the La Trobe [Student Charter](#), statutes and regulations, as well as policies and procedures. Make sure you read the [Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) developed in consultation with students. It is a brief summary of your rights, responsibilities and on what you can seek representation.

NDIS Pre-planning Toolkit

Your disability may mean you require extra support to complete your chosen course to ensure your participation is on the same basis as other students. The NDIS is responsible for supports that assist you to lessen the impact of your disability on activities that are not directly related to your education or training. The University is required by law to provide support directly related to your studies.

These [NDIS Pre-Planning Toolkits](#) will help you identify what supports you may need, who is responsible for providing them and how you can access them.

Moving from study to employment

There is a program designed for students to prepare actively for life beyond La Trobe, it is [Career Ready](#). There are great opportunities at La Trobe to undertake Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and placements and to extend your skills by studying overseas, volunteering and leadership opportunities. These will all assist you in being more employable when you finish your degree.

Search the website for **Career Ready**, get in contact with a Career Advisor, and find out about the range of supports to help you develop your resume, get additional skills and be ready for that big interview.

Connecting on social media

La Trobe have a number of official channels via MyLaTrobe student social pages on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Consider liking them and keeping connected with events and activities on your campus. You may also like to check out the social media channels for your [Student Union or Association](#) on your campus.