



# **EQUITY ADJUSTMENT PLAN GUIDELINES**

**INFORMATION FOR RELEVANT  
SUPPORT SERVICES AND OTHER  
UNIVERSITY STAFF**

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## **INCLUSIONUC**

InclusionUC coordinates and implements services and supports to assist students with disabilities and/or health conditions. This is achieved through the provision of reasonable adjustments to enable equal access and participation in university life.

## **NGUNNAWAL CENTRE**

The Ngunnawal Centre is the focal point for Indigenous students at UC. The Centre's aim is to work with students to help them achieve academic success through educational programs and confidential support services.

## **STUDENT EQUITY AND PARTICIPATION**

The Student Success programs are aimed to improve access, participation, retention, and success of students from targeted equity groups. The team works alongside students, empowering them to navigate their university journey.

## **STUDENT WELLBEING AND SUPPORT**

The Student Wellbeing and Support team provides individualised support, guidance and advice to help students navigate their journey at UC in the best way possible. The team can provide confidential advice, referrals and trauma-informed support to students to overcome any challenges they may face while studying at UC.

The Equity Adjustment Plan Guidelines support the [Inclusive Access to Education Policy](#)

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# CONTEXT

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To develop and sustain more inclusive learning environments that provide genuine opportunities and support for students with diverse backgrounds and experiences, the University is introducing a program to implement equity adjustments for Refugee, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and students in significant wellbeing crisis. These adjustments will mitigate the impact of social/cultural/institutional barriers for these identified student cohorts through targeted service design and offer trauma-informed support and care for students.

The equity adjustment strategy provides adjustments for students who are from specific vulnerable cohorts. Recent research has shown that students from these cohorts who are living with disability, ongoing health conditions and/or caring responsibilities are less likely to seek support through mainstream services leading to poorer educational experiences and outcomes for these students. The equity adjustment strategy addresses this by providing support to these students based on either a personal statement, or identification in an equity group – **not** verified by medical documentation.

Offering UC students support through equity adjustments aligns with two theoretical frameworks currently driving support services in the Higher Education setting – Intersectionality and the Psychosocial model.

By taking an intersectional approach, support services and institutions are encouraged to identify, challenge and address the ways that the inherent values and mainstream process can discriminate against students whose experiences are a complex intersection of compounded inequities including race, gender, disability, socio-economic and other identity categories (Nichols & Stahl, 2019). The UC equity adjustment strategy aims to improve current practices to determine ‘reasonable adjustments.’ The current process of registering with a distinct disability support unit and providing current medical documentation can alienate those students whose experiences do not necessarily align with a western medical model and/or western perceptions of disability.

Furthermore, this proposal is informed by a psychosocial model of support, which takes into consideration both a medical and social view of disability. Psychosocial disability can arise when a social environment presents barriers to an individual’s equality with others. UC equity adjustments aim to reduce psychosocial barriers faced by specific student cohorts. This service model aims to address these issues through proactive identification and outreach, developing appropriate and individualised support and by reducing the number of support services a vulnerable student need engage with.

# SERVICE PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH

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When supporting or providing equity adjustments to students, the following principles will guide decision making and service delivery. The aim is to:

- Provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds
- Design flexible and accessible learning environments that accommodate the diversity of learners
- Take a person-centred approach to service delivery, treating each student as an individual
- Promote strategies and adjustments that enable students to maximise their capacity and skills
- Empower students to be independent learners through our conversations and services
- Maintain the academic integrity of the University. The adjustments aim to support students to achieve required academic standards, Inherent Requirements and meet any relevant accreditation requirements.

Implementing Equity Adjustment Plans (EAPs) is a strategy that provides additional support for students who are from nominated cohorts or those who have experienced a significant wellbeing crisis. Support will be based on either a personal statement, identification in a specific equity group, or direct referral from a support team – **not** verified by medical documentation.

The EAP will document and communicate equity adjustments that the University will provide a student for their enrolled course. The EAP will be administered and distributed through InclusionUC to ensure a smooth user experience for both student and academic using a similar process and documentation as is currently used for developing and implementing Reasonable Adjustment Plans.

**Please note Equity Adjustment Plans will be indistinguishable from Reasonable Adjustment Plans so unit convenors will not be aware of whether they are implementing a reasonable adjustment or equity adjustment. This will protect student privacy and minimise administrative burden for unit conveners. If unit convenors have any queries related to the implementation of adjustments, they are encouraged to contact InclusionUC.**

Eligible students from the nominated equity cohorts will be able to access equity adjustments via referral from:

- Student Equity and Participation
- Ngunnawal Centre
- Student Wellbeing and Support

Each team will follow their own documented process for identifying and recommending equity adjustments for students.

Equity adjustments will be put in place for a minimum of 6 months and will be reviewed regularly. InclusionUC will contact the relevant Support Service prior to the student's EAP expiry. The require duration

for each EAP will be determined by the relevant team in consultation with the student and their ongoing circumstances.

Details of the equity adjustments required for the student will be provided to InclusionUC by the Support Service. InclusionUC will then:

- Create the student's file in the InclusionUC CRM Dashboard
- Generate the EAP
- Distribute the equity adjustment plans via the same portal that is currently used for Reasonable Adjustment Plans (RAPs)

# SYSTEMS

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The systems used for day-to-day service delivery are CRM and HPE Content Manager.

## CRM

The Customer Relationship Management system is a Microsoft system used by multiple teams across UC.

- In CRM, all e-mails to [inclusion@canberra.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@canberra.edu.au) are received in the InclusionUC dashboard, sorted, and responded to.
- The 'Inclusion Records' Database is also located in the CRM. This database stores each registered student's unique record, including the student's Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP), medical details, course and units of study, and case notes.
- Access to the [inclusion@canberra.edu.au](mailto:inclusion@canberra.edu.au) dashboard and InclusionUC records are strictly limited to InclusionUC Team members only. Other university staff do not have access to view e-mail exchanges to this address or student inclusion records.

## HPE CONTENT MANAGER

- All student medical documentation, support letters and consent documents are stored in the HPE documentation. HPE Content manager is also referred to as TRIM.

# EQUITY ADJUSTMENTS FOR IDENTIFIED STUDENT COHORTS

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Students are eligible to access support if they:

- are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- have a refugee background, or,
- are experiencing significant wellbeing crisis

## Significant Wellbeing Crisis

A significant wellbeing crisis is an incident or event that profoundly impacts a student's wellbeing, and can limit their access to additional support resources, including documentation. Providing a trauma-informed approach is essential to ensure the student does not have to retell their story, and can access safe, timely, appropriate support.

A significant wellbeing crisis includes a student who is impacted by:

- domestic and/or family violence - involves any violent, threatening, coercive, or controlling behaviour that occurs in present or past family, domestic, or intimate relationships.
- sexual violence - can include sexual assault, abuse and/or harassment
- unexpected incidents, including but not limited to, natural disasters, international conflict and political changes.

## Registering for an EAP

Students requiring equity adjustments will need to engage with InclusionUC, the Ngunnawal Centre, Student Equity and Participation or Student Wellbeing and Support units. To register for this, students must:

- Be known to the relevant UC support service
- Consult with and provide necessary details regarding their circumstances to their relevant UC support service
- Provide a signed consent form to enable the creation and distribution of their EAP to unit convenors of the unit(s) they are enrolled in

The steps involved in registering a new student (figure 1, new registration overview below) includes assessment of their circumstances and consultation with the student regarding the impact of these factors on their studies.

Students can access services and register at any time during their studies.

### Consultation

- Relevant support team engages with student.
- Information obtained and recorded by Advisor.
- Discuss the impact of circumstances on their studies.
- Refer to various support services where necessary.
- Appropriate adjustments discussed.
- Discuss validity date based on circumstances.
- Explain process to receive adjustments.
- Discuss and sign consent form (electronic copy to be forwarded to InclusionUC, student to keep hardcopy).

### Case Management

- Case note the meeting capturing the reasons for decisions.
- Relevant details emailed to InclusionUC (template provided).
- Student's signed consent form emailed to InclusionUC.
- When confirmation from InclusionUC is received, email student providing link to EAP.

### Referral to InclusionUC

- InclusionUC receives referral and signed consent form
- Create student Inclusion Record in CRM
- Generate and process EAP
- Email link and information to relevant team to distribute to student.

## Consultation

During student consultation the below information should be obtained:

- Student Name
- Student Number
- Course
- General outline of extenuating circumstances impacting studies. For example:
  - Background
  - Current living arrangements
  - Health conditions/ disability
  - Caring responsibilities
  - Mobility issues
  - Other issues/ concerns
- Relevant medical documentation
- Support networks/strategies already in place

- Aspects of study the student finds particularly challenging
- Educational adjustments the student is seeking
- Awareness of the Inherent Requirements for the student's course of study

**Please note if a student has a disability and/or health condition or is a registered carer of someone with a disability and requires support beyond the standard adjustments available through equity adjustments, it is recommended they register with InclusionUC.**

## Case notes

Case notes provide a record of the consultation or interaction with a student. Case notes are recorded electronically and are entered into the students CRM Record under 'Notes' as soon as possible after an interaction. Case notes should be objective and not include emotional, subjective, or judgemental language.

Case notes should be succinct but contain sufficient information for someone to understand the key discussion points and how these are linked to decisions/outcomes.

Case notes may include the following:

- People present at the consultation
- Purpose of consultation or interaction
- Summary of matters discussed
- Summary of decisions and agreed actions
- Recommendations and follow up

## Consent to Service and Distribution of EAPs

During the consultation, students will be requested to sign a consent form indicating that the InclusionUC team can store their personal information and distribute their EAPs. Students must indicate whether they would like InclusionUC to distribute their EAP or if they would like to self-distribute. The signed consent form is scanned and stored in the student's TRIM file on HPE Content Manager.

### InclusionUC Distribution

EAPs will be made available to relevant unit convenors on the UC Staff portal through their staff login once the student enrolls in the unit. At the beginning of major teaching periods, unit convenors are emailed the link to their student EAPs. Students are still encouraged to meet with their Unit Convenor to discuss their adjustments. As previously mentioned, the EAPs will be distributed following the same process as RAPs and will appear the same to unit convenors.

### Student Distribution

Where a student elects to distribute their own EAP, students are required to provide this to their Unit Convenor(s) within 5 working days of receipt from InclusionUC.

## Referral

When the referring team has obtained the necessary information and consulted with the student, a formal referral needs to be emailed to InclusionUC along with the signed consent form. **No case notes or supporting documentation (if available) needs to be sent to InclusionUC**, this is for the referring team to save as they see appropriate – though it is strongly recommended all interactions related to equity adjustments are documented and saved.

InclusionUC will generate the EAP in CRM and provide details to the referring team. InclusionUC will then contact the student with a *welcome email* detailing how the student can access their EAP, how to utilise the adjustments they have and who to contact if they have any queries.

InclusionUC will manage any queries from students or academics regarding the implementation or facilitation of adjustments.

## Standardised Equity Adjustments

**Please note if a student has a disability and/or health condition or is a registered carer of someone with a disability and requires support beyond the standard adjustments available through equity adjustments, it is recommended they register with InclusionUC.**

### Assignment Extensions

Assignment extensions can be added as an adjustment where a student's situation impacts on their ability to manage assignment submissions and would benefit from being able to access assignment extensions without explaining their circumstances in each instance.

Students with this adjustment are required to submit an assignment extension request form together with a copy of their EAP to the unit convenor, prior to the assignment deadline.

Where a student requests an assignment extension using their EAP, they are still required to apply in accordance with the procedures documented in the relevant Unit Outline.

### Assignment Extensions for Group Work

If a student requires consideration for an extension on a group assignment, the same process should be followed to that of applying for an individual assignment extension.

Apply for an extension in accordance with the procedures documented in the unit outline. They are required to attach their EAP to the extension request.

Please note, the ability to provide the extension for group assignments is more complex than individual assignments. The unit convenor must consider multiple factors, notably:

- What is the impact on other group members?
- What are the timeline implications for other assessment items later in the unit? for both you and another group member?
- Is there a peer feedback component attached to the assignment?

- Can the assignment be submitted in two separate parts, e.g., yours one week after the other group members?

If the unit convenor assesses these factors and deems it to be unequitable on other group members, they may not be able to approve the extension.

### Assignment Extension Requests Beyond 7 Days or Late Submissions

In accordance with UC Assessment Policy and Procedures, for extension requests beyond the 7-day period on the EAP, or late submissions due to unforeseen personal reasons (e.g., hospitalisation, sudden death in the family etc), students are encouraged to contact their unit convenor with additional documentation, such as a medical certificate, to support a further extension. Students may also seek assistance from either the Ngunnawal Centre, Student Equity and Participation or the Student Wellbeing and Support team in these instances.

### Attendance and Participation Consideration

Where circumstances impact students' ability to attend class, adjustments can be added to indicate that attendance and/or participation at lectures, tutorials and workshops may be impacted.

Attendance consideration provides the student some flexibility when they are unable to attend classes, tutorials, or workshops due to the impact of their circumstances. However, this does not allow students to miss all lectures or tutorials. Also, where a certain level of attendance is required for assessment purposes, students will still need to meet these requirements.

Participation consideration allows students who find group or class interactions challenging, the ability to limit their participation. Where possible, students should be encouraged to participate as needed and addition of this as an adjustment should be considered only when students have complex situations that limit the student's capacity significantly. In some units, participation in class is marked and further discussion with the unit convenor would be required to reach an agreement on how this will be managed.

### Test and Exam Arrangements

If a student's personal circumstances impact on their ability to complete tests and exams, some alternate test or exam arrangements can be considered. This could include:

- Additional time (10 minutes per 60 minutes)
- Small group room for tests or exams
- Rest breaks

The above adjustments are added in the alternate arrangements table of the student's InclusionUC record. These adjustments need to be added for tests and exams separately.

### Additional Time

Additional time to complete exams and tests will be considered as an equity adjustment for HV/Refugee students, in year one (up to 24 credit points), only. This is due to the bespoke challenges this cohort of student encounter when transitioning into higher education in Australia. A combination of limited literacy skills in their own language, compounded by learning a new language, severely impacts their capacity for success in the first 12 months of study.

## Rest Breaks

Rest breaks are provided so that the examination session does not become an endurance test for the student, particularly if additional time has been allowed. A student who finds themselves under heightened personal issues may require rest breaks to relieve stress.

A student who becomes extremely stressed during examinations because of their personal circumstances or psychological condition may require rest breaks to reduce stress/anxiety levels. The rest break may be used to move around the room or to take short walks outside/to the bathroom (under supervision).

## Guidelines for the Provision of Rest Breaks

Where rest breaks are allowed, it is useful for the supervisor and the student to have a clear understanding of the terms under which this strategy will be used, namely:

- rests breaks are included in the extra time allocation
- the role of the supervisor in monitoring and encouraging the use of rest breaks; and
- the activities permitted during rest breaks (e.g. walking, eating, toileting)
- activities NOT permitted during rest breaks are smoking and use of a mobile phone

## Reviewing or updating an EAP

When an EAP is expiring, students will be sent an email by InclusionUC advising them approximately three months beforehand. It is then the student's responsibility to contact InclusionUC, the Ngunnawal Centre, Student Equity and Participation or the Student Wellbeing and Support team to determine the next course of action; this being to let the EAP expire or to request its extension, the reasons for this and any possible amendments that may be required.

InclusionUC will be notified by the relevant support unit of next steps and revised expiry dates.

After the EAP has been extended, the student will receive an email from InclusionUC confirming this.

## Other Supports and Services

### Referrals to other services

Where appropriate, students will also be provided a referral to other UC services.

- Study Skills
- Medical and Counselling
- Careers UC
- InclusionUC
- Ngunnawal Centre
- Student Equity and Participation
- Student Wellbeing and Support
- UC Student Representative Council and Student Advocacy

## Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is an important part of university life for all students. The UC support services will endeavour to foster this skill and encourage students to talk to their lecturers, tutors and unit convenors, throughout the semester, about their support needs and any perceived problems. This self-advocacy can lay the groundwork for a constructive and positive student/lecturer relationship. Often this is all that is required for adjustments for lectures, tutorials and assessment tasks to be agreed upon and implemented.

Where self-advocacy is not an option or has become problematic, relevant advisors from the support units referenced in this document are available to advocate on the student's behalf. Much of this will include assistance negotiating equity adjustments.

The Equity Adjustment Plan Guidelines support the [\*Inclusive Access to Education Policy\*](#)