

Disability Education Inclusion Strategy

2027-2031

Status: Draft for consultation

Term: 2027-2031

Strategy owner: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Alternative and accessible formats of this Strategy will be available on request.

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Acknowledgement

Southern Cross University acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our campuses and students are located. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to land, waters, culture and community.

Southern Cross University also acknowledges the students and staff with disability, people with lived and living experience, and members of the University community whose experiences, advice and participation have informed SCU's disability inclusion work and this Strategy.

Foreword

Placeholder text -

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Professor Julie Jomeen
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

1. Identification and scope

1.1 Identification

The Southern Cross University Disability Education Inclusion Strategy 2027–2030 sets out the University's commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible educational environment where students with disability can learn, participate and thrive with dignity, equity and independence. Guided by the principles of human rights, authentic co-design, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), equity and intersectionality, accountable and transparent leadership and continuous improvement, the Strategy recognises disability as a natural

part of human diversity and positions inclusion as a shared responsibility across the University. Developed through authentic co-design that centres lived and living experience, the Strategy provides a university-wide framework for embedding accessibility and inclusion across the educational experience and implementing inclusive design from the outset. It is Southern Cross University's formally identified Disability Education Inclusion Strategy and establishes the framework through which the University will implement, monitor and review its commitments, including the applicable requirements referred to in section 37B of the Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Guidelines 2022 (Cth), s 37B (inserted by the Higher Education Support (Other Grants) Amendment (Disability Support Fund) Guidelines 2026 (Cth)).

1.2 Scope

This Strategy applies to the education of students with disability across Southern Cross University, including students studying:

- on campus;
- online;
- through mixed or flexible modes;
- in laboratories, studios, clinics and practical environments;
- on field trips and site visits;
- through Work Integrated Learning (WIL), professional experience and placements; and
- through educational activities delivered with or by third parties on behalf of SCU.

It applies across the student education journey from prospective-student information and outreach activities, admission and enrolment through to participation, assessment, progression, completion, graduation and transition to employment or further study.

It includes accessibility of curriculum and teaching; reasonable adjustments; assessment; learning resources and technologies; student support services; fieldwork and placements; disability-related complaints; inclusive and respectful student experiences; safe, respectful and inclusive learning environments; and/or freedom from discrimination, bias and adverse treatment; staff capability; and monitoring of educational experience and outcomes.

Employment-related matters for staff with disability are outside the scope of this Strategy and are addressed through the Disability Workforce Inclusion Strategy.

1.3 Relationship with the Disability Inclusion Action Plan

This Strategy supports SCU's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2027-2030.

The DIAP is the University's framework for disability inclusion. It is structured around three pillars: Inclusive Educational Experience; Accessible and Engaging Environments; and Inclusive Systems and Governance.

This Strategy has a narrower purpose: to establish how SCU will provide and assure accessible and inclusive education for students with disability.

2. Our commitment

2.1 Our vision

Students with disability experience Southern Cross University as an accessible, inclusive and equitable place to learn, participate, develop, belong and succeed.

Southern Cross University's purpose is "changing lives through revolutionary learning and research with real impact". This Strategy advances that purpose for students with disability and supports the University's

commitment to “enhance equity, supporting diverse students’ lives”, a key commitment within the **Revolutionary Teaching and Learning** pillar of Strategy 2030

2.2 Our organising commitment

The central purpose of this Strategy is to create an accessible and inclusive educational experience where students with disability are supported to participate, succeed and thrive.

Accessibility will be increasingly embedded by design across SCU's education system, creating inclusive learning experiences that anticipate and respond to the diverse needs of students from the outset.

Where individual adjustments are required, SCU will provide clear, consistent, transparent and responsive processes that enable students to access the support they need with ease, dignity and confidence.

2.3 How we understand disability

SCU adopts the social model of disability. This recognises that disability can arise through interaction between an individual and environments, systems, attitudes and practices that have not been designed inclusively. The focus is not on the individual; it is about identifying and removing barriers so that students with disability can access, participate in, and achieve educational outcomes on the same basis as their peers

SCU recognises both person-first and identity-first disability language and respects individual preferences for how disability is described and discussed

2.4 Universal design and individual adjustment

SCU will progressively embed Universal Design for Learning and accessibility into curriculum, assessment, technology and learning environments.

Universal Design for Learning works alongside individual consultation and reasonable adjustment to create responsive, accessible and inclusive educational experiences.

SCU recognises that disability is experienced differently by each individual and that effective support requires a personalised approach. SCU is committed to working in partnership with students to understand their strengths, goals and individual circumstances in order to implement reasonable adjustments that remove barriers and enable equitable participation, independence, wellbeing, and academic success throughout the student journey

3. How this Strategy was developed

This Strategy draws on the evidence, consultation and co-design undertaken in 2026 to develop the proposed DIAP.

That consultation involved 344 survey respondents and 55 workshop participants. Participants described SCU as a welcoming community with positive attitudes towards disability while identifying opportunities to improve the consistency and reliability of disability inclusion across campuses and systems.

Participants identified opportunities to improve physical and digital accessibility, the clarity and visibility of disability-related policies and processes, staff capability, and predictable support pathways that reduce dependence on individual effort.

The Strategy has also been informed by SCU's existing and proposed work in accessible course delivery, Universal Design for Learning, reasonable adjustments, Learning Access Plans, student support, digital accessibility, WIL and placements, staff capability and complaints processes to better support students with disabilities.

The development process builds on the rich whole-of-University consultation and lived experience insights gathered through the DIAP, ensuring these contributions continue to meaningfully inform the Strategy.

Before publication, this section will be updated to record the specific validation undertaken on the Disability Education Inclusion Strategy, including who participated, what feedback was received, which commitments changed as a result and, where feedback did not result in a change, and why.

4. What we know

4.1 Students with disability are completing, but outcome parity does not necessarily mean experience parity

The 2025 evidence identified provides an important starting point:

2025 measure	Students with disability	Domestic students overall	Gap
Preliminary retention	72.2%	72.3%	0.1 percentage points
Success rate	85.5%	88.6%	3.1 percentage points
Unit satisfaction	80.0%	83.1%	3.1 percentage points
Course satisfaction	70.5%	76.4%	5.9 percentage points

The pattern matters. Retention is effectively at parity and the success-rate difference is relatively small. Students with disability are staying at SCU and succeeding in their units.

The larger gap in course satisfaction suggests that comparable academic outcomes do not necessarily mean an equivalent educational experience.

The Strategy will therefore monitor not only whether students with disability complete, but also what additional challenges are faced by students with disability in their learning journey that are not experienced by their peers.

4.2 What students and staff have told us

To inform the DIAP, SCU conducted two separate university-wide online surveys in March 2026: a student survey, which received 283 responses, including 92 from students who identified as having disability, and a staff survey, which received 61 responses. The DIAP does not specify how many people received the surveys, so response rates cannot be reported. Results are averages for all respondents to the relevant survey, using a five-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

Students rated the statement “Learning materials, teaching methods and assessments are easily accessible” at 3.86 and “SCU has easily accessible and effective disability support services” at 3.77. Staff rated “Information about disability support services is easy for staff to find and use” at 3.02 and “Staff feel confident in teaching and supporting students with disability” at 2.87. The strongest results concerned SCU’s attitude towards disability inclusion, rated 4.09 by students and 3.74 by staff. The 2.87 result relates specifically to the stated teaching and support question and is not a broader measure of staff performance or capability.

The surveys formed part of a broader mixed-method consultation that included focus groups, workshops, interviews, campus accessibility assessments and engagement with the Project Working Group and Lived and Living Experience Reference Group. The results provide a baseline from respondents but should not be treated as representative of the entire University population. The available DIAP material does not provide a faculty-level breakdown. Future monitoring should use multiple accessible engagement methods and, where the data are sufficiently reliable and participant privacy can be protected, examine differences across faculties, courses, campuses and student cohorts to identify and extend effective practice.

4.3 The challenge we are addressing

SCU has strong foundations for advancing inclusive education, including established Universal Design for Learning capability, accessibility technologies, inclusion support services and accessible learning initiatives. The Centre for Teaching and Learning supports this work through approaches including Ally, the Blackboard Ultra transition, Southern Cross Model Unit Site Standards, Universal Design for Learning guidance, standardised LMS templates and assessment redesign initiatives.

This Strategy provides an opportunity to connect, strengthen and embed these established practices across the University, creating a consistent and sustainable approach to accessible and inclusive education for all students.

5. Our three pillars

This Strategy is aligned to the same three pillars at the DIAP and applies the education-related commitments of each pillar to the student journey. It provides a clear line of sight between SCU's whole-of-University disability inclusion framework and its specific commitments to accessible and inclusive education.

Pillar 1: Inclusive Educational and Workplace Experience

Our intended outcome

Students with disability experience a consistent, dignified and supported education journey, with equitable access to learning, reasonable adjustments and coordinated support from admission through to completion.

SCU will provide clear and accessible pathways to support, with consistent implementation of Learning Access Plans and timely, individualised reasonable adjustments. Accessibility will be increasingly embedded through accessible and inclusive curriculum, teaching, assessment, learning materials and technologies will be progressively embedded through the principles of Universal Design for Learning.

In professionally accredited disciplines, SCU will support students through reasonable adjustments that enable equitable participation while maintaining inherent requirements, professional standards, accreditation requirements and workplace health and safety obligations. Students will have access to clear and accessible information about these requirements throughout their studies.

SCU will strengthen staff capability, accountability and coordination across the University to provide a connected and inclusive student experience.

Delivery

While everyone has a role to play in delivering and embedding the Strategy, accountability for implementation sits with the Faculties, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Inclusion Support Services, Student Administration Services, Student Support and Success and other relevant education and student-facing areas.

Measures of progress and impact

SCU will monitor accessibility, adjustment timeliness and implementation consistency, accessibility of teaching and assessment, student experience of support, staff capability, recurring adjustment patterns, the student-reported burden of negotiating access.

Pillar 2: Accessible and Engaging Environments

Our intended outcome

Students with disability can equitably access and participate in physical, digital and external learning environments, regardless of study mode or location.

This outcome aligns with SCU's Teaching and Learning Principle 5, which commits to learning supported by high-quality materials and resources that are readily available and designed to be inclusive and accessible to all learners where possible, and Assessment Principle 5, which requires assessment to be inclusive, fair, transparent and equitable.

SCU will embed accessibility across learning technologies, digital systems, teaching spaces and other learning environments through relevant approval, procurement, implementation and review processes, informed by user testing and lived experience.

Accessibility will also be strengthened across fieldwork, WIL, including partner arrangements, reasonable adjustments, confidentiality, safety and alternative arrangements where required and possible.

Students with disability will contribute to university evaluation processes, with their feedback informing continuous improvement and future design of learning environments and technologies.

Delivery

While everyone has a role to play in delivering and embedding the Strategy, accountability for implementation sits with Technology Services, Faculties, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Library, property and facilities functions, Procurement, WIL and placement teams, Careers and Employability, Inclusion Support Services and relevant partner organisations.

Measures of progress and impact

SCU will monitor accessibility assurance and remediation, student experience of physical and digital learning environments, accessibility compliance of significant new learning technologies, and the identification and resolution of recurring accessibility barriers.

Pillar 3: Inclusive Systems and Governance

Our intended outcome

Disability education inclusion is embedded in SCU's systems, policies, governance and accountability, supporting consistent implementation and continuous improvement.

SCU will maintain clear executive and operational accountability, informed by academic governance and lived experience. Accessible pathways will enable students to raise concerns and provide feedback safely and confidentially.

SCU will strengthen disability-related data, monitoring and evaluation, using student feedback, complaints, outcomes and lived-experience evidence to identify systemic themes, assess progress and inform timely corrective action and ongoing improvement across the University. Data collection approaches will be designed to be inclusive and accessible, ensuring a wider range of voices are heard and represented through multiple engagement methods, including online surveys, yarning circles, qualitative feedback, peer mentors, student representative groups, and other culturally appropriate and participatory approaches.

Delivery

While everyone has a role to play in delivering and embedding the Strategy, accountability for implementation sits with Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), and relevant academic quality bodies,

disability inclusion governance, Faculties, relevant professional portfolios, data and planning functions, complaints and feedback functions, and accountable action owners.

Measures of progress and impact

SCU will monitor Strategy governance and action delivery, KPI performance, participation, accessibility of complaints and feedback pathways, systemic complaint and escalation themes, corrective action, data quality and reporting.

6. Measures and targets

SCU will establish a controlled Disability Education Inclusion KPI suite. Measures will have a clearly defined owner, data source, reporting frequency and, where appropriate, disaggregation.

Where an appropriate baseline does not yet exist, SCU will publish the measure and establish a baseline and target within a stated timeframe.

The complete definitions, owners, frequency and disaggregation are available in Appendix B.

7. Governance and oversight

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) is the executive owner of this Strategy and accountable for ensuring disability education inclusion is embedded within the University's education and academic-quality systems.

The Lived and Living Experience Reference Group will be a key mechanism for embedding lived and living experience throughout the implementation of this Strategy. The Group will provide ongoing advice to inform the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy and its pillars, helping to ensure that actions remain responsive to the experiences, priorities and emerging needs of students with disability. This approach reflects SCU's DIAP commitment to embedding lived and living experience as an ongoing governance practice.

Academic Board will oversee matters affecting curriculum, course delivery, assessment and academic standards.

SCU's disability inclusion governance will provide oversight of Strategy performance, lived-experience advice, systemic issues and corrective action.

Each commitment will ultimately sit with an accountable University executive or organisational unit.

Governance and delivery responsibilities will be documented in the Strategy's action register.

8. Monitoring

SCU will actively monitor and review the Strategy throughout its implementation, enabling progress to be recognised, opportunities for improvement identified and action taken in a timely way.

Performance will be reviewed through regular operational monitoring; scheduled reporting to disability inclusion governance; academic quality reporting where relevant to teaching and learning; student feedback and disability experience surveys; complaints and escalation data; and annual review of the KPI suite.

Evidence of changing performance, unmet targets or service standards, accessibility issues, adjustment challenges, inaccessible technologies or course content, placement accessibility concerns, or recurring themes in complaints will inform timely improvement action.

Actions may include remediation, root-cause review, process or policy improvement, additional training and support, technology enhancements, resource allocation, course-level action or executive escalation.

SCU will publish an annual Disability Education Inclusion performance report in accordance with the applicable statutory timetable, including the proposed on-or-before 1 May reporting date identified in the recommended structure, subject to final confirmation of the governing legislative requirement.

9. Resourcing and delivery capacity

The successful implementation of this strategy will be supported by appropriate resourcing, expertise, technology, systems capability and staff capacity.

SCU will consider strategy resourcing through annual planning and budget processes, identify workforce capability requirements, distinguish funded commitments from those requiring future investment, and phase implementation where appropriate. Material capacity requirements will be addressed through Strategy governance, with major commitments aligned to confirmed capacity and resourcing to support sustainable delivery.

10. Raising a problem

Students and staff will have clear, accessible and supportive pathways to raise disability-related concerns, including adjustments, course materials, assessment, facilities, technology, fieldwork and placements, harassment or victimisation, and University services.

SCU will provide multiple accessible channels, including online, email, telephone and alternative or supported formats. Plain-language information will explain how to raise an issue, what to expect, response timeframes and escalation options, aligned with the commitments established through the DIAP.

Where possible, accessibility concerns will be addressed through timely and responsive resolution, including implementation of already-approved adjustments without requiring a formal complaint. Formal complaint and review pathways will remain available, and no person will be disadvantaged for raising a concern, seeking an adjustment, making a complaint or participating in an accessibility review.

This Strategy operates alongside SCU's [Complaints Policy – Students and Members of the Public](#) and [Complaint Policy - Staff](#). Where a disability-related concern engages these formal processes, the relevant University policy and procedure will apply, supported by the accessibility and inclusion principles and commitments established through this Strategy.

11. Review and improvement

This strategy is a living institutional framework, strengthened through ongoing review, evidence and lived experience.

SCU will undertake annual implementation and performance reviews and a substantive review during the Strategy term. Reviews will consider progress against measures and targets, student outcomes and experiences, reasonable adjustments, accessibility of courses, technologies and placements, feedback and complaints, staff capability and resourcing.

Students with disability and people with lived and living experience will contribute to review and continuous improvement. An independent review will also assess the Strategy's effectiveness during its term or before development of the successor Strategy, with findings informing timely improvements where required.

12. Contact and feedback

Students, staff and community members may provide feedback on the Disability Education Inclusion Strategy at any time.

Strategy contact: TBA

Feedback received between formal reviews will be recorded, considered by the responsible area and, where it identifies a systemic issue, referred into the monitoring process.

SCU will make this Strategy and associated public reports available in accessible formats.

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