



Australian Government
Department of Education

2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education **Discussion Paper**





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2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education – Discussion Paper.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Government Department of Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and to their people and cultures. The lands now collectively known as Australia belong to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people belong to these lands. This paper was written on Ngunnawal Country.

Accessibility

The 2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education is focusing on listening to the voices of students with disability and their families, carers and associates. This will be supported by having accessible information available to all, and making sure events and discussions are accessible for people with disability.

- A more accessible [Easy Read](#) version of this document can be found on the Department of Education website.
- A [short video](#) explaining the Disability Standards for Education is also available.

The Department of Education acknowledges the time, effort and energy it takes to share your experiences. This Review will draw from evidence already given to other processes like the Disability Royal Commission and the review of the Disability Discrimination Act, where relevant.

Consistent with the review of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*, and in response to feedback from the disability community, this paper does not use acronyms or abbreviations.

Help and Support

If reading this paper or participating in this review brings up strong feelings, help is available.

If your safety or the safety of someone you know is at immediate risk, dial Triple Zero **000**.

The following services can also offer help and support:

- Lifeline **13 11 14** – Crisis support and suicide prevention services – always open
- 13Yarn **13 92 76** – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis support – always open
- Kids Helpline **1800 55 1800** – Crisis support for children and young people – always open
- National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline **1800 880 052** – Free, independent and confidential service for reporting abuse or neglect of people with disability
- Translating and Interpreting Service **131 450** – Translation help for non-English speakers
- National Relay Service TTY / Voice Calls **133677** or Speak and Listen **1300 555 727** – Assistance if you are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Context | 5 |
| Topic 1: Effective implementation of the Standards | 7 |
| Topic 2: Inclusive decision-making..... | 10 |
| Topic 3: Clear responsibilities for assessment authorities and course developers | 14 |
| Glossary | 17 |
| Attachment A | 18 |
| Attachment B. | 19 |

Context

The [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (the Standards) aim to ensure students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability.

They clarify the responsibilities education and training providers have under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* (Disability Discrimination Act). They cover areas such as enrolment; reasonable adjustments; participation; curriculum development, accreditation and delivery; student support services; harassment and victimisation; and where exceptions may be applied.

Currently, all education providers must comply with the Standards. This includes public and private schools; preschools and kindergartens that are educational institutions; curriculum and assessment accreditation authorities; public and private education and training providers; and tertiary providers such as vocational education and training providers and higher education providers¹.

Early Childhood Education and Care providers must comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. The Australian Government has consulted separately on including Early Childhood Education and Care providers in the Standards. It expects to expand the Standards to include these providers in response to recommendations from the 2020 Review of the Standards.

The Standards must be reviewed every five years. They were last reviewed in 2020.

This discussion paper supports the 2025 Review. It outlines the issues that the Australian Government is seeking feedback on to inform the future of the **Disability Standards for Education**.

Scope of the 2025 Review

The Australian Government Department of Education is conducting the 2025 Review of the Standards. The Terms of Reference for the Review are at [Attachment A](#).

As part of its response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the Disability Royal Commission), the Review will focus on three key areas:



1. Effective implementation of the Standards:

- What further action is needed to increase knowledge and support effective implementation of the Standards?



2. Inclusive decision-making:

- How can students with disability and their families, carers and associates be better supported through consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling?
- Should new principles for inclusive decision-making be included in the Standards?



3. Clear responsibilities for assessment authorities and course developers:

- Are the Standards clear enough that organisations which develop, assess, and certify courses have responsibilities to ensure students with disability are able to access and participate in their courses on the same basis as students without disability?
- What would help these organisations work better together to improve continuity of reasonable adjustments for students when they leave their regular classroom to attend examinations or undertake practical work placements?

These topics build on recent recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission. In particular, this includes recommendations 7.6 (e) on consultation and 7.10 (b) on complaints management.

¹ Note that schools, higher education providers and vocational and education training providers must also meet other standards.

The Review acknowledges the immense contribution the disability community has made to the evidence behind these recommendations. We will draw on this wealth of evidence wherever possible so that students with disability and their families and carers do not have to re-share evidence and stories already provided.

The Review invites the following groups to share their experiences and give feedback about how the Standards are working:

- students with disability, their families, carers, associates (e.g. flatmates, business partners, etc) and advocates
- people and organisations with responsibilities under the Standards. This includes education providers, educators and education leaders.

You can share your views in an online survey or by uploading a submission, or by participating in an event. Information about the ways to have your say are on the [Department of Education's website](#).

Outside the scope

The Australian Government is also [reviewing the Disability Discrimination Act](#). That review is consulting on the Disability Royal Commission recommendations with respect to the Disability Discrimination Act. This includes areas such as suspension or exclusion of students with disability, positive duty to eliminate discrimination, providing reasonable adjustments and the definition of unjustifiable hardship. It is also looking at other possible amendments, such as changes to the definition of disability and the enforceability of Disability Standards. This 2025 Review of the Standards is not covering the topics which are being considered by the review of the Disability Discrimination Act.

If changes are made to the Disability Discrimination Act that affect the responsibilities of education providers under the Act, this may result in future changes to the Standards.

Information on the review is on the [Attorney-General's Department website](#).



Topic 1:

Effective implementation of the Standards

Summary

All education providers must comply with the Standards. This includes public and private schools, preschools and kindergartens that are educational institutions, public and private education and training providers, and tertiary institutions such as vocational education and training providers (such as Technical And Further Education) and higher education providers (such as universities).

Since the last review of the Standards, the Australian Government developed new resources to help education providers understand and meet their responsibilities under the Standards. However, students with disability and their families, carers and associates have shared many examples of:

- being denied access to their preferred school, vocational education and training or higher education course based on their disability
- experiencing harassment based on their disability
- not getting the reasonable adjustments they need to participate on the same basis as students without disability.

Further action is required to ensure that all people working in the education sector are aware of their responsibilities under the Standards, and have the resources and guidance they need to meet them.

The review is interested in hearing if there are any gaps in the resources already developed, and what further action can be taken to help education staff and administrators meet their responsibilities.

Discussion

The 2020 Review heard that “...many educators are unaware of their obligations under the Standards, or lack the resources to implement them, and those who are aware struggle to find guidance and clarification on how to implement them.”²

In response to this feedback, a significant number of national resources were developed in consultation with people with disability and educators. The following resources have been released:

- Information resources for education providers and educators explaining their obligations under the Standards
- Information resources to help students with disability and their carers understand their rights under the Standards
- A resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students with disability and their families on students’ rights and what schools must do to support all students to join in and learn.

These resources are available at www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005.

Further professional development and training for educators and staff in early childhood, education and care and school settings is being developed in consultation with people with disability and educators. This will be available in 2026.

Resources to increase the capability of Registered Training Organisations and training product developers to support students with disability are also being developed. They will be released later in 2025.

² Australian Government Department of Education. 2020. *Disability Standards for Education 2005: 2020 Review Final Report*. Accessed at www.education.gov.au on 22 July 2025, p.v

Despite the availability of these resources, some students with disability are still being discouraged from enrolling with an education provider or in a particular course because of their disability. Some are still not being offered, or are being refused, the reasonable adjustments needed to access or participate in their education.³

Vocational education and training students with disability are less likely than students without disability to complete their qualification. They are also less satisfied with support services, learning resources, and the training overall.⁴ Higher education students with disability are less likely than students without disability to attain a qualification⁵, and less likely to be satisfied with teaching quality⁶.

None of these experiences are consistent with the intent of the Standards, which aim to ensure students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers. This includes:

- admission or enrolment in an institution
- participation in courses or programs
- use of facilities and services.

One possible explanation for this is that awareness of the Standards may not be widespread enough among people who work for organisations with responsibilities under the Standards.

Vocational education and training and higher education stakeholders have noted that awareness of the Standards is not widespread or comprehensive beyond disability practitioners and disability support units within education providers.⁷ Practitioners may not have the authority, knowledge of the organisation, or support from the organisation they work for to help their students get the supports they need. If experienced staff members leave, continuity of support can be disrupted.

Awareness may also not be widespread enough through the system as a whole. Some organisations may have better levels of awareness than others. For example, not all Tertiary Access Centres and similar organisations provide information about students' rights. Students may not be getting the information they need to understand their rights when enrolling. This may be leading to some students choosing not to reveal their disability status and missing out on critical supports.

Even where awareness is higher, people with responsibilities under the Standards may still not have the support and guidance they need to meet them in practice. For example, some school teachers have noted that they do not have the resources they need to meet the academic, developmental or welfare

³ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. 2023. [Final Report: Inclusive education, employment and housing: Summary and recommendations](#), accessed at www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au on 21 August 2025, p.10

⁴ National Centre for Vocational Education and Research. 2024. *VET qualification completion rates 2023*. Adelaide.

⁵ Most recent data available is from 2018. Sourced from: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2024. [People with disability in Australia, Educational attainment - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#). Accessed on 7 August 2025.

⁶ Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching. 2025. [Student Experience Survey 2023 Results](#). Accessed on 7 August 2025.

⁷ Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training. 2023. *Submission to the House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training*, Accessed at www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au on 7 August 2025, p.11

needs of some of their students with disability.⁸ The Disability Royal Commission heard that new teachers ‘...consider themselves unprepared to teach students with disability’.⁹

The broader and more general factors impacting implementation of the Standards in school contexts, such as teacher workload and the quality of initial teacher education, are being prioritised under the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan¹⁰. It is clear, however, that more needs to be done to ensure students with disability are having their rights properly upheld under the Standards, including the provision of professional development opportunities and resources for teachers and schools.

The 2025 Review is interested to hear about any further action that could be taken to embed widespread awareness of the Standards in all people working for organisations with responsibilities under the Standards. Where awareness is high, but the Standards are still not being put into practice, it would be useful to know what further guidance or support would help educators and other staff to meet their responsibilities.

*Note it is out of scope for this Review to consider the resources or guidelines the Disability Royal Commission has recommended under Recommendation 7.3, as these relate to reasonable adjustments which is being considered by the review of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Topic 1: Questions for students, parents, carers and disability advocates

- What have your experiences been with how the Standards have been put into practice so that you, or the student(s) you support, can access and participate in education?
- Before this Review, how much did you know about the Standards?
- Before this Review, were you aware of the free online resources that are available to help you to understand the Standards and advocate for your rights?
- What further support or guidance would help you to access and participate in your education?

Topic 1: Questions for individuals and organisations that apply the Standards

For example: teachers, schools, Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (assessment authorities), tertiary education providers, assessment organisations, professional bodies involved in accrediting courses or organising practical placements.

- Before this Review, how much did you know about the obligations under the Standards that all education providers, including their administrators have towards students with disability?
- Are you aware of the free online resources that are available to help you and your organisation to understand and comply with the Standards?
- What are the main challenges faced by you or your organisation in implementing the Standards?
- What further support or guidance would help you and/or your organisation to meet your responsibilities under the Standards?

⁸ Australian Education Union. *Submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability*. Accessed at www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au on 31 July 2025, p.5

⁹ Disability Royal Commission. 2023. *Final Report: Inclusive education, employment and housing* (Volume 7, Part A). Accessed on 7 August 2025. p.233

¹⁰ Australian Government Department of Education. 2022. *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan*. Accessed at <http://www.education.gov.au/national-teacher-workforce-action-plan> on 19 September 2025.



Topic 2: Inclusive decision-making

Summary

The Standards outline general steps education providers must take to avoid discriminating against a student with disability. This includes the requirement to consult with students with disability or an associate of the student before making any adjustments.

The Standards also include examples of compliance in order to help education providers understand how to implement each standard. However, the Standards do not include principles for consultation, complaints handling and issues resolution.

Students with disability and their families have reported being excluded from decisions that affect them. They have also said there are barriers to engaging in complaints handling processes when they have had to resort to dispute resolution.

The 2020 Review of the Standards and the Disability Royal Commission have both recommended making changes to the Standards to improve the way students are consulted and complaints are handled.

In response to this, a set of draft principles has been developed to more clearly explain how inclusive decision-making should work. The Review is interested in hearing from stakeholders:

- (a) if the draft principles that have been developed are fit for purpose or if they need to be changed, and
- (b) how draft principles for consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling should be included in the Standards.

These draft principles are available at [Attachment B](#) of this discussion paper.

Discussion

The Standards outline students' rights and the responsibilities of education providers under the law, but they are only words on a page. Students depend on the people and education providers they interact with to put the Standards into practice. When things go wrong, students depend on effective complaints resolution processes to restore compliance with the Standards.

The 2020 Review of the Standards heard that current complaints resolution processes are time-consuming and inaccessible. It also heard that escalating to a formal complaints system is resource intensive and intimidating for students, families, carers and associates.¹¹ They wanted open and supportive consultations where students are involved in decisions about their education.¹²

Tailored approaches for consultation may be required for some students with disability, to ensure they are appropriately consulted on decisions that affect their education, and in resolving any issues or complaints.

We have heard the importance of ensuring that First Nations students and their families, carers and associates are provided culturally safe and responsive approaches. These could consider:

- the importance of remaining on Country where possible
- history which may lead to a mistrust of medical and education authorities

¹¹ Australian Government Department of Education. 2020. *Disability Standards for Education 2005: 2020 Review Final Report*. Accessed at www.education.gov.au on 22 July 2025 p.16

¹² *Ibid*, p.23

- cultural expectations of who needs to be consulted and when and how that consultation should occur
- cultural differences in how disability is understood and defined.

The 2020 Review recommended that the Australian Government amend the Standards to include principles on consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling processes.

In consultation with key disability and education peak bodies, as well as a Reference Group with representatives from all states and territories and non-government school sectors, the Australian Government developed **a set of draft principles for consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling** (refer [Attachment B](#)) and three options for implementation.

The draft principles for all education sectors reflect current good practice in consultation already undertaken in the education sector.

This work on developing the draft principles and consulting on including them in the Standards occurred while the Disability Royal Commission was in session, before it finalised its report.

In its final report, the Disability Royal Commission noted that the Standards place limited obligations on schools and education authorities when consulting with students with disability and their families, carers and associates. They do not require consultation to be taken within any particular timeframe and provide no directions on the form such consultation should take.¹³

The Disability Royal Commission also noted that while consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling processes vary across sectors and jurisdictions, in general, students with disability and their families find it difficult to challenge school decisions or make complaints to education departments or authorities. The Disability Royal Commission heard that the process is time-consuming, exhausting and inaccessible.¹⁴

The Disability Royal Commission recommended:

Recommendation 7.6 (e) (Paraphrased) The Australian Government should consider updating the Standards to ensure students with disability can participate as fully as possible in age-appropriate decision-making; and entitle parents, supporters and carers of students with disability to be assisted by schools or principals on decisions relating to school-wide adjustments

Recommendation 7.10 (b) (Paraphrased) The Australian Government should include new duties and measures relating to complaint management procedures in the Standards to help achieve national quality and consistency, and ensure complaint handling processes are student-centric, accessible, efficient, safe, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate

Recommendation 7.10 (c) (Paraphrased) State and territory school registration authorities should embed new complaint handling duties and measures for compliance, as defined in the Education Standards, in registration requirements for all schools in their jurisdiction

While elements of the draft principles at [Attachment B](#) respond to issues raised throughout the Disability Royal Commission, they were not specifically designed in response to the recommendations at 7.6 (e) and 7.10 (b) and have not had further consultation since this time.

It is also worth noting that some states and territories have legislated complaints mechanisms. In determining a suitable approach to strengthening complaints arrangements within the Standards, consideration will need to be given to how changes to the Standards would interact with existing obligations for complaints management.

¹³ Disability Royal Commission. 2023. *Final Report: Inclusive education, employment and housing* Volume 7, Part A) Accessed at www.disability.royalcommission.gov.au on 22 July 2025, p.204

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.253

This Review, therefore, seeks to test the draft principles to ensure that they meet stakeholder needs and understand the best approach to implementation. There are two key questions for this topic:

- (a) Do the draft principles at [Attachment B](#) adequately respond to the issues raised through the Disability Royal Commission recommendations or do they need to be changed?
- (b) How should these principles, or a version of them, be included in the Standards?

The draft principles, or a version of them, can be included in the Standards in three ways:

Option 1 – include principles to guide best practice but there is no enforceable requirement to follow the principles: Include the principles as an additional example of a measure that an education provider may take to assist them to comply with the Standards for:

- enrolment
- participation
- curriculum development, accreditation and delivery
- student support services and
- preventing harassment and victimisation.

Option 2 – include a requirement to develop and comply with policies that must be consistent with the principles: Require education providers to develop, implement and comply with their own publicly available policies that must be consistent with the principles.

Option 3 – include a requirement to follow the principles when applying the Standards: Require an education provider to follow the principles when they consult, resolve issues or handle complaints arising in relation to the Standards and a student or prospective student.

Thinking beyond the principles, the 2025 Review is also interested in hearing from stakeholders if there is anything else that needs to be done to support improved consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling for students with disability.

Topic 2: Questions for students, parents, carers and disability advocates

- Can you tell us about the experiences you or the student/s you support have had in relying on the Standards to solve a problem with consultation, access or participation in education?
- Do you support including the principles at [Attachment B](#) in the Standards?
- If principles are included in the Standards, how would you like this to be done?
 1. To guide best practice, the principles would be included as an example of a measure that an education provider *may* take to help them to comply with the Standards – no requirements to follow the principles
 2. Require education providers to develop and comply with policies that are consistent with the principles and to make those policies publicly available, publish, implement and comply with those policies – requirement for education providers to have consistent policies that are publicly available
 3. Require education providers to follow the principles when they consult, handle complaints and resolve issues.
- If you do not support including new principles within the Standards, is there a different way we could improve inclusive decision-making?
- Does further work need to be done to improve consultation and support a more transparent and accessible complaints process?

Topic 2: Questions for individuals and organisations that apply the Standards

For example: teachers, schools, vocational education and training providers, higher education providers and their professional and academic staff, assessment organisations, professional bodies involved in accrediting courses or organising practical placements.

- How confident are you or your organisations in consulting with students with disability and their families, carers or associates when making decisions on access and participation?
- Do you support including the principles outlined at [Attachment B](#) in the Standards?
- If principles are included in the Standards, how would you like this to be done?
 1. To guide best practice – the principles would be included as an example of an additional measure that an education provider *may* take to help them to comply with the Standards – no requirements placed on the education provider
 2. As a new Standard that would require the education provider to develop and publish their own policies for consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling that are consistent with the principles – requirement for education providers to have their policies publicly in place
 3. Embedded within the Standards – requirement for education providers to follow the principles
- If you do not support including the principles within the Standards, is there a different way we could improve inclusive decision-making?
- What further guidance or support would help you or your organisation to undertake effective consultation and more transparent and accessible complaints processes?



Topic 3:

Clear responsibilities for assessment authorities and course developers

Summary

Education providers that design a course or program have certain obligations under the Standards. These relate to the steps they must take to design it in a way that any student with disability can participate in the learning experience, including the assessment and certification requirements. This includes education providers that are organisations whose purpose is to develop or accredit curricula or training courses used by other education providers. Such courses may be designed to include external assessments and work placements.

When students with disability move out of their regular classroom to sit external examinations, or attend work experience or practical placements, they do not always receive the reasonable adjustments they need to fully participate.

This may be happening because, in these cases, the responsibilities for making these adjustments are shared by more than one organisation, or need to be negotiated between organisations.

This topic seeks feedback on whether there is appropriate clarity about the responsibility of authorities and organisations involved in developing and accrediting curricula, training packages or courses to meet the needs of students with disability. In particular, it seeks feedback on whether the Standards are working effectively in relation to external assessments, practicums and work placements.

The focus of this topic is on senior secondary assessment, vocational education and training and higher education course development rather than school-level curriculum. This is because the 2020 review of the Australian Curriculum¹⁵ included making sure the school curriculum is accessible and meets the Standards.

Discussion

Students with disability have experienced issues with their supports not being fully maintained when they move out of their regular classroom or learning environment to participate in assessments conducted by an external provider, work integrated learning or practical placements.¹⁶

Students are not receiving continuity of reasonable adjustments for assessment tasks

School students can find it difficult to keep their classroom reasonable adjustments when sitting the Year 12 examinations required for a university ranking, known as the Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking. There is a lack of detailed data on how many applications for reasonable adjustments senior secondary certification authorities receive and approve. It is, therefore, difficult to build a national picture of the types of reasonable adjustments required to ensure inclusion and inform how education providers support the transition of students with disability to further education.

¹⁵ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. 2020. Website “[Review of the Australian Curriculum](#)” accessed on 19 September 2025.

¹⁶ Disability Royal Commission. 2023. [Final Report: Inclusive education, employment and housing](#) (Volume 7, Part A). Accessed on 7 August 2025, p.173

Each senior secondary certification authority has a policy in place to support students with disability to sit external examinations to receive an Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking. While arrangements vary, in most jurisdictions the authority (rather than the students' school) has the final decision on which reasonable adjustments it will grant for students with disability sitting external examinations.

It is important for all senior secondary certification authorities to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in examinations on the same basis as students without disability. A key focus of this Review is to understand what further work is needed to make sure senior secondary certification authorities are aware of their responsibilities under the Standards. It is also looking at what further support might help them to work closely with schools to make sure students with disability are getting the reasonable adjustments they need to sit their assessments.

The New South Wales Education Standards Authority is currently reviewing its Disability Provisions Program. The terms of reference for that work include consideration of the strengths of the program, as well as the differences between school-based and external Higher School Certificate exam-based provisions.¹⁷

Student representatives and higher education practitioners have told us that once students with disability commence university, they may also have trouble ensuring continuity and consistency of reasonable adjustments, including for assessment tasks, especially when they change courses or institutions.¹⁸

When a student participates in a work placement as part of a course of education, there may be a lack of clarity about whether they are working or studying or both, and whether the Standards apply.

Higher education students seeking access to courses with work integrated learning or practical placements can face challenges in gaining entry and in getting the reasonable adjustments they need to participate.

A 2024 study of Australian universities' work integrated learning policies and procedures found that few universities have work integrated learning materials that mention reasonable adjustments or provide clear advice on student, institutional, and placement provider responsibilities.¹⁹ Students have also said that higher education providers sometimes assume it is the students' responsibility to negotiate reasonable adjustments with their placement provider, while the placement provider assumes the reverse.²⁰ Students participating in school-based work experience, vocational education and training in schools and school-based apprenticeships, as well as vocational education and training courses may face similar challenges.

Students with disability can also experience difficulties with enrolling and completing courses with professional accreditation requirements. This is often because the reasonable adjustments they need to complete practical elements of the course can be seen by providers and employers as not consistent with the presumed requirements to practice in the profession.

Higher education providers have indicated they often have little control over the requirements a professional accreditation entity (for example, Engineers Australia or Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand) may set for relevant courses of study that facilitate the practice of that profession. While professional qualifying bodies must comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, it is not always clear whether they are considered 'education providers' under the Standards. This depends on whether they deliver courses or develop and accredit curricula or training used by other education providers.

¹⁷ NSW Education Standards Authority. 2025. [Review of NESA's Higher School Certificate Disability Provisions Program – Terms of Reference](#). Accessed 4 July 2025.

¹⁸ Stakeholder advice at Higher Education Roundtable meeting, Department of Education, Canberra

¹⁹ Andrew, L. et al. 2024. [A review of Australian universities work-integrated learning policies and procedures: Referencing disability - University of Canberra Research Portal](#)

²⁰ Stakeholder advice at Higher Education Roundtable meeting, Department of Education, Canberra

The 2025 Review is asking stakeholders if the Standards are working effectively in relation to organisations which are not educational institutions but develop courses for use by educational institutions and deliver assessments to students who are participating in those courses at those educational institutions. It would be useful to know what further support may be needed to help these organisations to:

- (a) understand their responsibilities and
- (b) work better together so that students with disability have more consistent support and their rights upheld.

Topic 3: Questions for students, parents, carers and disability advocates

- Have you or the student/s you support received the reasonable adjustments needed to access and participate in external Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking accredited examinations to the best of their ability?
 - How did these reasonable adjustments compare to the reasonable adjustments you / your child receives in their regular classroom setting?
- What more should be done to make sure curriculum development, accreditation and certification organisations from all education sectors are meeting their responsibilities under the Standards?
- What further support or guidance would help students with disability get the reasonable adjustments they need to participate in work experience within school settings and to take courses with professional accreditation requirements, work integrated learning and practical placements?

Topic 3: Questions for individuals and organisations that apply the Standards

For example: teachers, schools, senior secondary assessment authorities, tertiary education providers, assessment organisations, professional bodies involved in accrediting courses or organising practical placements.

- Are the Standards clear enough about the requirements that apply, and who those requirements apply to, when a student is participating in assessment, practicums or a work placement that occurs outside the educational institution they are enrolled at?
 - If not, how could these requirements be made clearer?
- What further support may be needed to:
 - clarify the responsibilities of the organisations involved and
 - work better together so that students with disability have more consistent support?
- How are students with disability considered by your organisation in development of courses and in implementation of assessments?
- What further support and guidance is needed to help vocational education and training and higher education providers make sure that students with disability are provided with the reasonable adjustments they need to take courses with work integrated learning, practical placements, and professional requirements?

Glossary

This is a list of terms used in this discussion paper. The Australian Government Department of Education has resources that explain these ideas in more detail. You can find these resources at www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education-2005.

| Term | Meaning |
|--|--|
| Accredit | The process of formally checking something to approve or confirm that it meets quality standards. For example, ‘accrediting curricula’ is confirming that the curriculum meets quality standards. |
| Assessment authority | An organisation that designs assessment, such as the boards of studies in each state and territory (the New South Wales Education Standards Authority, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, etc). |
| Associate | An associate of a student with disability is a person who has a close relationship to the student, like a flatmate, a close relative like a parent, a carer or a business or sporting relationship. There is more information about this in the Standards. |
| Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank | This is usually known as the ‘ATAR’. It is a number that ranks Year 12 students based on their school results. It is used by universities to help them select students for their courses. |
| Consultation | Consultation includes meetings, emails, phone calls etc with someone. Consulting about reasonable adjustments with students with disability or their associates is a requirement under the Standards. There is more information about this in the Standards. |
| Disability | The definition of ‘disability’ in the Disability Discrimination Act can be found in section 4 of the Act. Disability in relation to the Act includes: physical; intellectual; psychiatric; sensory; neurological; learning disabilities; physical disfigurement; as well as the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms. The definition of ‘disability’ in the Act is broad and does not rely on a formal diagnosis of disability. The Act covers disabilities that people have now, had in the past, may have in the future or which they are believed to have had. |
| Disability Discrimination Act 1992 | This law makes disability discrimination unlawful, including direct and indirect discrimination. |
| Education provider | Examples of education providers include schools, universities, and Registered Training Organisations. Education providers can also be organisations that develop or accredit curricula or training courses used by other providers. More information is in the Standards. |
| ‘On the same basis’ | Having opportunities and choices that are comparable with opportunities and choices offered to students without disability. There is more information about this in the Standards. |
| Practicum | Part of a course that is completed in a workplace setting. For example, a person studying to be a teacher will go to a school to practice their teaching, supervised by a qualified teacher. This is the ‘practicum’ part of their teaching degree. |
| Reasonable adjustment | An action or measure taken to assist students with disability with enrolment, access and participation in their education. For example, an adjustment for a student with low vision could be the use of a screen reader. More information is in the Standards. |
| Work integrated learning | An education program that combines course work with practical, real-world experience in a work context. |

Attachment A

2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education Terms of Reference

The targeted 2025 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (the Standards) will consider:

1. Whether further action is needed to increase knowledge and support effective implementation of the Standards.
2. Appropriate mechanisms to clarify the requirements around consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling in the Standards.
3. Ensuring the Standards provide appropriate clarity about the responsibility of authorities and organisations involved in developing and accrediting curricula, training packages or courses to meet the needs of students with disability.

Context

The Standards clarify the obligations of education and training providers under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as students without disability.

A review of the Standards is required to be conducted every five years.

The 2020 Review of the Standards was broad reaching with recommendations largely implemented or underway. This includes the recommendation to expand the Standards to include Early Childhood Education and Care providers in the Standards; public consultation on this issue opened on 31 January 2025 and closed 28 February 2025.

The 2020 Review of the Standards also recommended that the Australian Government amend the Standards to include principles on consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling. Work in response to this recommendation was overtaken by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission), and the Government is taking the opportunity presented by this review to test which mechanisms are needed to clarify requirements around consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling.

The Review will consider relevant recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission, in so far as they are relevant to the Standards. The 2025 Review will occur in parallel to a review of the *Disability Discrimination Act*, which is considering strengthening the duty to provide reasonable adjustments for people with disability. Matters being considered by the *Disability Discrimination Act* Review will be out of scope for the 2025 Review of the Standards.

The 2025 Review will support implementation of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*, which sets out a plan to change the lives of people with disability. It includes targets and measures agreed to by all Australian governments to improve the accessibility and inclusiveness of key systems including education.

The Review will consider the needs of Autistic people, in line with the Government's commitment in the National Autism Strategy First Action Plan (Action 4.2).

Timing: The Review will be conducted in 2025.

Attachment B.

Draft set of principles for consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling under the Disability Standards for Education

The draft principles for consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling process are as follows:

Consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling processes:

- a. encourage early, regular and open interactions with the student or an associate of the student in relation to the matter
- b. actively provide the student or an associate of the student with the information required to participate in the consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling processes
- c. actively seek the views of the student or an associate of the student in relation to the matter and gives these views proper consideration during the decision-making process, including any views in relation to preferred support and reasonable adjustments
- d. if the student or an associate of the student is from an Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or other culturally or linguistically diverse background:
 - i. actively take steps to identify any particular needs of persons from that background relating to the consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling processes
 - ii. actively takes steps to respond to any identified needs
- e. actively provide the student or an associate of the student with information on what support (including an advocate or support person, and support from other agencies or third parties) is available in the consultation, issues resolution and complaints handling processes
- f. if the student or an associate of the student chooses to access support — facilitate the involvement and participation of the person or agency providing the support
- g. record outcomes of any meetings and other interactions relating to the matter, distributes these promptly to all parties in an accessible format and gives all parties the opportunity to endorse, revise or reject the record
- h. communicate proposed decisions relating to the matter, including reasons for the proposed decisions, to the student or an associate of the student, in writing or as otherwise agreed, and in a reasonable timeframe
- i. document decisions relating to the matter, including reasons for the decisions
- j. communicate decisions relating to the matter, including reasons for the decisions and information about how to seek review of the decisions, to the student or an associate of the student, in writing or as otherwise agreed, and in a reasonable timeframe
- k. clearly identify what actions are required and by whom and by when in the outcomes of any meetings and communications of decisions in relation to the matter.

This set of draft principles were developed by the Australian Government following the 2020 Review of the Standards. The draft principles were informed by consultation with key disability and education peak bodies, as well as a Reference Group with representatives from states and territories and non-government school sectors. Work on developing the draft principles occurred while the Disability Royal Commission was in session, before it finalised its report, and the draft principles have not had further consultation since this time. We are taking the opportunity presented by the 2025 Review of the Standards to test with stakeholders if the principles need amending to align with related Disability Royal Commission recommendations.