

RMIT Counselling

T/ 9925 4365 (BH) 9925 3999 (AH)

www.rmit.edu.au/counselling

RMIT Career Development & Employment

T/ 9925 2078

E/ careers@rmit.edu.au

www.rmit.edu.au/careers

RMIT International Student Information and Support (ISIS)

T/ 9925 2078

E/ student.wellbeing@rmit.edu.au

www.rmit.edu.au/internationalsupport

RMIT Legal Services

T/ 9925 3180

E/ student.legal@rmit.edu.au

www.rmit.edu.au/legal

Student Administration Support Line

T/ 9925 8980

Complaints

Student Complaints Liaison Officers (SCLO's)

SCLOs are located in all Academic Portfolios, Departments, Schools and Groups.

For more information go to www.rmit.edu.au/students/complaints

Academic Registrars Group

T/ 9925 8863

E/ complaints@rmit.edu.au

RMIT Ombuds

T/ 9925 2930

E/ ombuds@rmit.edu.au



Your rights as a student with (dis)ability

You have the right to access a quality education regardless of any form of disability you may have. It is unlawful for RMIT as an educational authority to deny or limit a student's access to any benefits they provide or to subject the student to any other discrimination because of their disability.

If your studies are affected by a disability, which may be either permanent or temporary, you have the right to ask RMIT for support.

What constitutes a (dis)ability?

A disability is a permanent or temporary physical, sensory, neurological, learning, psychiatric, intellectual or medical condition that impairs your ability to study or participate in university life. This definition is quite broad, so stress, anxiety or depressions are forms of disabilities that are valid reasons for asking for help from RMIT. Students who are affected by temporary conditions have the same legal rights.

Some background information

As a university, RMIT is bound by both the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act. Because of these Acts it is unlawful for RMIT to treat you less favourably than another student because of your disability.

The University has to take reasonable steps to accommodate the effects of a disability where this is a barrier to your participation or assessment. Examples of this include making sure that classes are held in rooms that are accessible or providing handouts and notes in a format you can understand.

This is called making 'reasonable adjustments'. The idea is to ensure that what is being assessed is a student's actual academic ability, rather than the effects of any impairment they may have. Because many disabilities directly affect a student's ability to participate in an assessment task, they are able to request modifications to the way their assessment is conducted. Examples of adjustments may include allowing extra time in exams or extending a due date.

Having a disability does not entitle you to preferential treatment and you are required to complete your assessment to the same standard as your classmates.

Do I have to disclose my (dis)ability?

It is always your decision about whether you disclose your disability to RMIT. You can choose to disclose at any time.

Remember it is your right to be provided with support and accommodations to make your studies easier to manage. If you do decide to disclose a disability to the university, it is best to disclose it early in the semester or before classes start. If you choose to disclose the effects of, for example, a medical condition after your assessment is complete it can be more difficult for the institution to help you, although it is obliged to help you, where reasonable.

What is the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU)?

If you need help with a medical condition which is likely to affect you seriously or over a longer period of time it is advisable to consult with RMIT's Student Services Disability Liaison Unit

Disability Liaison Officers assess the individual needs of each student, may make recommendations to relevant RMIT Schools and can provide or refer the student to appropriate support services.

These services can include pre-enrolment guidance; assistance with physical access; liaison with external agencies; engaging note-takers and Auslan interpreters; providing special equipment; help with car parking; arranging 'Equitable Assessment Arrangements' or 'Special Consideration' for exams and assessments, and rehabilitation counselling.

However **the DLU do not advocate for students**, and often you will find yourself having to organise arrangements with your lecturer or school.

It is the teaching Schools which have the greatest responsibility to act to accommodate the effects of medical conditions. Unfortunately, Schools are not always aware of their responsibilities or experienced in working out what support to provide.

Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is a general guide only. RMIT is a very complex environment, and there are often a number of different rules which apply.

For more student rights information visit our website: www.su.rmit.edu.au/student-rights

For additional assistance drop into a Student Union Front Office to speak with a Student Liaison Officer.

City Higher Ed: Building 8, Level 3

Tivoli (Business): Building 108, Level 3

Carlton Campus: Building 57, Level 4

Brunswick: Building 514, Level 2

Bundoora: Building 204, Level 1

Or, send detailed information regarding your case to student.rights@rmit.edu.au

For enquiries call 9925 5004

If required, an appointment will be made for you with a Student Rights Officer.

Has this leaflet been helpful? Join the Student Union and join the fight to improve your rights!

Going through the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU) may mean that you have access to experienced and more understanding support for your education however some students can find it a troublesome process and in those cases we recommend you contact a RUSU Student Rights Officer, who will advocate for your rights.

You could also contact the free and confidential Counselling Services for personal counselling or the Compass Drop In Centre if you are looking for confidential referrals, support and advice.

What are my rights?

If and when you decide to disclose your disability to RMIT, RMIT must ensure that appropriate assistance is provided to you. This includes:

- All decisions concerning your needs and academic progress should be made with your involvement.
- Assessment procedures must enable you to demonstrate your knowledge to the best of your ability.
- Access must be provided to services including classrooms, libraries, computer facilities, recreation areas and parking.
- You must be provided with the support you require to enable you to study successfully. This might be things such as note takers in lectures, copies of overheads, access to a computer and scanner, and assistance in the library.
- All staff at RMIT have a responsibility for ensuring that disabled students needs are taken seriously.

Before going to the DLU

Some students with disabilities find that the DLU's recommendations do not address all of the issues their disability causes and that generic recommendations do not adequately cater for differences between how their disability affects them in different courses. It is worthwhile thinking things through before you go to the DLU so that your support can be tailored closely to your enrolment and condition.

- Try to develop a list of all of the symptoms, either temporary or permanent, and how they could interfere with your studies.
- Be honest about how seriously your condition may effect you and all of your studies.
- For each problem or group of problems try to

think of how their effect could be minimised, and write a list of these suggestions for minimising the effect on your studies.

- Speak to your treating doctors about your problems and proposed solutions. Ask them to write a detailed letter to RMIT going through each of the issues.

Making recommendations to your school

Once you have disclosed a disability, in theory the Disability Liaison Unit will make recommendations to your Program Coordinator who must ensure that assistance to you is provided. The DLU must respect a student's privacy and should not disclose details of your condition, only the support you need. Accessing the DLU also means you do not have to endlessly repeat your symptoms and justify your needs to every member of the teaching staff each time you need help.

It is expected that academic staff will:

1. work with you to identify any assistance needed
2. inform you of any existing special arrangements at RMIT that facilitate safety, access, mobility, communications and learning
3. arrange for the provision of extra assistance identified by you which is not already in place
4. inform you of the name and location of the RMIT Disability Liaison Officer or person on your campus responsible for students with disabilities if you have not seen them already. It is sensible to check with your Program Coordinator that the Disability Liaison Unit's recommendations have been received and have all been implemented - they sometimes go missing!

What about Special Consideration and Temporary Conditions?

The legal definition of a disability is very broad and includes conditions which are temporary or are often thought of as not serious or not disabling. It is worth remembering that you have the same legal rights, regardless.

Most of the sorts of conditions that would normally see students only applying for Special Consideration such as viruses, upper respiratory infections or stomach aches should also be considered to be disabilities. If you can show that

the condition has had a serious effect on you as a student then you have the right to ask RMIT to take reasonable steps to accommodate the condition. RMIT does not have to give you a pass just because you put in a Special Consideration application. However, if you can show that a medical condition has caused you to fail then RMIT has an obligation to consider what other steps, such as reassessment or additional work, might be reasonable. See the Student Union's leaflet entitled 'Special Consideration' for more information.

Equitable Assessment Arrangements

An Equitable Assessment Arrangement is an adjustment or alteration to the standard conditions or format of an assessment. It aims to lessen the impact of a disability or inability to participate in a standard assessment activity due to specific valid reasons such that the student's performance in assessment is reflective of their progress towards achieving the academic requirements. It does not represent weakening or lowering of the academic standard being assessed. Rather, it addresses the ability of a student to access and undertake the assessment effectively.

Equitable Assessment Arrangements differ from Special Consideration in that they are planned, proactive arrangements to ensure an equitable assessment environment rather than reactive processes to provide compensation for unexpected illness or hardship.

Students must complete the Application for Equitable Assessment Arrangements form as soon as they become aware of the need and lodge it at the Hub, or in the case of a learning disability, through the DLU or relevant Student Service centre if offshore. The form can be downloaded from www.rmit.edu.au/students/forms. The earlier the University receives notice, the more it is able to provide a reasonable level of assistance to students.

How can I make a complaint?

Unfortunately many students are made to feel unwelcome or are directly discriminated against because of their (dis)ability. The stigma attached to people with mental health issues, physical and structural problems with many RMIT facilities, general ignorance about how to make reasonable accommodations for students disclosing a (dis)ability and the lack of timeliness in dealing with complaints, are examples of why many students with (dis)abilities are dissatisfied or frustrated by RMIT. Complaints about (dis)ability support can also be difficult because there are a number of

separate areas involved and it can be hard to work out where to direct your grievance.

A general guide

Concerns about what the DLU is recommending should be taken up through the Unit's internal process. Issues with how the DLU's recommendations have been implemented by your teachers should be raised with the relevant School, and can often contribute to an Assessment Appeal. This process should also be used for complaints about the effects of temporary disabilities and other medical conditions which have been handled as Special Consideration applications. You also have the right to make a complaint of discrimination through the Student Complaints Manager in the Office of the Registrar, or externally to the Human Rights Commission. Complaints of discrimination are a serious matter, and we strongly advise talking to a Student Rights Officer or getting legal advice before taking this step.

In the Student Union, Student Liaison Officers provide initial advocacy and advice on how to appeal assessments or make a complaint. Student Rights Officers can assist you with complaints as well, especially if they are complex.

Relevant links

Equitable Assessment Arrangements

www.rmit.edu.au/students/equitableassessment

Australian Human Rights Commission

www.humanrights.gov.au

Disability Standards for Education

www.deewr.gov.au/schooling/programs/pages/disabilitystandardsforeducation.aspx

Other RMIT services

Disability Liaison Unit

Student Services Centre

Building 10, level 4, City campus

Building 202, level 3, Bundoora campus

Building 514, level 2, Brunswick campus

T/ 9925 1089

E/ dlu@rmit.edu.au

www.rmit.edu.au/disability