

# 2022 Equity funding for tertiary students with disabilities – Tertiary Education Institutions data reporting

## Introduction

The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has collected information from Tertiary Education Institutions<sup>1</sup> (TEIs) about their use of the TEC fund, *equity funding for students with disabilities*<sup>2</sup>, since 2018. This information is used to support work being undertaken by the TEC and the Ministry of Education (MoE), to improve outcomes for disabled learners across the tertiary sector. The data is collected through the ‘Equity funding: Tertiary students with disabilities’ reporting template, which captures various types of learners and resourcing information, such as costs, staff numbers, services provided, learners accessing the services, challenges faced by TEIs, etc.

The collection of this data is very important, as it supports work being undertaken by the TEC and the MoE to improve outcomes for disabled learners in the tertiary sector. In particular, the detailed information provided by those TEIs who reported Challenges, Highlights and Successes with their disabled learners has helped with informing work on the Unified Funding System. It will also continue to be reviewed in regards to additional resource content needs for [The Kia Ōrite Toolkit – A New Zealand code of practice to achieve an inclusive and equitable tertiary education environment for disabled learners](#).

In March 2023, we requested data from all 27 TEIs on their use of *equity funding for tertiary students with disabilities* for the 2022 funding year. The 2022 reporting template was consistent with templates used in previous years, with an expanded standardised list of the disability support services available at each TEI. It was therefore possible to compare responses across the years, with some new insights about the support services each TEI provides.

The quality and depth of data received for the 2022 reporting round improved again on the 2021 round, as more providers supplied more complete reports. This is enabling us to build a clearer picture of the supports provided for, and constraints on support for disabled learners.

We encourage all TEI’s to review the report, and consider how the issues and learnings detailed here might inform your [Disability Action Plan](#) development.

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<sup>1</sup> TEIs include Universities, Te Pūkenga and Wānanga. We have counted each Te Pūkenga business division separately instead of counting Te Pūkenga as one organisation.

<sup>2</sup> While the fund being reported on is called “*Equity funding for tertiary students with disabilities*”, the appropriate term for learners supported by this fund is ‘disabled learners’. This is reflected in the paper. Where the paper refers to the fund, it is italicised for clarity.

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## 2022 equity funding for disabled learners

This year, 27 TEIs returned<sup>3</sup> completed reports. Overall, they received a total of \$6,028,058 in *equity funding for students with disabilities* from TEC in 2022<sup>4</sup>. The equity funding received by each TEI ranged from \$53,854 (Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi) to \$1,711,898 (Te Pūkenga<sup>5</sup>). The large variation was due to the equity funding calculation, which is calculated as the Equivalent Full Time Student (EFTS) number from the Mix of Provision of each TEI multiplied by a standard dollar rate. From 2022 onwards, the allocation data for Te Pūkenga is given as a total, instead of split between each individual business division. The TEC still collects data from each Te Pūkenga business division. As a result, the 'Tertiary Student with Disability (TSD) allocation (excludes GST)' for Te Pūkenga is only showing the total but other data fields are still showing at each business division.

TEIs were asked to report the estimated overall costs of providing support services for disabled learners, including but not limited to TEC equity funding for 2022. All TEIs provided this information. The total cost across these providers was \$13,855,607 ranging from \$10,000 to over \$1.8 million.

All but two TEIs reported spending more than the TEC equity funding allocation while supporting their disabled learners, mostly spending more than double the amount they had received from the TEC. We are heartened to see the significant efforts made by some TEIs in providing services to their learners with disabilities.

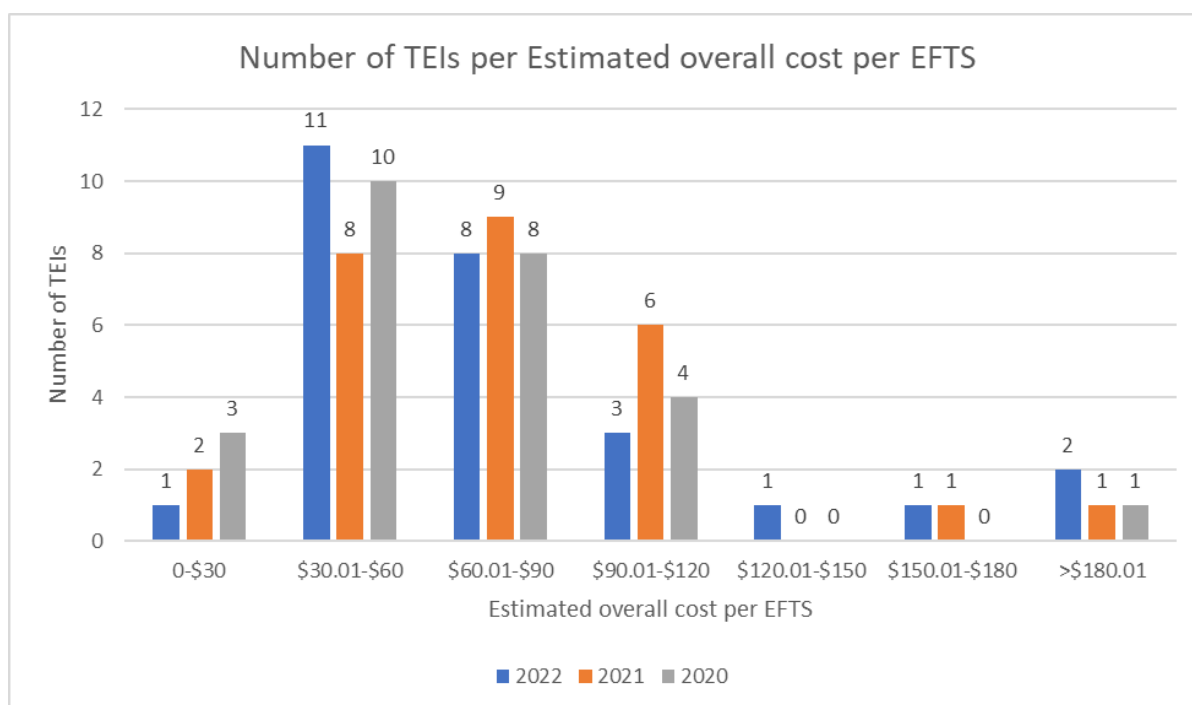
The overall cost per EFTS ranged from \$5/EFTS<sup>6</sup> to \$275/EFTS in 2022, with most TEIs ranging between \$30 and \$90. The graph below shows the number of TEIs within different ranges of estimated overall cost per EFTS in the past 3 years.

<sup>3</sup> In 2021, 27 TEIs returned the report and in 2020, 26 TEIs returned the report.

<sup>4</sup> In 2021, 27 TEIs received a total of \$5,414,772 in *equity funding for students with disabilities* from TEC.

<sup>5</sup> We have counted each Te Pūkenga business division separately instead of Te Pūkenga as one organisation.

<sup>6</sup> This estimated overall cost per EFTS excluded the staffing cost while most other TEIs have included this cost.



Note: caution is advised when comparing figures as each organisation’s financial systems collate information in different ways. For example, some TEIs reported staff costs only (for staff directly supporting disabled learners as their primary role), others included both staff and resource costs, while others included components, but not all, of both staff and resources. We are also aware some TEIs reported figures which were too low to cover the services that are known to be provided at these organisations (potentially an outcome of internal financial coding systems).

### Staff support for disabled learners<sup>7</sup>

TEIs were asked to report the number of staff FTE who directly supported disabled learners. Alternatively, if there was no specifically assigned staff, TEIs were asked to record the number of general staff who could assist with disability-related support requests. Note that caution is advised when comparing figures between TEIs, as organisations structure their support services in very different ways.

The reported number of staff who directly support disabled learners ranged from 0.2 to 22.8 FTEs. A higher number of FTE reports tended to include the numbers of staff who supported learners with disabilities in some aspect of the role, rather than the number of staff primarily dedicated to supporting learners with disabilities. Some TEIs included paid note-takers and mentors in their data, however others did not.

Taking generic pool staff out of the data set (i.e., removing staff that were not directly supporting learners with disabilities), TEIs reported an average of around three FTEs directly supporting disabled learners. Larger TEIs tended to have larger teams solely involved in supporting disabled learners (5 – 12 FTE’s), while smaller TEIs reported less dedicated staff (1 – 3 FTEs) and relied more on wider staff support roles.

<sup>7</sup> One TEI was unable to provide any data and has been excluded from any of these figures.

## Total number of learners accessing disability services<sup>7</sup>

TEIs were asked to provide the number of learners who accessed disability services in 2022, reporting each learner only once even if they accessed multiple services/ times.

The number of learners accessing services ranged from 6 to 2,389 learners. Larger TEIs tended to report larger numbers of learners accessing disability services. However, as with other data categories, caution should be taken when comparing data between TEIs as data collection practices differ. The learner counts can represent different learner groups, depending on how data is captured at each organisation. For example, some TEIs counted only learners *registered* with disability support services at the TEI, or only learners whose interaction with disability support led to a *dollar cost*, while others included all learners that had any interaction with disability support services.

## Waitlists and wait times for support from disability services

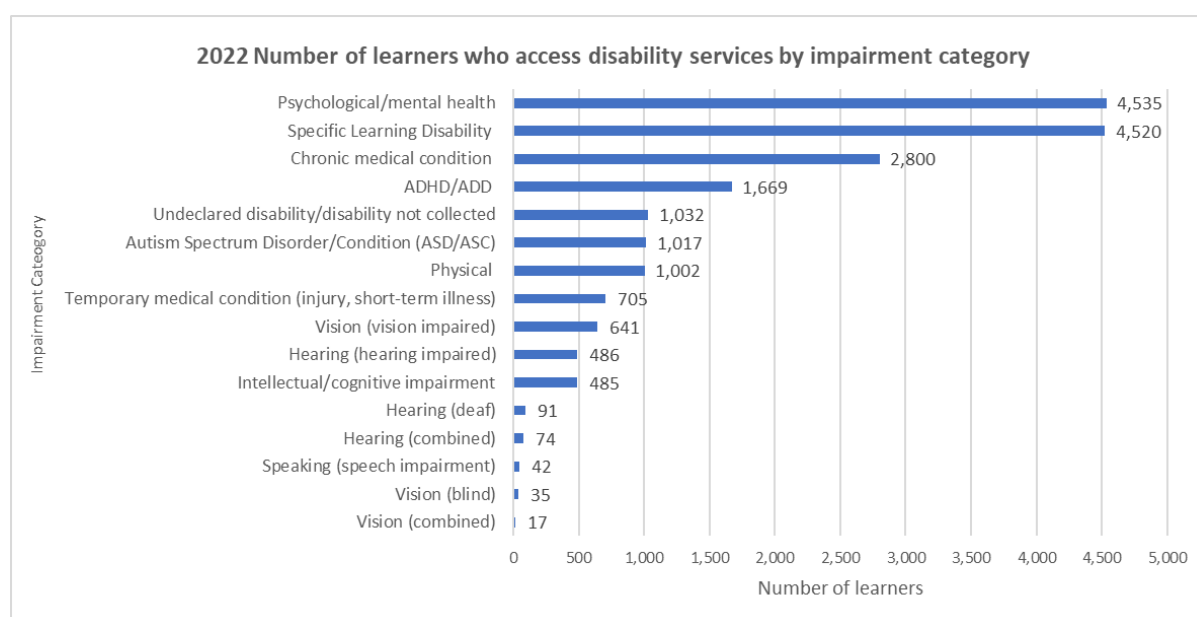
TEIs were asked to report information on waitlist for learners when getting disability support, including the amount of time learners have to wait and the number of learners on waitlist.

A handful of TEIs reported an estimated of 1 -2 weeks of wait time for an appointment with a staff member at the busiest time which is usually at the beginning of the semester. A few TEIs indicated that they were able to offer services at short notice. One TEI reported having 124 learners on the waitlist in 2022. Another TEI reported three learners had been on the waitlist. Others reported that there is no waitlist, or they don't hold students on waitlist or no data available.

## Distribution of learner counts across various impairment categories<sup>7</sup>

TEIs were asked to report on the number of learners accessing services, and the disability reported by those learners from a standardised list of impairment categories.

Among the TEIs that provided learner numbers, the percentage of learners accessing disability services ranged from 0.2% to 26.2% of the total number of learners within each TEI. The figure below shows the number of learners who accessed disability services by impairment category.



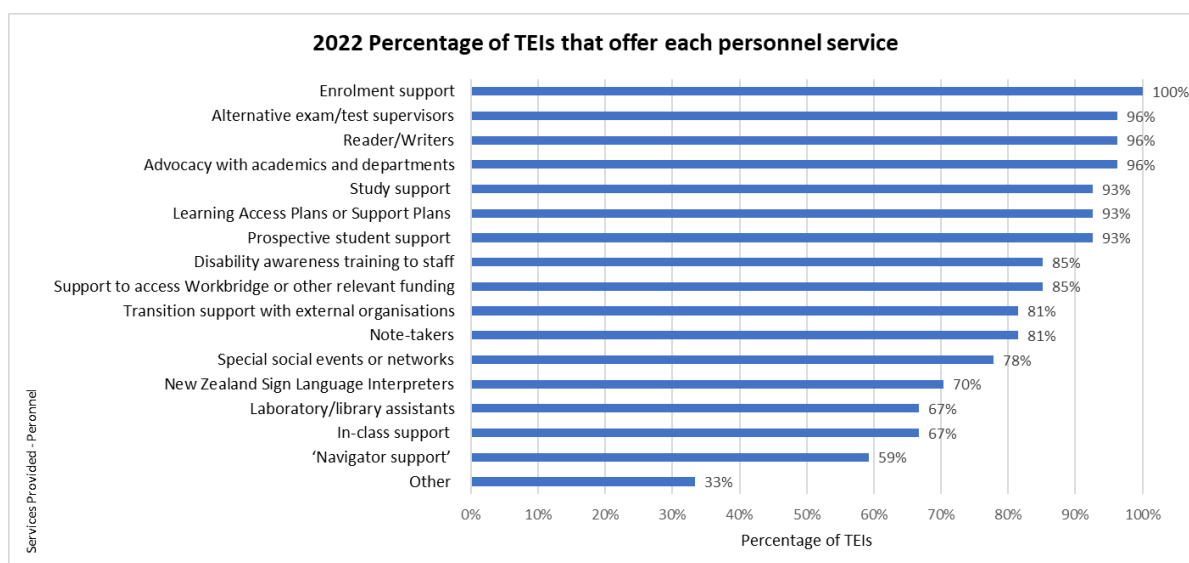
The impairment categories with the highest number of learners were *psychological/mental health* (4,535 learners), followed by *specific learning disability* (4,520 learners). For some TEIs a learner can be in more than one category. Therefore, the total percentage per TEI can be greater than 100% of the reported number of disabled learners. Overall, the numbers of learners in each impairment category in 2022 were similar to 2021. The exceptions were *chronic medical condition* (which saw an increase from 2,474 learners in 2021, to 2,800 in 2022) and a new impairment category that was added in 2022, *ADHD/ADD (Attention disorders)*, this was reported as the 4<sup>th</sup> highest impairment category at 1,669 learners in 2022.

Some TEIs provided additional comments, mainly regarding how their numbers had changed in 2022 in comparison to 2021. Several reported significant increases in mental health and chronic health conditions. Challenges remain with the coding of impairments; some learners prefer not to disclose certain impairments.

*We note the ongoing challenges TEI's face to ensure learners feel safe to disclose disability support needs at a time and level which enables appropriate support to be provided. We appreciate the ongoing work TEI's undertake to ensure that learners are aware of their services, especially in the growing area of need for mental health supports.*

### Personnel services provided for disabled learners

TEIs were asked to report on personnel services provided for disabled learners from a standardised list of services. Some TEIs indicated some services were not applicable to them. The figure below shows the percentage of TEIs offering personnel services, excluding any not applicable responses.

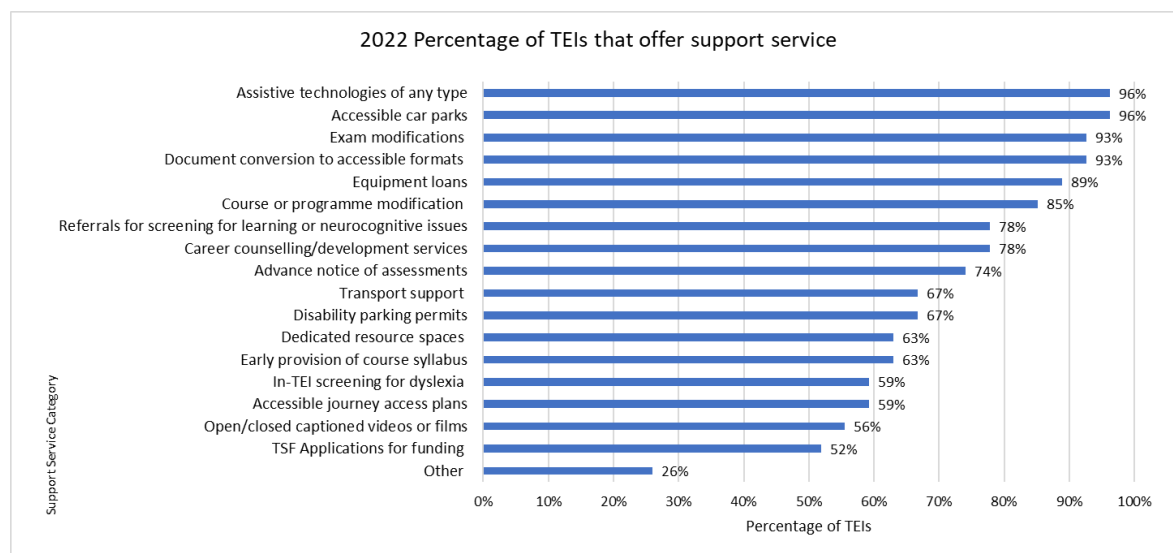


The top personnel disability services, offered by over 90% of TEIs, were *Enrolment Support* (offered by all TEIs, 100%), *alternative exam/test supervisors*, *reader/writers*, *Advocacy with academics and departments* (96%), and *Study Support*, *Learning Access Plans or Support Plans* and *Prospective student support* (93%).

The personnel disability services offered by the fewest TEIs were *Laboratory/library assistants* (67%), *In-class Support* (67%), *Navigator Support* (59%) and *other* (33%). Several TEIs noted some services listed were available to all learners, not only those who identified as disabled.

## Support services provided for disabled learners

TEIs were asked to report on support services provided for disabled learners from a standardised list of services. Some TEIs left some of the support service fields blank or indicated these were not applicable. The figure below shows the percentage of TEIs offering support services, excluding any not applicable responses.



The top support disability services, offered by over 90% of the TEIs, were *assistive technologies* (96%), *accessible car parks* (96%), *exam modifications* (93%), and *document conversion to accessible formats* (93%).

The bottom support disability services offered were *In-TEI screening for dyslexia* (59%), *accessible journey access plans* (59%), *open/closed captioned videos or films* (56%), *TSF (technology support funding) applications for funding* (52%), and *other* (26%).

Note TEIs were asked to state whether they provided each service specifically for disabled learners. Some TEIs have therefore not recorded services provided when these services were available to all learners, even though they were available to disabled learners.

In addition to the standardised list, TEIs were asked if they provided any other services. Eleven TEIs provided details of other support services. These were:

- Mentor support for study skills and/or mental health issues.
- Professional training for learner support workers.
- Referrals to internal and external support services.
- Financial assistance available for students who need to access a GP and/or onsite services available from a Nurse Practitioner.
- Assignment Advice mentor, preparing paper copies.
- Accessibility Student Advisory Group. Initiated start of the Pilot Navigators mentoring programme.
- Support for limited full-time applications to StudyLink; Auckland Transport support letter for student concession rates; support for environmental adjustments to student accommodation & learning spaces.
- Development of Accessible accommodation options, both on and off campus, in partnership with the Accommodation service.

- Contact/block course support.
- Online support, particularly for distance students.
- Studio group for students with anxiety / sensory issues in first year core creative arts courses.
- Support with limited full-time and disability allowance applications to StudyLink and the training incentive allowance from WINZ.
- ADHD screeners through our wellbeing service. Internal referrals for to health, counselling, and wellbeing services, learning and development support, financial and hardship assistance, and cultural support.
- Adaptive technology adviser who identifies adaptive technology to meet a student's needs and trains them in usage, facilitates funding applications.
- IT technicians learning to advise students on how to access disability features on devices.

### Need for additional support

Nineteen TEIs provided information on the additional services they would like to provide learners with disabilities, but could not due to resource constraints. The main services these TEIs wished to provide included the following:

- Mentors, advisors, pastoral care facilities (11 TEIs)
- Assistive Technology specialist and equipment (8 TEIs)
- Assessments and Screenings - these include ADHD, SLD diagnostic assessment, Educational Psychologist assessments, Dyslexia screening and neurodiverse diagnosis (5 TEIs)
- Student areas – these include dedicated workspaces, communal areas for socialising, rest areas, sensory rooms, and community spaces (4 TEIs)
- Pastoral care (3 TEIs)
- NZSL interpreters, assignment submissions and captioning (2 TEIs)
- Support and equipment for neurodiverse learners (2 TEIs)
- Accessibility (2 TEIs)
- Open/Closed captions on media (1 TEI)
- Adaptive Technology (1 TEI)

TEIs noted that cost constraints and a lack of human resources remain the primary factors preventing them from providing these services.

### Challenges faced

Twenty-four TEIs described the main challenges facing them regarding supporting disabled learners in 2022.

Most of the challenges recorded related to the impacts of lack of resources/staffing. These included<sup>8</sup>:

- Meeting the high support needs of a small number of students. The resources required can be demanding and can mean that other students with less support needs can be missed.
- Inability to provide learners identified as having an intellectual disability regular in-class support.

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<sup>8</sup> Wording as reported by TEIs.

- Learners' needs have continued to increase in complexity, often learning support is easily managed, it is the complex social, financial, psychological, and spiritual needs that require support beyond pastoral care.
- Remote learning for majority of ākonga: This was not suitable for the learning styles of a number of ākonga due to limitations around internet and technology, learning difficulties and personal stressors as a result of the pandemic.
- Ākonga have repeatedly requested a space to call their own and establish their community, and private break-out spaces specifically for disability and mental health. Ākonga continue to not disclose any disability on enrolment, and referrals for support are indicated later.
- The high amount of students with suspected ADHD and the cost and wait of official testing and diagnoses from external providers.
- Encouraging ākonga to actively engage early with the service is an issue. 33% of the ākonga accessing the service in 2022 did not indicate any disability on enrolment, this makes it difficult to put early interventions in place.
- The increasing number of ākonga who have indicated mental health needing to access specialized services. The lack of services in the community impacts access to the services that ākonga need.
- Building accessibility for wheelchairs and mobility scooters.
- Student numbers steadily increasing, and the time spent on each student (especially those with mental health issues) seems to be increasing disproportionately.
- Attracting and maintaining enough notetakers to provide coverage.
- Rise in mental health disclosures.
- Students not disclosing disability on enrolment then needing support at short notice.
- Maintaining a high quality and responsive service while managing vacancies in Disability Services.
- Continued disruption due to Covid and also changes in staffing levels across the team.

### Initiatives recently developed to support disabled learners

Twenty-three TEIs described recent initiatives developed to support disabled learners in 2022. Examples of the initiatives included<sup>9</sup>:

- In 2022 plans began to relocate the Disability Support Service (DSS) to a more visible and accessible location and to respond to the requests from disabled learners for quiet study space.
- Outside agency expo to support disabled learners entering the workforce, Seabrook McKenzie funded assessments for SLD.
- Extra wellbeing initiatives were funded by Te Whatu Ora in 2022 and has benefited a wide range of learners. Specific sessions were provided for international, Rainbow, Pasifika, and social work learners and a Whai Ora Wellness programme for Trades' learners.
- Development and sign off on the Disability Action Plan (DAP) which was highlighted nationally as being an exemplar for other ITPs to follow.
- Learner Success Plans - every disabled student registered with Disability Services has their own plan in place so we can all better support the student's journey.
- Working closely with Kaitakawaenga to engage Māori and Pasifika with disability earlier in the enrolment process and continue to support ākonga alongside Kaitakawaenga.
- New team to introduce whakawhanaungatanga sessions and implement new inclusive activity opportunities.

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<sup>9</sup> Wording as reported by TEIs.



- Working on a series of video stories of disabled learners sharing their barriers and successes with studying online and from distance.
- Students with Impairments policy to create and clearly outline baseline standards of support for disabled student, supporting the establishment and partnering with students to have an independent voice.
- Introduction of Glean (digital note taking software).
- By end of 2022, procedure formulated and implemented to begin in 2023 notifying students of upcoming assignments - with the aim to lessen number of aegrotats for Inclusive Ed students.
- Enhancements to the creation, capture and recording within the Academic Accommodation Plan along with sharing across the University to ensure all staff are aware of provisions in place for a student.
- Redesigned the recording and implementation for the ADHD/ASD student assessments at end of 2022 for implementation in 2023.
- Disability Support Services (DSS) student connect space. DSS advisors and DSS students allocated time and space to connect.
- End of 2022 began reviewing Deaf student processes when resource staff were required. New model of service delivery to be instigated in 2023.
- New model of engagement for Deaf students' transition and orientation submitted end of 2022 for trial in 2023.
- Achieved organisational support to submit a recommendation for a disability.
- Submitted leadership scholarship to the Scholarships Committee in 2023.
- Began Urgent Counselling Referrals project - completion scheduled for 2023.
- Taura Voice Strategy - ongoing development with staff, students and communities/ Roll out of Learner Success Plan 2023-24.

A good number of new initiatives were reported by TEIs for the 2022/2023 teaching year. Many of those introduced as a response to the move to online learning have been adopted as BAU by the institutions. The on-going commitment and care shown by TEI staff was highlighted in many of the initiatives, particularly those involving outreach or increased pastoral care systems. We recognise this has placed a very high burden on many support staff, and we acknowledge the dedication of these staff to supporting disabled learners.

If TEIs wish to know more about any of these initiatives, please contact the Ōritetanga Learner Success team at the TEC – we can link you with the relevant TEI for information / support<sup>10</sup>.

### Highlights/successes in supporting disabled learners

Twenty-three TEIs described highlights or successes in supporting disabled learners in 2022. These included<sup>11</sup>:

- Development of a disability strategy and disability action plan (DAP)
- Review of the Individual Access Plan and improved process of collaboration with department staff.
- Collaboration across Student Support Services to improve wrap around service for disabled learners.
- Pilot to fund the use of Glean and Otter AI licences for DS registered learners.

<sup>10</sup> You can reach the team via the Customer Contact Group on 0800 601 301, or [customerservice@tec.govt.nz](mailto:customerservice@tec.govt.nz), put 'Equity Funding for disabled students reporting' in your subject line.

<sup>11</sup> Wording as reported by TEIs.

- An increase in the number of relationships with external providers (Community Mental Health, Supported Employment, etc) as the recognition of holistic wrap-around support became apparent during the pandemic.
- Ability to deliver exam support remotely which meant that ākongā were not being disadvantaged by restraints because of pandemic precautions/guidelines.
- Established website with all info and resources.
- Improved transparency of referral processes and record keeping to ākongā.
- Established in-house 'engaging with neuro-diverse ākongā' training for all staff.
- Established in-house expertise to evaluate neurodiverse ākongā needs.
- Renovated Welcome Hub to be more inclusive of disabled community needs.
- Successfully supported first Deaf ākongā to enrol with interpreters and notetakers.
- Created a dedicated Disability and Wellbeing space for our kaimahi to work in this year.
- Renovation of one bathroom to support a mobility scooter and hoist.
- Establishment of dedicated Disability and Access Services.
- Trialling the LibCal appointment booking system to help enable early conversations with prospective students or those considering registering with our service.
- Contributing development of ākongā turi in the Far North where interest in learning te reo Māori is growing.

We were heartened to hear that TEIs are continuing to improve their case management and wider support services and structures for disabled learners. The ongoing focus on using data tracking to both identify disabled learner outcomes, and target supports, is also very important and it's great to see this continuing to develop.

As we have noted in earlier data reports, better data on disabled people's current position and outcomes is key focus for the NZ Disability Action Plan, so continuing development in this area remains important. It is also positive to see staff capability remain a focus area, with ongoing actions to support staff understanding and practice for supporting disabled learners.

The detailed information collected in this report continues to be essential to inform work being undertaken by the TEC and MoE. It is helping inform ongoing work on the Unified Funding System and conversations around a need for potential additional funding for high investment learners. It will also continue to be reviewed in regards to additional resource content needs for *The Kia Ōrite Toolkit – A New Zealand code of practice to achieve an inclusive and equitable tertiary education environment for disabled learners*.

If TEIs wish to know more about any of these initiatives, please contact the Ōritetanga Learner Success team at the TEC – we can link you with the relevant TEI for information / support<sup>12</sup>.

## **Next steps for equity funding for disabled learners reporting work**

### **Cross sector work**

We will continue to work with TEOs, disability support services, disability advocate bodies and disabled learners to understand the constraints on the system and provide support and advice to TEO's to help them best support their learners.

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<sup>12</sup> You can reach the team via the Customer Contact Group on 0800 601 301, or [customerservice@tec.govt.nz](mailto:customerservice@tec.govt.nz), put 'Equity Funding for disabled students reporting' in your subject line.

## **2022 reporting**

This report (for the 2022 year) will help the TEC and MoE better understand the impacts of the second year of Covid-19, and what extra support the sector may need as a result. We will continue to report back to the sector to help share initiatives and successes.

As we develop more consistent data from this reporting cycle, we will be able to have a better picture of where disabled learners are attending TEIs, and how they are being supported.

## **Planning for 2023 and beyond**

We are currently considering how we can collect data around presence and support of disabled learners in PTEs and industry training.

We are also considering changes to the equity funding reporting requirements for 2023 data onwards, to reflect the introduction of the Unified Funding System (UFS). We will be consulting with the sector on this in late 2023.

## **Support for the sector**

The [Kia Ōrite Toolkit](#) – A New Zealand code of practice to achieve an inclusive and equitable tertiary education environment for disabled learners

The Kia Ōrite toolkit is a key part of our commitment to support disabled learners. The Toolkit supports TEOs to standardise their practices, learn from each other, and understand what is expected from learners and their whanau. The Kia Ōrite development team will continue to add to the toolkit with additional training and resource material.