ACADEMIC BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

The Academic Board has adopted the following threshold standards in order to improve information access for students with a print disability.

1 Threshold standards for reading pack quality

Major delays result from insufficient information and/or poor print quality in subject reading packs. The introduction of threshold standards will reduce time taken to convert material into accessible formats and facilitate timely delivery of material to students. The introduction of these standards for the preparation of subject readers will result in improved and consistent electronic capture of information and improve access to information for all students.

The threshold PRINT QUALITY standards are:

1. Subject readers utilise only first generation photocopies
2. Reduced photocopies are not used
3. Photocopies are aligned accurately
4. Photocopies do not have any text 'chopped off'
5. Accurate and complete bibliographic details for all books and articles are provided
6. Pagination is clear
7. Schedule of dates by which readings are expected to be read is included.

2 Threshold standards for timing of the provision of teaching materials

The introduction of threshold standards for reading pack quality will facilitate timely delivery of materials in an accessible format.

The threshold TIMING STANDARDS are:

1. Teaching materials such as reading packs and course outlines are to be available to all students at least 4 weeks prior to the commencement of the semester in which the subject is to be taught.
2. If additional materials are introduced to the course, these materials to be made available to students 4 weeks prior to when the material is taught.

NB: If these time-lines cannot be met, the lecturer will need to ensure that alternative strategies are negotiated with students with a print disability, in liaison with the DLU, to ensure that their chances of success in the subject are not prejudiced.

It would be greatly appreciated if University staff who publish material were willing to provide the Library with e-text, or permission from publishers for e-text to be stored in the Library, for future use by a person with a print disability.

3 Development of guidelines for accessible online course materials

Currently, material delivered online is not uniformly accessible. Although guidelines exist for the production of accessible web content, there are many University websites that are not accessible and no apparent mechanism to ensure accessible web content is available. Further information on design standards can be found at:

http://www.sunriseresearch.com.au/OZeWAI_2001/IMS/IMS-secX.html and

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/standards/www_3/www_3.html

The introduction of University-wide guidelines will address a number of current concerns about the accessibility of online material.

Academic Board has agreed to:

- Endorse the development of University guidelines for accessible online course materials
- Support and monitor the implementation of the guidelines
- Consider including a reference to accessibility standards on the course approvals form
- Consider endorsing the provision of training for all staff in ensuring online material is accessible, and
- Communicate decisions relating to these recommendations to all staff.

CHECKLIST

FOR TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE AVAILABLILITY OF MATERIALS FOR CONVERSION

Academic and General Staff Members responsible for production of course materials

- ☐ Course materials have been prepared and made available to ALL students at least four weeks prior to the commencement of the semester
- ☐ Any additional materials introduced later in the course will be made available to students four weeks prior to when the material is to be taught
- ☐ If these time-lines cannot be met, the lecturer has ensured that alternative strategies have been negotiated with students with a print disability, in liaison with the DLU
- ☐ Course/subject readers use only first generation photocopies
- ☐ Reduced photocopies have not been used
- ☐ All photocopies have been accurately aligned
- ☐ Photocopies do not have any text 'chopped off'
- ☐ Pagination is clear
- ☐ Accurate and complete bibliographic details for all books and articles have been included
- ☐ A schedule of dates by which readings are expected to be read has been included.

Heads of Department

- ☐ A reference to accessibility standards has been included in the course approvals form
- ☐ Appropriate staff in the department have received training which enables them to ensure that on-line materials produced by the department are accessible
- ☐ These guidelines have been communicated to all relevant staff members
- ☐ Provision has been made to monitor the implementation of these guidelines.

For more information about accessible format materials and teaching strategies for students with a print disability please contact the **Disability Liaison Unit**:

Phone: **03 8344 7068**

Web address: **http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/disability/**

Prepared in December 2002 by Equity and Learning Programs (ELP).
Additional copies can be obtained by contacting
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THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

equity and diversity

Improving Information Access for Students with a Print Disability

Guidelines for Staff

Background

University policy and government legislation require the University to provide students with print disabilities with reading material in a format they can access. The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) defines disability to include "present existence of physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory neurological and learning disability". Such students include those with a vision impairment, dyslexia or a mobility impairment which impedes the use of print. They are unable to access curriculum materials or administrative information when it is in print or in an inaccessible electronic format. Increased costs and time delays in the provision of material to these students in alternative or accessible formats has become a significant concern both at the University of Melbourne and Australia-wide.

To date, few faculties have been able to provide subject reading guides or reading packs within a time frame which allows accessible formats to be prepared in time for the commencement of classes. In some cases, materials have not been made available until a week prior to the beginning of classes and occasionally, after classes have commenced. Students who receive their course material late in the semester are disadvantaged in their assessment choices and in tutorial participation and their potential to succeed is severely compromised.

Key issues for the University are:

- Increased costs associated with providing materials in an accessible format
- Unacceptable delays in providing materials to students in an accessible format.

This brochure outlines the factors impacting on the timely provision of material in an accessible format and presents three recommendations which were approved by the by Academic Board on 19 September 2002.

1. Introduction of threshold standards for reading pack quality;
2. Introduction of threshold standards for the timely availability of course materials;
3. Development of University guidelines for accessible online course materials, and the support for and monitoring of their implementation.

The application of these recommendations will be of benefit to all students and further enhance the University's reputation as a leader in the equitable provision of higher education.

Statement from the President of the Academic Board

"Recently the Academic Board considered a report produced by the University's Access and Equity Committee which addressed the considerable difficulties currently experienced by students with vision impairments and other print disabilities in gaining full access to their course materials in appropriate alternative formats. The report was developed by a consultative group with representation from the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU), academic staff and students, following concerns about increased costs and time delays in the provision of material in accessible formats.

We know that some students with print disabilities face significant barriers to accessing information. The University's Strategic Plan affirms a commitment to an equity agenda that takes account of the special needs of disadvantaged students. Furthermore, policy and legislative imperatives require the University to provide students who have a print disability with material in a format they can access.

Material is usually presented to students via print, sound and images and accessibility depends on both the way the material is created (the format and the process used) and the adaptive or assistive software and hardware that is used in conjunction with existing technology.

I encourage all staff to consider the information outlined in this brochure and make every endeavour to follow the guidelines. This will ensure that the University meets its responsibilities towards this particular group of students, thus enabling them to undertake their course of study with the highest chance of success."

Professor Peter McPhee
President, Academic Board

INFORMATION ACCESS FAQS

What is the University's responsibility under Disability Legislation?

Disability discrimination occurs when a person with a disability is, or is about to be, treated less favourably than others. A practice that unreasonably prevents a student from studying is unlawful indirect discrimination. More information is available at:
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/dda_guide/dda_guide.htm

What is a print disability?

People with a print disability may be unable:

1. to visually process print material due to sight impairment, learning disability or other perceptual condition
2. to hold or manipulate books or other texts, or
3. to maintain the focus to read.

What is an alternative or accessible format?

In order for a student with a print disability to access information contained in reading packs, handouts and textbooks the material must be converted into a format that the student can access. The terminology used is an 'alternative' or 'accessible' format. Printed material can be provided in the following ways, depending on a student's preference and the availability of accessible material:

- online via one of the University library resources
- electronically via the faculty, Disability Liaison Unit (DLU), or publisher
- in another accessible format such as audio recordings, Braille and raised-line illustrations via external library services.

Sometimes students require adaptive technology to use these formats.

What is meant by 'adaptive technology'?

Adaptive or assistive technology is any technology that assists a person to use generally available technology to create, access, process or present information. Adaptive technology may be something simple such as a tape recorder needed to access audio material. However many students who require accessible formats rely on more sophisticated technology to access electronic materials. For example, JAWS is a voice readout program which, when installed in a computer, enables a person to listen and navigate their way through the desktop, as well as utilise most generally available software, such as word processing packages. The Baillieu Library has study carrels with computers that have specific screen reading software loaded. Other software enables the printed text on the screen to be converted and printed in Braille, using a special Braille printer. Equipment which enlarges the text of books, maps, music or other documents is also available, using a CCTV. For further information regarding adaptive technology, contact the Disability Liaison Unit.

What is the role of the DLU?

The DLU is the primary reference point for students with disabilities enrolled at the University. The DLU provides a range of supports to students with disabilities as well as providing advice for staff. Among the many services for students with a disability, the DLU organises the conversion of material into accessible formats for students with a print disability. This process is usually outsourced and can have a significant turnaround time. Additionally the DLU employs and trains a team of casual Alternative Format Editors who perform some of the tasks involved in conversion of print materials into an accessible format.

All students requiring accessible materials are required to sign a document for the DLU, indicating that they understand their responsibilities related to the conversion of reading materials into accessible formats.

Staff of the DLU welcome enquiries regarding issues raised in this brochure, or about other aspects of providing support for students with disabilities. DLU staff can be contacted at **DLU-enquiries@unimelb.edu.au** or by telephoning **#47068**.

What is the demand for accessible formats?

Over the last five semesters there has been an increase in the demand for alternative/accessible formats at the University. Reasons for the increase relate to several factors:

- Increased numbers of students with a print disability, both vision impairment and learning disability
- Increased number of students with these disabilities undertaking full time study or combined degrees, with a corresponding increase in the volume of requests
- Increased number of students undertaking courses in the Science, Education and Engineering faculties, where there are additional complexities in presenting scientific notation in alternative formats, and
- Increased expectations as levels of support in the secondary sector have risen.

What is the role of other University Services?

Libraries

The University Libraries assist students to locate existing accessible formats, approach publishers and lecturers for e-text copies of published works, arrange inter-library loans of accessible formats and source original print copies for conversion and assist in the conversion of some reading materials. For example, scanning journal articles not already available in e-text and photocopying information up into large print.

Design and Print Centre

Through requests from faculties and departments, the Design and Print Centre converts A4 copies of Subject Reading Packs into accessible formats which the student can purchase in place of the standard copy. The Centre prepares two accessible formats:

- A4 up to A3 enlargements
- PDF files, which can be used if the student has sufficient vision to utilise this format by using screen enlargement software.

What about Copyright?

Copyright is a complex issue. In relation to accessible format materials, there are some copyright exemptions relevant to both students and staff. Educational institutions are allowed to make copies for students with a disability under what is called a 'statutory licence'. Students access these copies after agreeing not to share them, and to use them solely for purposes of pursuing a course of study. There is useful information on this topic at:
http://www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/gateways/Info/copyright.html#6

What costs are involved?

In the past, the provision of materials in an accessible format (Braille, audio, electronic and raised line drawings) was usually outsourced by the University to the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB). Prior to 2002 RVIB was heavily subsidised by the Commonwealth Government and charitable funds and the average cost was approximately $6,000 per annum per student undertaking four subjects with one subject reading pack and three texts per subject. In 2002 there has been a move to full cost recovery for the provision of external conversion services and consequent major increases in the cost to universities, with a single text now costing up to $6,000.

What factors affect the timely provision of materials in an accessible format?

There are a number of factors affecting timeliness of the provision of material in alternative formats:

- Time at which reading lists, course guides and other materials are made available to students
- Time at which students advise the DLU of the materials required
- Readability of materials - poor photocopies don't scan well and result in the need for costly editing
- Delays in receiving copyright permission
- External accessible format providers usually requiring a 3 month turn-round period
- Increased volume of demand from all universities leading to longer delays.

Are there teaching strategies which would be helpful for these students?

There are many teaching strategies which will assist students with a print disability. Further information can be obtained by contacting the DLU. A few useful strategies are listed below:

1. All PowerPoint slides to enter information into the slide components by using the master slide set-up so that students can easily convert text to MSWord.
2. Overheads – font size no smaller than 18 point font is used.
3. Overheads and/or lecture notes are made available on webraft.
4. Encourage self-disclosure where non-disclosure may disadvantage a student.
5. Encourage students to discuss alternatives which they would find helpful.