Enabling Assistance Student Handbook
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Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publication. For the most up-to-date information, please refer to the RMIT web site <www.rmit.edu.au>

RMIT University CRICOS Provider Code: 00122A
1. General Information

The Disability Liaison Unit (DLU) employs enabling staff: note-takers, sign interpreters, exam scribes, readers/clarifiers and participation assistants, through an external agency, Echo. Echo is responsible for the engagement of all enabling staff working within RMIT.

If you are assessed as requiring the services of any of the enabling staff, referred to above, you will be asked to sign a Student Enabling Assistance Agreement (Attachment Four) and complete a timetable form to be returned via email to the DLU as early as possible (dlu@rmit.edu.au). The DLU will then make the appropriate booking for the length of your course. You will need to complete the timetable form each semester.

Once the booking has been lodged with Echo you will receive a confirmation email, within 5 working days, from Echo advising you of the enabling staff member’s name and asking you to check and confirm the booking details. If the details are correct no further action is required. However if the details are not correct it is your responsibility to email the corrected information to the DLU as soon as possible.

Enabling staff can be booked 30 minutes earlier than the required start time for the first class (only), please enquire with the DLU if this is of interest to you. This extra time could be used for you to meet with your new enabling staff member and discuss any particular ‘reasonable’ requirements you may have e.g. seating arrangements, formatting of notes, etc.

You may have a preference to work with particular enabling staff and Echo will make every endeavour to accommodate your preferences, although it is important to understand that at times preferred staff may not be available.

Echo will do everything possible to ensure that all your timetabling requirements are covered. There may be times when due to situations beyond Echo’s control, that they are unable to provide you with interpreting/notetaking support. You will be notified by Echo as early as possible on any such occasion.

In the event that one of your classes cannot be covered, the DLU suggests that you contact your academic to explain the situation and request that study material be provided to you, if possible. However please first explore whether the materials are available to you through other means e.g., on the distributed learning service. If further assistance is required please contact the DLU.

If your situation changes and additional enabling assistance is required, you will need to make an appointment with the DLU to discuss. Echo is not able to make these changes.
2. Guidelines for students receiving note taking or participation assistance

Enabling staff work in lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical sessions and exams. Their role is to provide clear, concise, legible and comprehensive notes, taking into consideration your needs and requirements. Enabling staff do not provide tutoring.

**Your responsibilities include but are not restricted to:**

» Providing the DLU with a copy of the timetable form as soon as possible to allow for enabling staff to be booked. If you need enabling staff for classes or events that are not timetabled please remember to give this information to the DLU as soon as possible and no later than 5 working days ahead of the required time. However, these additional classes/events will need to be discussed and approved with the DLU prior to a booking being organised.

» Always be on time for class and undertake to attend all classes and tutorials. If you are late enabling staff will wait for 20 minutes and then leave. Please be aware that enabling staff will not participate in the class or provide information on what has occurred prior to your arrival.

» Provide 24 hours minimum notice via email or phone call to Echo and the DLU if you are unable to attend the assigned session or if there is a change to venue (i.e. room location, etc) or a once-off cancellation of one or more of your classes, lectures or tutorials (e.g. my class next Thursday will not go ahead because my teacher is away, etc). Please see Section 5 for Echo’s contact details.

» You will need to contact the DLU immediately if there are any permanent changes to your timetable. You can email dlu@rmit.edu.au

» You must phone Echo if enabling staff has not arrived for the scheduled class. Please also notify the DLU so as action can be taken if necessary.

» Arrive a few minutes early to classes to find appropriate seating.

» Supply paper, notepads or Laptop for enabling staff.

» Read and review your notes regularly.

» Introduce yourself and enabling staff to teaching staff and briefly explain why they are present e.g. to take notes, etc.

» Provide constructive feedback, as needed, to enabling staff. This could include discussion on seating arrangements e.g. sit together, sit apart, etc.

» If there is a problem with the clarity or style in which the assistance is provided (notes, participation in class, etc) communicate your concern to the enabling staff member in the first instance. If it is not resolved, talk with DLU staff.

» Read notes taken by enabling staff at the end of each class so as you can seek clarity from them before they go, if required.
3. Guidelines for students receiving sign interpreting services

Sign language interpreters use predominantly Auslan (Australian sign language) to facilitate communication for deaf and hard of hearing students at university. Interpreters employed by the specialised agencies, engaged by RMIT, will be qualified and accredited by the National Accreditation Authority of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI). Sign language interpreters work in lectures, tutorials, seminars and practical sessions.

Your responsibilities include but are not restricted to:

» Provide the DLU with a copy of the completed timetable form as soon as possible to allow for interpreters to be booked. If you need an interpreter for classes or events that are not timetabled please remember to provide this information to the DLU as soon as possible and no later than 5 working days ahead of the required time. However these additional classes/events will need to be discussed and approved by the DLU prior to a booking being organised.

» Provide 48 hours minimum notice to the Agency (and cc DLU) if you are unable to attend the assigned session or if there is a temporary change to venue (i.e. room location, etc) or a once-off cancellation of one or more of your classes, lectures or tutorials (e.g. my class next Thursday will not go ahead because my teacher is away, etc). Please see Section 5 for agency contact details.

» You will need to contact the DLU immediately if there are any permanent changes to your timetable. Please email dlu@rmit.edu.au

» You must SMS the agency if the interpreter[s] does not arrive for the scheduled class. Please also notify the DLU.

» Always be on time for class and undertake to attend all classes and tutorials. Should you be late your interpreter(s) will wait for 20 minutes and then leave. Please be aware that your interpreter will not participate in the class or provide information on what has occurred prior to your late arrival.

» Please arrive a few minutes early for class to arrange for appropriate seating.

» If you are unhappy with the clarity or style in which the interpreter is communicating to you please discuss with interpreter in the first instance. If your concerns are not addressed, talk with the DLU.

» You should allow for an initial period of time to establish fluent communication and a good rapport between yourself, interpreter and academic staff.

» Please provide the interpreter with a glossary of subject specific vocabulary including definitions, if possible.

» Identify and allow for language variation and accents between interpreters.

» Introduce yourself and the interpreter to the academic staff and briefly explain why they are present.

» Discuss any queries in the working procedure with the interpreter and give constructive feedback to ensure that the most beneficial service is provided.

If you utilise two interpreters and due to unforeseen circumstances only one interpreter is available, the interpreter will not be able to cover the class because of OH&S requirements. In this instance you are recommended to utilise the interpreter to discuss with the lecturer what alternate ways there are to gain access to the lecture material.

It should be noted that it is not the role of the interpreter to explain the content of academic work, clarify with academic staff issues that have arisen from the class, return books to the library or seek extensions of time for assignments. It is not their role to provide attendant care, transport or assist with personal matters.

The DLU reserves the right to revisit the provision of services by conducting a review of your situation, if you fail to consistently attend classes without the required notice, are constantly late or do not adhere to any other student responsibility outline in this Booklet.
4. Changes, cancellations and absences

Enabling staff are booked for the entire semester as per your timetable.

It is imperative that you advise the agency by email (cc the DLU) of:

» Your intention not to attend on a particular day.

» A temporary room change or class cancellation.

Please ensure, where reasonably possible, at least 24 hours notice for note takers and participation assistants and 48 hours for interpreters. Agency contact details are listed in Section 5.

Understandably unplanned absences can occur. However, if you are regularly absent from class, without the required notice, the DLU may need to review your circumstances and the appropriateness of previously agreed disability enabling assistance offered to you.

The DLU must be advised by email if there are any permanent changes to timetabling including changes in classroom venue or study programme. Please see Section 5 for contacts details.

In addition to above please contact the agency directly (and email DLU) if enabling staff fail to attend. The agency may be able to send another person if time/resources permit.

5. Complaints and Problems Procedures

If there is a problem with the clarity or style in which the assistance is provided, communicate your concern to the enabling staff member in the first instance. If the matter is not resolved, please inform the DLU as soon as possible after the incident occurs.

A Disability Adviser will meet with the student either face-to-face or over the phone to ascertain the nature of the complaint. Where the complaint relates to the quality of the Enabling staff, the DA will raise the matter directly with Echo agency, by phone in the first instance, followed by an email. Where the issue is related to other matters i.e. general unhappiness with their course or wanting a higher level of service than agreed, the DA will address the matter with the student.

It should be noted that it is not the role of enabling staff to explain the content of academic work, clarify with academic staff issues that have arisen from the class, return books to the library or seek extensions of time for assignments. It is not their role to provide attendant care, transport or assist with personal matters.
6. Agency and DLU Contacts

**RMIT Disability Liaison Unit**

Building 10, Level 4, Swanston Street, Melbourne Vic 3001

SMS: 0421267500 (for hearing impaired and deaf students only)

Tel: +61 3 9925 1089
Fax: +61 3 9925 1091

Email: dlu@rmit.edu.au
Web: www.rmit.edu.au/disability

**Agency Contacts**

Echo Interpreting

Sign Interpreting

Email Address: info@echointerpreting.com.au
Mobile: 0449 259 153

**Notetaking / Participation assistance**

Email Address: notes@echointerpreting.com.au
Mobile: 0423 064 322
Attachment One: Role of the Note-Taker

The role of the note-taker is to provide classroom assistance to the student in order to enhance their learning opportunities. This is achieved by providing concise notes that not only reflect true content, discussion and instructions expressed in the lecture/class/tutorial but are also written at a language level that the student will understand. All work undertaken on behalf of the student is the property of the student.

Notes may also be taken of videos, overheads, classroom discussions and the like. It is important the note-taker discusses with the student where they are to meet, where the student wishes the note-taker to sit in class and in what format the notes will be presented to the student (e.g. on disk, paper, etc.)

The note-taker should not take notes for the student in their absence unless it has been previously authorised by the Note-Taker’s employer.

What are the responsibilities of the note-taker?

» The note taker will initially wear an identification badge to identify themselves to the student. Some students do not want other students to be aware that they have enabling assistance. The note-taker must be sensitive to this and respect their desire for privacy.

» The note-taker must provide pens for note taking. The best colours to use are blue or black as these colours photocopy well.

» Notes must be proof-read and spelling checked before handing work to the student.

» Punctuality is crucial. It is the note-taker’s responsibility to notify their employer as soon as possible if they are unable to attend a scheduled class so that arrangements can be made to find a replacement.

» The note-taker should be unobtrusive in class. It is not the role of the note-taker to interact in class activities. Academic/teaching staff may assume that the note-taker is a student. It is therefore the note-taker’s responsibility to indicate at the start of semester or first session in an unobtrusive manner that they are providing enabling assistance for a student with a disability.

» If a lecturer/tutor asks a question with regard to the student it is the note-taker’s responsibility to indicate to the teacher that they are to refer questions to the student. Communication is to be between academic/teaching staff and the student, not through the note-taker.

» If the student does not turn up for class the note-taker may leave after half an hour unless they have been previously authorised by their employer to stay. The note-taker must remain on campus and ring either their employer or Disability Liaison Unit (on 9925 1089) in case the student has left a message.

» It is important that the note-taker maintain confidentiality.

» If a note-taker is feeling uncomfortable with the way a student is treating them, they must in the first instance discuss this with the student. If this fails to resolve the problem, the note-taker should discuss this with their employer.

What is not the role of the note-taker?

» To add their own comments.

» To let their own opinion influence the notes recorded.

» To take responsibility for student’s results.

» To interact with members of the class.

» To be responsible for communication between the student and teacher.

» To be responsible for communication between the student and Disability Liaison Unit.

» To pass on the notes to other students in the class.

» To answer questions intended for the students.

» To correct the teacher.

» To be an advocate for the student.

» To be a friend to the student

Hours

The Disability Liaison Unit will nominate how many hours per week are to be allocated for enabling assistance. This will be discussed with the note-taker or their employer. No payment will be made for unauthorised work.
Attachment Two:
Role of the Participation Assistant

**What is the role of the participation assistant?**

» The role of the participation assistant is to generally assist the student to participate in the classroom environment. The participation assistant is not a replacement or substitute teacher. The role will vary depending on the specific needs of the individual student and may take the form of one or more of the following duties:

» To provide concise notes in a format that the student will understand. These notes will give a true record of the content, discussion and specific instructions expressed during the class.

» To provide back-up instructions and assistance to reinforce the teacher’s instructions.

» To explain the procedures, words and new concepts expressed in the classroom.

» To provide, in some cases, outside of normal classroom hours to reinforce skills and theory covered in the classroom, such as revision support and study sessions.

» To provide physical assistance where necessary, such as taking books out of the student’s bag and opening doors.

**What are the responsibilities of the participation assistant?**

» They must be on time. It is the participation assistant’s responsibility to notify their employer as soon as possible if they are unable to attend a scheduled class or arranged meeting time, so that arrangements can be made to find a replacement.

» If working with the student in a classroom setting, the participation assistant must be unobtrusive in class. It is not the role of the participation assistant to interact in class activities. Their role is to assist the student in participating in the class.

» If a lecturer/tutor asks a question with regard to the student, it is the participation assistant’s responsibility to indicate that they are to refer questions to the student. Communication is to be between academic/teaching staff and the student, not through the participation assistant.

» If the student does not turn up for class or meet at the arranged meeting place, the participation assistant may leave after half an hour unless they have been previously authorised by their employer to stay. The participation assistant must remain on campus and ring either their employer or Disability Liaison Unit (ph. 9925 1089) in case the student has left a message.

» The student may not want other students to be aware that they have an enabling assistant. The participation assistant must be sensitive to this and respect their desire for privacy.

» It is important that the participation assistant maintain confidentiality.

» If the participation assistant is feeling uncomfortable with the way the student or teacher is treating them, they must in the first instance discuss this with the student/teacher. If this fails, the participation assistant should discuss this with their employer.

» The participation assistant should dress in a manner that allows them to blend in with the students.

» Other duties and responsibilities will be defined in the student’s individual support plan and discussed with the employer of the participation assistant.

**What is not the role of the participation assistant?**

» To act or be treated as a substitute teacher.

» To be solely a personal carer.

» To read material and provide a summary for the student.

» To be a researcher of material for a student to undertake an assignment.

» To add their own comments.

» To let their own opinion influence the notes recorded.
» To take responsibility for the student’s results.

» To be responsible for communication between the student and teacher.

» To be responsible for communication between the student and the Disability Services.

» To pass on the notes they produce to other students in the class.

» To correct the teacher.

» To be an advocate for the student.

» To be a friend to the student.

**Hours**

Disability Liaison Unit in consultation with the student will nominate the number of hours per week for enabling assistance. This will be conveyed to the participation assistant or their employer. Any unauthorised work will not be paid.
Attachment Three: Working with a Sign Interpreter for Deaf Students

Interpreters may be present in your classroom to allow a student who is deaf or hard of hearing to access information. Their job is well defined with boundaries to ensure that your role as a teacher is not impinged upon.

**Role of the Interpreter:**

» To interpret any communication between people without addition or deletion of content

» To provide culturally appropriate information relevant to the interpreting process

» To treat information that they interpret as confidential

» To state whether the message has been successfully delivered through the interpreting process

**It is not the interpreter’s role to:**

» Liaise between the student, teacher and disability services other than by direct interpretation

» Act as a teacher’s aide or tutor

» Add comments or participate in the class

» Have private conversations or interact during class time with either the teacher, students or other interpreters

» Be responsible for the student’s behavior or academic results

» Discuss the student’s progress

» Let their own opinion influence the information being interpreted

» Answer questions intended for the students

» Correct the teacher

» Breach confidentiality or repeat hearsay

» Provide advice to or about the deaf person

Expected behaviour and attitude:

» To be reliable and punctual

» To respect the student and their choices
» To encourage independence and positive self-esteem

» To honour the student’s rights to dignity, privacy and confidentiality

» To be as inconspicuous as possible in the class situation

**How teaching staff can best assist during classes:**

» The interpreter should be located near the speaker so the student can see both

» Speak directly to the student and look at him/her—not at the interpreter

» Allow the student time to receive the message, make comment and/or seek clarification

» Be aware that the student cannot look at you, the Interpreter, and/or the notes at the same time

» Speak in your usual manner/rate, but be willing to slow down if the interpreter is unable to keep up

» Remember that a student who is watching an interpreter is always few seconds behind the message. This is because the interpreter must first listen to the message, understand it, and then reconstruct it using the target language. Pausing after asking questions or during lectures allows time for the interpreter to finish and the student to be involved in class discussions

» Pace yourself when reading or provide the student with a copy to read for themselves. Normal reading speed will usually be too fast for the Interpreter to absorb and translate

» Do not ask the interpreter to interpret only selected portions of what is said

» Do not ask the interpreter to provide advice to or about the student.

» Ensure that only one person speaks at a time, i.e. group discussions can pose problems.

» Do not include the interpreter in classroom activities.

More teaching strategies can be obtained from the Centre of Excellence for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing at [http://online.nmit.vic.edu.au/deaf](http://online.nmit.vic.edu.au/deaf)
Attachment Four: Role of the Reader/Scribe

The role of the Reader/Scribe is to provide exam assistance by reading the exam questions aloud to the student as needed, and writing down (i.e. scribing) the student’s answer. Their job is well defined with boundaries to ensure that students receiving this support do not have an academic advantage to their peers, and that the academic integrity of the exam is maintained. For this reason, Reader/Scribes do not have expertise or extensive knowledge in the subject matter being examined. At all times, the student should demonstrate their knowledge as acquired throughout the semester by providing verbal instruction and direction to the scribe regarding how to write the exam answers.

It is the role of the Reader/Scribe to:

» remain with the student for the duration of the exam
» read the exam questions aloud to the student as required
» listen to the student’s response
» write down on the exam paper exactly what the student tells them to write (inclusive of spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraphs and any editing)
» if time permits, read aloud the student’s answers so that the student can further clarify, expand, or edit their answers.

It is not the Reader/Scribe’s role to:

» further explain the exam questions, beyond reading aloud the questions as written on the examination paper
» prompt or direct the student to provide a correct answer
» provide any feedback or information to the student
» write down additional information, beyond what the student has instructed the Reader/Scribe to write
» know or provide the correct spelling of any terminology specific to the course content
» take responsibility for the student’s results.

Essential information

The student should inform the Disability Liaison Unit if they are aware that the course content comprises terminology that is difficult to pronounce, equations, and/or formulas, because they will likely appear in the exam. In such circumstances, the DLU will discuss alternative arrangements that may be possible, taking these complexities into account.

To ensure that academic integrity is maintained and that the work submitted remains that of the student in question, DLU policy is that if a student has a regular in class note-taker throughout the semester, and the student requires an exam scribe/reader, that the regular note-taker should not be allocated the role of exam scribe/reader.

If there is a problem with the clarity or style of the reader/scribe, the student should contact the DLU within 48 hours after the exam. Please see the section, Complaints and Problems Procedures, for more information.
A student agreement is between you and the Disability Liaison Unit (DLU) at RMIT.

**Aims of Disability Liaison Unit**

The DLU aims to promote access and equity for students with disabilities. The DLU employs note takers, readers/scribes, interpreters and participation assistants to work with students across all campuses.

**Student Responsibilities**

As outlined in the DLU Service charter it is expected that students will treat all staff with courtesy and respect. This includes any dealings with Echo and enabling assistance staff.

The DLU reserves the right to review enabling assistance if a student fails to meet their obligations as outlined in the student booklet. In such situations the DLU will, in conjunction with the student, review the situation and make recommendations accordingly.

**Understanding this agreement**

If you do not understand something in this agreement, student booklet or have any questions it is important to discuss with a DLU staff member. If there is any aspect of the agreement that you do not agree with, or if you feel that you cannot meet some of the requirements, discuss this with the DLU.

**Service agreement**

**Student**

I have read and understood the student booklet and agreement outlining my responsibilities and agree to follow these while receiving support from RMIT via DLU.

**Student Name:**

**Student Number:**

**Date:**