Adjustment Policy

Policy Owner	CEO
Approving Authority	Governing Council
Implementation Responsibility	CEO
Effective Date	27/08/2021
Review Date	TBA
Current Status	Version 1.0

1. Purpose

This policy has been created by the Sydney Polytechnic Institute (SPI) to outline the principles and adjustments surrounding the provision of assistance. SPI recognizes that some staff or students face increased difficulties, whether it be due to illness or injury, disability, medical conditions or other circumstances that significantly impact their ability to fulfil their obligations at the institute. In order to achieve an equitable, inclusive and diverse environment, certain adjustments may be granted. SPI is committed to ensuring that an equitable opportunity for career and academic success is available to all staff and students.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff and students at SPI. However, certain additional requirements must be met to be eligible for adjustments.

3. Principles

The *SPI Staff Recruitment, Review and Development Policy* and *Student Support, Welfare and Wellbeing Policy* outlines SPI's principles and commitments regarding the provision of inclusive and equitable opportunities to its staff and students.

Disability is defined by the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)* as a condition whereby a person's mental or bodily function is impaired or psychological or neurological disease, illness or disorder. Circumstances, whereby employers or educators fail to provide reasonable adjustments in light of these conditions, constitute a violation of the legislation.

For students, the provision of equitable opportunities and access relates primarily to their ability to participate in or adapt to the learning environment, meet certain educational requirements, or sufficiently comprehend SPI guidelines or policies. The provision of equitable opportunities and access to students, therefore, involves assistance or additional support to ensure that that all students are able to achieve these skills and succeed in their studies.

For staff, the provision of equitable opportunities and access relates to the provision of adjustments, support or assistance to ensure that all staff can adapt to their workplace environments and fulfil their obligations to SPI as stipulated by their roles. Consequently, this

also involves ensuring that all staff members have an equitable opportunity and access to success in their careers.

In areas of admission, recruitment, employment or enrolment, all staff and students at SPI will be treated fairly, without conflicts of interest and discrimination. All staff candidates, applicants and students, prospective or otherwise, can expect to be judged in an equitable, fair and open process. This applies to referrals, applications to or within SPI and expressions of interest, complaint or grievances.

4. Implementation of Principles

4.1 Students

Where the provision of higher education is involved, reasonable adjustments concern two main areas: the learning environment (ie. facilities, resources, student support); and educational programs.

In both areas, reasonable adjustments involve the careful consideration of a student's disability or circumstance. For example, the consideration of a student's disability or circumstance may involve reasonable adjustments to their learning environment such as increased support during classes, assistance with accessing facilities and equipment or access to additional resources that assist their learning. Reasonable adjustment with respect to the working environment encompasses a similar suite of elements conceptually as those outlined for Students.

4.1.1 Learning Environment

Students with particular circumstances or a disability, as defined by the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*, are given additional considerations to ensure that they can adapt to their learning environment. This includes the provision of reasonable adjustments to ensure that they are able to access classes, tutorials, ICT laboratories and equipment, facilities and software to aid or facilitate their learning.

Reasonable adjustments to a student's learning environment include:

- The adjustment or rearrangement of a learning area;
- The provision of specially designed ergonomic furniture or equipment;
- The provision of assistance to travel between classes or facilities;
- The provision of remote headphones for use during classes;
- The provision of recordings from lectures and tutorials;
- The provision of additional software to assist in learning;
- The provision of a scribe, interpreter or translator to assist with class or lecture materials;
- The adjustment of or assistance with library storage and facilities if necessary;
- The provision of additional assistance regarding self or group study;
- The adjustment of student amenity facilities if necessary; and;
- The adjustment of the restroom or other facilities if necessary.

4.1.2 Educational Programs

SPI is committed to providing the high standard of education for its students and graduates. As such, no compromises will be made to the standards for completing programs of study regardless of circumstance. This involves a strict, yet compassionate and flexible approach to adjustments within educational programs in order to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to meet those standards. This may include adjustments to the assessment of a student's knowledge and skills (e.g. changes to the format or mode of delivery for an assessment). Limits to adjustments apply, such as the submission of assessments in English.

If an external assessment or certification is necessary for the demonstration (or partial demonstration) of a student's knowledge or skill due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. disability), approval must be obtained from the Academic Board.

Reasonable adjustments also include, where appropriate, access to certain forms of assistance such as interpreters, scribes, special conditions during examinations, adjustments to exam or assessment scheduling, assistive technology or equipment.

It must be stressed that the provision of reasonable adjustments due to a student's disability or disadvantaged circumstance must not involve the compromise of academic standards for successfully completing units of study or courses.

4.2 Staff

Reasonable adjustments for SPI staff with disabilities or certain disadvantaged circumstances relate to two areas: the physical workplace and working environment; and opportunities for personal or career development.

As outlined in the *Staff Recruitment, Review and Development Policy* to ensure equal access to opportunities and facilities for career progression, the personal and career development elements of the SPI's staff performance management and staff development frameworks provide for the reasonable adjustments required in this area for affected staff.

By the nature of a staff member or student's disability, there may be a case for provision to be made either temporarily or on an ongoing basis for them to undertake their studies or work from home.

4.2.1 Workplace Environment

Reasonable adjustments to a staff member's working environment include:

- The rearrangement of the office or workspace;
- The provision of specially designed ergonomic furniture;
- The provision of assistive equipment to facilitate proper communication to fulfil their duties;

- The provision of recordings of relevant information or materials where appropriate (eg. personal copies of induction or training resources if necessary);
- The provision of speech recognition software;
- The provision of a scribe, interpreter or translator to assist with the execution of their duties as stipulated by their official role or position; and;
- The adjustment of staff restroom and amenity facilities.

4.2.2 Personal and Career Development

SPI is committed to ensuring that all staff have equitable opportunities and access to personal and career success and development. Reasonable adjustments in this area are outlined in the SPI staff performance management and staff development frameworks. Examples include adjustments to enable participation in a development program or adjustments to facilitate the execution of particular tasks as stipulated by their role or position. Additionally, special provisions may be made to academic staff who require assistance to collaborate with colleagues outside of the Institute, to participate in or attend conferences, to access the premises of industry partners or to prepare and present academic papers.

4.3 Counselling and Support

In accordance with the *Student Support, Welfare and Wellbeing Policy* and *Staff Recruitment, Review and Development Policy*, support for staff and students with disabilities or extenuating circumstances will be provided where appropriate in the form of personal support, technological support, disability support, administrative support and academic support. All staff and students are encouraged to seek counselling if they feel unsafe or in need of help regarding mental health and wellbeing.

4.4 Student and Staff Off-campus Arrangements

Depending on the needs of a staff member or student according to their disability or circumstance, a reasonable adjustment may involve the temporary or ongoing arrangement whereby the staff or student completes their work from home. Medical evidence and supporting documents must be provided for the approval of this arrangement.

Once approved, the Institute will make the necessary adjustments to a student's study to facilitate remote learning, including ensuring access to educational resources, recordings of lectures and/or one-on-one tutorial support via call. Additionally, SPI will liaise with the relevant bodies regarding the confirmation of attendance requirements according to the student's visa.

If staff members require working from home or remote working arrangement due to a disability or disadvantaged circumstance, similar provisions may be made to allow them to fulfil their duties to SPI as stipulated by their official role. Efforts will be made to ensure that teamwork and communication with supervisors, in accordance with the *SPI Staff Recruitment, Review and Development Policy*, are not affected by the arrangement.

Adjustments and provisions will be made to ensure that the remote place of study or work complies with OHS requirements for both staff and students.

5. Adjustment Planning and Approval

For students seeking or considering reasonable adjustments, the first point of contact is the Student Support Officer who will liaise with the Academic Dean. If Student Support Officer proceeds with student's request, the Academic Dean and Student Support Officer will develop a proposal for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to review no later than two weeks of the receipt of the request. This process may involve consultation with other academic staff to assess the situation. All discussions, however, will remain strictly confidential and protect the privacy of those involved.

For staff members seeking or considering reasonable adjustments, the first point of contact is the Human Resources (HR) manager. Approval must be sought from the CEO in order for reasonable adjustments to be granted.

The approval and review of a reasonable adjustment request is based on a proposal that outlines the context, circumstances and specificities of the programs or environments which represent a disadvantageous or unfair barrier to the staff or student with a disability or extenuating circumstance. Additionally, accurate medical evidence and supporting documents must be provided with the proposal. Reasonable adjustments may be granted on a temporary or ongoing basis, subject to judgement or review.

Following the approval of reasonable adjustments, an Adjustment Plan is developed. This outlines the agreed upon terms of the adjustment and includes the specific conditions or details of the adjustment. Additionally, the Plan will identify the staff or academic (usually the Course Coordinator) responsible for overseeing the adjustment. This person is also the first point of contact for the recipient of the adjustment on matters related to the arrangement.

The Adjustment Plan does not include details regarding the student or staff member's disability or extenuating circumstance to protect the privacy of the individual. However, the Plan must detail the adjustment and any further arrangements granted to students and staff, including access to resources made available to the person/s responsible for overseeing the adjustment. The Adjustment Plan will be made available to the student and relevant staff members digitally to ensure that provisions are made when appropriate.

- Should further assistance be required regarding the provision of adjustments for students, the first point of contact should be the Student Support Officer who will ensure that the relevant staff members and Unit Coordinators are made aware of the adjustments.
- Any ongoing or past arrangements for staff members will be considered during annual staff performance reviews.

Reasonable Adjustment Plans are subject to review every three months by the Academic Dean for students with an approved and implemented arrangement. Staff members will have their

arrangement reviewed by the HR Manager periodically in an agreed upon time frame. An annual report is submitted to the CEO regarding reasonable adjustment plans, and having the CEO report to the Governing Council annually on the effectiveness or outcomes of the provided reasonable adjustments following a review of the report.

Should an application for adjustment by a staff member or student be considered not reasonable, SPI will reject the request and respond, if appropriate, with disciplinary measures that may include the exclusion from studies or employment. Instances of such occurrences will be carefully documented and reviewed by the CEO.

Notes

Related legislation:

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021

Related documents:

SPI Staff Recruitment, Review and Development Policy
SPI Student Support Policy

Amendment History:

Version No.	Approved by	Effective date	Amendments
1.0	Governing Council	27/08/2021	New Policy