# New Zealand Tertiary College Disability Action Plan
## 2023 – 2025

## Introduction

This document presents a 3-year Disability Action Plan which is aimed at creating an inclusive tertiary education environment to improve participation and achievement of disabled learners at New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC) by specifically addressing barriers to inclusion and success. This action plan was developed with input from staff, disabled learners, and disabled graduates, and has been endorsed by NZTC's Advisory Committee and Māori and Pasifika Working Group.

NZTC embraces disabled learners, as per the Education and Training Act 2020, which "aims to give all learners a high-quality, culturally responsive, seamless and inclusive education". NZTC's commitment to disabled learners is reflected in our values of Vision, Heart, Competence, and Spirit:

### Vision - *Te Mata*

*Guided by deep care and respect for the vulnerable and recognising their potential and unique needs we are encouraged to look to the future and dedicated to the best outcomes for those whose lives we touch.*

### Heart - *Ngākau*

*With heart and kindness, we celebrate and embrace people and their diverse cultures, talents and abilities. We acknowledge that it is through our students' love and affection that families and the wider community benefit.*

### Competence - *Poutama*

*Dedicated to increasing competence and confidence, we enable students to make a positive difference through care, education, professional service and a commitment to excellence.*

### Spirit - *Wairua*

*Encompasses not only a spirit to succeed and act with courage, but is a powerful acknowledgement of God's spirit; the life-force within every adult and child. We acknowledge this spiritual dimension, His guidance and enabling in our lives, our endeavours and our outreach.*

# Contents

## NZTC's Definition of Disability

NZTC refers to the social model of disability, as outlined in the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026, to understand disability within the organisation and within this action plan. The social model of disability is based on the understanding that a disability is present when people living with impairments face barriers in society, and that the barriers are what disable individuals rather than their impairments. The social model of disability is also reflected in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to define "disabled people":

> *Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.*
> (United Nations, n.d.)

NZTC acknowledges that some individuals who are living with impairments may prefer the term 'people with a disability' and others may prefer the term 'disabled people'. Throughout this document, the term 'disabled learners' or 'disabled people' will be used to reflect the social model of disability. We also acknowledge and respect both terms as their validity will depend on individual preferences. The following quote from Achieve (2023) helps to define disability:

> *Disabled people or disabled learners include those with permanent impairments, those with impairments resulting from long or short-term injury or illness, the deaf community and those with learning disabilities, neurological or cognitive difficulties, mental health conditions and other hidden impairments. These impairments may last for six months or more.* (Achieve, 2023, p.16)

NZTC also acknowledges that where a disabled learner is also a member of another underserved group, they encounter additional barriers. As noted by TEC, this includes Māori, Pasifika, and those from non-English speaking backgrounds. The participation rates of disabled Māori and Pasifika learners at NZTC are low. For example, in 2022 there were 6 disabled Māori enrolled in ECE programs and 5 in HW programs. In that same year there were 3 disabled Pasifika learners enrolled in ECE programs and 1 in HW programs. It is expected that the outcomes of this action plan, along with the outcomes that result from the Māori and Pasifika Working Group initiatives, together will enhance the learning experience of these learners. Feedback has been sought from NZTC's Māori and Pasifika Working Group to ensure this group of underserved learners have been represented during development of the access and inclusion initiatives.

## Current Processes

### Declaration of disability and initial contact

NZTC has a Disability Entry Policy that has been in place since 2002 and is updated regularly. The policy is to ensure entry, selection and acceptance processes are fair and considerate for all applicants. The college believes that having a written policy for the selection of applicants with diverse needs/abilities ensures appropriate processes are in place for encouraging ethical and professional academic practice during the selection process and subsequently in supporting the study of successful applicants.

It is important that individuals are not accepted into a program of study to later discover that they are unable to work in the sector, therefore NZTC have a robust application process in place. At the point of

applying to study with NZTC through an online application portal, applicants are required to declare any physical or learning disability, or diverse needs that may impact on their performance as a student. The entry and employment requirements of the early childhood education (ECE) and health and well-being (HW) sectors moderates the level of disability a learner may demonstrate in the selection process. To be able to enrol in any Initial Teacher Education program of study, applicants must demonstrate their ability to meet the requirements to become a registered teacher as outlined by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. The Teaching Council requirements are as follows:

> *You will be considered fit to be a teacher or fit to hold a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT), if you are physically and mentally able to carry out a teaching role safely and satisfactorily. In considering this requirement, we will distinguish between any mental or physical conditions you have that affect your ability to teach, and any that do not impact on that ability.* (TCANZ, 2021 p. 28)

Employers in HW also require healthcare workers to have a level of mental and physical fitness to work with the aged care population they serve. These factors are required to be taken into consideration for learners entering ECE and HW programs. Of note is that at all times throughout the application process, NZTC staff focus on the abilities of applicants rather than their limits, and in all cases NZTC aims to align each learner with an appropriate program of study.

## Referral and support

If an applicant declares a disability and/or declares taking medication long term during the application process they are referred to our Pastoral Support team. The Pastoral Support team follow up with the applicant to support them through the application process and ensure they enroll in a program of study that aligns with their abilities. This initial meeting involves a conversation with a team member, establishing the additional needs or health concerns the applicant might have. This initial meeting also offers the opportunity to discuss the support that is available at NZTC, how the program is delivered, and what the specific program requirements are. Having this conversation enables the applicant to make informed decisions as to whether the program is right for them, and determine their satisfaction with the support NZTC is able to offer.

The team then put support in place where needed and/or refer the learner to appropriate services. In situations where an applicant does not initially declare their disability, and it is discovered at a later stage, this is then recorded in the student management system and the Pastoral Support team follow up with the learner to put support in place if required. Some examples of impairments that the college has provided for, or is providing support for, include: diabetes, anxiety, depression, heart issues, muscle spasms, epilepsy, autoimmune conditions, Crohn's disease, dyslexia, heart transplants, vision impaired, bi-polarity, cancer, Autism, Turner syndrome, dyspraxia, ADHD, and dysgraphia.

There are several learning contracts available to support ākonga who experience challenges in their learning. Some examples include:

- Academic support contracts – which pair the learner with a lecturer for fortnightly support and progress meetings
- Field practice student support contracts – which offer extra support to students who might require extra guidance in relation to their practice
- Well-being contracts – which include weekly or fortnightly catch-ups with the Pastoral Support Team

- Professional conduct contracts – which empower students to grow their professional behavior and knowledge

These contracts are put in place to ensure the learners are well supported and that the guidance put in place is tailored to their specific requirements.

## Modes of learning

NZTC's delivery of programs is supportive of learners with a range of disabilities. NZTC has two modes of study including online and blended. The college does not require learners to come onto a campus because all learning, teaching, support and assessment is available through virtual environments and in community locations of work placement. Library resources are available in online journal databases and hard copy books are couriered directly to learners across New Zealand at no cost to the learner. Online students have no attendance requirements, and as there is no classroom-based study. This allows learners to study at times and places of their convenience, which gives more flexibility for disabled learners to work their study around their impairment.

## Learning Management System

NZTC delivers its courses through a bespoke learning management environment, *NZTC Online*. *NZTC Online* was designed to include the fundamentals of accessibility and has been reviewed using the *New Zealand eLearning Guidelines*, which were developed to support the New Zealand tertiary sector in its engagement with eLearning. The *Learner Perspective* is most reflective of the considerations NZTC has made in the *NZTC Online* development and ongoing enhancement in the area of consideration of learner needs. See here for more information on the learner perspective components of the New Zealand eLearning Guidelines.

# Feedback from Disabled Learners

Surveys were sent to current learners and graduates who declared a disability during enrolment or during their study. The aim of the survey was to find out what helped these learners during their learning journey and what NZTC could do to help them further. This data helps to inform the development of this action plan and helps NZTC to enhance the experience our learners have during their time studying with NZTC. 11 responses were received from current disabled learners and 24 from disabled graduates. A summary of the findings is presented here. Analysis of the survey findings can be found in Appendix A.

## Summary of survey and action points

Feedback from a majority of the disabled learners and graduates has confirmed that NZTC are doing a good job of supporting them during their study. There are, however, some disabled learners and graduates who feel there is more NZTC could be doing to help improve their learning experience. These recommended improvements have helped to inform this action plan in the following areas:

a. Disabled learner application and enrolment policy and process to be updated and informed by the recommendations from the learner and graduate feedback
b. Disabled learner communication policy and process to be developed and informed by the recommendations from the learner and graduate feedback

# NZTC's Participation Rates and Educational Performance

The participation rates, graduate numbers, and course completion rates are presented in Appendices B, C,

and D, and a summary is offered in this section.

## Participation rates

Participation rates of NZTC's disabled ECE learners have increased from 1.83% of all learners in 2021 to 2.61% of all learners in 2023. Participation rates for disabled HW learners have also increased from 1.85% of all learners in 2021 to 2.57% of all learners in 2023. According to the most recent disabled learner participation rates data available from the Ministry of Education, in 2013 7% of all tertiary students in New Zealand declared a disability (Earl, 2019, p.34). In contrast, as identified in the recent data, NZTC has between 2.57% and 2.61% of all learners with a declared disability. The course completion data can be found in Appendix B.

There are potential reasons for NZTC's participation rates being lower than data from MOE. The ECE and HW programs are aimed at employment and sector need. The physical and neurological requirements for working in Early Childhood Education and in the Health and Wellbeing sector reduces the number of learners who may be selected for a blended learning program due to the field practice requirements. In addition, it is expected that the actual number of disabled learners enrolled in our programs is higher than currently shown in our data. This is due to the question in our application form that prompts applicants to only declare a disability if they expect it will impact their ability to study. This question will be changed, once approved by the AIRG, and it is expected that there will be an increase in the number of applicants declaring a disability as a result of the change.

## Graduate numbers

The number of ECE disabled graduates from our programs decreased from 2.1% of all learners in 2021 to 1.6% of all learners in 2022. The number of HW disabled graduates increased from 1.35% of all learners in 2021 to 2.49% of all learners in 2022. As with participation rates, it is expected that our actual numbers of disabled graduates are higher than presented here due to the way these learners are asked to declare a disability on the application form. Changes to the question is expected to see an increase in the number of disabled graduates represented in future data. The graduate data can be found in Appendix C.

## Course completion rates

The 2022 data shows that course completion rates for all learners, including disabled, are between 87.96% and 93.39% which is an excellent outcome. The course completion rates for ECE disabled learners is 88.70% in comparison to all ECE learners which is 93.39%. The course completion rates for HW disabled learners is 87.96% in comparison to all HW learners which is 90.21%. The 2022 data indicates that there is room for improvement to course completion rates for disabled learners to bring them in line with the completion rates of all learners. The 2022 course completion rates can be found in Appendix D.

Changes were put in place from the start of 2023 to the support around assessments with an aim to improve the achievement rates of all learners. The 2023 course completion data to date shows a significant improvement in course completion rates for all learners, and more so for disabled learners. The changes that were put in place to achieve this positive outcome are explained below. The 2023 course completion rates can be found in Appendix D.

*Summary of changes to the process around fails and incompletes*
As part of a newly approved initiative to reduce the number of Incomplete grades received, which commenced January 2023, all learners are now contacted via call, voice mail, and email after 1 incomplete grade to see if they would like to have the course reopened for them (known as a "rollback" opportunity) for

another chance to submit their assessment. The calls for MPI students after 1 incomplete grade are currently completed by the Māori and Pasifika Student Liaison and NZTC's Pacific Partnership lecturer as part of the Tautoko process, while the calls for non-MPI students after 1 incomplete grade are currently completed by the Pastoral Support Lecturer (Joy McLelland). Any extensions and/or rollbacks approved following these calls are currently completed by the Pastoral Support team to reduce the number of Incomplete grades received. This follows changes to the extension/rollback process which now allow additional chances for submission after a significant amount of time has lapsed from the student's original due date – previously, an extension and/or rollback greater than 1 week from the original due date could only be approved under exceptional circumstances (e.g. student in hospital, bereavements, an emergency family situation). As of January 2023, extensions and/or rollbacks can now be approved beyond 1 week for students with varying circumstances. To date in 2023 these changes have made an improvement in course completions for all learners as mentioned previously in this report.

## Process Followed when Developing the Disability Action Plan

A. Created an Access and Inclusion Reference Group of relevant staff as a starting point to inform the initial stages of action plan development
B. Surveyed our disabled graduates and current learners to help identify any barriers they experienced or are experiencing during their learning journey. Their feedback informed the development of the first draft of the action plan
C. Access and Inclusion Reference Group worked through the Kia Ōrite toolkit to guide the development of the plan
D. Access and Inclusion Reference Group reviewed our current situation to identify areas where we are doing well and areas we need to address
E. Used the knowledge gained during stages A to D above to develop a first draft of the Disability Action Plan
F. Invited new members onto the Access and Inclusion Reference Group including disabled learners and an external professional who specialises in inclusive education.
G. The new members of the reference group had input into the first draft and updates/changes were made in response to this feedback.
H. Sought input on the first draft from disabled learners/graduates, staff, and the Māori and Pasifika Working Group members, and updated the Disability Action Plan in response to feedback.
I. Sought and received endorsement from the NZTC Māori and Pasifika Working Group and Advisory Committee

## Access and Inclusion Reference Group

The Access and Inclusion Reference Group has been in place since May 2023. The focus of the AIRG is to create an inclusive tertiary education environment to improve participation and achievement of disable learners at NZTC by specifically addressing barriers to inclusion and success.

**Purpose and role of the AIRG:**
- Develop, implement, and monitor the Disability Action Plan to ensure NZTC offers an inclusive learning environment.
- Recommend, to NZTC's Chief Executive, resource allocation to support the implementation of the plan.
- Monitor and report on the participation, learning journey experience, achievement, and graduate outcomes of disabled learners.
- Develop and follow up on recommendations to improve the participation, learning journey experience, achievement, and graduate outcomes of disabled learners.

**AIRG membership may include individuals with the following perspectives:**
   a. NZTC senior management – at least one involved in learner support services
   b. Disabled learners
   c. Disabled graduates
   d. External specialists in inclusive education
   e. NZTC senior academic staff members

It is important to note that because NZTC has a low number of disabled learner enrolments it might be difficult to find willing and able partners to join the reference group. If invitation is not accepted by current disabled learners, NZTC may reach out to disabled graduates for input. We may also rely on feedback from disabled learners and graduates via survey to inform the reference group decision making. Care must be taken to not add to the workload of our disabled learners. To ensure Māori and Pasifika disabled learners are represented, they will be invited to become members of the reference group. In addition, NZTC's Māori and Pasifika Working Group will have input into the development and monitoring of the Disability Action Plan.

# What NZTC is Currently Doing Well

Using the Kia Ōrite toolkit to assess our current policies and processes, the AIRG team members identified the following areas as those the college are currently doing well:

- All staff have undergone disability confidence training and new staff are required to as part of induction
- Good pastoral support team in place who support disabled learners from the initial enrolment stage and through their learning journey
- Staff assess applications with consideration of 'abilities' rather than 'disabilities' and align applicants with an appropriate program of study
- Information about disabled learners is handled appropriately
- Access and Inclusion Reference Group (AIRG) established and involved in the development of the Disability Action Plan. This includes senior management team members, disabled learners and/or graduates, and a specialist in inclusive education.
- Māori and Pasifika Working group in place to monitor progress and inform improvements to the learning experience and outcomes of these learners, including those who have identified as disabled
- Fully online learning is available for all programs (with the exception of field practice placements)
- Distance library services and online databases available to all learners free of charge
- Withdrawal and refund policies are clearly communicated to all learners and implemented consistently
- Complaints processes are clearly communicated to all learners
- Field placements increase employment opportunities for all learners

# Areas NZTC has Identified to Address

Using the Kia Ōrite toolkit to assess our current policies and processes, the AIRG team members identified the following areas to address. The Disability Action Plan is designed to address continued implementation of processes that have created success for disabled learners, and improve in areas identified that have not been previously addressed by NZTC. The following objectives are the focus areas of this action plan:

**Objective 1.** Engage governance and senior leadership in the accountability for disabled learners
**Objective 2.** Increase disabled learner voice at all stages of their learning journey

**Objective 3.** Update and monitor policies and processes to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and support of disabled learners throughout their learning journey

**Objective 4.** Ensure accessibility and inclusivity within the learning environment

**Objective 5.** Build disability confidence within the NZTC team

The following sections offer more detail on the objectives including goals/targets, tasks/criteria, evaluation methods to inform decision making, how the objectives link to the Kia Ōrite Toolkit, and a timeline for the implementation of the actions.

# Disability Action Plan Objectives

## Objective 1. Engage governance and senior leadership in the accountability for disabled learners

*Goals/targets*
- Establish an Access and Inclusion Reference Group (AIRG) with senior management involvement
- AIRG to develop, update, and monitor the Disability Action Plan
- AIRG to monitor the participation, retention, achievement, and graduate outcomes of disabled learners to inform decision making
- AIRG to ensure policies and processes allow for accessibility and inclusivity and are in alignment with relevant legislation

*Tasks/criteria*
- Ensure the AIRG's membership includes a minimum of two senior managers with one involved in learner support services
- AIRG and use feedback from disabled learners and graduates to inform policies and processes to ensure accessibility and inclusivity
- AIRG report to Advisory Committee and the Māori and Pasifika Working Group
- Develop AIRG policies and processes documentation
- Continue to monitor the AIRG policies and processes to ensure they are current and effective
- Remain aware of current relevant legislation

*Evaluation methods to inform decision making*
- Disabled learner and disabled graduate survey data
- Disabled learner participation rates, achievement rates, and graduate outcomes
- AIRG member input
- Employer feedback
- Staff feedback

*Links to the Kia Ōrite Ten Point Plan*
- People at all levels of a tertiary learning environment take responsibility for practicing equity through meeting the best practice standards in this Kia Ōrite Toolkit.
- Create an all-of-institution approach to supporting disabled learners, with senior management endorsing inclusive policies and procedures, so that disability support services can be a resource for supporting other staff to implement these inclusive practices and support disabled learners with more complex needs. Support of disabled learners should not just be the responsibility of disability support services staff.
- Build a partnership with disabled learners with different impairments in planning and design

through representative disabled student associations and groups.
- Provide guidance and training on the use of non-discriminatory practices, so staff are aware of their legal obligations under the Human Rights and Privacy Act, HDC Code of Rights and other relevant legislation.
- Review and analyse outcomes for disabled learners in an ongoing review/ reflect/response cycle.

## Objective 2. Increase disabled learner voice at all stages of their learning journey

*Goals/targets*
- Ensure disabled learner membership on the AIRG so they have input into practices and policies that impact their learning experience
- Ensure disabled learners have opportunities to receive guidance and support throughout their learning journey
- Ensure current disabled learners and disabled graduates are able to inform decisions around improving their learning experience and outcomes

*Tasks/criteria*
- Invite current disabled learners and/or graduates onto the AIRG
- Meet with each new disabled learner at application and enrolment stage to provide appropriate support from the outset of learning journey
- Develop surveys to gather data from disabled learners and disabled graduates to inform policies and processes
- Continue to monitor our processes for enabling learner voice throughout their learning journey

*Evaluation methods to inform decision making*
- Disabled learner and disabled graduate survey data
- Disabled learner participation rates, achievement rates, and graduate outcomes
- Staff feedback

*Links to the Kia Ōrite Ten Point Plan*
- Build a partnership with disabled learners with different impairments in planning and design through representative disabled student associations and groups.
- Publicise institution-wide training and resources on how to provide accessible information, communication and learning support for disabled learners with different impairments. Invite disabled learners to co-design these training programmes and resources focusing on inclusive practices.
- Review and analyse outcomes for disabled learners in an ongoing review/ reflect/response cycle.

## Objective 3. Update and monitor policies and processes to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and support of disabled learners throughout their learning journey

*Goals/targets*
- Ensure all relevant policies and processes allow for accessibility and inclusivity
- Ensure disabled learners and disabled graduates have input into the relevant policies and processes
- Ensure relevant policies and processes are communicated to staff and disabled learners

*Tasks/criteria*
- Identify policies and processes that impact the disabled learner experience and update where necessary
- Consult with disabled learners and disabled graduates to inform the development of policies and processes through survey and the reference group
- Develop a communication plan that outlines the communication of relevant policies to staff and disabled learners
- Continue to monitor and update the policies, processes, and communication plan regularly

*Evaluation methods to inform decision making*
- Disabled learner and disabled graduate survey data
- Disabled learner participation rates, achievement rates, and graduate outcomes
- Staff feedback

*Links to the Kia Ōrite Ten Point Plan*
- People at all levels of a tertiary learning environment take responsibility for practicing equity through meeting the best practice standards in this Kia Ōrite Toolkit.
- Create an all-of-institution approach to supporting disabled learners, with senior management endorsing inclusive policies and procedures, so that disability support services can be a resource for supporting other staff to implement these inclusive practices and support disabled learners with more complex needs. Support of disabled learners should not just be the responsibility of disability support services staff.
- Remove barriers to learning environment facilities, services and systems. Remember disabled learners are often 'disabled' by their environment.
- Review and analyse outcomes for disabled learners in an ongoing review/ reflect/response cycle.

## Objective 4. Ensure accessibility and inclusivity within the learning environment

*Goals/targets*
- Ensure the learning environment and interface allow for accessibility and inclusivity for all learners
- Ensure disabled learner and disabled graduate experience informs decision making around the learning environment
- Ensure policies and processes enable accessibility and inclusivity for all learners
- Ensure disabled learners have easy access to information about internal and external support services

*Tasks/criteria*
- Analyse the learning environment and interface and resolve barriers to ensure accessibility and inclusivity
- Continue to gather feedback from learners and graduates to monitor and inform improvements to the learning environment.
- Apply the principles of UDL within learning material updates.
- Review current student support policies and processes to ensure they enable equal access and equal opportunities for disabled learners throughout their application process and learning journey
- Develop partnerships with external support and advocacy services and create a resource for disabled learners that allows for easy access to these services

*Evaluation methods to inform decision making*
- Disabled learner and disabled graduate survey data
- Disabled learner participation rates, achievement rates, and graduate outcomes
- Staff feedback

*Links to the Kia Ōrite Ten Point Plan*
- People at all levels of a tertiary learning environment take responsibility for practicing equity through meeting the best practice standards in this Kia Ōrite Toolkit.
- Arrange flexible learning supports (reasonable accommodations) for classes, lectures, tutorials, field trips, tests, exams and other assessments that consider disabled learners with different impairments and allow them to show their academic potential.
- Remove barriers to learning environment facilities, services and systems. Remember disabled learners are often 'disabled' by their environment.
- Using the Principles of Universal Design in Education (UDL) in all course design, curriculum, delivery, assessment, learning support strategies, information and communication processes.
- Review and analyse outcomes for disabled learners in an ongoing review/ reflect/response cycle.

## Objective 5. Build disability confidence within the NZTC team

*Goals/targets*
- Ensure all team members are trained in best practice for supporting disabled learners
- Ensure all team members are aware of the legal and ethical requirements for communicating disabled learner information
- Ensure all team members have access to current national policies relating to disabled learners

*Tasks/criteria*
- All staff to undergo disability confidence training including new staff during the onboarding period
- Develop a communication plan to formalise how disabled learner information is managed within NZTC and in a way that enhances the learner experience and outcomes
- The AIRG remain informed of updates to national policies relating to disabled learners and communicate the updates to the NZTC team
- Continue to monitor and develop disability confidence within the NZTC team

*Evaluation methods to inform decision making*
- Disabled learner and disabled graduate survey data
- Disabled learner participation rates, achievement rates, and graduate outcomes
- Staff feedback

*Links to the Kia Ōrite Ten Point Plan*
- People at all levels of a tertiary learning environment take responsibility for practicing equity through meeting the best practice standards in this Kia Ōrite Toolkit.
- Remove barriers to learning environment facilities, services and systems. Remember disabled learners are often 'disabled' by their environment.
- Review and analyse outcomes for disabled learners in an ongoing review/ reflect/response cycle.

# Disability Action Plan Timeline

**Objective 1. Engage governance and senior leadership in the accountability for disabled learners**

| O1. Goals and targets | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Establish an Access and Inclusion Reference Group (AIRG) with senior management involvement | This is established and includes two senior managers with one from pastoral support and one from registry<br><br>Reference group policy and processes documentation is currently being developed | Continue to monitor the AIRG policy and processes to ensure they are current and effective | Continue to monitor the AIRG policy and processes to ensure they are current and effective |
| 2. AIRG to develop, update, and monitor the Disability Action Plan | AIRG has developed this action plan and will continue to monitor and update the plan regularly | Continue to monitor and update the action plan | Monitoring and updating will continue. |
| 3. AIRG to monitor the experiences of disabled learners and their participation, retention, achievement rates, and graduate outcomes to inform decision making | AIRG has gathered feedback from disabled learners and graduates along with participation, retention, achievement rates, and graduate outcomes which have been used to inform this action plan | AIRG will continue monitor feedback methods to ensure they are appropriate and make changes where needed | Monitoring and adapting will continue |
| 4. AIRG to ensure policies and processes allow for accessibility and inclusivity and are in alignment with relevant legislation | AIRG have gathered feedback from disabled learners and graduates and we are currently working on updating policies and processes to ensure accessibility and inclusivity | AIRG will continue monitor feedback methods to ensure they are appropriate and make changes where needed | Monitoring and adapting will continue |

**Objective 2. Increase disabled learner voice at all stages of their learning journey**

| O2. Goals and targets | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ensure disabled learner membership on the AIRG so they have input into practices and policies that impact their learning experience | Disabled learner/graduate representatives are members of the AIRG. | Continue to encourage disabled learner membership on the AIRG. Offer participation to newly enrolled disabled learners. | Continue to encourage disabled learner membership on the AIRG. Continue to offer participation to new disabled learners. |

| O2. Goals and targets | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Ensure disabled learners have opportunities to receive guidance and support throughout their learning journey | Continue with current practice of reaching out to every disabled learner during the application stage and encourage access to learner support throughout their learning journey. | Monitor and adapt current practice where necessary as informed by learner feedback. | Continue to monitor and adapt current practice where necessary as informed by learner feedback. |
| 3. Ensure current disabled learners and disabled graduates are able to inform decisions around improving their learning experience and outcomes | Surveys have been developed and distributed to gather data from disabled learners and disabled graduates which have been used to inform this action plan and policies and processes | Continue to monitor our processes for enabling learner voice throughout their learning journey. Update surveys when necessary and distribute regularly. | Continue to monitor and update our data gathering processes. |

## Objective 3. Update and monitor policies and processes to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and support of disabled learners throughout their learning journey

| O3. Goals and targets | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ensure all relevant policies and processes allow for accessibility and inclusivity | Policies and processes that impact the disabled learner experience are currently being identified and updated<br><br>All updates to be developed through consultation with the AIRG and approved by the Māori and Pasifika Working Group and Advisory Committee | Continue to monitor and update all policies and processes to ensure they meet standards for accessibility and inclusivity. | Continue to monitor and update where necessary |
| 2. Ensure disabled learners and disabled graduates have input into the relevant policies and processes | Have gathered data from disabled learners and disabled graduates to inform the development of policies and processes through survey and the reference group | Continue to monitor how we gather input from disabled learners and graduates to best inform policies and processes. | Continue to monitor and update the policies and processes regularly |
| 3. Ensure relevant policies and processes are communicated to staff and disabled learners | In consultation with the AIRG, develop a communication plan that outlines the communication of relevant policies to staff and disabled learners | Continue to monitor and update communication plan where needed | Continue to monitor and update communication plan |

## Objective 4. Ensure accessibility and inclusivity within the learning environment

| O4. Goals and targets | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ensure the learning environment and interface allow for accessibility and inclusivity for all learners | Current practices are working well however feedback from disabled learners will continue to be sought and changes made where required. Apply the principles of UDL within learning material updates. | Continue to seek feedback and make changes where needed. Continue to apply the principles of UDL within learning material updates. | Continue to seek feedback and make changes where needed. |
| 2. Ensure disabled learner and disabled graduate experience informs decision making around the learning environment | Gather and analyse feedback from disabled learners and disabled graduates to inform changes to the learning environment. Make changes where required. | Continue to gather feedback from learners and graduates to monitor and inform improvements to the learning environment | Continue to monitor and adapt as required |
| 3. Ensure policies and processes enable accessibility and inclusivity for all learners | Currently reviewing student support policies and processes to ensure they enable equal access and equal opportunities for disabled learners throughout their application process and learning journey | Continue to review and adapt learner support policies and processes. | Continue to review and adapt learner support policies and processes. |
| 4. Ensure disabled learners have easy access to information about internal and external support services | Develop partnerships with external support and advocacy services to enable easy connection for our disabled learners to the services | Create a resource for disabled learners that allows for easy access to these services | Regularly update the resource as required. |

## Objective 5. Build disability confidence within the NZTC team

| O5. Goals and targets | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ensure all team members are trained in best practice for supporting disabled learners | All current staff have undergone the disability confidence training offered by Achieve and it is part of the new staff onboarding process. | Continue to monitor and develop disability confidence within the NZTC team | Continue to monitor and develop disability confidence within the NZTC team |
| 2. Ensure all team members are aware of the legal and ethical requirements for communicating disabled learner information | Currently developing a communication plan to formalise how disabled learner information is managed within NZTC and in a way that enhances the learner experience and | Continue to monitor and update the communication plan | Continue to monitor and update the communication plan |

| O5. Goals and targets | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | outcomes | | |
| 3. Ensure all team members have access to current national policies relating to disabled learners | Plan processes for accessing current information and communicating to AIRG and team members. | The AIRG remain informed of updates to national policies relating to disabled learners and communicate the updates to the NZTC team | Continue to gather and communicate current knowledge relating to disabled learners |

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# Appendix A. Feedback from Disabled Learners

Surveys were sent to current learners and graduates who declared a disability during enrolment or during their study. The aim of the survey was to find out what helped these learners during their learning journey and what NZTC could do to help them further. This data helps to inform the development of this action plan and helps NZTC to enhance the experience our learners have during their time studying with NZTC. 11 responses were received from current disabled learners and 24 from disabled graduates. A summary of the findings is presented here. Analysis of the survey findings can be found in Appendix A.

## Factors our disabled learners and graduates have found to help them during their learning journey with NZTC

*Key themes that relate to the learners' own environment, attitude, and actions:*

Respondents recognised aspects of their own learning environment, attitude towards study, or actions that are conducive to their learning, for example:

- Having support from family, friends, manager, and co-workers
- Their desire to teach in this country
- Self-determination, patience, courage, and wanting to do better
- Connecting with fellow students on social media
- Practical work experience in the field they are studying
- Asking questions, writing things down, and talking to others
- Not having disruption

One respondent identified the importance of having a favourable study space: *"…having a stable environment to work in and place to study where I am calm and relaxed, which is what is happening"*

*Key themes that relate to the learning environment:*

Respondents also recognised many aspects of the learning environment that help them achieve in their study:

- Encouragement and support from lecturers and Associate Teachers/Kaiako
- Support from IT, the library, and the pastoral support team
- The welcoming atmosphere
- Good support from the field placement home centre
- Being able to get extensions for assessments
- Clear examples, guidance, and instructions for assessments
- Having physical copies of learning material
- Being offered a range of learning media such as videos, online lectures and forums, diagrammes, and images.
- Not feeling pressurised and being able to access learning material anytime
- Interesting assignments, great reading material and information supplied by lecturers
- Being able to study part time
- Being able to communicate with all of the lecturers

While some learners stated that they enjoyed the flexibility of studying by distance, a couple of the

respondents noted that they missed the face-to-face connections with the lecturers. For example, *"When I was in my first year of campus based it was great as the lecturers were there and able to answer any questions straight away."* Others found the online lectures and forums helped to balance their distance learning experience and one respondent found the online learning environment beneficial: *"The online learning environment which enabled easy access to all relevant course information/material and contact with the lecturers and other students. This helped me to understand the material and information for each course better and complete and pass each assessment"*.

As highlighted by one respondent, it is evident that the online learning environment can work well when it is easy to navigate and lecturers respond in a timely manner:

> *The content was interesting and easy to understand. Each topic was laid out well and it helped that there wasn't a lot of information all over the place to overwhelm me. The tutors gave good and clear examples of how to lay out assignments and which points to cover. Tutors also replied quickly to any questions or concerns, so I wasn't left stuck for long amounts of time.*

Responses have clearly identified the support they have received from the pastoral support team and their lecturers are contributing factors to their success as evidenced in the following quotes:

> *I dealt with many challenges in my personal life whilst I was studying, but I never felt like the course load was putting too much pressure on me. Everyone was always there to help and were always providing me with options to make my experiences easier. I think learning through NZTC is great for people like me who are unable to work or study full time due to illness/disability.*

> *The support from the pastoral support team. They were extremely helpful and supportive when I was having difficulties and were always in contact to check in throughout my studies.*

> *Lecturers that supported me and actually took the time to get to know me. I had the privilege of having good lecturers for Field Practice placements, and they actually took the time to get to know me. As a Māori student teacher this was so beneficial to me. They cared about more than written work.*

## Factors disabled learners and graduates have suggested could improve their learning experience with NZTC

Key themes emerged in the form of recommendations to improve the teaching and learning environment These are listed below and followed by a summary of actions that apply to the DAP:

- More clarity in the teaching and learning material to make it easier to understand
- Having all lecturers on the same page with assessment marking criteria
- Having help with the computer
- Getting a quicker response from some of the lecturers
- The opportunity to talk in-person with the lecturer and/or having in-person block courses
- Having a graduation ceremony
- Better timing of assessments so there aren't too many happening at once

- More contact from the lecturers
- More out of home practicums rather than home ones
- The option of readings to be in hard copy

Workload was identified as a challenge for a couple of the respondents. For example: *"When I studied I was told I had to do 7.5 hours each day of my placement which was really hard to juggle that, my other job, block course, placement work and the assessments that all seemed to be timed together"*, and *"I have looked ahead to what to expect for this year and I am absolutely stressed and horrified from what I've heard as well. I understand it's all new but it's very overwhelming"*.

## Summary of survey and action points

Feedback from a majority of the disabled learners and graduates has confirmed that NZTC are doing a good job of supporting them during their study. There are, however, some disabled learners and graduates who feel there is more NZTC could be doing to help improve their learning experience. These recommended improvements have helped to inform this action plan in the following areas:

a. Disabled learner application and enrolment policy and process to be updated and informed by the recommendations from the learner and graduate feedback
b. Disabled learner communication policy and process to be developed and informed by the recommendations from the learner and graduate feedback

# Appendix B. Disabled Learner Participation Rates

The following table presents the participation rates of disabled learners in our Early Childhood Education (ECE), and Health and Wellbeing (HW) programs.

**ECE and HW participation rates in 2021, 2022, and 2023 to date**

| ECE and HW programs | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 to date | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All ECE learners | 2287 | | 2582 | | 1988 | |
| Disabled ECE learners | 42 | 1.83% | 58 | 2.25% | 52 | 2.61% |
| All HW learners | 863 | | 1092 | | 584 | |
| Disabled HW learners | 16 | 1.85% | 29 | 2.66% | 15 | 2.57% |

Participation rates of disabled ECE learners have increased from 1.83% of all learners in 2021 to 2.61% of all learners in 2023. Participation rates for disabled HW learners have also increased from 1.85% of all learners in 2021 to 2.57% of all learners in 2023. It is expected that the actual number of disabled learners enrolled in our programs is higher than currently shown in our data. This is due to the question in our application form that prompts applicants to only declare a disability if they expect it will impact their ability to study. This question will be changed, once approved by the AIRG, and it is expected that there will be an increase in the number of applicants declaring a disability as a result of the change.

# Appendix C. Disabled Learner Graduate Data

The table below presents the number of disabled graduates from our programs in 2021 and 2022.

## ECE and HW graduates in 2021 and 2022

| ECE & HW graduates | 2021 | | 2022 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All ECE graduates | 1287 | | 1124 | |
| Disabled ECE graduates | 27 | 2.1% | 18 | 1.6% |
| All HW graduates | 740 | | 764 | |
| Disabled HW graduates | 10 | 1.35% | 19 | 2.49% |

The number of ECE disabled graduates from our programs decreased from 2.1% of all learners in 2021 to 1.6% of all learners in 2022. The number of HW disabled graduates increased from 1.35% of all learners in 2021 to 2.49% of all learners in 2022. As with participation rates, it is expected that our actual numbers of disabled graduates are higher than presented here due to the way these learners are asked to declare a disability on the application form. Changes to the question is expected to see an increase in the number of disabled graduates represented in future data.

# Appendix D. Disabled Learner Course Completion Data

The table below presents the course completion rates for disabled learners in the ECE and HW programs for 2022 and 2023.

## ECE and HW course completion statistics during 2022

| ECE & HW 2022 | Total number of courses | Successful completion | | Fails | | Incompletes | | Fails and Incompletes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| All ECE courses | 11,005 | 10,278 | 93.39% | 328 | 2.98% | 399 | 3.63% | 727 | 6.61% |
| Disabled ECE courses | 239 | 212 | 88.70% | 8 | 3.34% | 19 | 7.95% | 27 | 11.29% |
| All HW courses | 8282 | 7471 | 90.21% | 138 | 1.67% | 673 | 8.13% | 811 | 9.79% |
| Disabled HW courses | 216 | 190 | 87.96% | 1 | 0.46% | 25 | 11.57% | 26 | 12.04% |

The 2022 data shows that course completion rates for all learners, including disabled, are between 87.96% and 93.39% which is an excellent outcome. The course completion rates for ECE disabled learners is 88.70% in comparison to all ECE learners which is 93.39%. The course completion rates for HW disabled learners is 87.96% in comparison to all HW learners which is 90.21%. There is room for improvement to course completion rates for disabled learners and changes were put in place from the start of 2023 to improve the achievement rates of all learners. The 2023 course completion data to date is presented in the table below.

## ECE and HW course completion statistics from 1/1/2023 to date

| ECE & HW 2023 to date | Total number of courses | Successful completion | | Fails | | Incompletes | | Fails and Incompletes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| All ECE learners | 4231 | 4029 | 95.23% | 96 | 2.27% | 106 | 2.50% | 202 | 4.77% |
| Disabled ECE learners | 89 | 82 | 92.13% | 2 | 2.25% | 5 | 5.61% | 7 | 7.87% |
| All HW learners | 2255 | 2140 | 94.90% | 32 | 1.42% | 83 | 3.68% | 115 | 5.10% |
| Disabled HW learners | 48 | 46 | 95.83% | - | - | 2 | 4.17% | 2 | 4.17% |

The 2023 to date course completion rates, as presented in the table above, shows a significant improvement in course completion rates for all learners, and more so for disable learners. The changes that were put in place to achieve this positive outcome are explained below.

## Summary of changes to the process around fails and incompletes

As part of a newly approved initiative to reduce the number of Incomplete grades received, which commenced January 2023, all learners are now contacted via call, voice mail, and email after 1 incomplete grade to see if they would like to have the course reopened for them (known as a "rollback" opportunity) for another chance to submit their assessment. The calls for MPI students after 1 incomplete grade are currently completed by the Māori and Pasifika Student Liaison and NZTC's Pacific Partnership lecturer as part of the Tautoko process, while the calls for non-MPI students after 1 incomplete grade are currently completed by the Pastoral Support Lecturer. Any extensions and/or rollbacks approved following these calls are currently completed by the Pastoral Support team to reduce the number of Incomplete grades received. This follows changes to the extension/rollback process which now allow additional chances for submission after a significant amount of time has lapsed from the student's original due date – previously, an extension and/or rollback greater than 1 week from the original due date could only be approved under exceptional circumstances (e.g. student in hospital, bereavements, an emergency family situation). As of January 2023, extensions and/or rollbacks can now be approved beyond 1 week for students with varying circumstances. To date in 2023 these changes have made an improvement in course completions for all learners as mentioned previously in this report.

# Appendix E. AIRG Terms of Reference

## Definition

The Access and Inclusion Reference Group (AIRG) is a partnership body of New Zealand Tertiary College (NZTC) convened to support and serve all students, with a specific focus on those with disabilities. The AIRG aims to create an inclusive tertiary education environment to improve participation and achievement of disabled learners at NZTC by specifically addressing barriers to inclusion and success.

## Purpose and Role of the AIRG

1. Develop, implement, and monitor the Disability Action Plan to ensure NZTC offers an accessible and inclusive learning environment.
2. Recommend, to NZTC's Chief Executive, resource allocation to support the implementation of the plan.
3. Monitor and report on the participation, learning experience, achievement, and graduate outcomes of disabled learners.
4. Develop and follow up on recommendations to improve the participation, learning experience, achievement, and graduate outcomes of disabled learners.

## AIRG Membership

1. Members are appointed by the Chief Executive and there may be recommendations from the Māori and Pasifika Working Group and the NZTC Advisory Committee.
2. Criteria for appointment is to be determined by the knowledge, expertise, and role of the potential member.
3. The size of the AIRG will range between 5 - 10 members. The number may vary according to need and availability.
4. If particular expertise is required, additional members may be co-opted for that purpose.
5. All members are required to give an undertaking that they will attend most meetings and provide feedback on the material presented for collaboration.

    Appointments may include individuals with the following perspectives:
    a. NZTC senior management – at least one involved in learner support services
    b. Disabled learners
    c. Disabled graduates
    d. External specialists in inclusive education
    e. NZTC senior academic staff members

## Chairperson

1. The Chairperson will be appointed by the Chief Executive or designate

## Meetings

1. The AIRG will meet a minimum of four (4) times per year.
2. Meetings will focus on the development and monitoring of the Disability Action Plan and on the participation, learning experience, achievement, and graduate outcomes of disabled learners.

## Reporting

1. Reports on specific areas of Purpose and Role (as per above) will be distributed.
2. Reports on disabled learner participation and achievement in relation to course completions and field practice will be distributed.
3. Disabled learner feedback from course and stage completion surveys will be distributed.

## Confidentiality

1. Members need to assure, in writing, their commitment to maintain complete confidentiality regarding  all deliberations, college intellectual property, and program documentation.
2. Program material may be distributed for specific purposes, but remains subject to point 1 above concerning confidentiality.

Note: Confidentiality as it applies to this working group means that documentation and discussion is confidential to working group members only.