Through the lens of disabled students: How we access and engage with higher education in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

This chapter presents findings from an accessibility audit undertaken by disabled students on a university campus in Aotearoa New Zealand. The audit captured disabled students' experiences as they engaged with learning, teaching and social campus spaces. Despite government and institutional policy, commitments, and discourse, the authors highlight the everyday barriers that may be overlooked and explore their experiences of access and mobility, as well as inconsistent accommodations that can lead to stigma, social exclusion, and concern for safety. Importantly, the chapter situates findings within Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and Māori perspectives on disability, acknowledging the need for culturally responsive solutions. This chapter illuminates the complex accessibility challenges faced by disabled students but also serves as a powerful tool for advocacy and change. By centring disabled students' voices and experiences, this work contributes to calls for change in how educational institutions conceptualise and implement accessibility measures, moving beyond compliance-based approaches toward more comprehensive understanding of accessibility as a human right.

Keywords

Disability, accessibility, accessible campus, disabled students, barriers to education, inclusive education, disability rights.

Introduction

The modern university campus represents both opportunity and challenge—a space where higher education intersects with the complex realities of accessibility and inclusion. While universities in Aotearoa New Zealand, like many globally, have adopted practices, policies and principles promoting accessible education, disabled students continue to navigate a number of challenges that present significant barriers to their full participation in university life. These challenges, both visible and invisible, persist despite commitments to inclusion and frameworks supporting disability rights (Achieve, 2022; Standards New Zealand, 2001; Tertiary Education Commission, 2024).

The significance of examining these challenges extends beyond institutional compliance; access to higher education (HE) represents a fundamental human right that intersects with dignity, autonomy, and equal participation in society. As documented by Shaw (2024), "disabled students are under-represented in HE and tend to have worse post-degree outcomes" (Osborne, 2019, as cited in Shaw, 2024, p. 832). This disparity highlights a critical gap between institutional aspirations and the dreams and lived experiences of disabled students.

In the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, any consideration of educational access must acknowledge and be informed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) and partnership with Māori. In McKay's report (1995), one participant described the Māori worldview of disability, offering a distinct perspective that suggested that because tinana (body), wairua (spirit), and hinengaro (mind) work together, physical disability may have spiritual or mental origins requiring holistic treatment approaches. This understanding challenges conventional Western approaches to disability and accessibility, demanding more nuanced and culturally responsive solutions.

In 2024 a research project between the Ministry of Education, the National Disabled Students Association (NDSA), the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), and the National Qualifications Authority (NZQA) was launched (Ministry of Education, 2024) to explore the lived experiences of disabled students in higher education. The majority of respondents to this survey were (a) female, and (b) European (Pākehā). While these majorities are consistent with the proportion of these cohorts enrolled in higher education, census data from 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, as cited in Ministry of Education, 2024) recorded that there is a

higher proportion of disability amongst Māori in the general population. Consideration of this data suggests that there may be systemic barriers affecting Māori and/or male disabled students' access to higher education. The 2024 survey designers also acknowledged the need to adopt a Kaupapa Māori approach to such studies, where research is informed by tikanga Māori, or Māori ways of doing things, and relationships are built on mutual trust, and respect. Such an approachmay in turn lead to greater numbers of survey completions by these other cohorts.

The challenges faced by disabled students in higher education settings are multifaceted and interconnected. Issues include mobility, parking, distances between classes, access to social venues, access to materials (Ministry of Education, 2024; Riddell, 1995), size of doorways, weight of doors, accessible bathrooms (McKay, 1995), financial challenges brought about by funding reforms (Riddell, 1998; Shaw, 2024), how Universal Design principles are interpreted and implemented within an institution, and the role that the hidden curriculum plays in the university's culture (Shaw, 2024).

Furthermore, disabled students often contend with fatigue, stress, medication side-effects, visual concerns related to signage and lighting, and varying reading and writing speeds (McKay, 1995). The persistent stigma surrounding disability and students' reluctance to disclose their disabilities can significantly impact their ability to access available accommodations (Ministry of Education, 2024). One student in McKay's study (1995) described the intense embarrassment and guilt they felt when arriving in class and finding that people and furniture needed to be moved to enable them access to the room:

> When I arrived in the seminar room, much of the furniture had to be moved around, which often meant that the beginning of a tutorial had to be delayed while this was taking place. This was, in itself embarrassing for me as I felt that having to have this done or to cater for my needs was impinging on class time and a distraction. (McKay, 1995, p. 47)

This student's experience is one that students continue to experience today, which is what led to this chapter and the audit that was undertaken of a number of main campus spaces. What follows is a description and analysis of the audit (see Appendix A), the audit findings, and recommendations for accessible campus design.

Aims

This chapter aims to present the outcomes of a campus accessibility audit undertaken by two disabled students navigating a university campus in Aotearoa New Zealand. The audit was guided by the following questions:

1. How do disabled students experience and navigate key physical, social, and learning spaces within the university campus?
2. In what ways do physical barriers impact students' sense of dignity, belonging, and right to participate in university life?

These questions guide the evaluation of the interplay between physical environments, institutional practices, and student experiences, while acknowledging the fundamental role that planning and design of physical spaces play in enabling or constraining educational participation.

Understanding how physical spaces enable or limit movement through a campus is fundamental to creating an inclusive educational environment. This chapter provides an approach to examining elements of campus infrastructure, focusing on the practical aspects of how people navigate, use, and interact with the built environment of a typical university campus. Rather than simply checking boxes for compliance, the approach taken here captures student observations that reveal how the environment shapes their daily campus experiences.

By documenting elements like accessible bathroom design, pathway widths, ramp slopes, door configurations, and facility layouts, this approach creates a foundation for identifying practical improvements that can enhance campus usability for everyone, while providing data to support campus infrastructure planning and development.

The chapter provides a review of literature situating this audit within current understandings of disability rights in higher education, Universal Design principles, and the Aotearoa New Zealand context. We then detail our methodological approach. The results and discussion section examines these findings through the lens of the human rights model of disability, considering implications for both theory and practice in higher education accessibility. We

conclude with specific recommendations for institutional change and future research directions, emphasising the critical importance of centring disabled students' voices in campus planning and policy development.

By examining the policies, regulations, codes, and lived experiences, this study contributes to a growing body of literature calling for fundamental changes in how educational institutions conceptualise and implement accessibility measures. The insights presented here are particularly valuable given the limited research on disabled students' experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand, offering perspectives that may inform both local and international approaches to campus accessibility. Most importantly, this work serves as a powerful tool for advocacy and change, inviting higher education to move beyond compliance-based approaches to embrace more comprehensive and nuanced understandings of accessibility that recognise and support the dignity and rights of all members of the university community.

There are limitations to this current work. This chapter has captured the experiences of two disabled students at one university; the two students have physical disabilities and have vested interests in the success and wellbeing of disabled students in the tertiary sector. This chapter captures *their* on-campus experiences with access. While this chapter is not representative of all experiences of all disabled students, it goes some way to highlight common issues experienced by many. In addition, this chapter has not considered the campus as experienced by staff and stakeholders. It can be assumed, though, that staff and stakeholder accessibility experiences of the campus may be similar to those of students here; however, staff may have more agency within their place of work to influence timetabling and location choices.

Audit design

This audit came about as a result of conversations between a staff member and two physically disabled students, all passionate about the academic, emotional, and social wellbeing of disabled students. In these conversations, and in conversations with the Waikato Disabled Students Association, it became apparent that disabled students were experiencing a number of challenges in navigating physical spaces around campus which impacted on their ability to engage as fully in their studies and university social life as they would have liked.

Taking a human rights-based approach to the study, and drawing on participatory, inclusive and emancipatory methodologies (Arstein-Kerslake et al., 2020), the audit was informed by human rights concerns of the disabled student community. This approach acknowledges disabled students as experts in their own experiences and positions them as co-researchers rather than subjects of study. This approach aligns with disability studies scholarship that emphasises the importance of centring disabled voices in research about disability (Titchkosky, 2011). The students were a core part of the audit team, enabling the inclusion of their lived experiences while also supporting the development of these disabled students as researchers (Arstein-Kerslake et al., 2020).

A critical consideration in this audit and the writing-up of this chapter was the emotional and physical efforts required from the students, who were also focused on their own studies. The co-authors implemented regular check-ins, support was offered and provided, and accommodations were made throughout the journey.

Literature review

This review examines key theoretical frameworks and research that inform our understanding of campus accessibility and disabled students' experiences in higher education.

Evolving frameworks of disability rights and access

Research into Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within educational contexts has grown substantially over the past 20 years, emphasising the critical importance of creating learning environments that accommodate diverse student needs and diverse student populations. Colón-Aguirre and Bright's (2022) work, which considered DEI within the US library and information professions and with a particular focus on race and ethnicity, exemplifies this trend, advocating for the integration of DEI principles not only within educational practices but also within research methodologies themselves, ensuring that inclusive approaches inform both research processes and outcomes.

Parallel to DEI-informed research, the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has gained increasing prominence in educational discourse. UDL stems from the theory of Universal Design in architecture, and Cumming and Rose (2021, p. 1027) describe Universal Design as where “facilities ought to be useable for a diverse range of people, rather than

tailored toward a singular normative ideal of a person". Universal Design for Learning as an instructional pedagogy "guide[s] curriculum design with regards to providing content, activities and pedagogy that address multiple areas of representation, action, expression and engagement" (Cumming & Rose, 2012, p. 1027). Achieve (2022), a consortium of disability support services in Aotearoa's tertiary education sector, has been instrumental in promoting UDL principles within Aotearoa New Zealand. Their work emphasises the importance of flexible learning environments that offer multiple means of engagement, expression, and representation. Their approach recognises that accessibility in education requires diverse pathways to learning rather than one-size-fits-all solutions, highlighting how crucial flexibility is in ensuring equitable access to education.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, these Universal Design frameworks intersect with Te Tiriti o Waitangi obligations and Māori perspectives on disability. The holistic Māori understanding of disability described earlier offers important insights for developing culturally responsive accessibility solutions (McKay, 1995). This cultural framework suggests that effective accessibility measures must consider not only physical barriers but also spiritual and mental wellbeing.

The application of human rights frameworks to educational accessibility extends into the physical design of educational spaces. This approach recognises that the right to education encompasses not only pedagogical access but also the physical accessibility of educational environments, highlighting the interconnected nature of rights-based approaches to disability inclusion.

The development of inclusive and accessible educational environments, however, requires more than pedagogical innovation; it demands robust policy frameworks. Riddell et al.'s (2005) research illuminated the structural barriers facing students with disabilities in tertiary education, arguing that meaningful access and inclusion cannot be achieved without comprehensive policy reform. This understanding of institutional barriers has been further developed through Shaw's (2024) incisive examination of the current state of disability inclusion in higher education. Drawing on lived experience, Shaw (2024) critiques the persistent gaps between policy aspirations and practical implementation, highlighting how the slow pace of institutional change, inadequate support systems, and enduring social stigma continue to impede full inclusion.

The evolution of disability rights frameworks, particularly through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (United Nations, 2006), has fundamentally reshaped approaches to both disability research and educational access. This paradigm shift reflects a broader movement toward human-rights-based approaches in understanding and addressing disability access in higher education. The UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006) has emerged as a cornerstone document that continues to influence global disability strategies and policy frameworks, establishing fundamental protections and rights for people with disabilities, including the right to accessible education.

Inclusive research practices

The impact of this rights-based framework extends beyond policy into research methodology and practice. Arstein-Kerslake et al. (2020) advocate for a fundamental transformation in how disability research is conducted, arguing for the integration of human rights model methodologies that centre the experiences and rights of disabled individuals. This methodological shift represents a significant departure from traditional approaches, emphasising the importance of conducting research that not only studies access but also embodies rights-based principles in its execution.

Recent years have seen an evolution in inclusive and participatory research methodologies, particularly research practices that focus on the lived experiences of disabled individuals. This methodological shift represents a fundamental reimagining of how research is conducted, moving away from traditional approaches that position disabled individuals merely as subjects of study toward more collaborative and participatory frameworks. This approach recognises that individuals with disabilities possess unique insights and expertise derived from their lived experiences, which are essential for developing effective policies and practices in higher education.

Titchkosky's (2011) critical analysis of research practices in disability studies reveals how conventional research methodologies have often perpetuated the marginalisation of disabled individuals by failing to recognise both physical and pedagogical barriers in academic spaces. By critiquing the ways in which research has historically positioned disabled individuals as passive subjects rather than active contributors, Titchkosky's work, as well as the work by Arstein-Kerslake et al. (2020) underscores the need for fundamental changes in how disability research is conceptualised and conducted within academic institutions.

The shift toward more inclusive research methodologies complements the frameworks of DEI, UD, UDL, and disability rights by addressing the crucial question of who produces knowledge about disability in higher education and how this knowledge is created. This approach recognises that meaningful progress in creating accessible and inclusive educational environments requires not only policy changes and physical accommodations but also a transformation in how we understand and study disability itself. By positioning disabled individuals as co-researchers and active participants in the research process, these inclusive methodologies help ensure that efforts to improve accessibility in higher education are grounded in the actual experiences and needs of disabled students.

While some of the literature in this field may predate current developments, the core principles of inclusive research methodology remain relevant and continue to evolve. This review of literature reveals both progress and persistent challenges in creating accessible and inclusive higher education environments. While theoretical frameworks and policy initiatives have evolved significantly, the practical implementation of inclusive practices continues to lag behind aspirational goals. Moving forward, it becomes crucial to not only build upon existing research but also actively address the gap between theoretical understanding and practical implementation in creating genuinely accessible higher education environments that serve all students effectively.

Results and discussion

The disparity between accessibility policies and frameworks, and lived student experiences, emerges clearly through this audit's findings. While campus design may technically meet minimum regulatory accessibility standards, the reality of navigating multiple barriers—from steep ramps to inaccessible bathrooms—creates a significantly more challenging environment than policy provisions might suggest. The location of the campus Accessibility office itself, without an accessible bathroom on the same floor, symbolises this gap between policy intention and practical implementation. This disconnect highlights how approaches to accessibility often fail to address the cumulative impact of multiple barriers on daily campus navigation and participation.

The findings also raise critical questions about rights-based approaches to campus accessibility. The fundamental right to education is compromised when physical barriers

restrict students' ability to move efficiently between classes, access basic facilities, or participate independently in campus life. The current situation, where students must rely on others for basic tasks like reaching items in the café or navigating furniture, undermines their autonomy and equal participation rights. This dependence on others' assistance, combined with the extra time and energy required to navigate campus, places an inequitable burden on students with mobility requirements. Such barriers effectively transform what should be routine academic activities into complex logistical challenges requiring significant advance planning.

The implementation of Universal Design principles in physical campus spaces requires a fundamental shift to proactive inclusive design. Current campus infrastructure can often reflect a historical pattern of retrofitting accessibility features onto existing structures, resulting in compromised solutions like narrow ramps and inadequate turning spaces. Moving toward truly universal design would require reconceptualising campus spaces to ensure they are inherently accessible rather than merely adapted. This approach aligns with institutional responsibilities to provide equitable access, suggesting that future campus development should prioritise accessibility as a core design principle rather than an additional consideration and compliance exercise. The experiences of students navigating campus barriers provide crucial insights for informing such design decisions, emphasising the importance of incorporating lived experience into campus planning processes.

Disabled students are already dealing with any number of issues and challenges in their everyday lives. Managing fatigue, medical appointments, medications, stigma, physical and social access and engagement are some of the issues that many disabled students face (Ministry of Education, 2024). This chapter draws attention to some of the physical barriers that two physically disabled students experience at one university campus in New Zealand. The students recorded a number of experiences; these experiences and their reactions to these experiences and barriers are described here. Note that their experiences were recorded outside semester time, when the campus was less busy.

Analysis of the audit data reveals several recurring design patterns that influence campus accessibility. By mapping issues and experiences across a number of campus spaces, we can identify recurring design approaches that create consistent challenges to physically disabled students. These findings are similar to those documented in the 2024 report released by the Ministry of Education and are primarily around access and social inclusion. Through this

audit, we can better understand how certain design decisions are replicated across campus, creating systematic rather than isolated accessibility challenges. This understanding of recurring design issues will help to shift the focus from individual barrier removal to identifying opportunities for campus-wide design solutions; solutions which would also enhance the campus experience for all students (Cumming & Rose, 2022).

These design patterns documented below give an insight into the campus experience of physically disabled students, while noting that everyone's experience of disability is unique. Therefore, while the outcomes of this study may not be generalisable across all disabled communities, the patterns laid out here go some way to inform other campus users and campus designers of the physical barriers that are faced by disabled students on a daily basis.

Physical access and navigation

The audit revealed significant challenges in campus navigation and access. Of particular concern are the doorways across campus, which present multiple barriers including narrow widths, heavy pull-doors, and problematic threshold lips that require power chair users to redistribute their weight for safe passage. External pathways pose additional challenges, with narrow ramps featuring overly tight corners and steep inclines. The presence of temporary hazards, such as maintenance-related wiring across ground surfaces, creates tipping risks for power chair users. These issues are compounded by the considerable time required to navigate between classes, as users must carefully plan routes accounting for accessible crossings, ramps, and doorways.

Transportation and safety concerns

Lift access presents a number of critical issues throughout campus buildings. Notably, lift doorways are frequently too narrow, with insufficient manoeuvring space inside the lifts. The positioning of lift control buttons often requires users to block doorways to operate them. Of particular concern is a lift that opens onto a narrow mezzanine lacking safety rails, with the additional hazard of moveable furniture in the landing area. Similar safety concerns exist in other areas, including uneven steps without handrails and landscaped areas where rocks are unprotected by safety barriers. The absence of tactile indicators and signage and guide rails near steps creates significant hazards for vision-impaired students, as noted by the two students, who were concerned for their blind and low vision peers.

Bathroom facilities

The audit identified substantial inadequacies in accessible toilet facilities in the audited areas of campus. Multiple issues were documented across different locations, including: heavy sliding doors; inaccessible light switches; poorly positioned baby change tables that both obstruct movement and present eye-level hazards to seated users; and insufficient turning spaces. In some facilities, pull-doors close before users can access light switches (which need to be switched on manually), while others entirely lack adequate space for wheelchair access.

Interior spaces and furniture

Interior spaces present numerous accessibility challenges, particularly regarding furniture configuration and reach ranges. Moveable furniture in a number of locations creates navigation barriers, while food and beverage storage exceeds wheelchair reach ranges, forcing wheelchair users' reliance on peer assistance. Lecture theatres combine multiple barriers: heavy pull doors, obstructed wheelchair spaces, and insufficient turning areas. The limited availability of accessible seating that accommodates transfer from wheelchairs further restricts user independence. Signage positioning requires extreme neck extension for wheelchair users, with particular difficulty for those using wheelchair head supports. One student who took part in the audit and who had one of the narrowest power chairs on the market reported frequent equipment damage due to tight spaces and obstacles.

Campus mobility and time management

Campus topography and building distribution create significant time management challenges for disabled students and wheelchair users. Steep ramp gradients not only pose safety concerns but substantially increase travel time between locations, as users must navigate these inclines at reduced speeds for stability. The situation is particularly problematic where areas are aesthetically designed with angles, or slopes, that also force wheelchairs toward undesired or even dangerous areas, requiring additional time and effort to maintain a safe journey. The cumulative effect of these design issues—combined with the need to locate and use accessible entrances, navigate around obstacles, and find appropriate routes between buildings—means that disabled students require significantly more time to travel between classes than their peers. This extended travel time needs to be factored into class scheduling and can limit students' ability to participate fully and without stress in back-to-back classes across different locations in one campus. Arriving on time to class, finding an accessible spot in class, and being prepared for class start times all become difficult, increasing students'

feelings of being different and othered and at risk of a range of responses from teaching staff and classmates in making accommodations to support disabled students' access to learning.

Conclusion

Despite regulatory provisions made within Building Regulations (1992), Standards New Zealand (2001), Accessible Signage Guidelines (2018-2025), findings and recommendations made in the 1995 report (McKay, 1995), the 2024 report (Ministry of Education (2024), and institutional guidelines outlined by Achieve (2022) and the Tertiary Education Commission (n.d., 2024), it is apparent that the higher education sector in Aotearoa New Zealand (and, we suggest, globally) has some way to go to make campuses accessible to more students with a range of visible and invisible disabilities. This audit has revealed systematic accessibility challenges across one campus that impact disabled students, particularly those who use mobility devices.

The access issues point to several immediate practical implications for campus planning and management. While some of the barriers that have been identified may require substantial infrastructure modifications, others could be addressed through simpler interventions such as furniture placement protocols, improved signage, and automated door installations. Priority should be given to addressing safety concerns, particularly around unprotected edges, steep ramps, and access routes. Additionally, the development of detailed campus accessibility maps and alternative route planning would help students better navigate between classes and identify accessible pathways. Consultation with the disabled community in the design or redesign of any spaces is also highly recommended.

For students navigating these challenges, several strategic approaches emerge from the audit findings that may support students with access to campus facilities. The development of peer support networks could help address immediate accessibility needs while longer-term solutions are implemented. Time management strategies, including route planning, become crucial for full on-campus academic participation. Students might also benefit from working with accessibility support services to identify alternative pathways and develop personalised navigation strategies that account for specific mobility requirements. It is also critical that teaching staff and other staff at the university have a better appreciation and understanding of the needs of disabled students, and the role of staff in supporting student access and learning

in their courses. Such understanding, though, should not come at the expense of students having to disclose personal and intimate information about their health to everyone, and on a continual basis.

Looking forward, findings from this audit suggest several directions for future investigation and improvement. A comprehensive review of campus scheduling practices could better account for mobility-related time constraints when planning class locations. This approach, however, would require students to disclose their disability and identify their needs: there is reluctance to do so due to stigma, real or perceived lack of understanding from staff, and/or insufficient training of staff (Ministry of Education, 2024). Research into the effectiveness of various retrofit solutions could help prioritise infrastructure improvements. Additionally, studying the intersection of physical accessibility with other aspects of campus life—such as social spaces, study areas, and recreational facilities—would provide a more complete picture of accessibility needs.

From a problem-solving perspective, the findings suggest the need for a multi-tiered approach to campus accessibility. Immediate solutions might focus on removable barriers and simple modifications, while medium-term planning could address more complex infrastructure changes. Long-term strategic planning should incorporate Universal Design principles in all new campus developments, going beyond the minimum requirements currently specified in legislation (Standards New Zealand, 2001; Building Regulations, 1992) ensuring that future developments and additions to the campus environment enhance rather than hinder accessibility. This layered approach, combined with regular consultation with students and professional development for teaching and administration staff, would help create a more sustainable, inclusive, and accessible campus environment that can be used by all.

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Appendix A: Audit framework

This framework provides an approach for conducting a physical accessibility audit of a number of key teaching, learning, and social spaces.

This audit did not consider parking, all outdoor routes, digital accessibility, residential areas, emergency procedures, sport and recreation facilities, and academic and student services.

Physical infrastructure and access points	At least one accessible entrance per building Door opening width Automatic door operators where required Level landing both sides of door Adequate lighting and weather protection Clear, accessible signage Gradient Level landings Handrails on both sides Handrail extensions Edge protection Non-slip surface treatment Uniform riser height Uniform tread depth Closed risers preferred Tactile warning strips at top and bottom Adequate lighting and contrast marking
Lifts	Minimum car size Door opening width Automatic door operation with 5-second minimum open time Car controls maximum height Braille and raised character markings

	Audio announcements for floor levels Emergency communication device accessible to wheelchair users Level landing Call buttons maximum height Visual and audio signals for car arrival Clear floor space for wheelchair manoeuvring
Corridors and hallways	Minimum width Adequate lighting throughout No protruding objects or obstacles Clear sight lines and wayfinding Non-slip flooring Contrast between walls and floors
Classrooms and lecture halls	Accessible seating distributed throughout Clear floor space per wheelchair position Companion seating adjacent to accessible spaces Accessible route to lecturer area Adjustable furniture options available Adequate lighting for lip reading Hearing loop or similar systems installed where required Clear sight lines to presentation areas
Accessible bathrooms	At least one accessible bathroom per floor Minimum clear floor space Outward-opening door or sliding door Accessible door hardware and locks Toilet seat height Grab bars properly positioned and installed Accessible sink and mirror heights Knee space under sink minimum Accessible dispensers and controls Adult changing tables available

	Adequate space for caregiver assistance Privacy and dignity maintained
Dining areas	Accessible seating throughout dining areas Variable table heights Clear floor space at tables Accessible route to all dining areas Accessible food service counters and equipment
Visual signage	Consistent signage system High-contrast text and backgrounds Pictograms supplement text where appropriate Braille and raised character signs at key locations
Tactile and audio wayfinding	Tactile maps at major entrances Audio wayfinding systems available Tactile ground surface indicators at decision points Clear landmarks for orientation Consistent layout and navigation patterns

Biographies

Chelsea Blickem has a background in applied linguistics and ESOL. Chelsea led the University's Pathways College before assuming responsibilities for English language provision. She is currently the acting head of Accessibility Services, where she manages the supports and accommodations offered to disabled studentsto support them in their studies.

Jessica Anderson is a passionate disability advocate specialising in rare and hidden disabilities. She holds regional and national leadership roles, working to improve lives and foster inclusion. Jessica's mission is to empower individuals with disabilities and drive systemic change for a more inclusive society.

Nikita Van Dijk is a passionate disability advocate and researcher disabled by multiple chronic illnesses. They hold key leadership roles nationally, lecture on disability inclusion, and are pursuing a Master’s in Disability and Inclusion Studies. Nikita aims to amplify disabled voices and drive systemic change in Aotearoa and beyond.