



The education of students with a disability

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Introduction

The QTU is conscious of increased societal awareness and support for the inclusion of students with disability (SWDs) in mainstream or regular classrooms. The QTU understands the philosophical and educational reasons for a more inclusive approach to education and is broadly supportive of such moves.

The QTU reaffirms its belief that public education systems need to maintain a range of services and types of educational setting to ensure that the needs of all students are properly addressed. In all settings there is a need to ensure both the adequate provision of resources and curriculum appropriate to the student.

The enrolment of students with disabilities (and other special needs) should take place under a process which:

- ensures the most appropriate educational enrolment of the student
- is cognisant of the professional judgement of teachers, education leaders and other professionals
- involves parent and carers and acknowledges their preferences
- gives due consideration to the needs of all students in any educational setting.

Such a process should acknowledge that the enrolment of students depends on a number of factors and is not purely a matter of the decisions of individual parents. The professional judgement of teachers, education leaders and other school-based professionals should play a significant role in both the enrolment and associated processes, and their professional judgements should not be ignored. They should not be the subject of direction from regional or central officers based on pressure from external sources.

Inclusive education

In 2018, the Department of Education published its [Inclusive Education Policy](#).

The Department of Education website includes the following content:

“Students enrolled in Queensland state schools come from diverse social, cultural, geographic and family backgrounds, are of many identities, and of all abilities.

“The Department of Education's [Inclusive Education Policy](#) supports our shared vision that all students in Queensland state schools receive the support they need to belong to the school community, engage purposefully in learning and experience academic success ([Equity and Excellence \(qed.qld.gov.au\)](#).

“Students experience inclusive education when they can access and fully participate in learning, alongside their similar-aged peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs. Inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life, and is supported by culture, policies and everyday practices.”

QTU position

The QTU broadly supports moves towards greater inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms, subject to the following conditions.

- It is in the best educational interests of the students, and this is supported by all the relevant professionals, including the classroom teacher/s.
- QTU members have been consulted in line with certified agreement provisions about Inclusive Education Policy implementation, which may involve significant changes to the education programs of SWDs.

- Teachers and other staff have been trained to work with SWDs.
- Teachers and other staff have access to ongoing training and professional development.
- There is an adequate allocation of additional teacher FTE and/or teacher-aide hours to support the students.

The Department of Education has published a set of frequently asked questions, available on OnePortal and the QTU website which generally supports the QTU position.

QTU member action

Where conditions such as the above are not met and QTU members have ongoing concerns about the inclusion of a student or students, they should meet to consider further action, e.g., discussions with the school education leadership team to suspend the inclusion of a student or students until certain conditions are met. If this strategy is not effective, members may need to consider an industrial strategy, e.g., a directive not to teach a student or students until certain conditions are met by the department.

The QTU does not support school-based decisions to move to what may be loosely described as a “total inclusion model” – where all SWDs are included in regular classrooms for the entire education program – unless there has been adequate consultation with QTU members and they support a move to such a model. It should be noted that DoE senior officers continue to state that regional directors, assistant regional directors or principals have not been directed to move to such a model and that the department policy should not be interpreted in that way.

Staffing for the education of students with disability (SWD)

Up until 2023 the staffing for SEPs and special schools was determined through the EAP/verification process which focused on the SWDs from the six low incidence disability categories.

Since 2017, additional funding has been provided to schools for SWDs through Investing for Success I4S.

Reasonable adjustments resourcing

In 2021 the department commenced a review into the SWD staffing model mentioned previously. In June 2022 a new model was introduced which is based on the NCCD adjustment categories of SWDs. In the 2022 State Budget an additional \$90 million was provided over two calendar years (i.e., 2023 and 2024) to transition to the full implementation of the new model in 2025. In 2023 and 2024 no SEP or special school will be staffed at a level lower than their 2022 level in

relation to FTE and teacher aide hours. SEPs and special schools entitled to additional staffing under the new model will receive 25% of the additional staffing in 2023 and 50% in 2024. In 2025 the new model will be full implemented. The staffing provided to schools to support students with disability (teacher FTE numbers and teacher-aide hours) is determined by the staffing methodology applied to schools and SEPs by central office based on NCCD data available as of Day 8.

In addition to the 4 categories of educational adjustment in NCCD, the department has introduced a fifth category titled Extensive Plus. Schools make a separate application for this category for each SWD they believe needs adjustments beyond the NCCD extensive category. These applications are considered by central office.

Further information about the staffing model can be found on the [QTU website](#).(link –[Students with disability – Reasonable Adjustments Resourcing \(RAR\) staffing model review :: QTU](#))

Please note DoE has agreed that schools can use the anticipated adjustment process post the August NCCD census data collection to ensure new students from interstate or the non-government sector and Prep students are resourced based on their disability from the beginning of the following year. These students can be added up until the end of the school year. Schools can access additional resources for emergent student needs from their regional office.

Schools receive a range of resources which can be used to meet the diverse needs of students within the school community, including:

- a core or base allocation of teachers and teacher aides for every student enrolled at the school or attending a special school on temporary attendance
- Investing for Success (I4S) provides funding for every student and additional loadings for students with disability
- Whole School Support – Student Learning Resources (WSS – SLR) which includes guidance officers, learning support and behaviour support teachers for all students, and are allocated based on enrolments.

Each region is provided with a 3 percent contingency/additional allocation fund, which enables additional resourcing to be allocated to SEPs and schools during the year for new enrolments or for students where the initial allocation is grossly deficient. Central office also has a contingency fund for special cases that arise during a year.

I4S SWD funding

Since 2016, schools have several loadings through their I4S funding, one of which is for SWDs.

QTU members should try to ensure this I4S funding is allocated to support the education of SWDs in their school.

Possible QTU member action to improve SWD staffing

The QTU advises members who are concerned about inadequate resourcing for SWDs to ensure that the following action is considered and/or taken.

- Ensure that the SWD staffing allocation has been allocated and is being used for this purpose.
- Ensure the I4S SWD funding is allocated and used for this purpose.
- Check in WSS-SLR for additional sources of funding.
- If the initial SWD staffing allocation is insufficient or a new SWD student is going to be enrolled during the year, the school should apply to the region for additional resourcing from the region's 3 percent contingency fund.
- If the region is unable to provide additional resources, the relevant QTU Organiser should speak with the QTU Assistant Secretary responsible for SWD issues and a request for additional resources should be made to DoE central office.
- If the above request is not successful, members should consider holding a meeting to consider other strategies, including industrial options. For more information and advice about an appropriate industrial strategy, Union Representatives should contact their regional QTU Organiser or QTAD.

Education Adjustment Program

The Education Adjustment Program (EAP) was the system used by the department to identify and respond to the educational needs of students with disabilities up to 2022. From 2022 EAP is only required for ID students seeking special school enrolment or who are in special schools. There is no requirement for Guidance Officers (GOs) to perform these verifications on a regular or routine basis.

Nationally consistent collection of data on school students with disability (NCCD)

All Australian state and territory governments have agreed to implement a nationally consistent collection of data on school students with disability. The NCCD has been supported to date by the QTU and other education unions because of its linkage to the previously promised implementation of a needs-based education funding model (based on the Gonski recommendations) under which it would provide the relevant SWD data upon which to base a school's SWD funding loading.

The national data collection on students with disability acknowledges the work already undertaken in Queensland state schools to support students with disability. It assists schools in identifying and supporting students with disability so they can access and participate on the same basis as their peers. From 2022 NCCD data will be used to determine SEP and special school staffing.

Model and data collection

Under the model, teachers use their professional, informed judgment to determine:

- which of their students are being provided with reasonable adjustments to address a functional impact due to a disability, as defined in the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) (DDA) and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) (DSE)
- the level of adjustment that students with disability are provided in both the classroom and whole of school context
- the broad category of disability under which the student best fits.

A student is eligible to be counted in the national data collection if there is evidence at a school that the student is being provided with an educational adjustment to meet ongoing, long-term specific needs associated with disability, and that decisions have been made in consultation with the students and/or their parents or carers. The definition of "long-term" for this purpose is over a minimum period of one school term, or at least 10 weeks, in the 12 months preceding the national data collection. Accurate NCCD information is vital. The department is working with schools that have data outside to average expected to ensure schools are being funded appropriately.

Implementation and workload

In 2015, all schools across Australia participated in this data collection. There is now an annual data collection in August for Queensland state schools. Teachers are encouraged to consider recording the adjustments/NCCD data in OneSchool early in the year in a student's personal learning record (PLR), and this data is then easily downloaded into the NCCD collection instrument in August. If teachers do not choose this option, then they enter the relevant data in the NCCD instrument in August.

With the introduction of the new staffing model in 2023, it does not require any additional workload requirements in relation to NCCD evidence collection. Members need to be very careful that are not being asked to undertake additional NCCD work more than what the department requires. If a member is unsure about a request or new duty, they should ask a principal or HOSSES to show them the departmental policy or guideline that mandates it.

QTU advice and assistance

If you require further advice or assistance regarding the education of students with a disability, please contact the Queensland Teachers' Assist Desk (QTAD) in the first instance on telephone 1300 11 7823 or by email qtad@qtu.asn.au