

Disability Liaison Officers

This is an English transcript of the Auslan video: <https://vimeo.com/237329726>

For further information about this topic, visit: <http://www.deafconnected.com.au/study-support/>

This video will explain the role of the DLO – the Disability Liaison Officer – because some people may not know about this service.

DLOs are found in Registered Training Organisations (or RTOs), which include TAFE, community colleges as well as private colleges. All of these organisations provide VET (Vocational Education and Training) courses.

Most RTOs will have a position something like a DLO, although the title may vary in each organisation. The aim of these positions is similar however: to support students with a disability.

If you want to study but you do not know which RTO to choose, it would be best to contact the DLO in those RTOs so you can see what support they can provide you. It is a good idea to do this before you enrol – the earlier the better. That will give you and the DLO plenty of time to talk about what support you may need. It also means you have time to do something about any potential barriers so you can then focus on your studies just like all the other students.

To give you an idea of what the DLO does, I'll summarise with four points:

- Give guidance to teachers to help them create a learning environment that is appropriate for your needs
- Work closely with students with needs so they can participate fully and be successful in your studies
- Work with teachers and students to determine what kind of adjustment is suitable for both teachers and students
- To foresee and prevent any potential issues, such as discrimination and harassment.

So, what is the process for this?

Like I said before, it's a good idea to contact the DLO before you enrol, but if you have already applied for and accepted your course offer, you should contact the DLO again to make an appointment as soon as possible. You can send them an email. Let the DLO know which subjects you are enrolled in before the appointment.

At your meeting, the DLO will ask about your communication needs. For example, are you deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind? You will need to bring some evidence of your hearing loss, such as an audiogram. You will also have the opportunity to explain how you prefer to communicate. For example, do you use Auslan, spoken English, written English, or tactile signing?

The DLO will then be able to consider the support options that will best meet your needs. This includes Auslan interpreting, captioning of videos, notetaking, appropriate lighting, and assistive technologies for students who have hearing aids or cochlear implants. Some RTOs have study support services. The DLO can explain what these services are and how you can access them.

You will also need to think about when you need support. For example, you may want interpreters only for lectures and in the classroom but not for other more practical activities. Everyone is different so you need to discuss this with your DLO.

But remember to talk to your DLO about your needs early, because there is usually a big demand for Auslan interpreters. DLOs need at least 2-3 weeks to book interpreters, especially at the start of the year.

The DLO will also need to know how you prefer to be contacted. For example, by SMS, email, or through the National Relay Service.

Once you and the DLO have worked out your needs, you will receive a written agreement which will summarise what you have agreed.

Check that all the information is correct and all the support you need is included. Email the DLO to confirm that you are happy with your plan.

It is also a good idea to email your teachers to tell them about yourself and what support you need.

Throughout the year, your DLO will contact you to check how things are going, and to see if anything needs to change. You must tell your DLO soon as possible if there are any changes to your course. This could include room changes, timetable changes or if you need more or less support.

The DLO will also be supporting many other students. Some students will have very complex support needs so the DLO can be very busy. So establish a good working relationship with your DLO to help them do their best for you.

deafConnectEd works very closely with all DLOs. deafConnectEd support DLOs so that they can provide the best support to deaf and hard of hearing and deafblind learners, and so that everything can go as smoothly as possible. deafConnectEd services include:

- booking Auslan interpreters for DLOs
- professional development for newly accredited Auslan interpreters
- information and training for notetakers
- deafness awareness for teachers working with students who are Deaf or hard of hearing

For more information, have a look around our website or contact us - we are more than happy to help you with any questions.