



**NCSEHE**

National Centre for Student  
Equity in Higher Education



**Curtin University**

# DISABILITY SUPPORT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: WHAT OUR STUDENTS ARE TELLING US

2020 NCSEHE Equity Fellow Tim Pitman

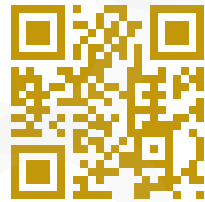
#NCSEHE\_Snapshots

**Make tomorrow better.**



## CONNECTING EQUITY POLICY, RESEARCH & PRACTICE

The NCSEHE provides national leadership in student equity, connecting research, policy and practice to improve higher education participation and success for marginalised and disadvantaged people.



NCSEHE



“Targeted  
Fellowships  
address  
**fundamental**  
issues for  
student equity.”

NCSEHE Equity  
Fellows conduct  
high-impact studies  
to advance student  
equity research,  
policy and practice.

The Student Equity Snapshots Forum  
showcases the 2019/20 Fellows’ research.



2019/20 EQUITY FELLOWS  
with Dr Cathy Stone,  
Prof. Sarah O'Shea  
and Prof. Sue Trinidad

2020  
NCSEHE  
EQUITY  
FELLOW

**“My Fellowship is looking at how universities can best support people with disability, particularly regional, rural and remote students.”**

**Tim Pitman is a Senior Research Fellow at Curtin University, having worked in the Australian higher education sector for over 20 years.**

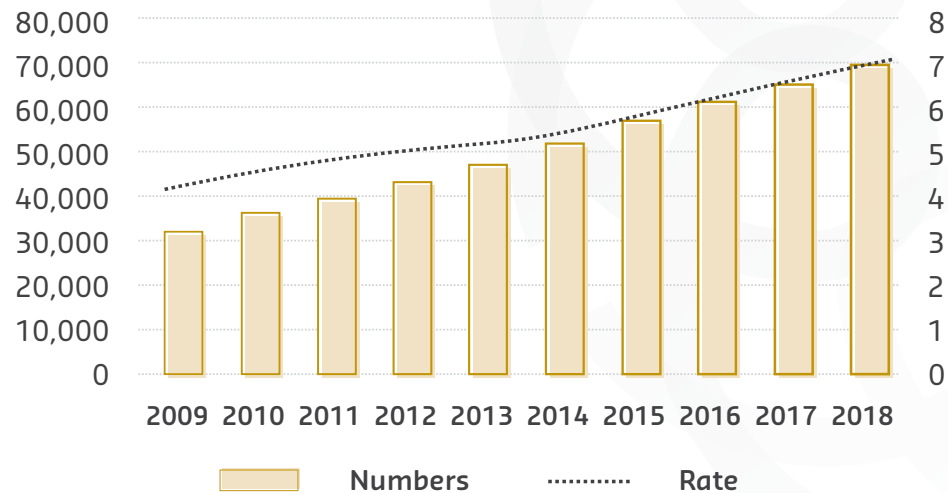
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TIM PITMAN



**Over the last decade, the number of people with disability studying in higher education has more than doubled.**



**GROWTH IN ENROLMENTS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY**





AROUND

17,000

STUDENTS WITH **DISABILITY** ARE FROM  
**REGIONAL** OR **REMOTE** AUSTRALIA.

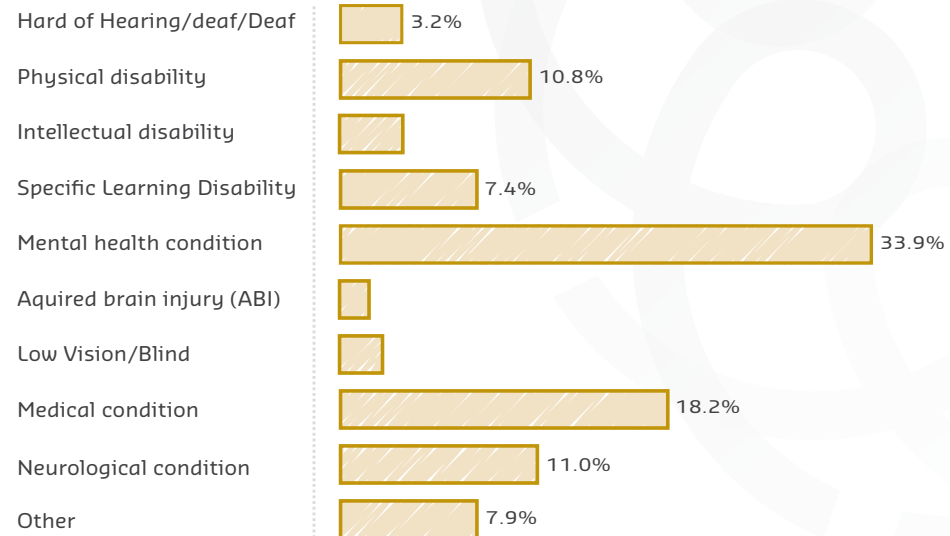


**For every five regional students with disability, four enrol in regional universities and one enrolls in a metropolitan institution.**

**The most common type of disability reported is some form of a mental health condition.**

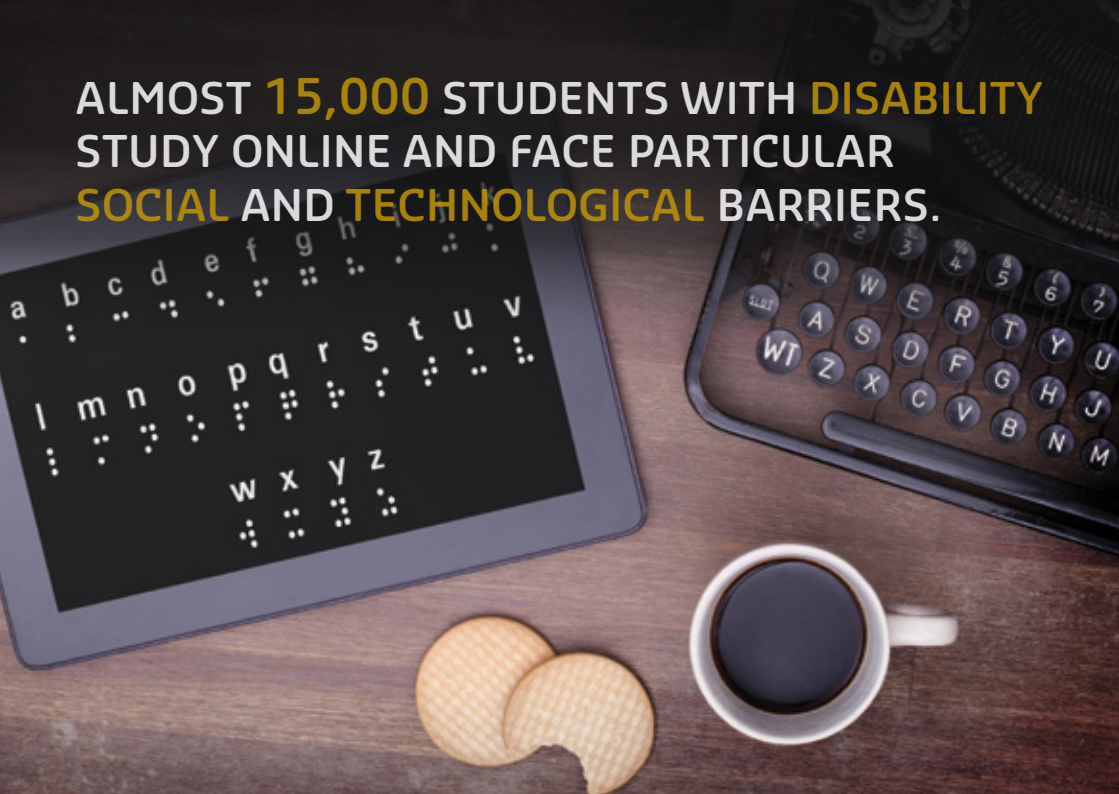


TYPES OF DISABILITY REPORTED BY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS  
RESPONSES FROM 2,518 STUDENTS





ALMOST **15,000** STUDENTS WITH **DISABILITY** STUDY ONLINE AND FACE PARTICULAR **SOCIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL BARRIERS.**



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY FACE A RANGE OF CHALLENGES



# TOP 5 TIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY FROM OTHER STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY\*

“PLAN IT,  
DON'T WING IT”

“CHOOSE WISELY”


“SEEK SUPPORT”

“ENGAGE”

“LOOK AFTER  
YOURSELF”



\*Based on the 165 responses to the question "If you could go back in time and give yourself one bit of advice when you first enrolled, what would it be?"

A man with a beard and headphones is sitting at a desk, working on a laptop. He is wearing a light blue shirt and has a red string on his left wrist. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office setting.

On average, students with disability are most **positive** about the attitudes of the people they **interact** with, and the procedures designed to **support** their functional needs.

“

*My disability resource centre contact has helped make university a more positive experience. She's been extremely helpful and understanding of my situation.*

”

However, there are other things that could be improved. These include the built environment,

**“A number of the lecture rooms and tutorial buildings have extremely large external noise which is extremely difficult for someone like myself.”**

Communication,

**“All too often people don’t get back to me when they say they will.”**

And being socially included.



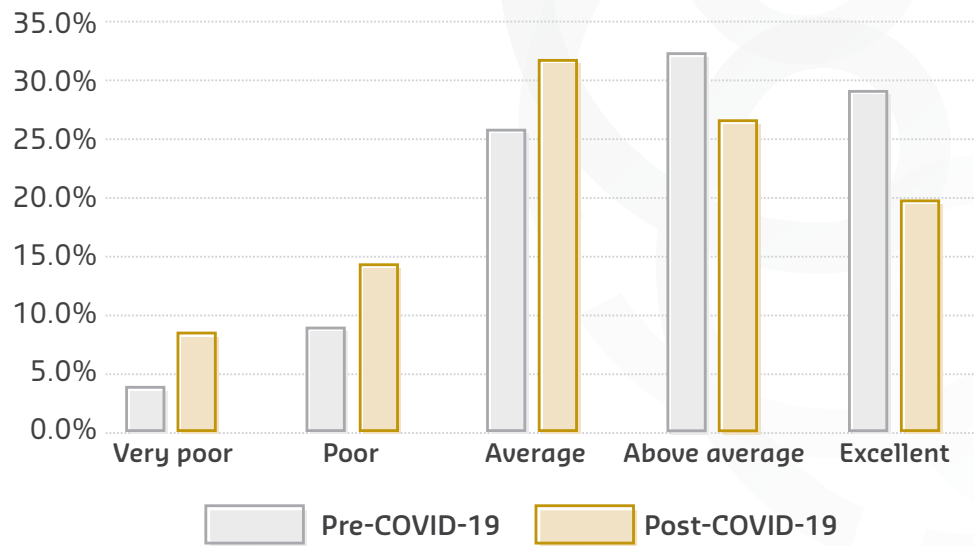
**“I feel completely isolated and lonely even when attending campus classes.”**



*Overall, whilst levels of satisfaction remain high, many students with disability have experienced a decline in support levels, resulting from the impact of the Coronavirus.*



**RATING OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY  
RESPONSES FROM 1,368 STUDENTS**



**“During complex and changing times, the NCSEHE Equity Fellows have exceeded all expectations to produce impactful and quality research for the equity field.”**

**NCSEHE DIRECTOR  
PROFESSOR SARAH O'SHEA**



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National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education  
Technology Park, Enterprise Unit 4 (Building 602)  
9 De Laeter Way, Bentley WA 6102  
GPO Box U1987 Perth WA 6845

Tel: +61 8 9266 1743

Email: [ncsehe@curtin.edu.au](mailto:ncsehe@curtin.edu.au)



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[ncsehe.edu.au](http://ncsehe.edu.au)