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## Frequently asked questions for schools

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## **1. What is the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (the national data collection)?**

The national data collection is an annual collection that counts the number of school students receiving an adjustment due to disability and the level of adjustment they are receiving to access education on the same basis as other students. Each of the included students has been identified by a school team as receiving a reasonable adjustment to address a disability under the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) (the Act) ([www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00339](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00339)).

The national data collection was progressively implemented from 2013 to 2015. All schools are now participating in the national data collection.

## **2. Why is this data being collected?**

Until recently there has been a lack of nationally comparable data about school students with disability. The national data collection ensures that, for the first time, information about students with disability is transparent, consistent and reliable at a national level. A nationally consistent approach to collecting data provides evidence on:

- the number of school students receiving an adjustment due to disability
- the level of adjustment they receive
- their broad category of disability.

Better information about school students with disability helps parents, carers, teachers, principals, education authorities and government to gain a more complete understanding of students who are receiving adjustments because of disability and how to best support them to take part in schooling on the same basis as other students.

The national data collection captures the good work occurring in schools to support students with disability. The national data collection process is supported by an excellent range of resources to assist schools to reflect on their practice and learn from others.

Over time, participation in the national data collection will help to embed in schools' everyday practice their obligations under the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) ([www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00339](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00339)) and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) ([www.docs.education.gov.au/node/16354](http://www.docs.education.gov.au/node/16354)).

### **3. How is data from the national data collection used?**

The national data collection will provide governments with greater insight into the numbers and distribution of students with disability in Australian schools and adjustments they are receiving. This information will inform policy development and planning at federal, state/territory and local levels to support schools in implementing quality learning and support practices.

The national data collection is also an opportunity for schools to review their teaching, learning and support systems and processes, helping to ensure they focus on the core practices that can deliver the best possible learning outcomes for all their students.

From 2018, the student with disability loading provided by the Australian Government is based on the national data collection. Funding is being provided via a loading at different rates based on the levels of adjustment (supplementary, substantial or extensive) students receive. This enables funding to be better targeted to student need as identified through the collection. Schools will continue to manage their total resources to meet the learning needs of their students based on the educational expertise of their staff.

It is important to note that states and territories are responsible for decisions about the level of funding for government schools; and non-government education systems and approved authorities are responsible for the distribution of the needs-based Commonwealth funding that they receive. While Government funding is calculated with reference to students enrolled at a school, the Government expects schools and school systems to pool their funding from all sources—Australian Government, state/territory and private—and prioritise their spending to meet the educational needs of all of their students. This is because the Government recognises that schools and school systems are best placed to understand the individual needs of students and budget accordingly.

The students with disability loading may be used for broader supports at the classroom, school and sector levels, as well as for supports for individual students. Education authorities may, for example, opt to use funding for professional learning and to build capacity and inclusive cultures in schools.

#### **4. Who is overseeing the national data collection?**

The national data collection is overseen by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, in partnership with all state and territory governments and non-government education authorities.

The Education Council Joint Working Group to Provide Advice on Reform for Students with Disability (the Joint Working Group) has provided advice and oversight on this work since 2011. The Joint Working Group includes representation from all state and territory government education authorities, the Independent Schools Council of Australia, the National Catholic Education Commission and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. From 2018, the Group is chaired by the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

#### **5. What resources are available to support schools to complete the national data collection?**

There are two important pieces of legislation that outline the essential requirements of schools, school leaders and teachers when planning and implementing learning programs for students with disability. They are the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](http://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00339) (www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00339) and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005](http://www.docs.education.gov.au/node/16354) (www.docs.education.gov.au/node/16354). Professional learning is available to assist schools to embed these important principles into everyday teaching practice.

The University of Canberra, in partnership with Australian school systems, has developed the Disability Standards for Education e-learning resources. The e-learning resources are available to schools through a licencing agreement. Under a 'user pays' approach, schools or education authorities, depending on a jurisdiction's arrangements, pay a small yearly fee to access all of the materials. Check with your school principal or education authority about the arrangements that apply to your school. Once your school has a licence, the materials can be accessed through the [log-in page of the University of Canberra Disability Standards for Education e-learning resources](http://www.dse.theeducationinstitute.edu.au/login/index.php) (www.dse.theeducationinstitute.edu.au/login/index.php).

There is a [national professional learning website](http://www.schoolsdisabilitydatapl.edu.au/) (www.schoolsdisabilitydatapl.edu.au/) to support principals, teachers and other school staff to understand and implement the national data collection. This website provides a 'quick guide' and includes case studies, frequently asked questions and other resources.

## 6. When does the national data collection take place each year?

The national data collection occurs in August each year, at the same time as the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC). The NSSC is also known as Schools Census and, in the Schools Service Point, Census on the Internet.

Key dates around the timing of the annual national data collection are communicated to education authorities. The [Resources page of the national professional learning website](http://www.schooldisabilitydatapl.edu.au/resources) (www.schooldisabilitydatapl.edu.au/resources) has a link to information setting out key activities and timeframes for 2018.

## 7. What information is collected through the national data collection?

Every year your school collects and provides the following information for each student receiving an adjustment due to disability:

- the student's year of schooling
- the student's level of adjustment
- the student's broad category of disability.

If a student has multiple disabilities, the school team, using their professional judgement, selects the broad category of disability that has the **greatest impact** on his/her access to education and for which adjustments are being provided.

Data is combined within each school and any identifying characteristics (such as student names) are not transmitted as part of the data-submission process. The information collected by schools is provided to governments to inform funding, policy and program improvement for students with disability.

## 8. Does the national data collection replace existing state or territory reporting requirements?

No, schools still need to collect data on students with disability under any existing state or territory or sectoral requirements that are linked to funding and/or reporting. Schools will be advised of any changes to this arrangement by the relevant authority in their state/territory.

## **9. How do schools know if a student should be included in the national data collection?**

In determining which students are included in the national data collection, schools draw on a range of evidence including, but not limited to: observation, teacher judgements, medical reports, individual learning plans, assessments, discussions with parents and carers and, if appropriate, the student, as part of the process for determining and providing reasonable adjustments. The national professional learning website has further guidance on the [evidentiary requirements to help school teams to complete the national data collection](#)

([www.schooldisabilitydatapl.edu.au/data-collection-steps/do-you-have-evidence](http://www.schooldisabilitydatapl.edu.au/data-collection-steps/do-you-have-evidence)).

## **10. Who in each school is responsible for the national data collection?**

The national data collection is a collaborative process involving teachers, principals and other school staff. The [national professional learning website](#) ([www.schooldisabilitydatapl.edu.au/](http://www.schooldisabilitydatapl.edu.au/)) provides clear guidance on good practice relating to the establishment of a school leadership team for the national data collection.

School principals are responsible for verifying or confirming that there is documented evidence at the school to support the inclusion of a student in the national data collection.

## **11. How will a student's personal details be protected?**

No identifying information or personal details are collected as part of the national data collection. Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all students and their families is essential and is an explicit focus of the national data collection.

All information and data relating to students with disability and the adjustments provided for them should be stored appropriately and securely. Check the requirements for storage in your jurisdiction.

Further information about privacy is available via the [Public Information Notice](#) for the national data collection ([www.docs.education.gov.au/node/33415](http://www.docs.education.gov.au/node/33415)).



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The document must be attributed as the *Frequently Asked Questions for Schools* on Nationally Consistent Collection of Data – Students with Disability.