

### Education and recovery

Engaging in education and study can have many benefits for people with mental illness. For future career direction, it can lead to a wider variety of choices and result in better pay, more hours, more benefits and better job security.

Study of course is also an achievement in its own right. Access to education and lifelong learning are aspirations that many people with serious mental illness hold. Despite the challenges that this brings, successful completion of TAFE qualifications and university degrees are possible given the right support and opportunity.

### Is study the right decision for the person you care for?

Motivation and commitment to study are key factors in determining success. This may be motivation to work in a particular area or for the study itself. This can be difficult for a person with a mental illness who may question their capacity to learn and succeed in what can be a demanding environment. Identifying effective support both within the study environment and family/friendship network to help the person maintain hope and meet these challenges is crucial.

People with mental illness may require flexibility both in how they approach their study and how it is offered by the institution. Consideration of part time vs full-time, and distance vs face-to-face delivery are important considerations.

Within TAFE and university there are many support systems that can help students succeed – accessing these can make all the difference if a student is overwhelmed or struggling to meet their commitments.

### Study options

- TAFE - Certificate and Diploma qualifications
- University - Open Foundation Course, Newstep or Yapug if you did not complete your Higher School Certificate

- Private Education Providers – usually short training courses
- Correspondence courses – Open Universities, OTEN and others
- Short courses through Disability Employment Services (eg forklift licence, Assistant in Nursing, Asset Maintenance, Responsible Service of Alcohol)

### Support available for study – University and TAFE

**Disability Support Units** – linking in with these units gives students access to support that can assist to overcome barriers such as anxiety, limited stress tolerance or poor concentration. The supports or ‘accommodations’ may include alternative exam conditions such as a smaller room, extended assignment deadlines, and access to assistive technologies including recording of lectures. TAFE offers individual tutoring to anyone linked with their Disability Support Unit.

To access this support, the student needs to register with the **Disability Support Unit**, providing some medical evidence of disability from their GP or health worker. This usually means that further disclosure with teachers and tutors is not required and the student is able to maintain their privacy if they choose to do so.

Contact details for the disability support units can be obtained by visiting the education institution website or contacting the general inquiry phone number.

Local Disability Support Units:

**Hunter TAFE – Mental Health Support Unit Phone: 02 4923 7240**

**University of Newcastle Disability Support Service Phone: 02 4921 5766**



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Generic student support services at university and TAFE which may also be useful include student mentoring programs, Learning and Development Units which offer workshops in academic/study skills or computer skills, Counselling Services and on-campus accommodation.

### What can carers, families and friends do?

Carers play a critical role in supporting the person they care for to commence and successfully complete TAFE and university. Most importantly family and friends help people to maintain hope and belief in their capacity to achieve their goals and can provide encouragement and comfort through this journey.

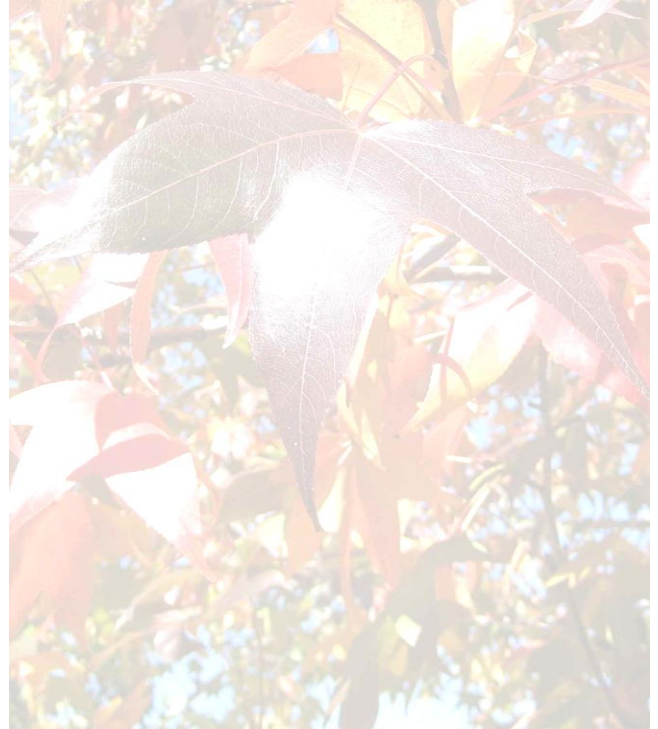
Because they are so closely involved, carers understand the strengths as well as the barriers, challenges and needs of the person commencing study. They have valuable information and insights to offer the mental health care team.

Carers and family need to be involved and informed about what is being planned and implemented to assist a person with study so they can effectively support these plans.

### What can mental health care providers do?

Mental health workers understand how important it is to a person's recovery to pursue their goals and achieve success.

It is useful to discuss these goals with the health practitioner, so that it is considered as part of a person's mental health plan. There may be times when a person's progress is impacted on by the symptoms of their mental illness. The practitioner may be able to offer some support or assistance with this or even practical help such as arranging a medical certificate.



**For further information discuss with your local mental health practitioner**

**For regional areas contact your**

**Community Mental Health  
Rehabilitation Coordinator**

**Manning Ph 02 6552 5792**

**Tamworth Ph 02 6767 7910**

**Armidale Ph 02 6767 9856**

**Moree Ph 02 6757 0239**