



UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN CAPE (UWC)

POLICY ON STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

DATE OF LAST APPROVAL: C2007/4



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

A place of quality, a place to grow, from hope to action through knowledge

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
POLICY ON STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The policy on disability sets out the responsibility and commitment of the University of the Western Cape towards providing equal opportunities and equitable access for students with disabilities. In line with Chapter Two of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, The White Paper on Higher Education and all relevant legislation, the University of the Western Cape will continue to work towards a more inclusive learning and work environment for students with disabilities.

DEFINITIONS

The University notes the following definitions:

Adopted by the World Health Organization

- Impairment refers to any loss or abnormality of psychological; physiological or anatomical structure and function;
- Disability refers to any restriction or lack of (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity within the range considered normal for a human being;
- Handicap refers to a disadvantage for a given individual resulting from an impairment or a disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normally possible for that individual.

In the Employment Equity Act:

- "people with disabilities" means people who have a long term or recurring physical or mental impairment which substantially limits their prospects of entry into, or advancement in employment
- (1)

REASONABLE ACCOMODATION

Reasonable accommodation means changing some feature of the learning and/ or work situation so that people from a designated group can have access to, participate in and advance in their academic endeavours and vocational training. The aim of reasonable accommodation will be to ensure that no student with disabilities would be unjustifiably excluded from any University activity or facility because s/he is disabled.

POLICY STATEMENT

The University of the Western Cape will:

1. Endeavour to establish and uphold the rights of students with disabilities in accordance with the Constitution of South Africa including, but not limited, to the right freedom of choice with regards to disclosure of the disability;
2. Encourage the development and implementation of procedures to address the requirements of students with disabilities, and to promote the functioning of all divisions within the university to operate within the disability framework;
3. Endeavour to include clear recommendations about the reasonable accommodation of students with disabilities in all university policy and operational documents;
4. Provide reasonable accommodations in the form of teaching strategies, alternative assessments and support assistance for students with disabilities in all respects of the academic and extra-curricular programmes;
5. Endeavour to remove any physical access barriers to ensure our campus is as accessible as possible for students, staff and visitors with disabilities;
6. Seek to foster positive attitudes amongst the campus community towards people with disabilities;
7. Actively campaign for and educate about the Disability policy and related procedures, as well as the provision of support for students with disabilities in all areas of academic learning, research, employment opportunities, and extra- curricular and support activities.

Reference List

1. Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996
2. The White Paper on Higher Education, Notice 1196 of 1997, S1.18

Office for students with Disabilities
Addendum on Operational Considerations for Students with Disabilities

REASONABLE ACCOMODATION

Reasonable accommodation means changing some feature of the learning and/ or work situation so that people from a designated group can have access to, participate in and advance in their academic endeavours and vocational training. The aim of reasonable accommodation will be to ensure that no student with disabilities would be unjustifiably excluded from any University activity or facility because s/he is disabled.

The University of the Western Cape will develop procedures for the provision of reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities with regard to the following aspects:

1. STUDENT RIGHTS

Students with disabilities have the following rights:

- Equal access to courses, programmes, academic adjustments (reasonable accommodation) and/ or auxiliary aid;
- Reasonable and appropriate accommodation, services, activities and facilities;
- Confidentiality of all information pertaining to the disability with a choice of whom to disclose their disability to, except as required by law;
- Information reasonably available in accessible formats.

2. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Where a student has been accepted into a particular field of study, the university will endeavour to adapt the existing physical environment as well as teaching and research facilities, taking into account its financial implications and practicality.
- The university undertakes to assess, in consultation with barrier-free experts and the Office for Students with Disabilities, the possibility of, and financial implications to, adapting existing buildings for disabled persons. It will also, in conjunction with the planning unit, develop a scheduled plan for implementing these changes.
- All new teaching and research facilities will provide for the needs of disabled persons and consult with experts throughout the planning process.
- Additional wings in existing residences on campus will be adapted, while new residences will be planned with the necessary facilities in place.
- The Physical Planning Unit of the University will in consultation with the Office for Students with Disabilities and a barrier-free expert, prioritise the

- implementation of making other university facilities such as the administration and the library accessible.
- The Physical Planning Unit of the University will also, in consultation with the Office for Students with Disabilities and a barrier-free expert, prioritise the implementation of making sport and recreational facilities such as the student centre, the sports stadium and the pool accessible.
- The Physical Planning Unit and the Department responsible for the physical environment of the university will ensure that these are kept as free from hazards as possible and that the Office for Disabled Students are informed if there are any building projects planned that could present a danger to blind and visually impaired students.

3. ADMISSIONS

- The university respects and acknowledges the constitutional rights of disabled persons. Application for admission to the university shall therefore not be refused solely on the grounds of disability, provided that the applicant fulfils the necessary entrance requirements, that the applicant is able to function independently, and that acceptance of said applicant can be accommodated within the budgetary constraints of the university.
- The applicant is responsible for indicating on the application form that he/she has a disability and what their special requirements are.
- Applications indicating a disability will be forwarded to the Programme Coordinator who will if possible contact each applicant personally to assess the level of disability and the particular needs of each applicant and the possible financial implications. Where applicable, a full medical report will be required before a final decision is made.
- The Office for Students with Disabilities will provide a profile of the applicant to the relevant departmental chairperson and course coordinator prior to registration. If possible, a meeting between the applicant, the relevant persons in the department and the programme coordinator will be arranged where the particular choice of study and its suitability will be discussed.
- In cases where students require a full time assistant for personal needs, this person should be employed personally by the student. Accommodation for this person is discussed in 8.

4. ACADEMIC SUPPORT

All departments that have registered disabled students will provide full academic support to these students so that their access to study material is equal to that of mainstream students. This will entail:

- Ensuring that lecture rooms are accessible to students in wheelchairs and that a writing surface is provided for them.
- Providing blind and visually impaired students with course outlines, notes, transparencies and any other study material in braille and on computer stiddy at the **same time** that it is given to mainstream students.
- Providing the Programme Officer of the OSD with a list of prescribed books and with copies of all notes and course readers as soon as a student's acceptance has been finalised so that the OSD can enlist the aid of outside agencies to timeously provide the student with material in Braille, on computer stiddy or on audio-tape.
- A full-time staff member to be dedicated to coordinating departmental input for disabled students. in the case of specific projects involving more than one student, outside funding could be sought to provide a mentor.
- Appointing additional support staff, e.g. tutors, laboratory Assistants and student assistants, to provide essential assistance to disabled students.
- Following the "Guidelines for Accessible Study Material" as outlined in the publication "The Disabled Student at U.W.C."

5. EXAMINATIONS

Refer to Examination Procedure for Students with Disabilities (Appendix A)

6. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The university will embark upon a concerted fundraising drive in order to provide:

- funds to the university to provide resources and staff for the Office for Students with Disabilities.
- Financial Aid (NSFAS) and the Office for Students with Disabilities will assist eligible students to apply for full cost bursaries from the Department. of Labour.
- funding for the gradual adaptation of the physical environment of the university.
- A specific budget amount will be allocated to the Office for Disabled Students to provide for the daily academic and practical needs of **all** disabled students, e.g. photocopying, Braille printing, typing services, student assistants, audio-tapes and computers.
- The Office for Disabled Students will assist in seeking financial assistance by liaising with agencies, state and otherwise, that provide assistance either financially or in the form of equipment and resources.

7. WORK STUDY EMPLOYMENT AND/OR PROJECTS

All on-campus student employment must adhere to the work study agreement. With regard to students with disabilities:

- Advertisements have to specify whether the post advertised requires skills that would render students with particular disabilities to be ineligible for applying for the post.
- Students with disabilities shall not be unfairly disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of their disability.
- Students with non-visible disabilities reserve the right to decide whether they will disclose their disability to their potential work-study employer.
- Students who receive full cost bursaries do not qualify for Work study employment unless they have specific skills that are to be used in the work study position e.g. sign language etc. The employing department has to provide a special motivation for employing a student who already has a full cost bursary.

8. ACCOMMODATION

- All disabled students will be granted residence accommodation, if they so wish, irrespective of their geographical area of residence. They will receive priority for residences that have been adapted for use by disabled persons.
- Requests for single room accommodation, either in a mainstream residence or in the special residence, will be considered where appropriate motivation is forthcoming.
- The programme coordinator is to liaise closely with the Residence Administration and the individual residence coordinators and staff to provide the necessary information and support and to encourage a spirit of acceptance and co-operation.
- Prospective students who are dependent on a full-time assistant (who is not a student) will receive special assessment by the Programme Officer, a medical expert and a representative from the Residence administration before any decision regarding admission is taken. This would depend on the availability of rooms and such an assistant will be required to pay the same residence fees as other students.

9. COOPERATION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS & ORGANISATIONS

The University will strive to liaise with extra-University role players, e.g.

- The National Department of Education.
- The National Student Financial Aid Scheme of South Africa.
- National and regional organizations for people with Disabilities.

10. OFFICE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (OSwD)

The goal of the OSwD is to promote Equity, Equality and Inclusivity by enabling students to achieve their maximum potential by empowering them to function as independently as possible. The objective of the O.S.D. is to increase access to, and ensure participation in, the academic programme for persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the OSwD in order to access the aid and support of the staff at the OSwD who will assist students with disabilities in advocating for and attaining reasonable accommodation in all areas of the academic programme at the University. The particular needs of students with disabilities will be addressed by the Programme Coordinator on an individual basis and by direct liaison with the relevant persons or departments concerned.

11 AFFILIATION TO THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Disabled students to be encouraged to form a society to address their own particular needs, with a constitution that conforms to the established format and requirements.

They shall be given full affiliation to the Student Representative Council on an equal basis to any other student society.

12 MEMBERSHIP OF CLUBS AND SOCIETIES ON CAMPUS.

Applications for membership to clubs and societies shall not be refused solely on the grounds of a student being disabled. Social interaction and support should be actively encouraged.

13. SPORT AND RECREATION

The relevant departments involved in sport and recreational facilities will be given encouragement to initiate and develop sporting codes for the physically disabled student here on campus and also network with established sporting organisations in the community and at other tertiary institutions to promote integration and participation.

14. COMPLAINT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The University has comprehensive complaint, grievance and disciplinary procedures for staff and students. The scope of these procedures includes complaints arising from discrimination as a result of disabilities.

Reference List

1. Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996.
2. The White Paper on Higher Education, Notice 1196 of 1997, SI.18.