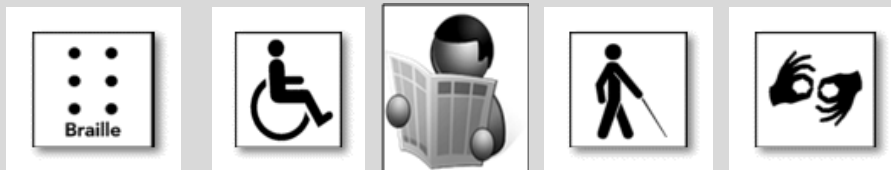
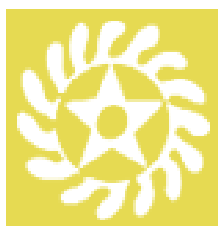


# UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN DISABILITY POLICY



**DISABILITY SERVICE**  
**Promoting Access and Developing Solutions**



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**  
**DISABILITY POLICY**

**PREAMBLE**

The University of Cape Town (hereafter “the University”) is committed to redressing past and present inequalities resulting from the legacy of our country’s past. In this regard it endorses fully the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities signed into South African law in June 2007. The University consequently recognises:

- that disabled people have been and continue to be subject to multiple forms of marginalization and exclusion;
- that as a result, the majority of persons with disabilities live in conditions of relative social, cultural and economic disadvantage; and
- the need to lend its full support to measures and programmes which provide for the social, educational, economic and cultural integration of persons with disabilities in our society.

**1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is:

- to state the role of the University in regard to disability;
- to clarify the rights of staff, students and visitors;
- to define concepts in relation to disability;
- to clarify the role of the Disability Service

**2. DEFINITIONS**

**2.1 Disability**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) recognises that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers. It recognises persons with disabilities as those persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

**2.2 Discrimination on the basis of disability**

Discrimination on the basis of disability refers to imposing any distinction, exclusion or restriction of persons on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, on all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field. It encompasses all forms of unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, including denial of reasonable accommodation.

**2.3 Reasonable Accommodation**

Reasonable Accommodation refers to necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms

#### **2.4 Universal Design**

Universal Design means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

#### **2.5 Staff Member**

Staff means an employee of the University and includes an applicant for employment at the University.

#### **2.6 Student**

Student means a registered student of the University and includes an applicant for study at the university.

#### **2.7 Visitor**

A visitor is any member of the public present on University property who is not a member of staff or a student, including persons with contractual relationships with the University and persons otherwise legitimately commercially active or employed within the University environment.

### **3. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION**

**3.1** The University recognises the right of staff and students with disabilities to request accommodations that will facilitate their full and equal participation in the services and facilities of the University.

**3.2** The Disability Service will play a facilitative role in the fulfilment of this responsibility.

**3.3** The University will seek medical confirmation of an impairment where a request for the provision of accommodation warrants this. In such cases supporting documentation will be provided to the Disability Service from a registered medical doctor in the case of physical and sensory impairments, and from a clinical or educational psychologist or psychiatrist in the case of cognitive and psychological impairments. In the case of scarce facilities and resources the Disability Service will have the right to request a second opinion regarding the need for an accommodation at its own cost.

Where accommodation provision is made in respect of temporary disabilities this will be done for the calendar year and will be reviewed annually by the head of the Disability Service. He/she will require up-to-date documentation in order to assess the continued necessity of this provision.

### **4. DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY, RECORD KEEPING AND DATA MANAGEMENT**

The University is committed to creating an institutional climate in which disclosure of disability would be both advantageous and safe. Disclosure of disability is necessary where a student/staff member/visitor requests support and/or accommodation provision. Disclosure will be made to the Disability Service. Information about an individual's impairment will be made available to persons tasked with facilitating or providing specific accommodations to the extent that this information is necessary to facilitate the accommodation.

Disclosed information will be treated as private and confidential. It will be used to monitor progress in employment and student equity, to comply with the reporting requirements of the Employment Equity Act, for strategic planning and to maximise levels of service provision.

## **5. Access to the built environment**

**5.1** The University faces particular challenges providing access to the built environment for people with disabilities. These include the location of the main campus on the slopes of Devil's Peak, the spread of its facilities over four campuses, and the heritage status of many older buildings and built structures.

**5.2** The University will identify, and where possible, address barriers to facilities and services at the University. In order to do this, the University will budget each year for retrofitting of access solutions. Improved access to students and staff with disabilities will be formally included as a performance objective of the relevant members of the University of Cape Town.

**5.3** The University endorses the principle of Universal Design as a feature of all new infrastructure development, and will formulate and implement standards and guidelines which ensure that Universal Design Principles are applied in the design and construction and/or maintenance of all buildings, thoroughfares, facilities, security systems, information technology and all other infrastructures for which the University is responsible.

## **6. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**6.1** The University recognises the importance of the application of principles of Universal Design in improving aspects of well-being, safety and security for all present on university campuses.

**6.2** The University will therefore develop and implement a comprehensive campus-wide strategy for addressing deficiencies in effective lighting in and outside buildings; the presence of balustrades, handrails, stair markers and effective signage (including tactile signage); the presence of reachable controls/buttons and auto cues. The University will put in place emergency evacuation procedures for persons with disabilities. It will ensure that all relevant personnel receive the necessary training including building curators, building health and safety officers, campus protection services, wardens and other relevant personnel in all sectors of the university.

## **7. ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

The University acknowledges that inequalities of access to education throughout the education system for persons with disabilities mean that learners with disabilities have in the past been – and continue to be – especially vulnerable to exclusion from higher education. Consequently the University commits itself to developing admission, recruitment and retention practices and policies for persons with disabilities which will maximise participation in higher education at UCT.

## **8. TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The University will provide for the learning needs of students with disabilities, and recognises that this may in some cases entail modifying, substituting or supplementing curricula and course work requirements, including alternative but equivalent assessment modes, ensuring at all times that academic standards are not compromised and that students will graduate with the requisite skills and competencies.

Any modification of course requirements or assessment methods will be discussed and agreed on by the dean of the Faculty (or nominee), the Head of the Disability Service and the student. If, after due consideration, the view is that in a certain discipline or course teaching methods and specific teaching environments pose insurmountable obstacles relating to a student's level of impairment, and a genuine attempt has been made by all role players to seek solutions, the head of the Disability Service in consultation with the dean of the faculty may advise the student to register for a course with fewer access impediments. Should a student still feel that his/her rights have been violated, he/she would follow the procedure as set out in Section 12 of this policy.

The University undertakes to encourage and support wherever possible:

- Universal Design Principles in new course offerings; and
- Educating academic staff with regard to the range of reasonable accommodations, and alternative assessment modes.

## **9. EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AND EMPLOYEE SUPPORT**

The University must include disability in its employment equity plan and targets. It must put in place measures to facilitate the recruitment, retention and career advancement of people with disabilities, including such reasonable accommodations as will optimize their ability to meet the requirements of their job.

## **10. COMMUNICATION**

The University will undertake to ensure access to information and communication services to staff, students and visitors with disabilities, including where appropriate, tactile signage; high contrast signage on noticeboards; circulars, library databases, learning materials, and electronic media. It will strive to maximize, through appropriate dissemination of information, opportunities for staff and students with disabilities to participate in all University wide consultation and debate and in grievance mechanisms and decision making processes.

## **11. RESEARCH, TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The University recognizes the value of research and teaching in disability-related fields and acknowledges the growing stature of Disability Studies as a relevant academic discipline along with other social justice disciplines.

The University acknowledges the need to include where appropriate perspectives on disability in relevant undergraduate and graduate programs e.g. Social Development Studies, aspects of Engineering and the Built Environment, Urban Planning, Transport Studies, Film and Media, Sociology, Psychology and the MBChB program to name a few.

## **12. EXTENSION SERVICES/SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS**

The University recognizes its obligation to the broader community including disabled people not currently working or studying at the institution. It recognizes too that it is in a position to play a leadership role to support and encourage initiatives that will contribute to the improvement of the quality of their lives in all spheres. Through, inter alia the Disability Service and disability advocates in the broader University community, it will work to establish linkages,

- with professionals in other higher education institutions who work in the area of disability and with organisations for and of disabled people;
- with schools catering for disabled learners;
- with schools involved in inclusive education and mainstreaming of disabled learners, and with Government with specific reference to education.

### **13. PROCEDURE FOR CHANNELLING AND MONITORING COMPLAINTS OF DISCRIMINATION ON GROUNDS OF DISABILITY**

Complaints should be lodged with the Discrimination and Harassment Office. The Office will institute the standard procedure for investigating complaints of equivalent forms of discrimination as for instance on the grounds of race, gender or sexual orientation. The Relevant Office (RO) will seek advice from the Disability Service (DS), except in cases where

- (a) the DS itself is the subject of the grievance, in which case the RO will consult an independent recognized authority on disability discrimination; or
- (b) the DS has agreed to represent the individual bringing the complaint.

### **14. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND APPRAISAL**

Where it is necessary, a new staff member who has a disability will have a conversation with his or her line manager, the manager of the Disability Service or his/her nominee, and an HR representative to: determine the nature of the accommodations he/she will need; identify areas of the job which may pose challenges; and agree on a way to address these. This may entail the purchase of technology or equipment; adjustments to the physical workspace, or minor adjustments to job descriptions.

### **15. ADVOCACY, AWARENESS AND EDUCATION**

The University undertakes:

To support, and make resources available for, initiatives to raise awareness throughout it's community of staff and students in order to foster respect for the rights and dignity of people with disabilities;

To promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness; and

To promote recognition of the skills and abilities of people with disabilities.