Office for Inclusivity and Change

UCT Disability Service

Council Report 2022

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Preamble

The UCT Disability Policy (2021) intends to create and maintain parity, in consultation with students and staff with disabilities to ensure access to education and university resources. Recognizing that an accessible and inclusive environment is one that is created with staff and students. The University is committed to fairness, equity and justice and recognizes the importance of disability inclusion through the provision of universal principles of accessibility.

The Disability Policy resonates with the University of Cape Town's (UCT) tenets of Excellence, Transformation and Sustainability as articulated in the UCT Vision 2030 strategic framework. The University thus strives to create an enabling learning and occupational environment in consultation with students and staff with disabilities; where their learning experience and career aspirations are supported and enabled by the University and where their talents are identified, nurtured, and developed. The University further subscribes to an environment where individuals with disabilities have equal and equitable access to opportunities and where diversity is valued.

Policy objective

The Disability Policy document response to the key areas of focus for promoting disability inclusion in the University. It commits the University to progressively realizing resources for disability inclusion in all spheres of university life. It identifies access as including physical, epistemological and social aspects to remove inequities experienced by persons with disabilities. The University commits itself to the removal of cultural, physical, social and other barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from entering, being employed, and developing their careers in the University.

Legal framework

The Disability Policy document acknowledges national legislation that recognizes and protects the rights of persons with disabilities. These legislative requirements in Section 9 of *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* Act No. 108, of 1996 and Section 51 of the Employment Equity Act, No. 55, 1998 and Section 9 of the Promotion of Equality and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000 No. 4, 2000. These legislative frameworks ensure that no one may unfairly discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability.

The Disability Policy acknowledges and follows the Department of Employment and Labour Code of Good Practice guidelines; the Higher Education Act of 1997 and is also aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the optional protocols.

LANGUAGE

Everyday language usage occasionally includes a number of derogatory and discriminatory terms for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the use of terminology that emphasizes the inabilities of people may lead to categorization, stigmatization, discrimination and exclusion. The University discourages the use of such terminology. The University strives to continuously advocate for the use of appropriate language with regards to disability within the UCT community. Resources related to appropriate language will be provided by the Disability Service (DS).

Reflections for 2022

Positive Implementation

When providing Disability Accessibility and Inclusivity training to the UCT community, the DS has a section dedicated to Mindful Communication and Inclusive Language use. This section encourages participants to steer away from derogatory disability terminology and teaches the correct terminology as approved by persons with disabilities. A resource package which includes information on Mindful Communication and Inclusive Language is issued to participants upon completion of training.

Challenges

The attendance of UCT academic staff for Disability Accessibility and Inclusivity training is almost non-existent, apart from the New Academic's Practitioners' Programme (NAPP), which is concerning because in the DS monitoring and evaluation of disability inclusivity at UCT, students have identified that many lecturers are not sensitive towards disability inclusion.

Recommendation

Common barriers to inclusion of students and staff are still preventing the full inclusion of students and staff with disabilities. UCT needs to create a humanizing culture that is free of

barriers by making the attendance of the Disability Accessibility and Inclusivity training that is offered by the DS mandatory to academic staff and line managers.

COMMUNICATION

The University will ensure access to information and communication services to staff, students, and visitors with disabilities – including appropriate, tactile signage, high contrast signage on notice boards, 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.

Reflections for 2022
Positive Implementation
Advocacy

The DS is in constant communication with staff and students. In addition to formal University Handbooks, staff and students are made aware of the services offered by DS through workshops, presentations, posters, infographics, pamphlets and social media. The DS is involved with orientation where DS staff present to first year students, outlining the services offered and the application process. The DS staff members are available to answer queries throughout the year via emails and appointment system.

Positive Implementation
Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

The DS provides information on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to promote the provision of accessible academic material by lecturers. DS works closely with the Educational Technology Advisors at the Centre for Information Technology (CILT) to advocate for the provision of accessible documentation across the University. In instances where students still have challenges with accessibility, the DS has a specialist text conversion section to ensure students and staff who are blind or partially sighted receive academic material in an accessible format. This includes text conversion of hard copy, as well as inaccessible electronic documentation, into word format which is accessible for reading through screen reading software such as Job Access with Speech (JAWS) and Apple Mac Voice over. This

text-to-audio software is used by blind staff and students to listen to their academic material being read aloud.

The DS makes available the JAWS and Zoomtext software to visually impaired persons. Magnifying devices are available at the DS, as well as at the 24-hour study space in the main library in Hlanganani Junction, Hiddingh Library and the Kramer Law Library. Information and training on Free Accessibility Features found in Office 365, for example Office Dictate, is also provided. In addition, DS has a state-of-the-art Braille Embosser and braille translating facilities for students and staff who are braille fluent.

The DS has made available a site license for all UCT staff and students for the Read and Write Literacy Software. This software assists persons with dyslexia and contains useful study tools for all students.

The DS has also loaned out an Apple Mac laptop to students with speech impairments for test and exam oral presentations. The Voice Over feature in the Apple Mac laptops can provide a speech alternative to the human voice, which assists students when they experience speech challenges (e.g., stuttering) while giving an oral presentation. The student can then alternate between their own voice and that of the computer.

Challenges

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

The JAWS and Zoomtext software licenses must be connected on campus to the UCT server to work. This presents as a challenge to students who must work from home or off-campus.

The Apple Mac laptop (with Voice Over facility) does not need a license, but the device is very costly. Students who receive National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding can apply for the assistive software, but students who are not on NSFAS, or are postgraduate or international students would not have this funding option.

Recommendations

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

A specific donor fund could be set up to create an ongoing funding resource for assistive devices when they are needed by students with disabilities. DS is not able to predict which students will register at UCT and what their assistive device needs will be until just before the

start of term. Once lectures start, students need to have all their devices in place so as not to fall behind. The fund could also be used to cover the cost of repairs to personal assistive devices, which many students are not able to cover due to funding constraints. Using free open source software, like NVDA, instead of the JAWS software is another solution.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

The University recognizes that disability inclusion is a human right and that an inclusive practice is premised on a collaborative and consultative partnership with staff and students with disabilities to identify the reasonable accommodations that will facilitate their full and equal participation in the services and facilities of the University within its available resources. The Disability Policy encourages a partnership approach with shared responsibility between the DS and Faculties and Departments. Reasonable accommodation for students in relation to their academic programme will be provided by the DS where possible. In the case of staff with disabilities, reasonable accommodation, such as assistive devices, may be provided for by the University via application to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) of Transformation. Personal assistive devices for staff, such as hearing aids, should be acquired through the staff member's medical aid or at their own cost. The DS will play a consultative and facilitative role in the fulfilment of reasonable accommodation for staff.

Positive Implementation

Advocacy

Reasonable accommodations are provided across the portfolios of DS Specialists for various disabilities. Support services include:

- Support and guidance to students with disabilities
- Motivations and appeals for students with disabilities to access reasonable accommodations in relation to their disabilities
- Assistance with National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) applications and Annexure A form
- External funding applications
- Application for UCT residence and access to reasonable accommodations within residence
- Support to UCT ParaSport to promote the physical and mental health of students with disabilities.
- Disability advice given to UCT governance committees through the DS Specialists that sit on the various committees.

- Hosting disability relation events to create awareness on disability inclusion
- Hosting disability inclusivity training and workshops
- Monitoring and evaluation of the DS services received by students with disabilities

Challenges

Advocacy

Some departments do not easily accept the fact that students with disabilities (especially those with invisible disabilities) require reasonable accommodations and therefore deny the requests made by the DS through letters of motivations and appeals. Previously, there was no formal process to implement reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, but now with the approval of the Disability Policy (2021), formal processes to implement reasonable accommodations are highlighted within the Policy's guideline document. However, the processes have not yet been tested.

Funders have a specific criterion when attracting students with disabilities. It is therefore challenging to source funding in particular areas of studies. This creates a barrier since DS are not able to source funding for students who are in need. This has been flagged with UCT Financial Aid Department and external donors when funding opportunities for students with disabilities was discussed.

Recommendation

Advocacy

When reasonable accommodations requests are declined by UCT stakeholders (lecturers, faculties and departments), it is important that feedback is provided to the DS and student; and the student is allowed to follow a formal appeals process should the student not be satisfied with the outcome of the request.

Positive Implementation

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

There are ongoing interactions amongst the DS, faculties and departments (lecturers and administrative staff) around specific course accommodations for students with sensory and

chronic disabilities requiring complex, multi-layered support (e.g., blind and visually impaired students), students with mobility challenges and students with speech challenges.

Notification of support offered by DS (human support and assistive technology) and accommodation requests to the department (e.g., provision of course material in advance or in larger font) is via the Letter of Introduction, composed in collaboration with the student. This interaction continued through the levels of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), Physically Distanced Learning (PDL), blended teaching and learning (on-campus and off-campus) and continues upon our return to on-campus teaching and learning.

There are intensive interactions amongst the DS portfolios, the administrative staff and lecturing staff around the implementation of test and exam writing accommodations at the DS testing venues.

There are ongoing interactions between SWS, Student Records Department, and the DS Specialists' portfolios in order to ensure that the students referred to write tests and exams at the DS venues are assisted and accommodated with the support required to encourage students' academic success.

Challenges

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

There are possible delays in the referral and outcome process for new students requesting test or exam accommodation at the DS. Students can struggle at busy times of the year to get appointments at SWS or with the DS Psychologist due to high volumes of students needing referral appointments. This results in an inevitable delay in the processing of accommodation requests by the Senate Examination Committee (SEC), who confirms reasonable accommodation(s) for students with disabilities. This delay can cause students' considerable stress. Students may also experience challenges and require disability accommodation(s) after the deadline for applications has passed.

The Disability Policy (2021) mandates the DS to provide reasonable accommodations for staff and students with disabilities, however, donor funding is not guaranteed and will not be able to sustain the permanency of core and critical DS human support services – Psychometrist, South African Sign Language interpreters, Student Assistant and Carers – provided by the DS to staff and students with disabilities.

Physical spacing challenges for semester test placements, when multiple tests occur at the same time, mostly in the late afternoon. (Maximum number of seats at DS Main is 25 students).

Recommendation

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

A possible solution could be to request the use of the Department of Student Affairs' (DSA) 6th Floor Meeting Room, temporarily being used by SWS while Ivan Toms is being renovated. Discussions would need to be opened with the Director of DSA around this matter.

Positive Implementations

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

DS provides psychosocial and psychometric support for students with Mental Health concerns and Specific Learning Disorders (SpLD) through reasonable accommodations. The DS works in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to ensure reasonable accommodations are granted and implemented. There are many different reasonable accommodations available to students which is then tailored to their specific needs in relation to their disability.

SEE APPENDIX C: HOW TO APPLY FOR ACADEMIC CONCESSIONS

Challenges

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

The DS ensures that the reasonable accommodation(s) granted to a student are implemented timeously and informs students of the support services available. However, some students with invisible disabilities often inform the DS that they are not aware of the support services available to them due to the nature of their disabilities, e.g., students with Mental Health Concerns, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Phobias of Spaces and Psychosocial Disorders do not attend orientation where in-depth information is shared. By the time these students find out, it may be too late or past the University's extra-time submission deadline dates.

To substantiate their applications for extra-time and Mental Health concessions, students are required to provide supporting documentation from a professional health practitioner as per the University's rule. The supporting documentation cannot be older than three years. Many students do not have supporting documentation and private healthcare is too expensive; these students are often referred to SWS but are sometimes reluctant to schedule an appointment with SWS due to the long waiting periods for appointments.

Recommendations

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

The DS provides prospective students with information regarding reasonable accommodation(s) and the requirements thereof so that when the student enrolls in their first year, they will have the necessary supporting documentation available.

Communication is key, during COVID-19 all information was circulated to staff, students and guests with disabilities via the various online platforms. The recommendation for 2023 is to have a more physical presence on the different campuses by having infographics and posters placed on notice boards at various departments, faculties, cafeterias, etc.

Successes

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

The reasonable accommodations that have been granted to students with disabilities has been implemented effectively at all levels of the University.

Lecturers and departments are becoming more understanding and accommodating with respect to the Mental Health challenges that students experience.

Positive Implementation

Universal Design (Access and the Built Environment)

The DS provides reasonable accommodation through the built environment. The DS ensures that persons with various types of disabilities can access the University and academic activities without or with limited barriers. Where a lecture venue is inaccessible for students with disabilities, the student is reasonably accommodated by changing the venue to an

accessible venue to ensure that the student can participate. The following reasonable accommodation measures are implemented through the DS:

- General and Specialized Mobility Orientation
- Accessible Transport
- Accessible registration venues to during start of the academic year
- Assessment of accessible residences
- Induction loop systems
- Frequency Modulation systems

Challenges

Universal Design (Access and the Built Environment)

In order for the reasonable accommodation to be implemented effectively in the Built Environment, retrofitting and maintenance can only be done during the June and December vacation. This is done in collaboration with P&S and the University's academic calendar.

Successes

Universal Design (Access and the Built Environment)

DS works in collaboration with P&S to address access challenges raised by UCT stakeholders. The effective partnership approach has been positive and productive in creating inclusion for persons with disabilities.

DISCLOSURE OF DISABILITY, RECORD KEEPING AND DATA MANAGEMENT

The University is committed to creating an institutional culture in which disclosure of disability provides persons with disabilities the opportunity to access relevant services provided by the university. Disclosure of disability is necessary where a student/staff member/visitor requests support and/or accommodation provision. Staff are encouraged to disclose their disabilities to UCT Human Resources at the time of appointment in accordance with the provisions of national legislation and best practice. Staff already employed by UCT, who acquire a disability are encouraged to declare their disability by updating their staff profile details via UCT Human Resources Employment Self-Service SAP system and/or the EEA1 declaration form to ensure that relevant services can be provided to them. Students are required to disclose to the Admissions Department and to the DS in order to access services provided by the DS.

Positive Implementation

Advocacy

Students and staff who approach the DS seeking assistance/enquiring about reasonable accommodations are encouraged to complete a DS Registration Form. This form makes provision for the disabilities and/or difficulties the student or staff member is experiencing and the type of accommodation(s) they are seeking. The DS Registration Form contains a segment regarding confidentiality and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). Information about an individual's impairment will be made available to persons tasked with facilitating or providing specific reasonable accommodations to the extent that this information is necessary to facilitate the reasonable accommodation. These registration forms and any other documentary evidence of a person's disability or medical condition are stored according to the University's Records Management Policy and POPIA.

The University encourages staff to disclose their disabilities. The DS, in collaboration with the Employment Equity (EE) Manager and the OIC Director, carried out a Disability Disclosure Drive in support of the University's initiative and to work towards the adequate representation of a 2% target of staff with disabilities. This drive led to the creation of an online tool where staff could disclose their disability in confidence. Furthermore, staff were required to upload supporting documentation to verify their disability that led to the implementation of reasonable accommodations for those who require the support services. This is an on-going drive and is open to staff to upload supporting documentation at any time should there be a change in their condition. The DS also works in collaboration with the Human Resource (HR) department to ensure that staff with disabilities are included in all aspects of university life, i.e., from the recruitment phase to their exit.

Challenges

Advocacy

There are staff and students who have expressed concerns about disclosing their disability/difficulties due to fears of being discriminated against, and/or being stigmatized. These staff and students then go under the radar and therefore do not receive the necessary support, or some of them will wait until their struggles have gotten so extreme that they no longer can cope.

Recommendations

Advocacy

By creating a humanizing culture, and creating a safe learning environment, UCT can reduce the number of staff and students failing to receive the support they deserve. Ongoing training of staff with respect to understanding Mental Health challenges is vital to reducing stigma and fear of victimization. However, because disability training is not regarded as a priority for staff, the afore-mentioned challenges are ongoing.

Challenges

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

DS receives many referrals from various faculties and departments which do not fall within the scope of the DS. The referrals include students enquiring about extra time for ADHD and for other Mental Health disorders. This will be discussed later as we unpack the section of Mental Health concessions.

Other referrals include students requesting assistance with deferred exams and leave of absence applications; students requesting a secluded venue for exams after the exams have started; and students requesting assessments for Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorder which the DS does not provide.

Recommendations

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

UCT staff will be able to provide students with the proper information if they have undergone mandatory training and thus will eliminate incorrect information being passed on to students. This is to counter the incorrect referrals as it creates confusion and frustration for students with disabilities seeking timeous assistance and approval.

Students seeking assessments for Mental Health disorders can approach SWS. SWS provides psychiatric evaluations through their psychiatrist. Students are able to book a psychiatric evaluation via the SWS website.

SWS are able to assist students with applications for deferring exams. Students, therefore, need to make an appointment with a SWS staff member. The SWS booking system allows for students to select the type of appointment in relation to the assistance they require.

Students wanting to take a Leave of Absence (LoA) will need to approach their faculty. The LoA application procedure is administered by the Faculty Manager's office, and the point of contact for applications is the Faculty Manager. Students will need to complete either an undergraduate application or postgraduate application and upload the required documentation with their application onto PeopleSoft. Information relating to LoA can be found in the UCT General Rules and Policies Handbook (Rules G16.1-8).

Successes

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

Although DS still experiences a small number of students (mostly first year students) who are reluctant to register with the DS due to their fear of being stigmatized, there is an increase in the number of students registering with the DS. This indicates that there is an increasing sense of belief in the services and support offered by the DS.

The DS is regarded by many students as a safe and supportive environment where the DS Specialists take a personal interest in helping students and go to great lengths to meet their needs and secure their well-being.

ACCESS TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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

Positive Implementation

The DS has created partnerships with external and internal stakeholders (architects and project managers) to exchange knowledge and skills pertaining to the implementation of the

SANS 10400 – Part S and other relevant South African building regulations to ensure that the University is compliant with regards to access to the built environment for persons with disabilities.

A Disability Access Audit was conducted on 31 UCT buildings as requested by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The Access Audit was conducted by an external service provider, IDC Consultants, who specialize in the field of Universal Access. Although the mandate for the Access Audit derived from DHET, UCT was liable for the cost of the audit. The outcomes of this audit directed the intention for UCT so that the necessary changes were costed and phased into the University development plan over a ten-year period.

The implementation of the Access Audit is two-fold, involving short- and long-term measures. The short-term strategy recommendations cover retrofitting and refurbishments, including but not limited to toilets, door handrails, grabrails, building ramps, and installation of lifts where possible.

The long-term recommendations entail major structural changes. Currently 2 of the 31 audited buildings - Steve Biko Student Unions' Building and Chris Hani – have undergone major structural alterations and the Access Audit report recommendations have been factored into the drawings and plans. DS and the Properties & Service Department (P&S) will continue to work in partnership to ensure that UCT is compliant with the building regulations, particularly the SANS 10400 – Part S.

The DS continuously engages with the various stakeholders to furnish them with information on accessibility and highlights potential barriers that are communicated through our engagements. The DS reviewed and revised all architectural drawings for all building and development projects. The objective of revising the architectural drawings was to ensure that the drawings were in accordance with the SANS 10400 – Part S, and other relevant South African building regulations that ensure that all the building (new and existing building developments) are accessible for persons with various types of disabilities.

The DS serves on the University Building (UB) and Development Committee (DC), and all User Groups and Project Implementation Committees linked to building projects. Under the leadership of the newly appointed chair of the UB&DC, there has been a shift on the structural operations of the committee. Disability Access matters have since been prioritized during the meetings, and the DS has been incorporated in numerous subcommittees of the UB&DC, such as the Physical Planning and Landscaping Committee (PPLC), the Space Allocation Committee (SAC) and the UCT Design Review Committee (DRC). Through the UB&DC chair,

the DS had an opportunity to engage with a member of UCT Council to unpack the strategy of the OIC, incorporating the 2014 Access Audit as well as inclusion for persons with disabilities at UCT.

Challenges

In the event of access challenges that can be resolved timeously such as lifts that are out of order, DS communicates such challenges to the P&S maintenance department who communicates with external vendors for the repair of lifts. The matter can be resolved the same day but if parts are required, it could take up to 5 working days.

Recommendation

In order to mitigate further potential non-compliance as per the building regulations on facilities and buildings for persons with disabilities, the DS will collaborate with an external Universal Access Specialist to provide training to all P&S Project Managers.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Positive Implementation

The DS has engaged with the Health and Safety Department as well as the Student Housing and Residence Life Department to strategically discuss the installation of Evacuation Chairs at the various UCT residences. During the engagement, a few residences were identified which required the installation of Evacuation Chairs. The DS, together with the Health and Safety Department, conducted on-site assessments to determine the strategic location of the Evacuation Chairs and locations were identified. Installation of the Evacuation Chairs will commence during the 2022 December vacation period.

Challenges

The Healthy and Safety of persons with disabilities is not just the responsibility of DS, but of the Institution. Although DS is responsible for the installation of the Evacuation Chairs,

faculties and departments need to ensure that Health and Safety training is incorporated in their Health and Safety plan.

Recommendation

All Health and Safety representatives should ensure they attend Refresher training hosted by the faculty/department to ensure that they are on par with Health and Safety legislation when evacuating persons with disabilities.

Accessible transport service

The UCT DS recognizes that being mobile is one of the keys to equal citizenship in a society which has an expectation that persons can freely move around. Transport opportunities enable people to access and avail themselves of goods, services, employment and other activities. The DS equally recognizes that the current lack of adequate accessible mainstream public transport significantly impacts on the ability of staff and students with disabilities to work and study at UCT, and to take part in functions and events related to UCT community life.

Positive Implementation

The DS provides accessible transport services to staff and students with physical disabilities, sensory impairments (visually impaired and blind), as well as staff and students with complex medical conditions and severe Mental Health concerns.

The DS has three (3) vehicles which are operated amongst three (3) Mobility Assistants (Drivers). This service is a scheduled service which commences from 07h00 – 20h00 as per the adoption of the Disability Policy. However, the Mobility Assistants (Drivers) need to be on campus at 05h30 to ensure that users are accommodated timeously.

The steady increase of the accessible transport service during the period of 2018 to date is a result of the increase of the admissions of students with disabilities and the employment of staff with disabilities. Furthermore, the adoption of the second Disability Policy “formally” lifted the restriction of the 10-kilometre radius to undefined.

Challenges

Although the change to the 10-kilometre radius to “undefined” has guaranteed transport services to all staff and students with mobility difficulties, irrespective of their kilometer radius, the DS is receiving an influx of users requesting services beyond the radius of 30 kilometers from the institution. This has a significant impact on the vehicles accumulating a steady increase in mileage, fuel increases and repair and maintenance cost.

Although the vehicles are still operational, they are accompanied by high costs. Annually, the DS spends a substantial amount of their General Operating Budget on the repair and maintenance of the two vehicles. This excludes the annual licensing, checks for roadworthiness of the Crafter and vehicle insurance, notwithstanding the high fuel cost.

08 August 2022, it was noted that the Volkswagen (VW) Caddy required additional maintenance to ensure that the vehicle is kept in a roadworthy condition to transport persons with disabilities. The cost of the repairs has not yet been determined by VW Cape Town. However, the vehicle is depreciating in value and requires maintenance and repairs twice a year.

The mandate of the new Disability Policy requires a financial commitment and expenditure in order for full inclusion to be realized. This Policy acknowledges national legislation that recognizes and protects the rights of persons with disabilities. These legislative requirements in Section 9 of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108, of 1996 and Section 51 of the Employment Equity Act, No. 55, 1998 and Section 9 of the Promotion of Equality and the Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000 No. 4, 2000. These legislative frameworks ensure that no one may unfairly discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability.

With the change in radius and the increase in users over longer distances, the vehicles maintenance cycle is reached much quicker than before. This has a negative impact on valuation. The vehicles depreciate at a rapid pace due to the fast-paced increase of the odometer. There are also parts of the vehicles that are negatively affected at a quicker rate, such as the break-pads and tyres.

Recommendations

The afore-mentioned paragraph highlights the challenges faced by the DS regarding the depreciation and age of the current vehicles. The DS submitted a funding proposal to RAAG

for the replacement of two new vehicles, but the proposal was declined. The DS has also noted the growth in demand from users as well as the removal of the 10km radius limit.

The DS thus requests a budget for the replacement of the existing vehicles as well as the purchasing of an additional vehicle in order to adequately serve the requirements of students and staff with disabilities at UCT.

Disabled parking

Disabled parking is intended for use by staff, students and visitors with permanent and significant mobility impairments and for those coping with serious health conditions which may not be permanent. Staff and students with sports and other temporary injuries and manageable, age-related degenerative conditions do not automatically qualify for disabled parking. Requests for parking from this group will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in the light of the severity of an individual's impairment and regarding competing claims. Although we require documentation from the health care professional, such documentation does not in itself guarantee access to a parking bay. The final decision will rest with the manager of the DS who will have a broader sense of the availability of bays and/or discuss alternative measures if necessary.

Positive Implementation

The DS works in collaboration with the UCT Traffic Department to issue disabled parking bay discs to staff and students with disabilities. The process requires staff and students to submit their supporting documentation to verify their disabilities.

See Table 7 for the number of disabled parking bay discs issued from 2018 – 2022.

Challenges

This year, the DS hosted a Disability Constructive Workshop which provided a platform for students to engage with the DS Specialists on the various challenges they were facing that has direct impact on their teaching and learning journey at UCT. The students indicated various challenges regarding the disabled parking bays such as their dissatisfaction with having to pay for the bays whilst the bays are considered as reasonable accommodations.

Recommendation

The DS, through the OIC Director's portfolio, will initiate a campaign against the inappropriate use of disabled parking bays around campuses.

Furthermore, students with disabilities suggested that parking discs for persons with disabilities should grant them access to all campuses.

Accessible Digital Technology

The University will progressively and within its available resources, provide up-to-date adaptive and assistive technology for students and staff with disabilities where possible.

Positive Implementation

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

During Lockdown, the provision of information on Free Assistive Software was a priority. Training continues to be given to students on the use of the free assistive features found in Office 365 as well as the use of Read Aloud and Ease of Access Centre. DS continues to promote free software offerings promoted by the Information and Communication Technology Services (ICTS) and track the latest assistive technology innovations providing software support to students with disabilities that can be mostly free and portable. Furthermore, assistive software is also provided to staff upon request. With a return to campus, students can now have access to specialized software again, such as Job Access with Speech (JAWS), Zoomtext, and Read and Write on the computers available in the DS Lab.

At the end of 2021, the DS reported on successful collaborative initiatives with ICTS and with the Peoplesoft Development Team. These initiatives were aimed at improving technical access and inclusion for students with disabilities to UCT online platforms, especially for those students using screen reading software. The development requested that DS log a call with ICTS to make Peoplesoft accessible to blind students using Screen Reading Software (JAWS) which made a positive impact on the technical inclusion of visually impaired students and staff. For example, the DS recently received the following confirmation from a colleague at the Peoplesoft Office with reference to the enhancement for the JAWS and Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) / Progress and Planned Activity (PPA) functionality in phase 2 of the MoU/PPA project. One of the visually impaired postgraduate students (*who had an accessibility challenge in 2021 with the PPA form being incompatible with screen reading software*) reported that in 2022, it has been fixed and worked well. The student was now able to fill in the form completely independently.

The DS has a representative on the Web Governance Committee who provided guidance on the importance of online universal design, consideration for diversity of the users, and accessibility of communications as core values in the design of the HR recruitment requirements of a new Web Governance Post. This process was successful as the DS was informed that the proposals have been included as deliverables in the Job Description being sent to the HR department.

Challenges

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

Delays in budgetary and other university processes result in delays in the Meeting of the Web Governance Committee.

Immediate funding availability is a challenge when specific specialised technology is required by students who do not receive funding, e.g., a JAWS Single User license for a blind student. However, DS continues to work to find innovative support for time-sensitive solutions, working as best as possible with what is available. This includes recommending free open source software wherever possible. DS continuously engages with external donors in support of funding for students and works in collaboration with departments to best support students with disabilities. However, funding will always be a challenge as specialised accessible digital technology is costly.

Recommendation

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

The DS suggests the University steadily increases the DS annual budget, taking the annual inflation rates into account as the cost of the specialised equipment is determined by the exchange rate.

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The University strives to create an enabling learning and occupational environment for students and staff with disabilities where the University environment enables the learning experience, academic success, and career aspirations. In consultation with each student and staff member, the University is committed to the provision of innovative support for time-sensitive solutions for students and staff with a wide variety of disabilities. This is done through the available suite of services which includes an accessible transport service and specific mobility orientation for staff and students with disabilities, psychosocial support services for students with invisible and visible disabilities and facilitating extra-time applications and/or other specialized accommodations in terms of exams for students.

Positive Implementation
Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

The DS has had the experience of rapid shifts between contact and digitally mediated teaching and learning during various levels of Lockdown. DS had to consider what would be possible for students with disabilities to not be able to physically access the DS facilities. This experience served to enhance the importance of resource availability for students with disabilities in their home settings, and always emphasized the importance of agency for the student and ready availability of accommodations (e.g., laptops, access to free assistive software) under any circumstance. The necessity for accessible digital access to UCT teaching and learning was starkly revealed.

Now that the University has returned to in-person engagements, the DS focus is on how best to support students with disabilities in a blended study environment, both on campus, and in a residence setting.

Students had reported challenges with connecting to Wi-Fi during loadshedding, thus the DS engaged with the Deputy Registrar which resulted in a collaboration with the UCT Engineering section. The DS now has constant access to Wi-Fi, even during loadshedding.

Positive Implementation
Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

The DS is committed to creating an environment where students can access support services for Mental Health conditions without fear of stigmatization and discrimination. Mental Health

concerns are known as “invisible disabilities” as it is not easily recognizable to the outside world. This means that many students tend to suffer in silence. Removing stigma and stereotypes around Mental Health disabilities is a crucial step towards inclusivity.

The DS works towards building awareness around Mental Health concerns and to encourage students to come forward and seek support. To this end, the DS includes the topic of Mental Health in awareness campaigns, workshops, social media platforms, presentations and infographics. The DS ensures that students are aware of the services available at the DS and how to access them.

The DS Specialists work with academic staff to empower them with the knowledge and understanding of various Mental Health concerns and to enable students to get the support that they need. Creating awareness and openly discussing mental health goes a long way to reducing stigma and encouraging students to access support.

ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS

Attitudinal barriers are often reflected in relation to stigmas arising from prejudicial thinking and unconscious bias, negative attitudes, behaviors and perceptions related to persons with disabilities. A result of attitudinal barriers faced by persons with disabilities is physical and emotional bullying – which impedes access to learning and can lead to a sense of isolation. The University recognizes that in order to remove attitudinal barriers, change at the individual level is necessary. Through advocacy, awareness and education, attitudinal barriers towards disability can be removed. As with society in general, it is important that consistent and strong advocacy must be given to raise awareness and combat negative attitudes and stereotypes which are often caused by lack of knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of persons with disabilities. UCT addresses attitudinal barriers through a range of advocacy training programmes geared towards transforming the culture of the university. These training programmes include unconscious-bias training, employment equity training and disability advocacy sensitization training which are all centered around transformation and inclusion.

UCT in collaboration with the OIC strives to create an enabling learning and occupational environment for its students and staff with disabilities where their learning experience and career aspirations are equal with their abilities and where their talents are nurtured and developed. The DS is geared towards providing innovative support for time-sensitive solutions for students and staff with a wide variety of disabilities.

Positive Implementation

Advocacy

The DS Specialists work towards creating a mind shift within the UCT community through Disability Inclusivity training sessions in order to break down attitudinal barriers to disability inclusion. The DS provides Disability Sensitization training at NAPP and hosts BUZA's (interactive information sessions on disability related topics), notwithstanding the fact that DS also avails DS Specialists for one-on-one engagements with lecturers.

To promote an enabling environment for staff, the DS is constantly engaging with HR and various departments to ensure equity is achieved through practices of equality when addressing disability related challenges. Furthermore, the DS is committed to creating an environment where staff can feel open to disclosing their disabilities without the fear of stigmatization. Through the successful implementation of the Disability Disclosure Drive (for staff), which was led by the DS, staff who participated in the Disability Disclosure Drive now feel more at ease to openly discuss their disability related challenges.

Challenges

Advocacy

Students with disabilities have expressed that they experience attitudinal barriers from lecturers which prevent them from feeling included within the teaching and learning environment. The students expressed that most lecturers are not sensitized towards best practices of teaching and interacting with persons with disabilities and that disability inclusive practices are often an after-thought or not practiced at all.

Recommendation

Advocacy

The students suggested that all lecturers attend Disability Awareness and Inclusivity Training. Currently, the DS does provide this training, however, it is not well attended by lecturers as most attendees are members of the Support Staff. Again, the DS brings to the attention of the Council the importance of making attendance of this training mandatory for all academic staff.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Positive Implementation
Sign Language interpreting

The DS endeavors to ensure access to teaching and learning in the classroom environment specifically pertaining to the provision of South African Sign Language interpreting services to users of South African Sign Language as the main language of communication in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNRCPD) extract from article 24 on education states below:

"1. *States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:*

3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;

*c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social develo*pment."

South African law also recognizes Sign Language according to the South African School's Act, Act 84 of 1996, schools must have a language policy, and when selecting languages for such a policy, a "recognized Sign Language" should be evaluated as if it has official language status along with the other eleven official languages.

The role of the interpreter is to convey the content of the communication occurring within the setting. It must be noted that interpreters stay true to the message, which means interpreting verbatim what the lecturer delivers and what the student communicates. The role of a Sign Language interpreter needs to be understood in order to understand the challenges faced by interpreters and what coping strategies are implemented as a response to challenges.

The DS has made provision for a South African Sign Language interpreter (SASLi) with the arrival of the first Deaf student that was admitted to UCT in 2012. Since then, the services of the SASLi have been available to all Deaf students who have graduated from UCT. The SASLi has provided Sign Language interpreting services in the various settings of the University, namely lectures, tutorials, graduation and any other university related events. The interpreting service offered by the SASLi during graduation ceremonies is not only limited to the Deaf graduates, but to all Deaf guests in attendance and to those who are watching the ceremony online.

The service of the SASLi is not only limited to students with disabilities but is also made available to the Deaf staff so that staff can have access to information on their daily operational requirements, access to communication in their staff meetings, workshops and Development Dialogues. The SASLi also accompanies Deaf staff and students to important off-campus engagements such as medical appointments and job interviews for students.

Challenges

Sign Language interpreting

The appointment of the DS SASLi is on a contract basis which creates instability in the continuity of the service. UCT cannot give Deaf students equal access to information and communication without the support of a SASLi. SASLi services are a scarce skill, and the University needs to retain the current skill set that has been cultivated over years by providing permanency.

The University through the DS has employed one interpreter in 2022 for all SASLi services. During special events and staff engagements, the University requires the assistance of an additional interpreter to accommodate the schedule of the events. As one interpreter is not sufficient to maintain additional requests. When additional SASLi services are requested for special events, the cost for these services is covered by the faculty or department.

The DS is currently supporting eight Deaf people, seven of the 8 people are staff members, and one is a master's student. The current interpreter and student ratio is 8/1. This excludes the requirement of SASLi interpreters for Graduation and UCT Events.

During DS quarterly Disability Sensitization training offered to staff, lecturers are trained in how to work with a SASLi in a lecture environment. Furthermore, during the DS student engagement at Res Life, for example, students are sensitized to the needs and support of Deaf students in the UCT environment. The gap identified is the attitudinal barriers still presented by some of the UCT community still reluctant to change.

In order to best support Deaf students, the interpreter needs time to prepare and research the topic of engagements so that when the lecture starts, the student receives optimal support. It is important for lecturers to understand that course information and online details need to be shared with the interpreter before the course is presented to the student, allowing for the interpreter to adequately prepare for the class interaction.

Recommendation

Sign Language interpreting

The need for recognition of South African Sign Language was amplified nationally this year, when the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services gazetted a constitutional amendment for public comment, which will make South African Sign Language an official language of South Africa. Furthermore, the Western Cape, home of the University of Cape Town, was the first province to officiate South African Sign Language in its legislature. Therefore, the DS strongly recommends that the University allows for the permanency of the post of the SASLi in order to maintain the services that are currently provided by the SASLi to Deaf staff and students. In addition, the above-mentioned legislative references proves that Sign Language is recognized both nationally and internationally therefore, the University has a responsibility to respect and embrace SASL in the teaching and learning space of the leading university in Africa and to uphold the fundamental basic rights of Deaf persons to gain access to information, communication and education.

This recommendation is made by the DS in line with the Disability Policy which was adopted by UCT in 2021 and resonates with the University's tenets of Excellence, Transformation and Sustainability as articulated in the UCT Vision 2030 strategic framework.

Positive Implementation

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

The DS presents a workshop at NAPP training and has Disability Sensitization programmes available on Success Factors. The DS offers advice on specialised disability accommodations to lecturers working with students with complex disabilities. In addition, the DS Specialist has collaborated with CILT in the training of Educational Technology Advisors in text conversion methods and refers departmental enquiries to the Educational Technology Advisors for advice

on implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and reasonable accommodations in their teaching methods. *http://www.cilt.uct.ac.za/cilt/projects/udl.*

The Disability Accessibility Audit commissioned by DS and completed by Sensory Solutions in 2019 has been provided to the Web Governance Committee and can provide a baseline for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) compliance. The DS collaborated with CILT during lockdown to provide support and student feedback for provision of lecture transcripts with VULA lectures.

The DS has provided positive input on Blackboard Ally, which is currently being motivated for RAAG funding by CILT to be included as part of Amathuba. Amathuba replaces VULA and provides a much better accessible experience for users of screen reading software.

Blackboard Ally is an add-on to Amathuba that would provide ease of conversion of academic material to multiple formats to suit different learning styles and preferences for all students, as well as offering a text conversion option that includes an accessibility checker together with the solution for lecturers. The CILT proposal will go a long way to providing technical options to include more students in a universal design for learning approach, where multiple formats are made available to a wider audience of students, not just students with disabilities.

DS will continue to provide specialised disability support, hopefully enhanced by the parallel mainstreaming of technical support such as conversion of text into multiple formats. Work that may have been directed towards DS will now be made easily available to students and staff, e.g., provision of accessible documentation at source. Blackboard Ally also provides a monitoring and evaluation component, to track how broadly the accessibility options are being used.

Once Amathuba is established, CILT recognises that there will be a need for lecturer training on all options available. Amathuba will provide a solid technical base for broader accessibility options. DS text conversion and human support provision in the form of notetakers, will still be needed by some students with disabilities in the near future.

Challenges

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

At the time of the original compilation of this report, it was not known whether funding of Blackboard Ally would be approved by RAAG. Sadly, the update received on 31 January 2023 was not positive. The Disability Service was informed by CILT that regrettably neither

Blackboard Ally nor video transcripts and captions were funded in their 2023 budget requests This is very disappointing news and a setback for disability inclusion.

Positive Implementation

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

After students have been granted reasonable accommodations based on their disabilities or difficulties, their respective lecturers, course convenors, faculties and departments are made aware of the reasonable accommodations in order for them to make the necessary arrangements. The reasonable accommodations provided to students with disabilities is to ensure the full inclusion and participation of students in their university life.

As cited in the Disability Policy (2021), reasonable accommodations are defined as the provision of “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case...”. It is important to note that the reasonable accommodation(s) granted to a student should not cause an undue burden on the university. This service does not approve or request modifications to essential course requirements or provide accommodations for persons whose impairments do not substantially limit one or more major life functions.

Challenges

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

When the reasonable accommodations are not implemented by the relevant university stakeholders, it creates exclusion and barriers to learning, disempowering and discouraging students with disabilities.

Although DS provides training at NAPP and quarterly, the update of course convenors and lecturers who are currently providing teaching and learning support to students with disabilities are low. Through engagements with students, DS has been informed that some lecturers do not implement disability inclusion in their course curricular.

Attitudinal barriers by the relevant university stakeholders (course convenors, lecturers, etc.) and the lack of knowledge and understanding of students with disabilities and their needs.

There may be instances where the specific course is unable to provide reasonable accommodations as the course requirements do not allow for it. For example, a student having

permission to sit for a deferred class test. If the course does not have deferred tests or make-up tests, then it would not be possible for the student to sit for a deferred class test.

As per the Disability Policy (2021) and Policy Guideline Documentation, faculties and departments have engaged with DS to ascertain whether a student(s) is fit for study or whether a student should continue in a specific course or follow an alternative career path.

Recommendations

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

DS recommends that all UCT staff members attend mandatory training on Disability Awareness and Sensitization to understand the disabilities students suffer from and the significance of affording students with reasonable accommodations to ensure their full academic involvement.

Student(s) who do not receive the reasonable accommodation(s) as recommended by their preferred Health Practitioner can make a complaint to the Director of the OIC. Staff members should be held accountable.

Where specific courses are not able to provide certain reasonable accommodations due to the requirements and practicality of the course, the UCT staff member/faculty/department and the student in collaboration with DS should seek a positive solution to resolve the challenge. All parties involved should be proactive in finding a solution.

Successes

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

When the relevant UCT stakeholders implement the reasonable accommodations in the teaching and learning environment, it positively impacts the student and the University.

There are a number of success stories documented of UCT staff members providing students with disabilities the support they need. Once UCT staff members understand what a particular disability entails, and what the reasonable accommodation(s) is, they are more open in implementing the reasonable accommodations and providing additional support.

EXTRA TIME APPLICATIONS

The DS will address the assessment and case management needs of students who wish to apply for extra time and other concessions (such as the use of a computer and access to a secluded writing space) during tests and examinations. Such applications must be supported by previously documented diagnosis of Specific Learning Disabilities, Physical and Sensory disabilities from an internal or external registered Medical Practitioner. As defined in the UCT Handbook 3: General Rules and Policies, page 15 and 16.

Positive implementation
Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

The continuous growth in the number of students applying for extra time and secluded writing space concessions are being accommodated at the DS.

DS Specialists manage the internal referrals and referrals from SWS and implement the disability accommodations for students referred to write in-person tests and exams at DS venues. This includes assistive software, use of a computer, comfortable seating, podiums, scribes, and secluded writing venue.

DS Specialists have worked constantly through the various stages of Lockdown, supporting departments doing on campus teaching (Engineering, Science, Commerce departments) with test and exam accommodations for students with disabilities.

More UCT departments are now returning to on-campus testing. The DS Student Assistant with the support of postgraduate invigilators offers individual timed test and exam invigilation for multiple students with varying accommodations writing a variety of subjects. Invigilation hours are between 8am and 8pm during exams, and between 8am and 6.30pm during semester for tests (depending on the test times). The DS Specialist provides a Letter of Introduction for students requiring complex accommodations and interacts with individual UCT course convenors and students. DS secured the John Day LT2 lecture venue as the secluded writing space for students with Mental Health concerns (without extra time) referred by the DS Psychologist for exams.

See Table 4 for the number of tests and exams written by students with disabilities at DS venues in 2022 follows.

Positive Implementation

Specific Learning Disorders and Mental Health Concerns

The DS facilitates the process of extra time applications for students with Specific Learning Disorders. Students seeking extra time register with DS, and their applications are submitted to the Deferred Exam Committee (D.E.C) via Student Records. This D.E.C makes the decision whether the student is granted or denied extra time (and will make recommendations for other applicable accommodations). Where extra time is granted, the subcommittee will indicate how much extra time per hour is given (5, 10, or 15 minutes per hour). In cases where a student is denied extra time, the student is allowed to appeal the decision.

There are two submissions per year, one for each semester: 1st semester (April/May) and 2nd semester (September). Dates are subject to change. DS are requested to comply with the dates set out by the University.

See Table 8 for the number of extra time applications submitted from 2018 – 2022.

The process for extra time applications is cited in the UCT Handbook.

- Students need to register with DS as per the UCT annual deadline.
- Students are required to complete the Background History Questionnaire
- Students are requested to submit additional supporting documents (psychological reports, doctor's letter, psychiatrist letter, etc.)
- Students need to schedule an appointment to see the Disability Service Psychologist.

Extra time is only granted on grounds of a Specific Learning Disability or a Physical Disability. Students who are in possession of psycho-educational reports need to submit their report to the DS Psychologist who then screens the report to determine whether it meets UCT's requirements. UCT has rigid requirements regarding assessment reports.

The DS provides psychometric services to students in support of their extra time application. This service is provided to students who do not have the financial means for a private

assessment and comes at no cost to the student. The decision to have a student tested internally is at the discretion of the DS Manager and DS Psychologist. Psychometric testing is done to highlight and confirm any specific learning disabilities.

In cases where it is a physical or medical condition, students register with the DS and are then referred to SWS where they are examined by the appropriate staff member. After examining the student, SWS submits an extra time application (including other reasonable accommodations where applicable) directly to Student Records.

The extra time application process involves many stakeholders; internal and external. At UCT, the DS engages with Student Records, Exams Office, SWS, DS Psychometrists, DS Psychologist and faculty Psychologist, lecturers, faculties, and departments. Externally, DS also engages with the private practitioner who attended to the student.

See Table 9 for numbers on internal psychometric testing for extra time from 2018 – 2022.

Although there are systems in place for students with specific learning disabilities, extra time is not granted on psychological grounds/Mental Health grounds, nor is it granted for ADD/ADHD.

Challenges

Specific Learning Disorder and Mental Health Concerns

As the country moved out of Lockdown and moved to lower levels of restrictions, this had a direct effect on the deadline date for extra time application submissions in the 2nd semester. Student Records brought the dates forward by almost a month, which left little time to assess students internally, write up psychometric reports, schedule appointments with students, screen external psycho-educational reports or receive psycho-educational reports from external practitioners.

Students continue to approach the DS well past the application submission deadline and become unhappy when informed that the DS cannot accommodate their request. There have been a few students who have stated that they are dissatisfied with the DS and mentioned that they would not recommend fellow students to approach the DS.

Students are under the impression that the DS provides extra time when this is not the case. This misinformation is mainly the result of other lecturers/faculties/departments communicating this to students as they themselves do not know the processes, as they may have not undergone Disability Awareness and Sensitization Training. UCT staff need to be encouraged to take part in the training offered by the DS. Furthermore, academic staff can collaborate with DS to best support students with disabilities.

There is an internal assessment waiting list based on the availability of the DS Psychometrist and therefore students are not guaranteed to be assessed in time for the extra time application submission deadline. The student is therefore unable to receive extra time and will have to wait for the following semester for an extra time application to be submitted.

Suggestions

Specific Learning Disorder and Mental Health Concerns

The dates for extra time application submission deadlines need to be clearly set out in the UCT Student Handbook (3) and strictly adhered to avoid such problems in the future.

Successes

Specific Learning Disorder and Mental Health Concerns

Where students are more successful as a result of the extra time granted, it restores the student's faith in the system as well as the lecturer's understanding of how assessment accommodations can be helpful and lead to better academic results that benefit all.

APPLICATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONCESSIONS

In line with the UCT Mental Health Policy (2018) DS also works in collaboration with external and internal Mental Health Practitioners (MHP) to support students with Mental Health concerns (MHC). Students with MHC have the right to apply for various concessions, however, such applications must be supported by documented diagnoses and will be assessed by the DS. If the documented diagnoses are not clearly defined in the external and internal reports the MHP will be required to complete a Confidential Verification Form provided by the DS as per Appendix A of the Disability Policy.

Positive Implementation

Specific Learning Disorder and Mental Health Concerns

Students approach the DS either with a documented, longstanding Mental Health concern/difficulty or they suspect they may be suffering from one.

Students seeking Mental Health concessions follow the process below:

- Students need to register with the DS
- Students are required to complete the Background History Questionnaire
- Students are requested to submit additional supporting documents (psychological reports, doctor's letter, psychiatrist letter, etc.)
- Students need to schedule an appointment to see the DS Psychologist.

Students who do not have documents but suspect they may be suffering from a Mental Health disorder(s) are referred to SWS or referred externally. Where a student is referred to SWS, the student will be examined by a SWS staff member and then referred back to DS with recommendations and a letter/certificate containing more information on the student's difficulty.

Students who have been attended to by external practitioners are asked to provide supporting documentation from their private practitioner. The DS Specialist will contact the student's private practitioner and request that they complete a Certified Verification Form (CVF), which makes provisions for Mental Health diagnoses and recommendations based on the diagnoses (See Appendix B for CVF). These recommendations are taken into consideration when drawing up a Verification Accommodation Letter (VAL). This letter serves as a formal document verifying the student's Mental Health difficulty which allows them to receive reasonable academic concessions (where possible). This letter is not retroactive and is only valid from the date of issue.

The process of proving reasonable accommodations for Mental Health involves both internal and external stakeholders. This includes lecturers, course convenors, faculties, departments, Exams Office, DS Specialists, SWS and the student's private practitioner(s).

See Table 10 for the number of the Verification Accommodation Letters issued to students from 2018 – 2022.

Challenges

Specific Learning Disorder and Mental Health Concerns

Attitudinal barriers by UCT lecturers and course convenors, which involves reluctance on their behalf to provide/grant the reasonable accommodations to the student.

The VAL process and document is not widely known to UCT staff and can result in confusion in how to implement the reasonable accommodations.

Mental Health concessions at UCT do not include extra time. In contrast, extra time is granted to students on psychological grounds/Mental Health difficulties at a secondary school level. This causes confusion, dissatisfaction, and anger in students as they are not granted extra time although there was an expectation on their behalf that they would automatically receive this at a university level.

There are increasing numbers of students who are approaching the DS highlighting their struggles with Mental Health. This poses a challenge with respect to the efficiency with which the DS Specialist can attend to students.

The DS Psychologist's diary gets fully booked well in advance, causing students to wait for long periods of time to secure a booking.

Students apply for Mental Health accommodations when they are in distress and have not handed in assignments by the due date. By the time the process for the VAL is completed, they have missed many deadlines and the VAL cannot be used retroactively.

Suggestions

Specific Learning Disorder and Mental Health Concerns

UCT staff should attend mandatory Disability Policy training and Disability Awareness and Sensitization training. DS can explore the possibility of providing tailored training for specific Mental Health disorders and how to effectively manage it in the class environment upon request from UCT departments.

The VAL is included in the DS training for UCT Academic and PASS staff.

Being unable to receive extra time on psychological grounds presents as a gap in the Disability Policy (2021) and Student Mental Health Policy (2018) which should be examined further. The Student Mental Health Policy (2018) is approaching its review period, and this will present as an opportunity to explore the possibility and feasibility of granting extra time on psychological grounds.

The DS needs more human and financial resources to provide inclusionary support and services to UCT staff and students, and to ensure the efficiency of this support and services.

UCT should aim for the prevention of Mental Health challenges and difficulties (early intervention) before students approach DS for reasonable accommodations in a crisis.

Successes

Specific Learning Disorder and Mental Health Concerns

The receipt of a VAL can alleviate much of the anxiety that students with Mental Health challenges face during term time, and tests and exams. It is not always possible to determine how a student's mental illness will impact them as they progress through their courses and having a VAL means that they can request accommodations and concessions as the need arises.

The high number of bookings reflects students' awareness of the support that can be provided by DS to those with Mental Health challenges. It also reflects a positive outcome of the awareness and advocacy campaigns designed to reduce stigma and to encourage students to seek help for their difficulties.

Positive implementation

Universal Design for Learning - Teaching and Learning

The DS has accommodated a growing number of students with Mental Health challenges in the DS on-campus testing spaces.

RESEARCH

The University recognizes the value of research led teaching in disability related fields. The University acknowledges the need to include, where appropriate, aspects of disability in all undergraduate and postgraduate programs, research groups and grant applications.

Positive Implementation

Barrier-Free Access

The DS identified a knowledge gap where the focus was primarily on the implementation of the SANS 10400 – Part S regulation when guiding the University on facilities for students, staff and visitors with disabilities. Over time, the DS recognised the need for relevant staff members within the DS to undergo Universal Access and Building Regulation Training.

Universal Design consolidates a range of previous approaches to this concept, including ‘environmental access’, ‘special needs facilities’, ‘barrier-free design’ and many other initiatives that were generated with the intention of creating Universal Access. These include initiatives not only in the field of physical access but extend to information and communication technology as well as orientation and way-finding systems and most importantly, pro-active management and operational systems. It is essential to understand that Universal Design requires a framework of infrastructural and operational upgrading, especially where cost constraints restrict the development of a complete Universal Design framework, it is often possible to optimize the level of Universal Accessibility through creative operational and management systems.

At the conclusion of the training programme the staff members would be able to utilise Universal Design as a vehicle to create and enhance the functionality of environments, services, and products for the widest range of users, recognizing the diversity of the human condition.

Challenges

Barrier-Free Access

One of the greatest barriers to creating an accessible environment in the University is the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 which prevents certain areas on campus to be made accessible due to the heritage status of various buildings and areas. For example, placing things such as handrails on staircases creates access for students that are visually impaired, blind, and those with mobility impairments, however handrails cannot be placed in areas such as the Sarah Baartman Stairs because it is deemed as a heritage site.

Recommendation

Barrier-Free Access

Further research on the barriers created by the National Heritage Resources Act for persons with disabilities should be conducted and the research should indicate how these barriers can be mitigated. The researchers should include but not limited to Architects (various disciplines), Universal Design and Access Practitioners, Persons with Disabilities, Disability Advocates.

EXTENTION OF SERVICES/SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS

The University recognizes its obligation to the broader community including persons with disabilities not currently working or studying at the institution. It recognizes too that it is able 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 DS and disability advocates in the broader University community, will endeavor to work to establish linkages:

1. with professionals in other higher education institutions who work in the area of disability and with organizations for and of persons with disabilities;
2. with schools catering for disabled learners;
3. with schools involved in inclusive education and mainstreaming of disabled learners;
4. with the Government with specific reference to education.

Positive Implementation

Advocacy

The DS has played a leadership role to support and encourage initiatives that contribute to the improvement of the quality of the lives of persons with disabilities in the broader UCT community such as:

- engaging with secondary special school students to attract students with disabilities
- participating in information sharing events for Deaf school pupils
- providing disability and inclusivity training for companies who employ persons with disabilities
- participating in disability awareness campaigns hosted by government departments
- providing disability inclusivity guidance to institutions of higher educations who plan to establish disability units within their institutions, as well as to government departments who reach out to us

Challenges

Advocacy

Sharing information with students in special schools in hope to recruit them into UCT is a challenging task as the education provided in special schools does not meet the requirements that will gain them entry into the university. Thus, this exercise often feels like an unfruitful one, but we remain positive as even assisting one student is a positive outcome for that student and for the university.

Recommendation

Advocacy

The DS made a recommendation to the institution to establish an inclusive recruitment process for persons with disabilities through the Admissions Department. This recommendation received a positive response resulting in an Admissions Subcommittee which includes DS Staff for recommendations on best practices in the recruitment processes of students with disabilities.

EMPLOYEE PROVISIONS

Employment Equity and Employee Support

The University is committed to enhancing the employment of persons with disabilities across all sectors and levels within the University. The aim is to achieve a diverse workforce that is

representative of the South African population. Persons with disabilities are part of the designated group in the Employment Equity Act and accordingly all Employment Equity Plans will include strategies for the elimination of barriers to such persons as well as goals for the attraction, recruitment, retention and advancement of persons with disabilities. The UCT Recruitment Policy and the Employment Equity Plan govern the application, selection and equity targets for the university.

Positive Implementation

Employment Equity and Employee Support

The DS has engaged fully with the UCT Disability Policy, and with all stakeholders, to ensure that staff with disabilities are included and engaged with relating to reasonable accommodations. It was identified, in line with the employment equity policy, that disability needed to be defined and clarified to staff. Through policy engagement staff matters were included in the Disability Policy, which makes recommendation as to how staff are included at UCT.

Under Employee Provisions, reasonable accommodations and access for staff were included. Everything we do around disability access now includes staff. Employment equity and support, speaks about how to we attract staff with disabilities, and how they are welcome to apply through recruitment processes which are identified. At the Selection of the candidate a confirmation needs to be sent to the candidate to enquire about their disability, and to explain how they will be accommodated. The DS worked extensively with the Human Resources Department (HR), Employment Equity (EE) and the previous Acting DVC in the application of the policy. Ways were found to create bridges between HR, EE and DS. The DS then took a stance to become more practical to get statistics. Through this engagement, and through promotion of the policy, the OIC and DS did an online survey, asking staff to declare their disability through the EEA1 form. This data was then sent to the EE Manager and shared with the DS Manager. Staff with disabilities were asked if they needed resources. With this survey staff were asked to upload their disability documentation for verification. Through this process of verification, staff disability could be confirmed. In this way we could identify those staff with a verified disability and to enquire if they were receiving reasonable accommodations or if this needed to be put in place. Prior to this some staff had received reasonable accommodations, for example, assistive software, accessible transport, assistive hardware e.g. the Merlin Enlarger. For staff with newly identified disabilities, the DS was able to share what was currently available for staff. This included information on accessible transport, assistive

devices for staff who are Deaf, specific orientation to their workspaces, and finding out from the staff if they have communicated with their Line Managers.

Challenges

Employment Equity and Employee Support

During this engagement it was discovered that not a lot of staff were communicating with their Line Manager. Staff felt they would be victimised if they disclosed to their Line Managers. Arising out of this verification process, the DS Manager had online meetings with staff members who requested to meet them individually. Staff indicated that they had gone through various procedures, for example, with HR and their Line Mangers to indicate their debilitating conditions. When this wasn't received well either with sensitivity or compassion, they felt more withdrawn. For example, a staff member who was diagnosed during COVID could not perform their roles optimally as their condition was so debilitating. When they addressed it with their Line Manager, they nearly lost their job and had to go through many legal processes. Their salary was reduced, this had a ripple effect on their livelihood and almost cost them their property. Through the engagement of the DS Manager with the staff member, the DS Manager facilitated a further engagement and encouraged communication between staff member and Line Manager. Another case study is another colleague coming for training on assistive software, but who doesn't want to fully inform their Line Manager of the current situation. The DS Manager is acting in a supportive and facilitative role and acting as a bridge to allow staff to speak openly about their disability. If this supportive space is not created, we will not get an accurate picture of staff with disabilities at UCT.

Staff did not meet their deadlines to upload their documentation as it was linked to the EE reporting deadline. This impacted on our ability to produce accurate deadlines.

Recommendations

Employment Equity and Employee Support

The DS is working on making the list of staff with disabilities more accurate on the EE report. HR provides the data to DS through the EEA1 form.

The DS Manager had the opportunity to engage with colleagues extensively and will continue to do so in the disability disclosure drive of 2023. We recommend that the verification process be open again to staff to allow them time to upload their documentation from their medical

practitioners so we can have accurate stats. The DS proposes opening the process again on 15 January to the end of the First Quarter, and, because disabilities is ever evolving and can happen to anyone at any given time, this process should be done twice a year where staff can upload their information and we can re-assess with HR and with EE.

Appendix A:

DISABILITY SERVICE STATISTICS: Analysis for 2022

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION:
Human Support Statistics 2018 to 2022

DS Human Support strategies are implemented to ensure inclusion, access, meaningful participation, and success of previously and currently marginalized people with disabilities. This service provides optimal personalized support to a small group of students with complex disabilities which result in challenges with independent handwriting or typing. This support aims to assist these students in reaching their full academic potential. Due to the fast pace at which lectures proceed during the semester, it is essential that this support be given to students who are unable to write or type at speed, so that lecture material is received. In addition, students who are unable to write or type independently are provided with a Scribe so that they can dictate their test and exam answers. The provision of Human Support ensures assistance to students with disabilities, therefore, promoting equality of access to academic material.

Table 1: Human Support offered in the Second Semester - 2022

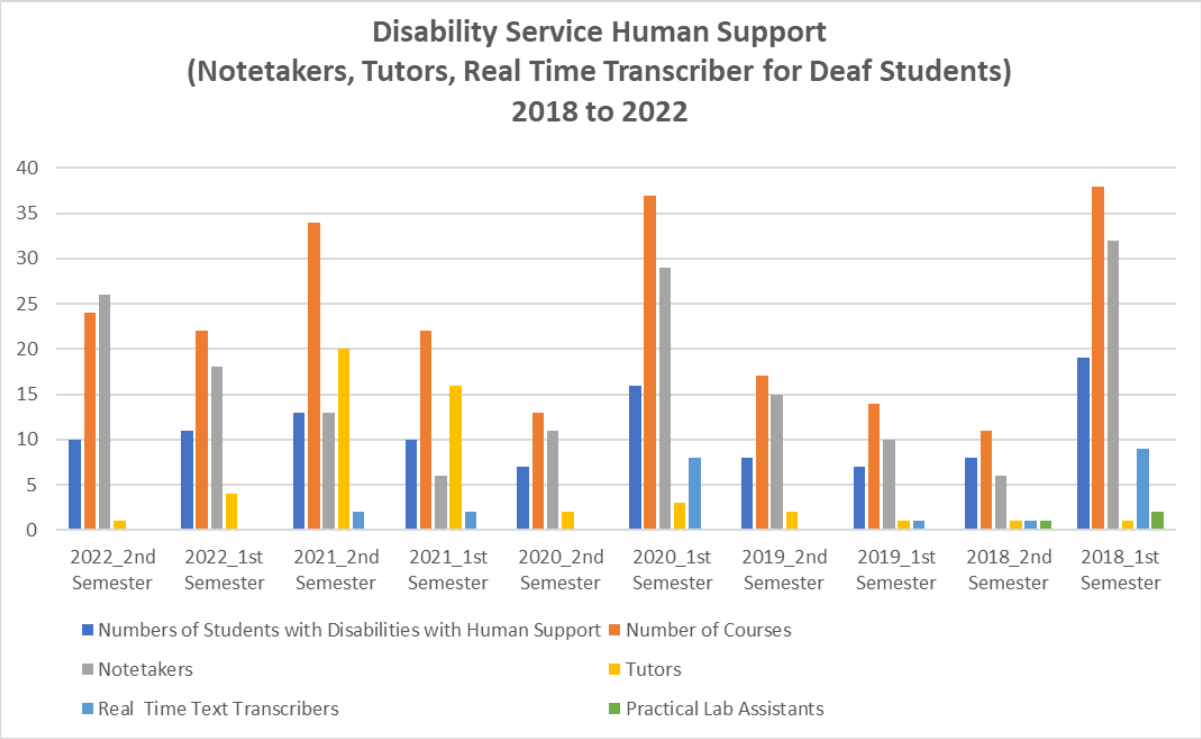
	Numbers of Students with Disabilities with Human Support	Number of Courses	Notetakers	Tutors	Subjects
2022_2nd Semester	10 1 MTIMP (Hand), 2 SLD, 3 WHCACC 2 CHRON, 2 VSIMP,	27	26	1	ANS3401S, ASL3201S, BUS1007S, CML4006S, CSC1015S, ECO1110S, ECO2007S, ECO3021S, HST3037S, HST3045S, HST3046S, MAM1000W, MAM1010S, MAM1043H, PBL5618S, PHI3024S, POL2042S, POL3045S, POL3045S, POL3046S, PSY1005S, PSY3011S, PVL3005W, PVL3006S, REL3042S, SOC3031S, SWK1004S
2022_1st Semester	10 1 MTIMP (Hand), 2 SLD, 3 WHCACC 2 CHRON, 2 VSIMP,	22	18	4	ANS3400F, ASL3200F, CML3001S, CML4006W, CSC1015F, DOH1002F, ECO3009F, ECO3020F, FAM1001F, HST3043F, HST3043F, HST3043F, MAM1019H, MAM1043H, POL3029F, POL3030F, PSY1004F, PSY3009F, PVL2002H, PVL3005W, SLL1062F, STA2020F

The graph below reflects the Human Support statistics over the past five years. In 2021, at the height of Lockdown and with online teaching and learning, the demand for Notetaker support dropped (see grey block) and the demand for Personalized Tutors grew (orange block).

The reduction in demand for Notetakers is linked to the increased provision of text transcripts for many online lectures. With a return to in-person lectures, and the reduction in the provision of text transcripts, the demand for in-class Notetakers is growing again. The provision of Real Time Transcribers and for Practical Lab Assistants depends on the needs of the individual students registered at any given time.

The provision of Human Support is a flexible and adaptable support mechanism, depending on the nature of the disability of the individual student, as well as the nature of the courses that the student is registered for.

Graph 1: DS Human Support offered to students (2018 – 2022)



The graph above is based on the following detailed statistics from Table 2.

Table 2: Human Support offered to students (2018 – 2022)

	Numbers of Students with Disabilities with Human Support during Semester	Number of Courses	Notetakers	Tutors	Real Time Text Transcribers	Practical Lab Assistants
2022_2nd Semester	10	24	26	1	0	0
2022_1st Semester	11	22	18	4	0	0
2021_2nd Semester	13	34	13	20	2	0
2021_1st Semester	10	22	6	16	2	0
2020_2nd Semester	7	13	11	2	0	0
2020_1st Semester	16	37	29	3	8	0
2019_2nd Semester	8	17	15	2	0	0
2019_1st Semester	7	14	10	1	1	0
2018_2nd Semester	8	11	6	1	1	1
2018_1st Semester	19	38	32	1	9	2

TEACHING AND LEARNING:

Test and examination accommodations statistics

A number of students with disabilities are referred to write tests and exams at the DS by the DS Psychologist or by SWS medical practitioners. This service provides optimal personalized support to students with disabilities to receive reasonable accommodation(s) and to assist them in reaching their full potential in a test or exam setting.

The DS has adapted to each changing level of Lockdown and in 2022, the DS provided on-campus test and exam writing support for students with disabilities. Accommodations provided included the provision of a secluded writing space; assistive technology; use of computer; assistive furniture; the provision of Carer and Mobility Assistant support (Drivers)

for students with physical disabilities; and provision of Scribes for students with hand mobility challenges.

Tests written by students with disabilities during the Semester at the DS venue

Graph 2: Number of Semester tests written at the Disability Service venue (2018 – 2022)

The table below displays the detailed statistics reflected in Graph 2. The zero entries in 2020 are due to COVID-19 Lockdown, as no test writing took place in-person on campus, and due to the moving of the DS into newly renovated premises towards the end of 2020.

Table 3: Number of Semester tests written at the Disability Service (2018 – 2022)

Semester Tests at Disability Service 2018 to 2022				Total
2018	1st Semester	All Subjects	336	783
2018	2nd Semester	All Subjects	447	
2019	1st Semester	All Subjects	468	805
2019	2nd Semester	All Subjects	337	
2020	1st Semester _ COVID LOCKDOWN	All subjects Online	0	0
2020	2nd Semester COVID LOCKDOWN	All subjects Online	0	
2021	1st Semester	Science, Commerce, EBE on campus	38	180
2021	2nd Semester	Science, Commerce, EBE on campus	142	
2022	1st Semester Tests on campus	Science, Commerce, MAM , STA, EBE, LAW,ECO on campus	406	1024
2022	Second Semester Tests on campus	Science, Commerce, MAM , STA, EBE, LAW,ECO, SLL Languages, some Humanities courses on campus	618	

Exams written by students with disabilities at the DS venues

Table 4: Number of exams written by students with disabilities at Disability Service venues in 2022.

Date	Exam Total	Numbers of Students
June Exams	406 exams	Written by 135 students with disabilities
November Exams	489 exams	Written by 169 students with disabilities

Graph 3: Number of students writing exams at the Disability Service (2018 – 2022)

The tables below indicate the types of disabilities accommodated for exams at the DS.

Table 5: Disabilities accommodated for June 2022 exams at the Disability Service

JUNE 2022 EXAMS at DS BY DISABILITY	
CHRON (Chronic)	6

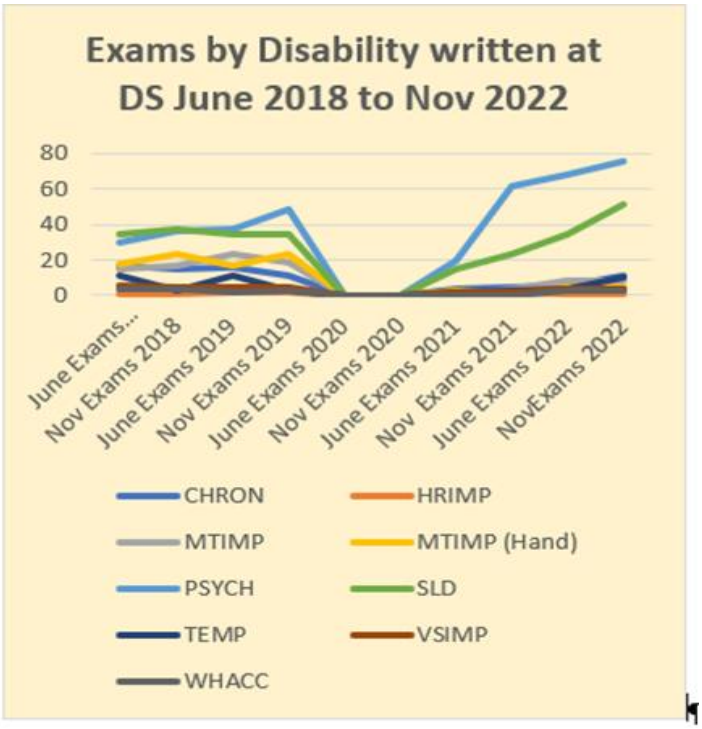
HRIMP (Hearing Impaired)	**1**
MTIMP (Motor Impaired)	**8**
MTIMP (Hand Mobility)	**5**
NRIMP (Neurological)	**1**
PSYCH (Psychological)	**68**
SLD (Specific Learning Disability)	**35**
TEMP (Temporary)	**4**
VSIMP (Visually Impaired)	**4**
WHACC (1 through Examity)	**3**
TOTAL	**135**

Table 6: Disabilities accommodated for November 2022 exams at the Disability Service

NOVEMBER 2022 Exams at DS BY DISABILITY	
CHRON (Chronic)	11
HRIMP (Hearing impaired)	1
MTIMP (Motor Impaired)	8
MTIMP (Hand Mobility)	5
PSYCH (Psychological)	76
SLD (Specific Learning Disability)	51
Temp (Temporary) Crutches	6
Temp (Temporary) Hand Surgery	4
VSIMP (Visually Impaired)	4
WHACC (Wheelchair Users)	3
TOTAL	169

There has been a large growth in the number of students with Mental Health concerns writing exams at the DS Secluded writing space. The light blue line in the graph below indicates psychological disabilities moving upwards.

Graph 4: Exams by Disability type written at the Disability Service (June 2018 – November 2022)

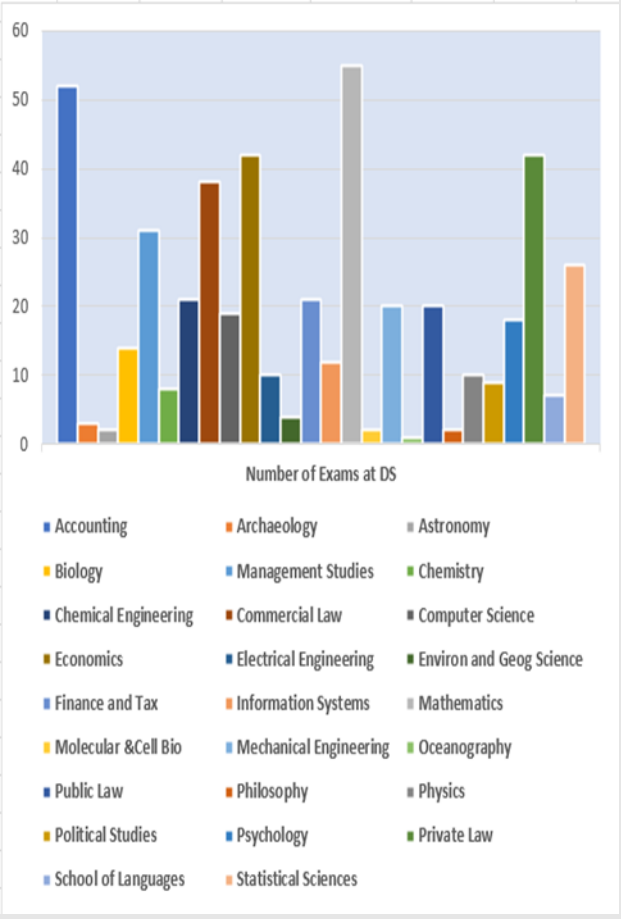


No exams are noted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 Lockdown and the moving of the DS to renovated premises.

Academic exam subjects written by students with disabilities at the DS

The graph below depicts the range of academic exam subjects written by students with disabilities at the DS. Many of the Humanities subjects do Continuous Assessments instead of exams, hence most of the subjects are Commerce, Law or Science subjects. Mathematics reflects the highest number, closely followed by Accounting, Private Law, Economics, Commercial Law and Mechanical Engineering.

Graph 5: Exam subjects written by students with disabilities at the Disability Service



DISABILITY PARKING

See Table 7 for the number of disabled parking bay discs issued from 2018 – 2022.

Table 7: Number of Disabled parking bay discs issued (2018 – 2022)

Year of Issue	Number of Discs Issued
2018	56
2019	87
2020	44

2021	8
2022	62

The number of disabled parking bay discs issued for 2022 can be attributed to staff and students returning to UCT physically full time.

EXTRA TIME APPLICATIONS

See Table 8 for the number of extra time applications submitted from 2018 – 2022.

Table 8: Extra time application submitted (2018 – 2022)

Year of Submission	Number of Applications Submitted
2018	148
2019	176
2020	98
2021	84
2022 (January – 30 November)	113

This includes extra time applications submitted by Student Wellness Services

The increase in the number of extra time applications submitted for 2022 can be attributed to the Country moving to lower levels of restrictions and UCT requiring students to be physically on campus full time.

See Table 9 below for internal psychometric testing for extra time from 2018 – 2022.

Table 9: Internal psychometric testing administered for extra time (2018 – 2022)

Year of Testing Conducted	Number of Testing Conducted
2018	35
2019	58
2020 (January – March)	10
2021	23
2022 (January – 30 November)	9

In 2020, the number of assessments administered were affected by COVID-19 and the Country entering Lockdown. This meant that no assessments could take place after March 2022.

In 2022, the number of assessments administered internally was affected by: COVID-19; the employment of a new DS Psychometrist; and the extra time application submission deadline dates brought forward by Student Records.

APPLICATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONCESSIONS

Table 10 below shows the number of Verification Accommodation Letters issued to students from 2018 – 2022.

Table 10: Verification Accommodation Letters (VAL) issued to students (2018 – 2022)

Year of Issue	Number of VALs Issued
2018	6
2019	23
2020	30
2021	19
*2022 (January – 15 November)	27 +

*The number of VALs issued for 2022 is expected to increase. There are currently VALs in the process of being approved and issued to students and the relevant UCT stakeholders.

Since 2018 (implementation of the VAL), there has been a steady increase in the number of VALs being issued to students. In 2021, there was a decrease in the number of VALs issued which can be attributed to COVID-19 Lockdown and remote learning. Students with Mental Health difficulties were able to access learning and teaching while being in the comfort of their own home/environment. This calm and controlled environment assisted students with managing their Mental Health difficulties. However, since the return to campus physically (full time), the numbers have begun to rise again. Students are required to attend lectures, tutorials, workshops, and write tests and exams in-person.

South African Sign Language Interpreter Statistics

Table 11: South African Sign Language support provided to students (2018 – 2022)

Year of interpreting support	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	**Hours**
Classroom support	200	320	20	350	100	**990**
Research & Preparation	100	200	10	200	30	**540**
Tutorials	0	10	0	50	10	**70**
Psychosocial Support	0	10	12	0	0	**22**
Supervisor Meetings (MA)	0	10	24	0	20	**54**
Extra-Curricular Activities	10	10	0	20	0	**30**

Table 12: South African Sign Language support provided to Staff & University (2018 – 2022)

Year of interpreting support	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	**Hours**
Staff Meetings	200	120	40	40	20	**520**
Staff Training	100	60	30	30	0	**220**
UCT Law Clinic	6	10	0	0	Empl	**30**
Graduation	30	30	0	0	10	**70**
Psychosocial Support	10	10	20	20	10	**70**
UCT Events	10	20	10	10	10	**60**

Appendix B (Note 15.3)

DISABILITY SERVICE

CONFIDENTIAL VERIFICATION FORM FOR MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY

The Disability Service of the University of Cape Town strives to ensure that students with documented mental health disabilities receive appropriate accommodations to enable them to demonstrate mastery of course content, meet course requirements, and complete their studies successfully. The Service does not modify or request modifications that are essential to the program of instruction or provide accommodations for persons whose impairments do not substantially limit one or more major life functions. The Disability Service is committed to providing reasonable accommodations that are appropriate to the student's condition.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the South African government, defines a "reasonable accommodation" as follows: The provision of "necessary and appropriate modification and adjustment, not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with other of all human rights and fundamental freedoms"

It is important to note that a mental disorder in and of itself does not necessarily constitute a disability. It must be long in duration and substantially limiting.

All information provided in this form, including additional supporting documentation provided, as well as formal and informal conversation relating to necessary accommodations for the student will be treated as confidential as per the POPI Act (Protection of Personal Information Act 01 July 2021).

VERIFYING A MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITY

This form must be completed by a medical practitioner or mental health practitioner (psychologist, psychiatrist, clinical social worker or mental health nurse) who is registered with a South African regulatory council (the Health Professions Council of South Africa, the Nursing Council of South Africa or the South African Council for Social Work Professions)

The practitioner must have first-hand knowledge of the student's condition and must be an impartial professional who is not related to the student.

A mental health disability, in line with the University of Cape Town's Mental Health Policy (Approved by Council in August 2018), refers to:

- the presence of a mental health impairment (a clinically recognised condition or illness that affects a person's thought processes, judgement or emotions);
- that is long term (at least 12 months in duration) or recurring;
- and that is substantially limiting i.e. it must impact severely on the teaching and learning process of the student and needs to have a significant and sustained impact on the student's ability to access and perform on an academic course.
- The specific impacts of the diagnosed disorder on the student's learning must be fully explained in the relevant section of the form.
- Should clarification or additional information regarding the student's condition be required by the Disability Service, further contact will be made with the certifying person.
- **Note that only appropriately qualified mental health professionals within the Disability Service or Student Wellness Service and those on the verifying panel will have sight of this document and strict confidentiality will be maintained.**
- Students need to complete Section A of this form.
- Section B is then to be completed by a registered medical or mental health professional (psychologist, psychiatrist, registered psychological counsellor, clinical social worker or mental health nurse) with whom the student has consulted regarding his/her/their condition.

SECTION A – STUDENT INFORMATION

STUDENT INFORMATION			
Student No:		Surname	

First Name/s			Preferred 1st Name	
Faculty			Name of degree	
Level	Undergrad	Postgrad	Age	
1st year of registration at UCT	20			
STUDENT'S CONTACT DETAILS				
Address while at UCT				
Cell Number			Landline	
Email addresses	1.		2.	

SECTION B – TO BE COMPLETED BY CERTIFYING PROFESSIONAL

CERTIFYING PROFESSIONAL	
Name	
Qualification	

HPCSA Registration Number	
Practice Address	
Practice Tel. Number	
Practice Email	
Date of first contact with student	

Date of last contact with student	

DIAGNOSIS/DIAGNOSES **ICD-10 or DSM 5 CODES REQUIRED**
Note that place has been provided for three diagnoses in this document. **The practitioner is welcome to provide additional information.**
DIAGNOSIS 1
ICD 10: **DSM V:**
Basis on which diagnosis was made e.g., symptoms, family history
Approximate date of onset, duration, and history of condition
Severity of condition

Treatment to date – Tick applicable box and provide details		
Medication	Psychotherapy	Hospitalisation

Planned therapeutic interventions - Tick applicable box and provide details		
Medication	Psychotherapy	Follow up appointments with psychiatrist/GP

DIAGNOSIS 2
ICD 10: **DSM V**
Basis on which diagnosis was made e.g. symptoms, family history
Approximate date of onset, duration and history of condition

Severity of condition

Treatment to date - Tick applicable box and provide details		
Medication	Psychotherapy	Hospitalisation

Planned therapeutic interventions - Tick applicable box and provide details		
Medication	Psychotherapy	Follow up appointments with psychiatrist/GP

DIAGNOSIS 3
ICD 10: **DSM V:**
Basis on which diagnosis was made e.g., symptoms, family history
Approximate date of onset, duration, and history of condition

Severity of condition
Treatment to date - Tick applicable box and provide details

Medication	Psychotherapy	Hospitalization

Planned therapeutic interventions		
Medication	Psychotherapy	Follow up appointments with psychiatrist/GP

CURRENT MEDICATION – If applicable		
Medication	Dosage	Potential side effects

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS

Learning difficulties specific to the tertiary education environment that are impaired by the mental health disability (e.g., difficulty with concentration, slow processing speed, planning difficulties etc.)
Implications for taking exams and other classroom activities caused by the disorder or medications. Please specify which.
Day to day functioning e.g., sleep problems, fatigue

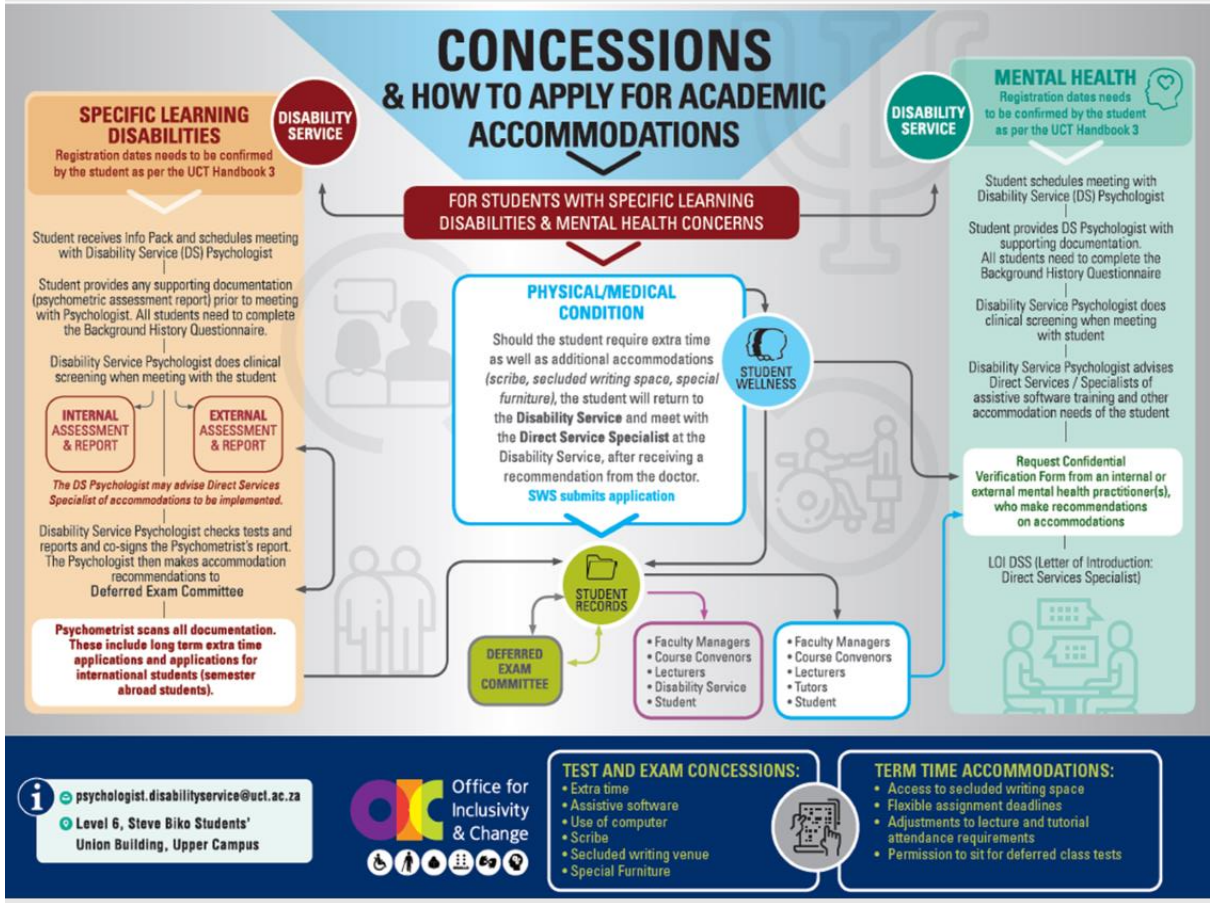
SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS			
Each recommended accommodation should be accompanied by an explanation of its relevance to the disability that is diagnosed. **Final determination of appropriate accommodations will be determined by the Disability Service.**			
Controlled space in which to take exams	Yes	No	Specify reason
Extension of a deadline to complete an assignment	Yes	No	Specify reasons

Adjustments to lecture tutorial attendance requirements or	Yes	No	Specify reasons
May have disability related absences requiring make up tests	Yes	No	Specify reasons
Other.Please specifyand give reason			
Signature of certifying professional who bears no relation, other than professional, to the student.			
Date			
Optional condition:			
I am aware that the student may have access to this document and request that access may only be given in the presence of a person qualified to explain its contents.			
Signature of certifying professional			

Kindly: Email to: psychologist.disabilityservice@uct.ac.za
Or Post to: UCT Disability Service, UCT Private Bag, Rondebosch, 7701.

APPENDIX C:

HOW TO APPLY FOR ACADEMIC CONCESSIONS


CONCESSIONS
& HOW TO APPLY FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS
FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES & MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS
SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES
Registration dates needs to be confirmed by the student as per the UCT Handbook 3
DISABILITY SERVICE
Student receives Info Pack and schedules meeting with Disability Service (DS) Psychologist
Student provides any supporting documentation (psychometric assessment report) prior to meeting with Psychologist. All students need to complete the Background History Questionnaire.
Disability Service Psychologist does clinical screening when meeting with the student
INTERNAL ASSESSMENT & REPORT
EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT & REPORT
The DS Psychologist may advise Direct Services Specialist of accommodations to be implemented.
Disability Service Psychologist checks tests and reports and co-signs the Psychometrist's report. The Psychologist then makes accommodation recommendations to Deferred Exam Committee
Psychometrist scans all documentation. These include long term extra time applications and applications for international students (semester abroad students).
PHYSICAL/MEDICAL CONDITION
Should the student require extra time as well as additional accommodations (scribe, secluded writing space, special furniture), the student will return to the Disability Service and meet with the Direct Service Specialist at the Disability Service, after receiving a recommendation from the doctor.
SWS submits application
STUDENT WELLNESS
STUDENT RECORDS
DEFERRED EXAM COMMITTEE
• Faculty Managers
• Course Convenors
• Lecturers
• Disability Service
• Student
• Faculty Managers
• Course Convenors
• Lecturers
• Tutors
• Student
DISABILITY SERVICE
MENTAL HEALTH
Registration dates needs to be confirmed by the student as per the UCT Handbook 3
Student schedules meeting with Disability Service (DS) Psychologist
Student provides DS Psychologist with supporting documentation. All students need to complete the Background History Questionnaire
Disability Service Psychologist does clinical screening when meeting with student
Disability Service Psychologist advises Direct Services / Specialists of assistive software training and other accommodation needs of the student
Request Confidential Verification Form from an internal or external mental health practitioner(s), who make recommendations on accommodations
LOI DSS (Letter of Introduction: Direct Services Specialist)
psychologist.disabilityservice@uct.ac.za
Level 6, Steve Biko Students' Union Building, Upper Campus
Office for Inclusivity & Change
TEST AND EXAM CONCESSIONS:
• Extra time
• Assistive software
• Use of computer
• Scribe
• Secluded writing venue
• Special Furniture
TERM TIME ACCOMMODATIONS:
• Access to secluded writing space
• Flexible assignment deadlines
• Adjustments to lecture and tutorial attendance requirements
• Permission to sit for deferred class tests