



Office of the Registrar

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MEASURES INCORPORATED TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE INTEGRATED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

1. Introduction

The University of Limpopo (UL) strives and is committed to creating and offering equal opportunities to students living with disabilities. Students are integrated fully into the learning experience and participate in programmes they have enrolled for with no barriers to acquire necessary skills and knowledge. The University ensures that knowledge production, information dissemination, advancements and empowerment of students living with disabilities reflect in academic activities, research and social engagement plans.

There are areas where students with disabilities encounter challenges, but in partnership with relevant stakeholders principles enshrined in legislations governing the rights of persons with disabilities will be upheld. This year a total of 136 students living with disabilities have been enrolled in various faculties.

2. Admission and Registration

The University is committed with current and future financial constraints to granting or accepting more students living with disabilities into different study programmes of their choice. During admission and registration, voluntary disclosure is encouraged and not imposed on students to ensure adequate learning assistance, suitable support services and accommodation are provided. Information disclosed is treated with outmost confidentiality. Students living with disabilities' registration activities are held at the Disability Centre (Reakgona Disability Centre - RDC), students assistants

are assigned at the centre to form part of RDC staff members during this period to offer extra assistance and guidance.

3. Campus Accessibility: Students living with Disabilities

3.1. Building

The University has a combination of old and modern building infrastructure, modification and refurbishments of old building structures to accommodate students living with disabilities are underway. Universal access requirements are mandatory on new building plans across campus. Sufficient signage indicating locations of accessible entrances, parking areas, restrooms, emergency exits, ramps, lifts and other relevant services and facilities related to students with disabilities are available. Occupational Health and Safety Department is responsible to implement and monitor safety measures across campus.

Functional, sustainable and well-furnished Centre: Reakgona Disability Centre (RDC) was established. The centre comprises of the Library, Electronic Room or Computer Laboratories, Examination Halls, Offices, Restrooms etc. Dedicated staff members assigned at RDC offer optimal services and assistance to students. The centre further plays an important role to ensure there is needs adherence for students living with disabilities. Find RDC building pictures below on page 3 and renovated residence for students living with disabilities on page 4:



Reakgona Disability Centre (RDC)



Renovated students living with disabilities residence

3.2. Lecture Halls and Campus Grounds

Most Lecture Halls are physically accessible with limited assistive listening amplification systems. Corrective measures are implemented to rectify these challenges in lecture halls and discussion rooms. Build-in projectors are installed in some halls to accommodate students with visual impairment (partially sighted). Adaptive technologies such as tape-recorders and headphone are provided for students living with disabilities and students are allowed to utilise them in lecture halls.

The University constantly clears grounds to create pathways for students living with disabilities. Designated parking areas are manned by security personnel. Students living with disabilities have equal access and equal opportunity to participate in all student governance structures, recreation and sport facilities on campus. Some additional efforts to provide special facilities and arrangements to support students with disabilities are underway.

4. Resources Accessibility: Students living with Disabilities

The University Library provides a wide range of services including orientation sessions, retrieval and photocopying of materials and extended loan periods for students who are blind, partially sighted, or have limited mobility. In addition, students living with disabilities centre has a build in sub- Library equipped with relevant technologies such as a brailing area and reading area for partially sighted students and some computers are installed with relevant softwares such as JAWS Screen Reading Software.

University Library ensures that RDC sub- Library has sufficient prescribed reading materials and allocate budget annually to purchase print collection. Universal access and designed principles in relation to faculty instruction and curriculum, including content, training material, facilitation, teaching style, practicals etc. To facilitate integrated learning the Library staff members together with RDC staff members provide orientation and information literacy skills training to students living with disabilities.

The Centre for Academic Excellence (CAE) programme assists student who are struggling with their studies by assigning mentors or “Baditi”. The programme is elevated to students living with disabilities as well. Students are encouraged to reach out to CAE for assistance individually or in groups. The University further has an active Student Counselling Centre, the centre works closely with RDC to ensure students living with disabilities challenges and problems are raised and resolved. The Student Counselling and Development Centre offers educational and personal counselling. The centre further suggests, and organises awareness campaigns around campus regarding people living with disabilities in conjunction with RDC.

During assessments, students living with disabilities use any adaptive devices depending on their disabilities during test/examinations. Students write their tests/examinations at RDC. Test/examinations question papers and answer sheets are provided in alternate formats depending on their needs. Extended or additional time is allocated to students with disabilities during assessment and further assistance is provided when required. Equal support services to healthcare, treatment and career guidance is further provided.

The University donates wheelchairs as part of its objective to buttress its social and academic offerings through Reakgona Disability Centre (RDC); over the years such efforts to improve learning and social experiences of students living with disabilities have had a profound impact on the lives of these students. This year a modern Clinical Emergency Power 14 electric wheelchair was donated to a second-year Bachelor of Arts (Criminology and Psychology) student, Ms Lucia Lekgogola that saw the end to her seven years of asking for a push ended. Previous various donation initiatives for student living with disabilities are accessible at the University Website at www.ul.ac.za. Picture below on page 6 depicts recent wheelchair donation.



Ms Lucia Lekgogola: received a modern Clinical Emergency Power 14 electric wheelchair.

5. Awareness Raising and Advocacy

The University constantly improves the skills level of its staff, both academic and administrative. Awareness, training and advocacy programme regarding people living with disabilities are conducted. Awareness campaigns are designed to change University community social attitudes towards people living with disabilities. RDC and Student Counselling Centre works closely with University, management to facilitate such initiative and are fully supported. The below pictures on page 7 depicts such events:



Under the theme of “Being Mindful Matters”, disabled students demonstrated to the University community how texts get inputted into braille, among other activities.

6. Conclusion

The Registrar's Office is currently working on developing a University-wide Policy for Students with /living with Disabilities. The policy will create and enable a barrier-free academic environment, and assists to remove all forms of unfair discrimination against students with disabilities. The University will set out measures to comply with South African Higher Education Statutes and international approaches and practices on integrated learning experiences guided by the policy. These new developments notwithstanding, the University should however be commended for its strides in maintaining functional existing solid measures currently applied to ensure there is accessible, inclusive and integrated learning environment for students living with disabilities.

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