

RHODES UNIVERSITY

POLICY PROTOCOL

STUDENT DISABILITY POLICY

1. POLICY PARTICULARS

DATE OF APPROVAL BY RELEVANT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:

Equity Committee in 27 July 2005.

Student Services Council on 14 October 2005.

Institutional Forum on

DATE OF APPROVAL BY SENATE: 21 October 2005

DATE OF APPROVAL BY COUNCIL: 15 December 2005

COMMENCEMENT

DATE:

REVISION HISTORY: July 2005

REVIEW DATE: To be reviewed at the end of 2006 and thereafter, every 3 years.

POLICY LEVEL: All students.

RESPONSIBILITY:

- IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING: Students Services Council, Academic Development Centre, Psychology Clinic, Counselling Centre, Estates Division, Dean of Students Division, Human Resources, Registrar's Division, Heads of Departments.
- REVIEW AND REVISION: Student Services Council and thereafter the Equity Committee but any of the above structures may recommend changes.

REPORTING STRUCTURE:

Director (Estates) → Vice Principal → Vice-Chancellor

Academic Development Centre → Vice Principal → Vice-Chancellor

Heads of Departments → Deans → Vice-Chancellor

Registrar → Vice-Chancellor

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 POLICY DECLARATION:

Rhodes University is committed to the promotion of equal opportunity for all persons. It therefore supports the right of people with impairments to be involved in higher education both as employees and students. This policy specifically deals with issues of students. There is a separate policy to deal with staff issues.

Following what is commonly termed the *Social Model of Disability* (Ref. www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia), Rhodes University acknowledges that physical impairment does not constitute a disability in itself and that people with impairments only become disabled when education, work and leisure opportunities are denied to them on the basis of their impairment.

Accordingly, the criteria used by Rhodes University to screen and admit students (on the basis of academic ability and suitability for course/degree) shall apply equally to impaired students. However,

- 2.1.1 In cases of mental impairment, the University retains the right to request a formal assessment of the impairment;
- 2.1.2 In the case of impairments which arise after a student has registered, the University may require an evaluation of the student's ability to continue studying and reserves the right to exclude her/him on the basis thereof;

Support systems provided by Rhodes University to enhance the academic and social lives of students with impairments will be limited only by their affordability. Rhodes University anticipates that there may be particular cases where the student may be expected to provide his/her own support systems.

2.2 POLICY OBJECTIVES:

To ensure that:

- 2.2.1 Positive and unprejudiced attitudes towards people with impairments are fostered and encouraged;
- 2.2.2 In as far as resources reasonably permit, the needs of people with impairments are met in a way which will allow them to maximize potential professionally, academically and socially;
- 2.2.3 Individuals are provided with a choice as to whether they will disclose their impairment, except where this is required by law.

2.3 DEFINITIONS:

Please note that these definitions follow the *Social Model of Disability*.

Impairment: Refers to the limitation in a person's physical, mental (including psychological) or sensory functioning.

Disability: Refers to the loss or limitation of opportunities that prevents people who have impairments from taking part in the normal life of the academic and social community on an equal level with others due to physical or social barriers.

3. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 THE ACTIONS AND PROCESSES BY WHICH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY WILL BE ACHIEVED:

3.1.1 The Career Centre will:

3.1.1.1 Advise and counsel prospective students on possible courses of study which are available. Because of the need to liaise with academic departments and other University divisions, late applications will not normally be accepted from students with impairments.

3.1.1.2 Advise and counsel students who suffer an impairment while they are registered at the University of possible courses of study which are available.

3.1.1.3 Liaise with academic departments, support services and the Library to ensure that, in as far as reasonable resources admit, access to learning is provided.

3.1.1.4 Liaise with the Estates Division to ensure that, in as far as reasonable resources admit, suitable adaptations are made to learning, residential, sport and leisure facilities in order to accommodate the physically impaired person.

3.1.1.5 Advise the Dean of Students and Hall and House Wardens on impaired students' needs.

3.1.2 The Academic Development Centre will:

3.1.2.1 Provide support to academic staff that teach and assess impaired students.

3.1.3 Within the context of confidentiality as legally required, the **Counselling Centre** will:

3.1.3.1 Liaise with the Sanatorium Sisters;

3.1.3.2 Liaise with academic departments;

3.1.3.3 Liaise with the Dean of Students and Hall and House Wardens;

3.1.3.4 Offer socio-emotional counselling services to students.

3.1.4 The **Heads of Academic Departments** will, where feasible:

3.1.4.1 Meet requests to accommodate students with impairments. This would involve arranging alternative teaching venues as well as considering how teaching and assessment might best be modified;

3.1.4.2 Liaise with the Examinations Officer regarding any special provision for assessment which might be required;

3.1.4.3 Sensitise staff to the needs of individual students.

3.1.5 The **Estates Division** will:

3.1.5.1 Modify physical access to and within buildings where possible and where funds permit;

3.1.5.2 Where possible, and within the limits of reasonable resources, make suitable adaptations to study, residential, sport and leisure facilities to accommodate physically impaired students.

3.1.6 The Psychology Clinic will:

3.1.6.1 Liaise with external assessors with regard to determining capacity for succeeding at University and/or degree of impairment related to psychological disability;

3.1.6.2 Offer socio-emotional counselling and therapy to students;

3.1.6.3 Offer an assessment service to students regarding educational needs (e.g. extra time applications, learning disabilities, etc) and clinical/emotional assessment (e.g. major depressive episodes, etc).

3.1.7 The **Dean of Students** Division will:

3.1.7.1 On a regular basis, report on how the University is catering for the needs of impaired students.

3.1.7.2 Serve as the place where students may seek help if their unique needs are not addressed, or where staff may report if students' needs are not being addressed.

3.2 REVIEW PROCEDURE:

The Dean of Students is regarded as the guardian of this policy and will be responsible for assessing adherence to the policy, identifying any problems with the current policy and procedures and therefore the identification of any changes that need to be made to the policy. In addition, other staff who serve on the various structures e.g. Examination Committee (extra time), Equity Committee and Student Services Council can also raise issues of concern.

Examples of reasonable accommodation include:

Adapting existing facilities to make them accessible

Adapting existing equipment or acquiring new equipment including computer hardware and software

Re-organizing work areas e.g. in residential areas

Changing lecture and assessment materials and systems

Restructuring jobs so that non-essential functions are reassigned

Adjusting time for examinations, tests and assignments

Providing electronic readers and

Providing specialized supervision, training and support.