Rhodes University

Student Disability Policy

Policy Volume	General Institutional Policies & Protocols
Policy Chapter	Student Disability Policy
Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty	Division of Student Affairs
Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager	Director: Student Affairs
Dates of First and Subsequent Council Approvals	2005, 2010,
Revision History: Approved Reviews	2010
Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc.)	Every 5 years
Next Review Date	2024

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POLICY PARTICULARS

Policy Title	Student Disability Policy
Policy Statement	Rhodes University strives to be an outstanding internationally-respected academic institution which proudly affirms its African identity and which is committed to democratic ideals, academic freedom, rigorous scholarship, sound moral values and social responsibility (Vision and Mission Statement, 2000). The pursuit of equity is integral to the University's identity and the institution realises that its strength will be realised and its reputation secured through its commitment to both equity and quality. Disability Equity is entailed in the University's broader pursuit of equity.
Reason for Policy	This policy is required for the following reasons: - To give articulation to the imperative of removing absolute barriers that result in the exclusion of individuals with physical, psychosocial, cognitive, neurological and/or sensory disabilities from accessing and successfully participating in the life of the institution. - It clarifies the rights of students with disabilities that have to be exercised in order for students to participate equitably in the life of the institution. - It outlines the obligations and the rights of the institution with respect to creating an equitable study environment for students with disabilities. - It outlines measures that the institution will take in order to create an environment in which students with disabilities are not unfairly discriminated against and are enabled to participate successfully in all spheres of university life. - It defines the roles of the various functions and units of the institution in the creation of an inclusive environment in which there is no unfair discrimination against students with disabilities and in which students with disabilities are enabled to participate in the life of the institution equitably. - It promotes the participation of students with disabilities in university governing structures and other structures.
People affected by this Policy	All University students.
Who should read this Policy	All University students, members of the University and visitors to the University.
Website address/link for this Policy	www.ru.ac.za/studentaffairs/ www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies/ www.ru.ac.za/equityandinstitutionalculture/policies/listofpolicies/

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RELATED DOCUMENTS FORMS AND TOOLS

(University Policies, Protocols and Documents (such as rules/policies/protocols/guidelines related to this policy)

Relevant Legislation
Equity Policy, Students' Admission Policy
Teaching and Learning Policies including the Policy on Curriculum Development and Review and Assessment Policy
Anti-discrimination policies, including the Policy on Eradicating Unfair Discrimination and Harassment and the Transformation Summit document.
Related Policies
The South African Constitution
White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016)
White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013)
White Paper 3 on the Transformation of the Higher Education System (1997)
Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act No 4 of 2000
National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act No 103 as amended in 2008
South African National Standards 10400-S (2011)
The application of the National Building Regulations Part S:Facilities for Persons with Disabilities
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for Post-School Education and Training 2018
National Plan for Higher Education 2001.
Related Protocols
To be developed and negotiated with stakeholders, following approval of this policy.
Forms and Tools
Documents pertaining to procedures for implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation, to be developed and negotiated with stakeholders, following approval of this policy.

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POLICY DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Absolute barriers	The exclusion of a defined group of individuals from participating in development opportunities or applying for employment or promotion opportunities on the basis of any arbitrary demographic factor, such as race or gender. In the specific context of the transformation of the South African employment structure, the removal of absolute barriers means the removal of barriers that continue to result in the inequitable participation of designated groups of South African individuals in the opportunities offered by society.
Assistive device	A product, piece of equipment or tool that is designed to enable persons with impairments to participate in activities, tasks or actions. They may include mobility aids such as wheelchairs, prostheses and crutches, communication aids such as hearing aids, FM systems, and sensory aids such as white canes, screen readers, magnifiers and text in audio format.
Assistive technology	This is an umbrella term that includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices which enable persons with disabilities to attain independence. The technology includes, for example, loop systems, sub-texting and alternative input for cognitive assistance and computer or electrical assistive devices.
Impairment	A condition that results in loss of or a limitation in physiological or psychological functioning of an organ.
	Individuals with impairments are disabled when they are excluded from and not enabled to access opportunities which are available for access to other members of the society.
Institutional Culture	The "way things are done" within an organisation, specifically the traditions, customs, values, and shared understandings that underpin the decisions taken, the practices engaged in and those practices that are rewarded and supported.
Reasonable accommodation	Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments which do not impose a disproportionate or undue burden on the institution to ensure that persons with disabilities exercise, on an equitable basis with others, all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
	Reasonable accommodation includes any action on the part of the institution to reduce the impact of the impairment in processes such as student recruitment, admission, learning and assessment. It also includes action on the part of the institution to reduce the impact of the impairment on conditions of study. Such action must be reasonable and not impose an unjustifiable hardship on the institution. **Examples of reasonable accommodation include:**
	(i) Adapting existing facilities to make them accessible;
	(ii) Adapting existing equipment or acquiring new equipment including computer hardware and software;
	(iii) Adjusting time for examinations, tests and assignments;
	(iv) Providing readers or sign language interpreters;

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	(v) Reorganising workstations, e.g. in residential areas.
	In consultation with the student apply a fair procedure for specific individual student request or for psychosocial support, e.g. granted the use of a service dog or therapy dog.
Service dog	An assistance dog trained to provide specific support for individuals with disabilities such as visual or hearing difficulties, seizure disorders, mobility challenges, and/or diabetes.
Therapy dog	Provide social and emotional support for students. Reacts and respond to people and their environment, under the guidance and direction of their owner.
Unfair discrimination	Unfair discrimination is when an individual is treated differently from individuals belonging to other socially significant categories of people and when this differential treatment results in the diminishing of the individual's dignity as a human being. The 2000 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act states that "discrimination is regarded as unfair when it imposes burdens or withholds benefits or opportunities from any person on one of the prohibited grounds listed in the Act, namely: race, gender, sex, pregnancy, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, impairment, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth etc." The Act further states that it is not unfair discrimination when measures are taken to advance or protect individuals or members of groups who have been disadvantaged through unfair discrimination.
Universal Design	The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.
Unjustifiable hardship	Action that requires significant or considerable difficulty or expense that would substantially harm the long- term viability of the institution. This would involve considering the impact of the accommodation and the extent to which it would seriously disrupt the operation of the institution.

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

OVERVIEW
Rhodes University strives to carry out the following, as far as is reasonably practicable: 1. To reject all forms of unfair discrimination and harassment, recognising these as hindering the integration of all people within the institution. 2. To recognise that persons with disabilities are entitled to represent themselves on all matters affecting them and that resources should be made available to enable them to fulfil this role. 3. To recognise the importance of individual autonomy and independence for persons with disabilities, including the freedom to make their own choices. 4. While disclosure of information about an impairment is necessary where a student requests support and accommodation provision, the institution will also recognise that the right to disclose or not to disclose information about an individual's impairment lies with the individual. 5. It is also committed to creating an institutional climate in which disclosure is both advantageous and safe. 6. To effect a change in the culture, values and institutional practices in order that a culture which is inclusive and equitable, is developed. This includes removing any absolute barriers to the admission and success of students with disabilities as well as removing any absolute barriers to the personal growth of students with disabilities. 7. To endorse the principle of Universal Design as a feature of all new infrastructure development, and will formulate and implement standards and guidelines which ensure that Universal Design principles are applied in the design and construction and/or maintenance of all buildings, thoroughfares, facilities, security systems, information technology and all other infrastructures for which the University is responsible. 8. To recognise the right of students with disabilities to request accommodations that will facilitate their full and equitable participation in the services and facilities of the University. 9. To also recognise that a committed and accountable leadership is necessary to the realisation of disability equity goals and to the change in the culture and dominant values of the institution. 10. To recognise that communication is critical to the pursuit of an equity agenda and in establishing an inclusive institutional culture. It is therefore committed to two-way communication where students are consulted regarding decisions that impact on them.

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DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

Directive 1 The institution aims to achieve the policy's objectives with respect to the STUDENT ARENA in the following manner:

1.1. Recruitment and admission

- In recruitment processes, the University will endeavour to disseminate to all students information on facilities including assistive devices and technology, general services and disability forums that exist in the institution. In accordance with the principles of universal design and access, all student recruitment platforms and forums, e.g. the institution's website, will progressively be made accessible to all potential students.

- The University will also strive to ensure that student recruitment entails the specific targeting of virtual and physical spaces where information on the institution's offerings is more likely to be accessed by persons with disabilities.

- The University will implement an admission system that ensures that students with disabilities are assessed using the same academic criteria that are used in the admission of all students as per the Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for Post-School Education and Training 2018.

- The University's admission of academically qualifying students with disabilities will be limited only by a demonstrable risk of unjustifiable hardship.

1.2. Teaching and Learning

- Academic staff will strive to employ teaching and learning strategies which make learning as inclusive as is possible and, where reasonable, allow adaptation to accommodate students' individual requirements. This may entail modifying, substituting or supplementing curricula and course work requirements, including alternative but equivalent assessment modes, ensuring at all times that academic standards are not compromised and that students will graduate with the requisite skills and competencies.

- The Institution will endeavour to ensure that, limited only by unjustifiable hardship, appropriate technological support is afforded to students with disabilities to enable them to access the academic curriculum. The University will also strive to ensure that, wherever possible, students with disabilities have equitable opportunity to access all external learning opportunities. This includes field trips and service learning opportunities.

- The University may seek further guidance from appropriate professionals in cases where a student requires additional support on external placements or field trips, limited only by unjustifiable hardship. Acknowledging the growing stature of Disability Studies as a relevant academic discipline along with other social justice disciplines, the University will progressively include the study of disability in relevant undergraduate and graduate programs.

- Assessment and examination policies, practices and procedures will provide students with disabilities equitable opportunities to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes, which may, in some cases, include alternative assessment and examination arrangements. The University will progressively educate academic staff with regard to inclusive teaching and learning, including the range of reasonable accommodations and alternative assessment modes.

Directive 2 The institution aims to achieve the policy's objectives with respect to STUDENTS' self- definition and representation in the following manner:

2.1. Disclosure

- From the point of recruitment, encouragement and opportunity will be given to potential students to disclose information on impairments that may impact on their ability to carry out activities so that a discussion can take place about reasonable adjustments or other support that may be required.

- In instances where the disclosed impairment is not evident, the University reserves the right to seek medical confirmation of an impairment from a registered medical practitioner / professional in the case of physical and

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sensory disabilities, and from a clinical or educational psychologist or psychiatrist in the case of cognitive and psychological impairment where a request for the provision of accommodation warrants this. In such cases up-to-date documentation will be provided to the designated official in the Divisions of Student Affairs.

- Disclosure is necessary where a student requests support and/or accommodation provision. Information about an individual's impairment will be made available to persons tasked with facilitating or providing specific accommodations to the extent that this information is necessary to facilitate the accommodation.

- The University will also encourage students to disclose any impairment, which in the short term has substantial impact on their day-to-day activities to ensure that appropriate support can be provided.

- Where accommodation provision is made in respect of temporary impairments, this will be done for the specific period recommended by registered practitioners. The student will be required to submit up-to-date documentation in order for the continued need for this provision beyond this period to be assessed by the institution.

- The institution undertakes to protect the confidentiality of the information that has been disclosed and will take care to keep records of private information confidential. Disclosure will take place only under specified conditions, i.e. with the written consent of the student or when it relates to the health and safety of the student, and when reasonable accommodation is requested.

- Should a student choose not to disclose information about an impairment that may affect her/his ability to carry out activities, the institution may not be held liable in that particular case for failure to comply with the provisions of this policy.

2.2 Self-Representation

- Students with disabilities will be encouraged to participate in the institution's governance structures including the Institutional Forum, the Equity and Institutional Culture Committee and the Disability Committee.

- Students with disabilities will be encouraged to lead and to participate in the development of programmes designed to educate and to raise awareness about disability issues.

Directive 3 The Institution aims to achieve the policy's objectives with respect to the BROADER LEARNING, AND LIVING ENVIRONMENTS in the following manner:
3.1 Learning and Living Environments

- The Institution will ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that its built environment is compliant with the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act as amended in 2008. A phased-in retrofitting approach will be adopted with older structures whilst new projects will include universal access requirements from the outset.

- University student accommodation will be provided with due regard to reasonable accommodation needs of students.

nited only by the risk of unjustifiable hardship to the Institution, students with disabilities will have equitable access to recreation and sport facilities on campus.
- The University will strive to ensure that adequate signage indicates the location of accessible entrances, parking, toilets and emergency exits, ramps and lifts and other relevant services and facilities related to students with disabilities.

- The University will endeavour to disseminate information about the accessibility of and enabling facilities in the physical environment to all students.

- Information about safety and evacuation procedures for all students will also be disseminated to all students with disabilities. The University will strive to enhance access to information and communication by using, as appropriate, tactile signage, high contrast signage on noticeboards, circulars, library databases, learning materials, and electronic media.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY

ROLE 1
Disability Committee
	● Promoting the adoption of this policy by the institution and by all the institution's governance committees. Among other effects, such adoption should be reflected in the documents, including policy documents that will be produced by the governance committees.
	
	● Providing advice to Senate and Council regarding systemic, structural, cultural and social support mechanisms that can impact positively on the lives and opportunities available to the persons with disabilities at Rhodes.
	
	● Providing advice to Senate and Council on improving the general environment for persons with disabilities at Rhodes.
	
	● In partnership with the Equity and Institutional Culture Directorate;
	
	    o Monitoring adherence to this policy,
	
	    o Recommending changes to this policy,
	
	    o Participating in the assessment of impact of accommodation on the long-term viability of the institution,
	
	    o Promoting greater awareness of impairment issues in the institution.

ROLE 2 Registrar's Division	● Aligning the Division's policies, including student recruitment and selection policies, to the principles stated in this policy. ● Promoting representivity in the institution's governance structures. ● Ensuring that members of governance structures with disabilities are enabled to effectively contribute to the functioning of each structure. ● Aligning the Division's policies, including student recruitment and admission policies, to the principles stated in this policy.
ROLE 3 Directorate of Student Affairs	● Advising on and advocating for the provision of support to students with disabilities. ● Providing assistive devices, including computer software to students and facilitating students' access to assistive devices, technology and services that are in fixed positions around campus.

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- Reviewing the services available to students with disabilities and making recommendations to the appropriate University structures concerning improvement in these services. This process should involve consulting with students to ensure that their needs are appropriately addressed.

- Liaising with Deans, Heads of Departments, wardens, and Counselling Centre, Health Care Centre, and Sports Administration and other staff to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are met in the learning and living environments.

- Reporting to the Disability Committee on how the institution is catering for the needs of students with disabilities.

- Promoting representivity in student structures including governance structures.

Through the Career Centre:
- Providing information and counsel on the various study options available at Rhodes University with prospective students and liaise with various University departments and structures to accommodate prospective students with disabilities as far as is possible and feasible limited only by the risk of unjustifiable hardship.

- Providing career counselling for students who become impaired in any manner whilst studying at the University.

- Liaising with all relevant support structures and academic departments to assist all students to complete their studies successfully and refer students to the relevant professional staff and resources within the University when necessary.

- Remaining up to date on information on the resources available to assist all students at Rhodes University.

Through the Counselling Centre within the context of confidentiality as legally required:
- Providing professional counselling and support.

- Liaising with the various Departments to ensure students' needs are met.

- Referring students to the Health Care Centre when and if the need arises.

- Offering psychological assessment of students regarding their educational needs (e.g. extra time applications, learning disabilities, etc.).

- Offering clinical/emotional assessment (e.g. major depressive episodes, etc.).

- Referring students to an appropriate private practitioner in the event that the Counselling Centre is unable to assist with an assessment.

Through the Health Care Centre:

- Providing quality nursing and medical care to all clients with disabilities.

- Being proactive and liaising with internal and external departments for the continued wellbeing of all clients with disabilities.

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	● Making the necessary special arrangements when needed such as house calls and providing transport. ● Referring newly diagnosed disabled clients to tertiary levels of care. **Through the Sport Administration** ● Removing barriers to participation by providing access for students with disabilities to a variety of sporting activities. ● Providing sporting facilities that are easily accessible to students with disabilities. ● Making provision in the clubs to cater for students with disabilities. ● Providing support to students with disabilities who wants to participate in sports. ● Providing support to access other clubs outside the University, where we don't provide their sports of choice.

ROLE 4
 Deans and Heads of Departments
	● Accommodating students with disabilities. This involves:
	   ○ Limited only by demonstrable unjustifiable hardship, arranging alternative teaching venues as well as considering how teaching and assessment might best be modified.
	   ○ Modifying lecture and assessment materials and systems as approved by Senate.
	   ○ Sensitizing staff to the needs of individual students.
	
	 ● Liaising with the Infrastructure, Operations & Finance, Student Affairs regarding physical access and other requirements as necessary.
	
	 ● Liaising with the Student Affairs regarding the provision of any specialised equipment, e.g. computer hardware or software, furniture and equipment.
	
	 ● Liaising with any other relevant support staff entities, such as the Library and the Information and Technology Services Divisions for the purposes of supporting students with disabilities who are in faculties and departments.
	
	 ● Supporting the education of staff and students regarding the particular needs of students with disabilities in order to foster a culture of inclusion in the departments and faculties.
	
	 ● Promoting the development of a curriculum that is, among other considerations, also informed by Social Justice Principles, including disability issues.
	
	 ● Facilitating access and support to teaching and learning opportunities, as well as research for students with disabilities.

ROLE 5 Centre for Higher Education Research Teaching and Learning (CHERTL)	● Supporting academic staff to develop knowledge of inclusive teaching and learning practices including curriculum development and assessment practices. ● Supporting the development of a curriculum that speaks to Social Justice Matters, including disability issues.

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	● Supporting academic staff to incorporate universal design strategies into teaching and learning curricula, pedagogy and assessment. ● Supporting academic staff to create flexible learning environments/ classrooms by using teaching and learning technologies.
Role 6 The Psychology Clinic	● Offering a psychological assessment of students regarding their educational needs (e.g. extra time applications, learning disabilities, etc.) and clinical/emotional assessment (e.g. major depressive episodes, etc.). ● If for whatever reason the clinic is unable to assist with such an assessment, referring the student to an appropriate private practitioner. ● Liaising with external assessors with regard to determining the capacity for succeeding at University and/or degree of psychological impairment. ● Offering counselling and therapy to students where possible. Alternatively, referring such students to the Counselling Centre or an appropriate private practitioner.
ROLE 7 Extra Time Committee	● Reviewing applications for concessions for examinations and tests based on evidence supported by an appropriate registered practitioner such as an educational psychologist or occupational therapist. ● Making recommendations to Senate with regard to the concessions that should be awarded. Recommendations made may include the use of appropriate alternative forms of assessment.
ROLE 8 Infrastructure, Operations and Finance Division	● Ensuring that the budget for transforming the institution's physical environment into an inclusive environment is mainstreamed in the University's budgeting processes. ● Ensuring that the budget for assistive technology and devices is mainstreamed in the University's budgeting processes. ● Limited only by a demonstrable risk of unjustifiable hardship, making suitable adaptations to study, residential, sport and leisure facilities to accommodate physically impaired students (e.g. re-organizing work areas e.g. in residential areas). ● Developing minimum specifications and protocols for old buildings and infrastructure and implementing them in order to make them accessible to students with disabilities. ● Ensuring that the principles of universal access underpin the construction of any new buildings. ● Ensuring that the physical environment's health and safety standards are met concerning the needs of all students with disabilities. ● Ensuring the mapping of the campus in accessible formats, including high contrast signage on noticeboards, to communicate the location of facilities and services that make provision for the needs of students.
ROLE 9 Equity and Institutional Culture Directorate.	● Through awareness raising and advocacy, elevating the importance of Disability issues at Rhodes University.

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	● Identifying and drawing attention to systemic, structural, cultural and social barriers impacting on the lives of persons with disabilities at Rhodes, and the opportunities available to improve accessibility. ● Reporting to Senate and Council, through the Equity & Institutional Culture Committee, on matters related to the Disability Policy and its implementation.
Role 10 Institutional Planning Office	● Assessing the quantitative and qualitative risks inherent in the University's processes, protocols and structures with respect to disability. ● Facilitating planning and implementation of planning which will result in minimising the financial and reputational risks identified in the University's processes, protocols and structures with respect to impairment.

CONTACTS

Area of Concern	Division/Faculty/Department	Telephone	Email
Implementation	Division of Student Affairs	Extension 8181	studentaffairs@ru.ac.za

POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE

(Actions and processes by which the policy will be reviewed)

The Student Services Council will regularly review this Policy as may be required by legislation, organisational changes and stakeholder concerns, or at least every five years.
Communication of the review process
The Division of Student Affairs will engage students through the Board of Residences and Student Services Council. Updates will also be posted on the following websites: www.ru.ac.za/studentaffairs/ www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies/ www.ru.ac.za/equityandinstitutionalculture/policies/listofpolicies/

REPORTING STRUCTURE

Division of Student Affairs --- Student Services Council --- Equity & Institutional Culture Committee -------Faculty Board----------Senate------ Council

LIST OF APPENDICES

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