

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



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| <b>Policy Name/Title:</b> Policy on Universal Access and Disability Support for Students with Disabilities |  |                                     |            |
| <b>Policy Group(s): e.g.</b>   | Support Services Policy: Student Affairs   |                                     |            |
| <b>Type:</b>   | Policy   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Guideline  |
|  | Procedure  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Regulation |
| <b>UFS Statute and/or Regulation Reference No and date:</b>  | UFS Statute, Government Gazette, No 42337, 29 March 2019<br>UFS Statute, Government Gazette, No 41399, 26 January 2018   |                                     |            |
| <b>Relevant Legislation and/or policy, Codes of practice, Professional Authorities:</b>                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD)</li> <li>2. Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa (Bill of Rights)</li> <li>3. White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016)</li> <li>4. Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System (2018).</li> </ol>   |                                     |            |
| <b>Relevant Institutional policies/manuals</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Policy on Universal Access for Staff with Disabilities</li> <li>2. Anti-Discrimination, Promotion of Equality, and Social Justice Policy and Procedures</li> <li>3. Policy of the UFS on Student Mental Health</li> <li>4. Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Policy</li> </ol>  |                                     |            |
| <b>Consultation Process</b><br>To be verified and signed-off before approval                               | <p>A: Student Governance Structures (Bloemfontein, South, and QwaQwa Campus)<br/>17 September 2019 – 31 December 2019 Open for comments during this period<br/>No pertinent issues raised</p> <p>B: Division of Student Affairs<br/>17 September 2019 – 31 December 2019 Open for comments during this period<br/>No pertinent issues raised</p> <p>C: Rector and Campus Principals<br/>17 September 2019 – 31 December 2019 Open for comments during this period<br/>No pertinent issues raised</p> <p>D: All UFS staff<br/>17 September 2019 – 31 December 2019<br/>Open for comments during this period</p> |                                     |            |

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|   |                            | <p>Issue raised: Representation of staff and students with disabilities in structures of the university</p> <p>E: Student Service Committee 22 October 2019 Tabled for comments<br/>No pertinent issues raised F: Students with Disabilities 28 October 2019 – 31 December 2019 Open for comments during this period<br/>Issue raised: Representation of students with disabilities in Reasonable Accommodation Panel (RAP) and Faculty Student Councils</p> <p>G: Academic Committee of Senate 28 November 2019 Tabled for comments<br/>Issue raised: Inclusion of Reasonable Accommodation Panel in faculty assessment policies or procedures</p> <p>H: Teaching and Learning Management Committee 28 January 2020<br/>Tabled for comments<br/>No pertinent issues raised</p> <p>I: Legal Services<br/>29 June 2020 Requested legal review<br/>Issue raised: Clarification of definition of Academic Support</p> <p>J: Rectorate<br/>7 October 2020 Approved</p> <p>K: University Management Committee 12 October 2020 Approved</p> <p>L: UFS Council<br/>27 November 2020<br/>Concern raised: Amendment of 6.9 to include “qualifying students with disabilities”</p> <p>M: UFS Council<br/>Amendment of 11.1 (b) (ii) to include “amanuenses” as the plural form.</p> |                            |   |  |
| <b>Status</b>   |                            | Council Approved as per minutes 5.1   |                            |   |  |
| <b>Coordinating UMC Owner</b>   |                            | Rector & Vice-Chancellor  |                            |   |  |
| <b>Contact Person</b>   |                            | Head of Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support  |                            |   |  |
| <b>Certification of Due process:</b><br>To be verified and signed once approved by the relevant authority |                            | Prof FW Petersen<br>Rector & Vice-Chancellor  |                            | 25 August 2021<br>Date                    |  |
| <b>Approval Date</b>  |                            | <b>Commencement Date</b>  | To be inserted             | <b>Review Date</b>                        | To be inserted   |
|   | 18 June 2021               |   | 18 June 2021               |   | 18 June 2024   |
| <b>REVISION HISTORY:</b> Only applicable to amended or reviewed policies. Record details of               |                            |   |                            |   |  |
| <b>Version No.</b>  | <b>Approved/ Rescinded</b> | <b>Date</b>   | <b>Approving Authority</b> | <b>Resolution Number/ (Minute number)</b> | <b>Date for next review (start date for reviewprocess)</b> |
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| <b><i>For office use only</i></b>        |                                |
| <b>Policy Group</b> (Broad Policy field) | Student Affairs                |
| <b>Subject</b> (Policy sub-field)        | Policies                       |
| <b>Reference Number</b>                  | SA200/P/2.0/21.2               |
| <b>Version Number</b>                    | Version 3                      |
| <b>Key Words for Search Engine:</b>      | Policy, Student Affairs, SA200 |

| <b>POLICY STATEMENT</b>         |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>1. Preamble / Background</b> | <p>1.1 Recognising the talents, abilities and potential of students with disabilities, the UFS is committed to creating an enabling environment where fully equitable participation and progression become a reality for all its students. This commitment is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa (Bill of Rights), the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016) and the Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System (2018).</p> <p>1.2 The UFS values diversity, human rights, human dignity and social justice, in line with the Integrated Transformation Plan (ITP) and the UFS Strategic Plan 2018-2022. To this end, the University commits to create equal opportunities and a humanising institutional culture for students with disabilities.</p> <p>1.3 Furthermore, the University strives to create an enabling learning environment for its students with disabilities, where their talents are nurtured and developed. Accordingly, the University commits itself to reasonably accommodate students with disabilities.</p> |
| <b>2. Purpose</b>               | <p>2.1 The policy outlines the obligation of the UFS to promote human rights, human dignity, social justice and the interests of students with disabilities.</p> <p>2.2 It is intended to create an enabling institutional culture that is free of all forms of unnecessary barriers for students with disabilities to perform in line with their aspirations, talents and abilities.</p> <p>2.3 Its sets out measures to advance the prescripts of relevant higher education legislation in South Africa, UFS policies and international approaches and practices on integrated learning experiences and disability.</p>   |
| <b>3. Scope</b>                 | <p>3.1 All faculties, departments, units and centres of the UFS are bound by the provisions contained herein.</p> <p>3.2 The broader UFS community, including fellow students, must adhere to the principles of anti-discrimination, inclusivity and equal opportunities and must act in accordance with prescribed procedures.</p> <p>3.3 Students with disabilities will benefit from the policy provisions contained herein and can apply for reasonable accommodation in accordance with this policy.</p> <p>3.4 This policy will be used as a reference point pertaining to students with disabilities at the UFS.</p> <p>3.5 UFS policies and practices must be aligned to this policy to ensure inclusivity of students with disabilities.</p> <p>3.6 This policy should be considered in conjunction with other UFS policies.</p>   |

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| <p><b>4. Definitions and Abbreviations</b></p> | <p><b>4.1 Academic Support</b></p> <p>For the purpose of the University of the Free State (UFS), Academic Support refers to activities or programmes offered to support students with disabilities, outside of the classroom, towards completing their academic programme. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Individual tutor assistance;</li> <li>b) Communication access, i.e. Sign Language interpretation for tutor sessions, group discussions or meetings with lecturers;</li> <li>c) Accessible study material, i.e. Braille, E-text, or audio;</li> <li>d) Accessible transport for academic purposes; and</li> <li>e) Alternative assessment arrangements, i.e. accessible venue, amanuensis (scribe and/or reader), extra time, concessions during tests and examinations, specialised equipment and computer hardware and software.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.2 Barriers</b></p> <p>Barriers refer to policies, actions, behaviour, practices, procedures and institutional strategies which may adversely affect students' prospects of entry, advancement and/or success within the institution. Such barriers may hinder academic excellence, humanising student experience and support services.</p> <p><b>Types of Barriers</b></p> <p>Types of barriers may include, amongst others, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a) Attitudinal barriers</b><br/>Caused by attitudes that are inconsistent with the letter and spirit of human rights and human dignity, for example, prejudicial attitudes about disability and persons with disabilities. These type of attitudes are discriminatory in nature.</li> <li><b>b) Institutional barriers</b><br/>Caused by values, policies, procedures, guidelines, norms, traditions and practices which deprive students with disabilities of equitable access to studying opportunities and genuine participation in student life.</li> <li><b>c) Environmental barriers</b><br/>Caused by physical and structural aspects of the built environment, which have the effect of unfairly making facilities and amenities inaccessible and cause unfair exclusion or unequal rights to use, enjoy and benefit from them.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3 Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)</b></p> <p>The Centre was established to provide academic support to students with disabilities. Also, the Centre promotes the integration and inclusion of students with disabilities at UFS.</p> <p><b>4.4 Humanising</b></p> <p>To validate and affirm a person, i.e. seeing someone as they are – as a complete human being.</p> |
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#### **4.5 Humanising Student Experience**

To validate and affirm students within the context of their disability, for example, to provide a blind student with Braille study material.

#### **4.6 Inclusion**

Disability inclusion means that students with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in every aspect of their student life cycle to the fullest extent possible. These opportunities include participation in an academic programme and student life, where barriers are removed. The result is that all students with and without disabilities benefit.

#### **4.7 Institutional Universal Access Forum**

The Institutional Universal Access Forum will be established to accelerate the transformation of the UFS with regard to the integration and inclusion of staff, students and visitors with disabilities at the UFS, including the provision of an oversight and advisory role.

##### **Constituents of the Institutional Universal Access Forum:**

- a) Rector & Vice-Chancellor
- b) Vice-Rector: Academic
- c) Deputy Registrar: Student Academic Services
- d) Executive Director: Student Affairs
- e) Senior Director: Centre for Teaching and Learning
- f) Senior Director: Human Resources
- g) Senior Director: University Estates
- h) Senior Director: Information and Communication Technology Services
- i) Director: Communication and Marketing
- j) Head of CUADS

#### **4.8 Integration**

“Incorporation as equals into society or an organisation of individuals of different groups”, such as people with disability, people of colour, gender, etc. (Merriam Webster: 2020).

For the purpose of this policy, integration will refer to the incorporation of people with disability as equals into the university community. The aim of integration is to humanise the experiences of students with disabilities.

#### **4.9 Learning Experience**

Learning experience refers to any interaction, course, programme or other experience in which learning takes place. This may occur in traditional academic settings (classrooms) or alternative settings (co-curricular, outside of classroom environments), and could include traditional educational interactions (students learning from lecturers) or alternative interactions (peers, online platforms).

#### **4.10 Reasonable Accommodation**

Reasonable accommodation means any modification or adjustment to the environment that will enable a student with a disability to have equitable access to the University. These measures ensure that students with disabilities have a fair opportunity for academic excellence, humanising student experience and receiving support services at the UFS.

#### **4.11 Reasonable Accommodation Panel**

The Reasonable Accommodation Panel (RAP) will be established to adjudicate over all applications for reasonable accommodation, including students with mental health conditions. The primary aim of reasonable accommodation is to reduce the impact of a person's impairment on their ability to perform essential functions as a student in a higher education setting, and to create an enabling environment.

##### **Constituents of RAP:**

- a) Vice-Rector: Academic (Chairperson)
- b) Secretary (Meeting Administration)
- c) Members:
  - i. CUADS
  - ii. Student Counselling and Development (SCD)
  - iii. Faculty Managers
  - iv. Specialists (e.g. Occupational Therapist or Medical Doctor or Social Worker, etc.)
  - v. Representatives from the Faculty Student Councils
  - vi. Representative of the Student Universal Access Council

#### **4.12 Students with Disabilities**

The scope of support for students with disabilities focuses on the effect of an impairment on the person in relation to the barriers experienced in their academic, learning, physical, student-life, administrative and social environments, and not on the diagnosis of the impairment.

Different types of disabilities and impairments:

##### **a) Long-term, short-term, recurring impairments, and/or progressive conditions**

Long-term means the impairment has lasted or is likely to persist for at least 12 months.

Short-term or temporary illness or injury is an impairment that does not give rise to a permanent disability.

Recurring impairment is an impairment that is likely to happen again and to be substantially limiting (see below). It includes a constant underlying condition, even if its effects on a person fluctuate.

Progressive conditions are conditions that are likely to develop, change or recur. People living with progressive conditions or illnesses are considered as people with disabilities once the impairment starts to be substantially limiting. Progressive or

recurring conditions that have no overt symptoms or that do not substantially limit a person are not disabilities.

b) Physical and psycho-social impairments and specific learning difficulties

Physical impairment includes a partial or total loss of a bodily function or part of the body. It includes sensory impairments such as being deaf, hearing impaired or visually impaired, and any combination of physical or mental impairments.

Psycho-social impairment includes a clinically recognised condition or illness that has an effect on a person's thought processes, judgment or emotions.

Specific learning difficulties include clinically recognised and measurable conditions (e.g. dyslexia, ADHD, dyscalculia) that may significantly influence the ability of a student to successfully complete their studies without support.

c) Substantially limiting impairments

An impairment is substantially limiting if, in the absence of reasonable accommodation by the UFS, a student would be totally unable to learn or significantly limited in learning, or would be unable to perform their academic work and engage in student life co-curricular activities.

An assessment of the extent to which the effects of the impairment are substantially limiting must consider if medical treatment or other devices would control or correct the impairment so that the limitation can be mitigated.

Exclusions for purposes of this policy, certain conditions or impairments may not be considered as disabilities, and these include but are not limited to:

- i) sexual behaviour disorders that are against public policy;
- ii) compulsive gambling, a tendency to steal or light fires;
- iii) disorders that affect a person's mental or physical state if they are caused by current use of illegal drugs or alcohol, unless the affected person is participating in a recognised programme of treatment;
- iv) normal deviations in height, weight and strength; and
- v) conventional physical and mental characteristics and common personality traits.

#### **4.13 Universal Access**

Universal Access is when the focus of attention is shifted from the individual with the disability to the environment. In this instance, Universal Access demands that the environment and society be more adaptable and flexible. The approach of Universal Access conceptualises a disability as an experience when the environment a person functions or interacts in is inaccessible, and may include social, attitudinal, learning, administrative and physical barriers for a student.



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|                                     | <p><b>4.14 Universal Design</b></p> <p>Universal Design means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to make them usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. Universal Design shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities, where needed (UNCRPD, Art 2).</p>  |
| <p><b>5. Guiding Principles</b></p> | <p>5.1 The UNCRPD, Article 24 on Education (2006) states that all State Parties recognise the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure an inclusive education system.</p> <p>5.2 The National Student Financial Aid Scheme Disability Fund is a full-cost bursary aimed at providing financial support to students with disabilities who are financially eligible and academically able. Qualifying students are entitled to assistive devices (wheelchairs, hearing aids, adapted laptops, etc.) and human/other support (caregivers, Sign Language interpreters, tutors, scribes, guide dogs, etc.). The key parameters of the guidelines allow a minimum time of completion for undergraduate studies (as determined by the institution's academic faculties), plus an additional three years. In exceptional circumstances, consideration may be given for an additional year through an appeal process.</p> <p>5.3 Chapter 2 (Bill of Rights) of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996, Section 9, as well as the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997), as amended, states that everyone is equal, and that equality should be promoted through legislation and other measures to protect and advance persons who have been disadvantaged, and that persons with disabilities may not be directly or indirectly discriminated against (as affirmed by the UFS Anti-Discrimination Policy). Furthermore, Section 29 states that everyone has the right to further education and reasonable measures must be made available and accessible.</p> <p>5.4 The UFS undertakes to protect all students and staff from direct and indirect unfair discrimination through its Anti-Discrimination, Promotion of Equality, and Social Justice Policy and Procedures.</p> <p>5.5 The National Plan for Higher Education (Ministry of Education, February 2001) commits higher education institutions in South Africa to increase the access of learners with special education needs. The Department of Education's Education White Paper 6 (2001) requires of management of higher education institutions to ensure appropriate physical access for students with physical disabilities and to provide specialised equipment and resources.</p> <p>5.6 The Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System (2018), based on the White Paper 2016 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, places a responsibility on higher education institutions to nurture students and to prepare them for a positive role in a democratic society.</p> |

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|                         | <p>5.7 The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) Professional Standards, specifically for disability resources and services, requires the consolidation of the inaccessibility of the environments in which students function. Therefore, institutional advisement should intentionally be done with regard to universal design.</p> <p><b>5.8 Disclosure of disability status</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The UFS aims to create a positive and safe environment that promotes acceptance and the prevention of prejudice and discrimination against students with disabilities.</li> <li>b) UFS will encourage voluntary disclosure in order to provide suitable support but will not impose any obligation on students to disclose their disability status.</li> <li>c) In the case of non-disclosure by a person with a disability, or where the disability is not self-evident, the UFS may not be held liable for failure to comply with the provisions of this policy.</li> <li>d) The UFS may require the student to disclose sufficient information to confirm the disability and/or to assist in determining appropriate reasonable accommodation needs.</li> <li>e) Disclosure may occur during the application or at any time during the period of study.</li> <li>f) Support will be provided from the date of disclosure (not retrospectively).</li> <li>g) Disclosure will take place only under specified conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) with the consent of the student;</li> <li>ii) when it relates to the health and safety of the student and others; and</li> <li>iii) when reasonable accommodation is requested.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>5.9 Confidentiality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The UFS recognises that students may be reluctant to declare a disability, due to the fear of stigma, a fear that confidentiality will not be respected, or that their academic standing will be affected. However, the UFS encourages students to declare their disabilities at an early stage in order to be reasonably accommodated timeously.</li> <li>b) The UFS provides specific guidelines on confidentiality in respect of students with disabilities. These embody the general principle that consent should be sought before information is shared, except in situations that are in accordance with legislation and strict professional ethical guidelines. Therefore, any decision to break confidentiality must be made at the appropriate level.</li> <li>c) The UFS undertakes to protect the confidentiality of the information that has been disclosed for the purposes of this policy.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>6. Policy</b></p> | <p>6.1 The UFS commits to reduce and/or remove the barriers to participation, especially for students with disabilities.</p> <p>6.2 UFS will ensure that the production, transfer and dissemination of knowledge that supports the advancement and empowerment of students with disabilities is included in its academic, research and social-engagement plans.</p>  |

6.3 The UFS commits to sustainable transformation initiatives and governance mechanisms that value the diversity of its student population and the community it serves.

6.4 The inclusion, empowerment and integration of students with disabilities is an integral part of the UFS ethos and institutional culture. This requires that the UFS creates an intellectually vibrant, socially just and culturally inclusive environment, which will foster and encourage positive attitudes towards students with disabilities.

6.5 The UFS commits to include and integrate students with disabilities within teaching, learning, and research and service functions. The UFS commits to serve students with disabilities in a humane and respectful manner with due cognisance for the diversity in their learning abilities and styles.

6.6 Where necessary, all academic staff will put in place reasonable accommodation measures in the learning process, teaching methodology, course content and delivery to facilitate access and success by applying universal design principles.

6.7 The UFS will evaluate/audit the environment and, where necessary, provide appropriate interventions in order to create an enabling environment.

6.8 All UFS information will be made available in different formats to be accessible by the responsible divisions (e.g. captioning, e-text, html, etc.).

#### **6.9 Admissions**

a) No qualifying student with a disability will, on that ground alone, be refused admission to the UFS. However, the provision of appropriate support will be limited by the affordability of those support systems.

b) The UFS commits itself, within reasonable capacity (e.g. finance, facilities, etc.), to enable as many qualifying students with disabilities as possible to study at its institution.

c) The UFS respects and will support the rights of students with disabilities to receive reasonable accommodation, when the student voluntarily requests such support.

#### **6.10 Learning and teaching**

a) The UFS will endeavour to make teaching methodologies and processes accessible to students with different types of disabilities.

b) Universal access and design principles will be applied in relation to faculty instruction and curricula (including the content and design of training material, facilitation and teaching style, practicals, etc.) to facilitate integrated learning.

c) The UFS will aim to improve the skills level of its staff – both academic and administrative – through training and advocacy programmes.

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|                                 | <p>d) Academic staff in particular will be trained to engage appropriately and be equipped to deal with different reasonable accommodation needs.</p> <p>e) The staff of CUADS and academic departments will liaise with one another to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities.</p> <p>f) Facilities appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities will be made available during assessments and concessions will be allowed, upon application and evaluation by the RAP.</p> <p>g) Special assessment arrangements will be available for students with disabilities.</p> <p>6.11 UFS will implement ongoing sensitisation and advocacy initiatives that promote and maintain an inclusive and enabling learning and support environment to remove attitudinal barriers.</p> <p>6.12 The UFS will ensure to remove environmental barriers in the built environment by:</p> <p>a) Complying with the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act as amended for persons with disabilities.</p> <p>b) Adopting a phased-in approach with older structures, while new projects will include universal access requirements from the outset.</p> <p>c) Creating adequate signage indicating the location of accessible entrances, parking, toilets and emergency exits, ramps and lifts and other relevant services and facilities related to students with disabilities.</p> <p>d) Communicating safety and evacuation procedures applied to students with disabilities with due cognisance of reasonable accommodation needs.</p> <p>6.13 Students with disabilities will have equal access to and will be encouraged to participate in all student governance structures of their choice.</p> <p>6.14 Students with disabilities will have equal access to recreation and sport facilities on campus. In an instance where a request is not attainable by the UFS, alternative ways of accommodating the student will be explored.</p> <p>6.15 Housing and residence will be provided with due regard to the reasonable accommodation needs of students.</p> |
| <p><b>7. Responsibility</b></p> | <p>7.1 The Rector and Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Director: Student Affairs are responsible to provide leadership to ensure the buy-in from all role players, in order to attain the objectives of this policy.</p> <p>7.2 The Executive Director: Student Affairs will be the first point of accountability for the operational implementation of this policy.</p> <p>7.3 The Head of CUADS will be responsible for developing and implementing processes that give effect to the provisions of this policy. CUADS will:</p> <p>a) Provide academic support to students with disabilities.</p> <p>b) Provide access to fair and equitable education.</p>  |

- c) Aim to create and maintain a barrier-free environment for students with disabilities.
- d) Provide services to students with different disabilities.
- e) Extend the existing levels of service within resource constraints.
- f) Provide support to Faculties and Support Services in relation to the implementation of this policy.
- g) Provide guidance and advice to assist the UFS to promote and develop an inclusive institutional culture.
- h) Have joint programmes and collaboration amongst institutional divisions to remove administrative, academic, support and student-life environmental barriers.
- i) Coordinate the functions of the RAP for the adjudication of requests for reasonable accommodation.
- j) Provide individualised disability support to render a humanising and appropriate support service to students with disabilities.
- k) Provide academic support services by administering and coordinating the following:
  - i) The Alternative Assessment Programme and venue together with Student Academic Services (Exam Division) to ensure that the assessments of students with disabilities are done in an effective, fair, equal, credible and trustworthy manner.
  - ii) The production of accessible study material together with academic departments and Library Services to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to study material.
  - iii) The Communication Access Programme to provide communication access together with interpreter services to students with hearing impairments.
  - iv) The Student Academic Support Programme through the Centre for Teaching and Learning (A-Step Programme, Unit for Language Development, Write-Site, etc.) to provide optimal academic support for individual students according to their specific academic challenges and needs.

7.4 The Senior Director: UFS Estates will be responsible for continuously conducting physical accessibility audits and progressively removing all physical barriers and accessibility hazards in the built environment in collaboration with CUADS.

7.5 The Director: Student Recruitment will actively attract students with disabilities through accessible advertising, career exhibitions, and visits to high schools (including special schools) to showcase the University's inclusive academic culture and approach.

7.6 The Deputy Registrar: Student Academic Services, in collaboration with CUADS, will ensure that the admission and registration of students with disabilities is inclusive.

7.7 The Centre for Teaching and Learning, in collaboration with CUADS, will implement and promote the universal design principles to assist academic departments to adapt their teaching and learning methodologies to include the needs of students with disabilities by:

- a) Using inclusive instructional strategies that benefit a broad range of learners in a diverse learning community.
- b) Having strong collaboration and working relationships between teaching and learning managers of faculties and CUADS.

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|  | <p>7.8 The Director: Communication and Marketing will ensure that dissemination and sharing of information is accessible to students with disabilities on the communication platforms of the UFS.</p> <p>7.9 The Senior Director: Information and Communication Technology will:</p> <p>a) Provide guidance and information regarding assistive technology, hardware and software.</p> <p>b) Maintain and update CUADS computer laboratories.</p> <p>7.10 The Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs will ensure the placement of all students with disabilities in residences on campus.</p> |
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| <b>8. Accountability and Authority:</b> |   |
| <b>Implementation:</b>                  | Rector & Vice-Chancellor<br>Executive Director: Student Affairs<br>Head of CUADS<br>Senior Director: UFS Estates<br>Director: Student Recruitment<br>Deputy Registrar: Student Academic Services<br>Senior Director: Centre for Teaching and Learning<br>Director: Communication and Marketing<br>Senior Director: Information and Communication Technology<br>Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs<br>Institutional Universal Access Forum<br>Reasonable Accommodation Panel |
| <b>Compliance:</b>                      | Rector & Vice-Chancellor<br>Executive Director: Student Affairs<br>Head of CUADS<br>Senior Director: UFS Estates<br>Director: Student Recruitment<br>Deputy Registrar: Student Academic Services<br>Senior Director: Centre for Teaching and Learning<br>Director: Communication and Marketing<br>Senior Director: Information and Communication Technology<br>Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs   |
| <b>Monitoring and Evaluation:</b>       | Rector & Vice-Chancellor<br>Registrar<br>Executive Director: Student Affairs  |
| <b>Development/Review:</b>              | Rector & Vice-Chancellor<br>Executive Director: Student Affairs<br>Head of CUADS  |
| <b>Approval Authority:</b>              | University of the Free State Council  |
| <b>Interpretation and Advice:</b>       | Head of CUADS<br>Institutional Universal Access Forum   |

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| <b>9. Who should know this policy?</b>  |
| UFS Students and Staff<br>Institutional Student Representative Council and its sub-structures<br>Line Managers<br>Institutional Universal Access Forum<br>Reasonable Accommodation Panel (RAP)<br>Rector & Vice-Chancellor<br>Executive Director: Student Affairs |

Head of CUADS  
 Senior Director: UFS Estates  
 Director: Student Recruitment  
 Deputy Registrar: Student Academic Services  
 Senior Director: Centre for Teaching and Learning  
 Director: Communication and Marketing  
 Senior Director: Information and Communication Technology  
 Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs  
 Senior Director: Human Resources

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| <p><b>10. Policy implementation plan</b></p> | <p>           Training workshops to all relevant departments responsible for the implementation of the policy<br/>           Remit for Institutional Access Forum<br/>           Remit for Reasonable Accommodation Panel<br/>           Reasonable Accommodation Procedures<br/>           Development of Protocol for Proactive Approach for Lecturers, Guidelines for Teaching Material, Protocols for Universal Access<br/>           Considerations for Physical Spaces, Infrastructure and learning spaces.<br/>           Advocacy, advocacy and analysis workshops for staff and students         </p>  |
| <p><b>11. Resources required</b></p>         | <p>           11.1 The UFS commits to the following in ensuring the successful implementation of this policy:<br/>           a) Funding the production cost of accessible study material.<br/>           b) Funding for the ad hoc employment of:<br/>               i) South African Sign Language interpreters/lip-speakers<br/>               ii) Amanuenses (scribes and readers)<br/>               iii) Note-takers<br/>               iv) Personal assistants<br/>               v) Tutors<br/>           c) Funding of computer laboratories, hardware and software for alternative assessment arrangements.<br/>           d) Funding of assistive devices for student academic support needs.         </p> <p>           11.2 The UFS will establish a RAP budget (recurring seed funding of about R500 000), which will fund the implementation of the RAP resolutions (as required by the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016).         </p> <p>           11.3 The UFS commits itself to budget for accessibility funding, which will address the physical environment.         </p> |

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| <b>12. Answers to FAQ</b>   |  |
| <p>Q: How are staff and students with disabilities represented in structures of the university (such as the Reasonable Accommodation Panel (RAP), Faculties, Student Councils, and Employment Equity Committee)?</p> <p>A: CUADS attempts to represent the voice of students and staff with disabilities on the Employment Equity Committee, Academic Committee of Senate, Student Services Committee, Reasonable Accommodation Panel and Institutional Universal Access Forum.</p> <p>Since 2018, the Institutional Student Representative Council (ISRC) Constitution has created a campus SRC level constituency-based portfolio. The portfolio in question, the universal access and social justice portfolio was established with a mandate to create student committees within the Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support as well as the Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Office. The student committees created within these respective environments, elect a chairperson from within their collective which chairperson would then serve on the SRC as a full member.</p> <p>The purpose of the portfolio is to ensure that the voice of historically marginalised communities is intentionally and officially placed within the highest structures of student governance in order to ensure that at all times, the voice of these constituencies is considered and available during all campus deliberations and decision-making processes.</p> <p>The Campus SRC structure is the only structure where the portfolio is made mandatory. However, as substructures of the SRC, all faculty councils, residences and other structures are encouraged to adopt new portfolios within their respective structures in order to mirror the direction and mandate given to the SRC. Therefore, the voice of students with disabilities must be represented through this mandate. It is encouraged that the mandate be made mandatory in all faculty and residence committees.</p> |  |
| <p>Q: How does the experience of students with disabilities differ?</p> <p>A: It is important to note that it is not a “one size fits all” adaptation to accommodate students with disabilities. Each student with a disability has his/her/their own experience depending whether they were born with a disability or became disabled or it might be progressive of nature. Not all deaf persons use Sign Language or can lip-read for example, but also that hearing loss can be progressive of nature. Each student’s experience is individual and therefore the provision of disability support must be according to the student’s specific needs.</p>  |  |
| <p>Q: What are the different categories of disabilities accommodated at the UFS?</p> <p>A: Specific learning difficulties, Mobility impairments, Visual impairments, Hearing impairments, Debilitating psychological and other chronic conditions and Temporary impairments. Whilst students with learning difficulties are the majority and invisible, it must be noted that not all disabilities are visible, including psychological and chronic conditions.</p>   |  |
| <p>Q: What are the services available for students with disabilities at the UFS?</p> <p>A: Provision of <u>disability support</u> through a specialist and a holistic coordinated approach:<br/> Provision of <u>accessible transport</u> between Bfn and South Campuses.<br/> Provision of <u>accessible study material</u> through the coordination and production of accessible learning material (Braille, enlargements, audio) and lectures with Academic Departments and lecturers.<br/> Provision of <u>communication access</u> through the facilitation and coordination with Interpreter Services (Sign Language interpretation, lip-speaking, real-time captioning, transcribing).<br/> Facilitating and coordinating <u>alternative assessment options</u> housing an accessible venue and computer lab.<br/> Collaborate with the Centre for Teaching and Learning for <u>student academic support</u> to ensure students with disabilities are supported academically, i.e. WriteSite, A_Step Tutor Programme, Unit for Language Development and the implementation of Universal Design in Learning.</p>  |  |



Liaison, awareness and advocacy for the development of awareness and advocacy programmes regarding disability and universal access (i.e. Student Affairs, HR & CTL)  
Endeavour to ensure the accessibility to buildings and facilities for all users, according to the principles of Universal Access and Universal Design together with UFS Estates.

**EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY**

**Performance Indicator(s):**

To be completed on review by the person responsible for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.