



GUIDE FOR SUPPORTING  
STUDENTS WITH

**COMMUNICATION AND  
SPEECH DIFFICULTIES**

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**UFS**  
CENTRE FOR UNIVERSAL  
ACCESS AND DISABILITY  
SUPPORT (CUADS)



## HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS WHEN INTERACTING WITH A STUDENT WITH A SPEECH IMPEDIMENT:

The Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS) plays a very important role in the lives of all students with disabilities. Students are assisted in adjusting to the demands of academic life in various ways and many specialised services for such students are on offer.

Speech impairment refers to an impaired ability to produce sounds and may range from mild to severe. It may include an articulation disorder (characterised by omissions or distortions of speech sounds), a fluency disorder (characterised by a typical flow, rhythm and repetition of sound, stuttering and stammering) or a voice disorder (characterised by abnormal pitch, volume, resonance, vocal quality or duration which might be inappropriate for one's sex or age) (American Speech–Language–Hearing Association: 1993). All of these impairments can be further aggravated by the anxiety inherent in oral communication in a group.

People with speech impairments may take longer to communicate with you, so be patient and respectful.

Speech impairments are not related to an individual's intellectual capacity, and individuals with speech impairments do communicate, but may communicate using various assistive technologies.

- Treat the person with respect. Do not be afraid to ask them to repeat a word or sentence. Be patient; do not supply words or finish thoughts for them.
- Address the person with the communication disorder directly. Do not assume someone with a speech disorder lacks the capacity to understand.
- Give whole, unhurried attention to the person who has difficulty speaking.
- Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting.
- Look for facial, hand or other responses. Speech is not the only form of communication.
- Do not urge a person who stutters to slow down or start over. This tends to make the stuttering worse.
- Rather than speak for the person, allow extra time for the conversation and be patient. Do not finish a person's sentence or guess what is being said.
- If you have difficulty understanding, don't pretend that you do. Repeat as much as you do understand. The person's reaction will guide you and clue you in.
- Provide appropriate ways for the individual to participate in activities, conversations or class presentations. Do not exclude them just because their speech is impaired.
- Speak clearly and distinctly but naturally. Be aware that people might feel like you are "talking down" to them if you speak too slowly.
- Be willing to work at communicating. In some cases, this may mean learning basic Sign Language or being aware of special communication devices for individuals who are nonverbal. If appropriate, become familiar with devices, systems and programs that have been developed to assist.
- Strive to understand what the individual is saying by focusing on what they say rather than how they are saying it.
- Ask one question at a time, giving the person time to respond before moving on.
- Whenever possible, ask questions that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no".
- Be aware that you may need to use a variety of communication methods such as writing notes, emailing or technological options.
- If the person uses any assistive technology devices, make sure the devices are always within the person's reach.

## IF YOU ARE A STUDENT WITH A SPEECH IMPEDIMENT, CUADS CAN ASSIST:

Whatever the degree of impairment, students should be expected to participate fully in classroom activities, such as discussions and group work. CUADS can advise on a range of support services, strategies and resources to enable you to perform to your potential and participate in university life.

CUADS will liaise with academic staff so that the modification of materials, necessary accommodations, permission to record lectures, provision of lecture notes and reading/book lists are provided well in advance and any necessary psychological or social support is provided by Student Counselling and Development.

At CUADS, we will consult with you on the support you need, preferred methods of communication and accessing written information. In order to fully support you, you will need to come to CUADS and apply for the necessary reasonable accommodations/concession. We also advise the academic staff on ways to help enable you to fully access lectures, seminars and tutorials.

We can assist you with your requests for concessions/accommodations during tests and exams as well as help you in finding scribes, readers, note-takers or tutors. While CUADS helps to identify your individual support needs, we can also offer the following assistive devices and other technology:



Concessions.



Reasonable accommodations.



Advice regarding assistive technology, hardware and software.

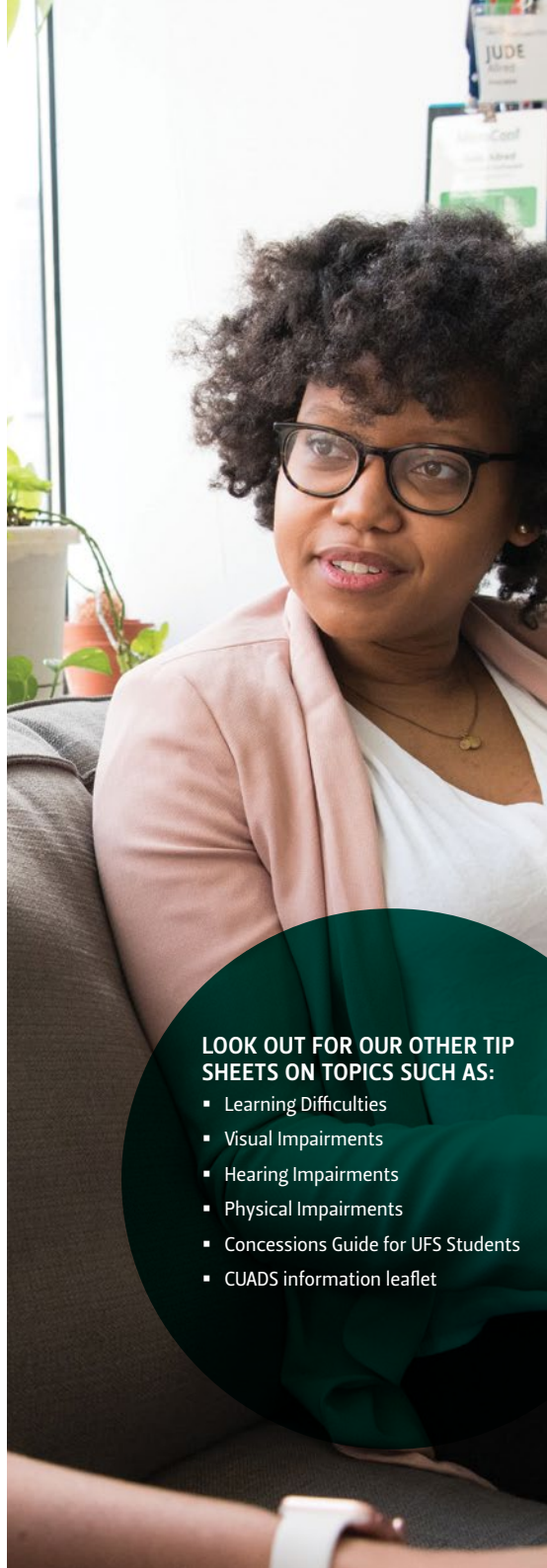


Liaison with academic staff.

The aim of assistive technologies is to help level the playing field for students with communication and speech impairments, not to give them an added advantage over other non-disabled students.

### LOOK OUT FOR OUR OTHER TIP SHEETS ON TOPICS SUCH AS:

- Learning Difficulties
- Visual Impairments
- Hearing Impairments
- Physical Impairments
- Concessions Guide for UFS Students
- CUADS information leaflet





HELLO

## KEEP IN TOUCH

We aim to provide holistic support to UFS students with disabilities, and pride ourselves on being accessible to our students and other university stakeholders.

You can reach the Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS) on any of the following platforms:



## VISIT US ON YOUR CAMPUS

- **Bloemfontein Campus (BFN):**  
Level 2, Sasol Library (next to the Johannes Stegmann Art Gallery)
- **South Campus (SC):**  
Room D125, Neville Alexander Library
- **QwaQwa Campus (QQ):**  
Room 2013, Intsika Building



## CALL US

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+27 51 505 1355 (SC)  
+27 58 721 5189 (QQ)



## SEND US AN EMAIL

[cuads@ufs.ac.za](mailto:cuads@ufs.ac.za)



## Facebook

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## Instagram

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## LinkedIn

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