# POLICY ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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<td>Custodian</td>
<td>MEC member responsible for Human Resources</td>
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<td>Responsible Division</td>
<td>Committee for People with Disabilities</td>
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## RELATED DOCUMENTS

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<td>People with Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Divisions, Constituents and/or Individuals Affected by the Policy</strong></td>
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<td>All employees</td>
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<td>ADS, (PsyCad – O;PwD), HR Department, Library and Information Centre, Operations (Campus Directors), Student Affairs (Residence Managers), Sports Faculties (Executive Deans, HODs)</td>
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1. **PREAMBLE**

1.1. Recognising the talents, abilities and potential of people with disabilities, the University of Johannesburg is committed to creating an enabling learning and work environment along with an organisational culture where full and equitable participation and progression become a reality for all its students and employees. Disability integration forms an integral part of the University's transformation agenda.

1.2. The University strives to create an enabling learning environment for its students with disabilities where their learning experience is commensurate with their aspirations and abilities and where their talents are nurtured and developed.

1.3. The University further subscribes to a workplace where its employees with disabilities have equal and equitable access to opportunities and where diversity is valued.

1.4. Differences and diverse needs will be reasonably accommodated within the University’s physical environment, structure, available resources and institutional processes.

2. **SCOPE**

2.1 The term ‘People with Disabilities’ within the University of Johannesburg refers to employees, students and visitors.

2.2 All employees and registered students of the University are subject to this policy.

3. **POLICY PRINCIPLES**

3.1 The University strives to develop and follow a consultative and participative approach and will involve students and employees with disabilities in the development and the implementation of its disability initiatives.

3.2 This policy is based on the premises of human rights, universal access design and the pursuit of knowledge. It is acknowledged that all people with all types of disabilities enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms and that the University can benefit from their participation.

3.3 The University recognises the roles and responsibilities of different internal role players to ensure the successful implementation of this policy and will strive for a holistic and multi-faceted approach. Students and employees with disability as beneficiaries are also obligated to support the University in achieving its vision and must accept their responsibility in realising the mutual benefits of this policy.

3.4 The University strives – in a non-discriminatory manner – to entrench inclusivity and create equal opportunities for employees and students with disabilities.

3.5 The University strives to comply with the spirit and content of, amongst other:
i) The Employment Equity Act of 1998;

3.6 The University aims to keep abreast of all relevant legislation, policies and directives that affect the position of people with disabilities and is fully committed to the execution thereof.

3.7 The University aims to keep abreast of international instruments, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and to take note of best practice developments in international higher education.

3.8 With regard to physical facilities, the University’s intention in the planning and re-planning of existing facilities and future design is that all the areas will be made accessible for employees, students and visitors with disabilities. The University will provide an accessible environment in compliance with all legal and other regulatory requirements that allows equal freedom of movement and access to services on all our campuses. The University will assess its built environment continuously and will address barriers in a strategic and incremental manner that allows students, employees and visitors with diverse needs to function optimally within the campus environment.

3.9 The University realises that universal access relates to more than the built environment and will strive for inclusion of students in the broader learning experience and in the workplace for its employees with disabilities.

3.10 Universal design also includes an educational approach for instructing all students through developing adaptable classroom materials, using various technology tools, and varying the delivery of information or instruction thus creating an instructionally accessible environment.

3.11 The University will facilitate access to information and assistive technology/devices. People with disabilities may function differently and relevant accommodations will be put in place as far as reasonably and practically possible.

3.12 The University will strive for a culture of acceptance of disability as part of the broader diversity experience.

3.13 Regular contact is maintained with professional bodies, local and international, regarding different types of disabilities in order to keep abreast of educational and employment related developments, innovations and solutions relevant to people with disabilities (including information about new types of equipment, teaching methodologies, curriculum design) for specific needs. The University is
also committed to making its own contribution to the broader higher education sector specific in relation to disability equity and integration.

3.14 As the custodian of knowledge and education the University will promote further learning in the subject matter of disability contributing to expertise and excellence in the field.

3.15 All policies and rules of the University are also applicable to students and employees with disabilities. In its procedural and substantive application due consideration will be given to the accommodation needs of people with disabilities to ensure equitable and fair application.

3.16 This policy as a whole is conditional in that the University will provide and put in place measures for its achievement and implementation within its discretion that are reasonable, practical, achievable and financially viable.

3.17 This policy and the benefits afforded by it are based upon voluntary disclosure and self-identification, unless the disability is visible and self-explanatory. The University reserves its right to verify a person’s disability status based on medical evidence, should it deem it necessary.

4. STUDENTS

4.1 The University recognises that students with a disability may access the learning experience differently from their non-disabled counterparts. The admission of students with disabilities is subject to the admission requirements of the University.

4.2 The University subscribes to a social model of dealing with disability and recognises it as a function of an impairment, the environment and societal attitudes. Deficiencies in environmental design and a lack of awareness constitute societal barriers for the full integration of people with disabilities.

4.3 The University endeavours to continually improve all aspects of accessibility for its students – physically, technologically and socially. Universal access facilitates the whole learning cycle including aspects such as an understanding of the learning content, campus experiences that leads to the full development of the student, and integration within the broader student community.

4.4 For purposes of this policy a student with a disability is defined as:

i) A student with an impairment who experiences disability based on specific contextual barriers.

ii) Disability, as a consequence of an impairment as well as environmental and attitudinal barriers, substantially limits a student from equal participation in the learning environment. The University accepts its responsibility to incrementally remove or limit the barriers to participation, as far as is reasonably practicable and financially sustainable.

Note: An Impairment is caused by an injury, illness, trauma and/or congenital factors resulting in a physical, sensory, mental, emotional or
cognitive condition that is permanent, long term or recurring and which causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological functioning. The impairment can be visible or invisible.

4.5 The support and integration of students with disabilities is facilitated by the Office: People with Disabilities.

4.6 The Office: People with Disabilities concerns itself with the position of students with disabilities and serves as the central point of contact for any student or prospective student with a disability.

4.7 Students with disabilities are welcome to report concerns and request assistance and support to enable them to be included in all aspects of university life on equal terms with other students.

4.8 At the beginning of every year, the Office: People with Disabilities conducts a survey of all the registered students with disabilities (in accordance with the HEMIS classification system) and assists them as far as reasonably possible and within available resources. The student database is continuously updated to ensure that a proper information management system is in place.

4.9 The special support needs and reasonable accommodation requests of students with disabilities are considered on the recommendation of, professionals including registered medical and other health professionals registered with a professional body. Consultation occurs between the requesting student and the Office: People with Disabilities who forwards requests to an ad hoc Committee, comprising of relevant professionals and faculty based experts for consideration and decision making. The Committee’s recommendations are then communicated to the respective executive dean and/or division for implementation. The measures put in place must serve the purpose for which they were intended and the University undertakes to apply resourceful and customised solutions to meet individual needs. All types of disabilities will be catered for as far as reasonably possible.

4.10 The confidential nature of information regarding the disability status of a student is honoured and the information released to appropriate UJ stakeholders only with the written consent of the student (or, where applicable, the student’s parent or guardian) if considered necessary in order to promote a student’s academic and academic-related interests.

4.11 The Office: People with Disabilities Standard Operating Procedures must be read together with this Policy.

5. **EMPLOYEES**

5.1 The University recognises that people with disabilities are people with abilities capable of and eligible for a wide range of positions and occupations just as their abled colleagues. Persons with disabilities are considered for employment
provided they are suitably qualified to perform the essential functions of the job and meet the inherent job requirements.

5.2 The University’s Employment Equity Plan includes numerical targets/goals as well as measurable outcomes and positions the institution strategically to achieve, amongst other, disability equity in its workplace.

5.3 In terms of the Employment Equity Act people with disabilities for workplace purposes are considered as such if they satisfy all the criteria in the following definition:
   i) Having a physical or mental impairment;
   ii) Which is long term or recurring; and
   iii) Which substantially limits their prospects of entry into or advancement in employment.

Note: An Impairment is caused by an injury, illness, trauma and/or congenital factors resulting in a physical, sensory, mental, emotional or cognitive condition that is permanent, long term or recurring and which causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological functioning. The impairment can be visible or invisible.

5.4 Substantially limiting means if in its nature, duration or effects, the person’s impairment substantially limits their ability to perform the essential functions of the job for which they are being considered. This does not equate to an incapacity or inability to perform.

5.5 When determining disability status the University focuses not only on the medical symptoms of an impairment or disease. A social model, is followed where the contribution of societal, attitudinal and physical infra-structure barriers in creating the limitations are acknowledged.

5.6 An applicant for employment or a current employee of the University has a choice to disclose their disability, impairment and related accommodation requirements at any time in the employment process. The University will keep proper record of the disability status of employees in its service and will report accordingly in terms of statutory prescripts.

5.7 Within the workplace reasonable accommodation refers to ‘any measure that can ensure the entry and/or advancement of people with disabilities in the workplace’. The purpose is to enhance opportunities for qualified persons with disabilities to be, or to remain, employed at the University. Accommodations vary according to the disability and are determined on a case-by-case basis and must be ‘reasonable’ within the particular circumstances.

5.8 Disability integration and equity principles will be applied throughout the employment cycle from entry into the University, to workplace conditions and practices whilst in employment to the person exiting from the organisation.
Accommodations will address environmental and attitudinal barriers in the workplace.

5.9 Standard human resource policies and procedures apply to employees with disabilities but with due regard for their support and accommodation needs.

5.10 The University actively advertises and seeks to encourage people with disabilities to apply for vacant positions for which they are qualified. Best practice recruitment methodologies are adhered to by opening all jobs to all people, irrespective of their type of disability. A conditional job offer can be made subject to the outcome of a workplace or medical assessment. Once employed accommodations relevant to the individual are put in place, if required, to assist the person to execute their functions, perform satisfactorily, grow their talent and skills and to ensure progress, upward mobility and retention.

5.11 All employees and prospective employees are consistently treated equitably in all aspects of resourcing and employment.

5.12 The University will not unfairly discriminate against people with disabilities in any employment policy or practice, including those relating to recruitment, selection, appointments, remunerations, benefits, work promotion, conditions of employment and disciplinary procedures.

5.13 The University attempts to adapt the working conditions of employees with disabilities, in order to ensure efficient functioning.

5.14 The University may request pertinent information about prospective or current employees with disabilities. This medical or psychological information will only be requested if it is deemed necessary to assess the ability to perform, to adjust the employee's working conditions/environment to ensure efficient functioning, as well as for legal compliance purposes.

5.15 The confidential nature of information regarding the disability status of an employee is honoured and such information is released to appropriate university stakeholders only with the written consent of the employee.

5.16 Every attempt is made to re-integrate employees with disability/impairments occurring during employment by accommodating them, either in their current position or alternative positions.

5.17 Should the degree of disability deteriorate to the extent that the employee becomes incapacitated to fulfil his/her job and/or any other alternative job, due process will be instituted to deal with the situation in accordance with the University's legal and other statutory obligations.

5.18 The University will put appropriate disaster management, including evacuation procedures, in place to ensure the safety of employees with disabilities at the workplace.

5.19 The Human Resources Division of the University is responsible for developing and implementing best practices and legally compliant human resource policies
and procedures relating to employees with disabilities. This Policy must be read together with other relevant human resource related documentation.

6. VISITORS
6.1 As far as visitors, including parents, community members, other lecturing staff, and service providers are concerned, the University strives to create a disability friendly and non-discriminatory environment where people with disabilities have freedom of movement, they are treated with respect and internal role players are sensitive to their accommodation needs.

6.2 The Office: People with Disabilities serves as point of contact, if required, from where the necessary referrals can be made.

7. ACCESS TO INFORMATION
7.1 The University undertakes to facilitate access to information for people with print disabilities and will strive to make, amongst other, the Library services accessible.

7.2 University communications, including its website, will take cognisance of the need for information in accessible format.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
People with disabilities are encouraged to come forward personally and to notify the University of any concerns, obstacles and needs associated with their disability, which requires the attention of the relevant decision makers within the University to attempt and find reasonable accommodations wherever possible.

9. GOVERNANCE
9.1 Office: People with Disabilities
The Office: People with Disabilities resides within the Centre for Psychological Services and Career Development (PsyCaD). A PsyCaD employee/psychologist on each of the four campus sites of the UJ is responsible for the co-ordination of support to students with disabilities.

With regard to students with disabilities, the Office: People with Disabilities amongst other:

i) Provides guidance and counselling services.

ii) Identifies and determines specific support needs in consultation with the student.

iii) Empties to find practical solutions to their needs.

iv) Liaises on accessibility issues with faculties and divisions.

v) Helps the students to familiarize themselves with the campus, depending on their special needs.

vi) Brings the situation of every student with a disability to the attention of the respective line managers in faculties and divisions.
vii) Provides assistance with access to learning aids.
viii) Incorporates the students in one or more of the support programmes presented by the University, if this is deemed necessary or useful.
ix) Provides assistance to foreign students with disabilities to address their special needs.

In addition the Office:
i) Advises on support for employees’ with disabilities, when required.
ii) Provides service support to visitors with disabilities, when required.
iii) Provides advice to the MEC Committee: People with Disabilities on the provision and maintenance of infrastructure on all campus sites, involvement in fundraising drives and awareness campaigns.
iv) Act as change agent on campus to facilitate disability equity and integration
v) Actively raise awareness amongst all internal role players on disability matters and this policy’s principles;
vi) Work together with other role players to achieve the University's Transformation Plan objectives and targets;
vii) Facilitate access to student and institutional funding opportunities.

9.2 **Human Resources Division**
The Human Resources Division is responsible for the development and implementation of best practice and legally compliant policies and procedures throughout the employment cycle to ensure the attraction, integration, progression and upward mobility of employees with disabilities.

9.3 **Unit: Employee Wellness**
The Unit: Employee Wellness within the Division: Human Resources is responsible for the provision of advice and the co-ordination of activities in respect of employees and prospective employees with disabilities.

9.4 **MEC Committee: People with Disabilities**
9.4.1 The **governance** in respect of support for people with disabilities is undertaken by the Committee for People with Disabilities. The composition of this committee is as follows:

9.4.1.1 The MEC member responsible for Human Resources (Chairperson);
9.4.1.2 Executive Dean nominated by MECA or his/her nominee;
9.4.1.3 Executive Directors or their nominees:
   - Academic Development and Support;
   - Human Resources;
   - Library and Information Centre;
   - Operations;
• Student Affairs;
• Sport;

9.4.1.4 Team Leader – Office: People with Disabilities;
9.4.1.5 Head: Unit for Employee Wellness.
9.4.1.6 One SRC representative nominated by the UJ-SRC;
9.4.1.7 One member of each recognised labour union nominated by the respective labour unions;
9.4.1.8 One employee with disabilities nominated by the Division: Human Resources and appointed by MEC;
9.4.1.9 Co-opted members as the CPWD deems fit.

9.4.2 The functions of the Committee for People with Disabilities are the following:
9.4.2.1 Development of a Strategy for People with Disabilities (employees, students and visitors) including equity targets for people with disabilities;
9.4.2.2 Policy formulation, monitoring and revision;
9.4.2.3 To facilitate the exercise of the rights of people with disabilities;
9.4.2.4 To provide advocacy and facilitate the establishment of support groups for students/employees with disabilities;
9.4.2.5 To determine through consultation the types of disabilities that can be fully accommodated and appropriately resourced in the academic programmes of the University;
9.4.2.6 To initiate partnerships with other higher education institutions and external role-players to maximise opportunities for people with disabilities;
9.4.2.7 Analyse national and international trends to ensure a “fit-for-purpose” social, physical, working and learning environment for the disabled.
9.4.2.8 To review bi-annual reports from the Office: People with Disabilities, the Unit: Employee Wellness and the Division: Operations on the exercise of responsibilities for people with disabilities and the implementation of the policy in these respective domains.

10. REPORTING
The Committee: People with Disabilities is a sub-committee of the Management Executive Committee (MEC). It reports regularly to the MEC on its activities.