



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
TRANSFORMATION SERVICES OFFICE
DISABILITY SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

April 2014 to March 2015

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
DISABILITY SERVICE**



PROMOTING ACCESS AND DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS

All documentation produced by the Disability Service is available in enlarged text, audio, Braille and e-text on request.

Vision

To establish a human rights culture at UCT with a special emphasis on disability.

To act within the University structures, providing advice and support both in terms of harnessing mainstream capabilities for the accommodation of people with disabilities, as well as providing specialist services where mainstreaming is not possible. To provide academically deserving disabled people with the opportunity for a fair and equal educational and work experience.

To be the sounding board, knowledge base and benchmark which deliver to the University the capacity to interact appropriately with students, staff, prospective students and visitors with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends and Colleagues

In drafting this annual report I am always conscious of being able only to skim the surface of what is inevitably a bare bones, snapshot report. It is hard to convey anything of the often feverish activity that characterises the average day in the Disability Service: the outraged member of staff to whom we have had to (politely) deny a disabled parking bay despite being pregnant (pregnancy is a normal, healthy state we tell her); the angry phone calls because “the bus is late” (it is stuck in traffic!); the highs and lows as students succeed spectacularly, or are defeated by health issues which take a turn for the worse; the growing anxiety as we reach out to meet genuine demands from deserving students and wonder where the funding will come from to cover our commitments.

And yet there is no doubt in my mind that ours is the most rewarding, the most enriching team to work in across the entire University.

Much of the work we do in the Disability Service is not quantifiable. It consists of heart work, involving all the members of the DS team who, each with their unique set of skills, accompany staff and students with disabilities on their journey towards a successful outcome, whether it is successfully graduating or accessing buildings and services in order to meet their goals as UCT staff members. As is the case with other transformation work at UCT the numbers alone don't tell the story, although we are in fact able to produce pretty impressive stats. In very many cases the support we provide to students with both permanent as well as temporary disabilities make the difference between graduating or not graduating, and very often going on to do successful post graduate work. Two examples of what some may consider rather mundane circumstances of students who were able to write their exams and pass all their courses may suffice. One student had recently fractured her coccyx. She was unable to write in a standard exam writing venue; she had to be able to change position – standing, lying down, and needed a big enough chair to support the therapeutic cushion she needed to sit on to relieve her pain. She wrote and passed her exams.

In similar vein we accommodated a student with acute haemorrhoids. He too could not afford to have his exams deferred. For him too we provided a flexible space where he could stand, walk around, lie down to minimize his acute discomfort and get through his exams that way.

There are a large number of students for whom a secluded test and exam writing venue make all the difference between graduating successfully and failing to do so. There are, for example students with Tourette's syndrome for whom the inevitably heightened stress levels produced by exam conditions drastically increase their vocal and other tics. When, shall we say, Anna, wrote her first exams with us she wept and cussed, loudly berating herself; a cup of tea, a quiet word, was often enough to calm her down. Not only did she regularly achieve

exam results upwards of 70%, but by the time she wrote her final exams her tics were almost completely under control.

And it is not only during the test and exam process that we support students. Several students located along the Autism Spectrum Disorder or with acute forms of Attention Deficit Disorder had been in danger of exclusion but for the ongoing support they received both in managing their anxiety and phobia and their organisational and planning challenges.

The work of DS may focus on the needs of students and staff members, but the real benefit is to the university community. UCT seeks to create a culture that embraces diversity, and this in itself is a learning and growing experience for all of us. In working with people who have disabilities, we find we are often the ones who receive as well as give. One recent gift to the DS family is Deborah Ojuka.

Throughout 2014 a familiar sight on weekday afternoons, sometime after four, was the fully loaded Disability Unit Caddy. In it we would squeeze, among other things, Allen and his wheelchair, My guide dog and myself, Nannette from the school of Architecture and Deborah Ojuka -- the acknowledged favourite. Deborah was in her first year as a student of Electrical Engineering, loving her course and doing well. She was a warm, gentle girl; she had the kind of smile that people would feel bound to tell me about. "That girl has the most beautiful smile," I became accustomed to hearing.

End-of-year exams came, Deborah was optimistic, she thought she had done well, and indeed this proved to be borne out when the end-of-year exam results were published. But to our shock and bafflement Deborah did not live to celebrate the fruits of her hard work and immense promise. On Monday morning we heard that she had passed away. Her absence still haunts those of us who had become extremely fond of her. Even now, almost six months later, we are weighed down by our sense of loss, our sense of a promising life cut cruelly and inexplicably short. Our hearts go out to her parents and brother, and all of those who loved her.

DEAF STUDENTS DO THE UNIVERSITY PROUD

I would like to draw the university's attention to the phenomenal success achieved by the four Deaf students who were registered with the university in 2014. It is hard to exaggerate their achievements given the language deficits that pre-lingually Deaf people must inevitably overcome if they are to cope with the comprehension, reading and writing tasks the UCT curriculum demands of them; and yet all of them consistently achieved between 60 and 75% in the November exams. We wish them all strength as they forge ahead with the next leg of their journey to graduation. One among their number, David Silva deserves special mention here. Although profoundly Deaf, David enrolled at the University before we appointed our first Sign language interpreter. For the first two years of his study he managed by lip reading and hard slog. It was only in 2012 when UCT

appointed its first full time Sign Language Interpreter that David had regular access to an interpreter. He deserves our Achiever of the Year award for 2015.

MORE STUDENT NEWS

Lauren Presutti, a Study Semester Abroad student with quadriplegia from Central Michigan University for whom, together with her two assistants, we provided accessible accommodation in Forest Hill, completed her semester with excellent results, obtaining 72, 80 and 91% respectively, the latter for IsiXhosa. As well as the accommodation mentioned above, we provided Lauren with accessible transport between her residence and lectures, a peer note taker and a scribe for tests and exams. Sinikiwe Kademaunga is a student of extreme short stature who also has no hands. Sinikiwe needed a motorised wheelchair if she was to cover the challenges posed by the distance between lecture venues, and, not unimportantly, to ensure her safety during the student stampedes that happen on Upper Campus between lectures. We were moved by an anonymous donation from a member of the UCT academic staff who recognized this and pledged R1000.00 towards a wheelchair for Sinikiwe. We were also pleased that the Kellogg Foundation, who is sponsoring Sinikiwe's studies, agreed in the course of the year to refund the cost of Sinikiwe's wheelchair. This is a truly exceptional young woman who, apart from accessible transport and her wheelchair has asked little of us. She has so far declined the use of a note taker or a scribe. Her independence speaks of tenacity and determination, but also that somewhere along the line Sinikiwe must have had excellent habilitation.



Picture: Sinikiwe Kademaunga enters the Accessible bus with assistance from Disability Service staff members David Jacobs and Graham Baartjies

SRC ALUMNI DONATES R10 000.00

We have mentioned one anonymous donor, but I need to mention a second, even though we normally leave thanking donors to the end of our report. A member of the 2013 SRC made an anonymous donation of R10 000.00 into our donation bank account after an SRC advocacy event during which two wheelchairs were handed over to the Disability Unit. We are usually more than happy for students just to volunteer their time and skills to assist us in the work we do. A concrete commitment of this sort from a student is truly extraordinary. We salute you, dear anonymous student. You made your donation anonymously, and we have to respect that, but I wish I could shout your name from the roof tops!

EXTRA TIME APPLICATIONS

The Disability Service currently employs a consultant psychologist for 25 hours a week to address the assessment and case management needs of students who wish to apply for extra time and other concessions in test and examinations, on the basis of previously documented or suspected Specific Learning Disabilities (SpLD). She also provides short-term crisis intervention and counselling for individual cases. In the few instances where it has been possible for her to provide students with more regular consultations, focused on problem specific interventions, the improvement in the student's academic performance has been evident.

During 2014 she had face-to-face interviews with 294 students, most of whom requested these appointments with a view to applying for a time concession. Application for extra time was made for 153 of these students. Since the start of 2015 she has interviewed 91 students. Again, most of these appointments were made by students wishing to apply for a time concession. Thus far extra time applications have been submitted for 49 of these students. Approval has also been granted for other accommodations, such as the use of a computer in tests and exams and access to a secluded writing space.

Provision has been made to enable disadvantaged students to access the costly assessments required to obtain approval for the test and exam concessions internationally accepted as appropriate for students with a Specific Learning Disability. An internship position has been created for a student psychometrist who is trained by the consultant psychologist in the administration of the required test battery. In 2014 the incumbent in this position assessed 38 students. Since starting at the Disability Service in February of this year, our new student psychometrist has completed her training in most of the tests required and she has been involved in the assessment of 13 students.

TESTS AND EXAMS WRITTEN AT THE DISABILITY SERVICE

234 Semester Tests were written in the DS, and a total of 579 Exams were written in June and November. Over the last few years we have been doing formal evaluation of our exam writing process, which, it goes without saying, are

administered strictly according to UCT's exam writing policy. In the evaluation forms the service is rated consistently as 5 out of a possible score of 5, with a few 4's scattered here and there.

NOTETAKERS

25 students, volunteers and notetakers responded to our invitation to an informal get-together, to thank the volunteers and notetakers and to ask for any suggestions for changes or improvements of the system, and to allow the DS family members to get to know each other a bit better.

GRADUATION NEWS

30 of the students who wrote their exams in the Disability Service graduated in November. Of these:

- 3 have some form of chronic illness such as epilepsy likely to impact their ability to perform optimally:

- 5 with a psycho-social disability)

- 2 who are Deaf or have significant hearing loss

- 9 with a diagnosed Specific Learning Disability

- 7 with a Motor impairment

- 4 with limited function of their hands.

Of these 11 students needed support from DS staff during the ceremony.

As we have indicated in earlier reports, the Disability Service has been playing an increasingly central role in the graduation ceremonies taking place in June and December. During the 13 ceremonies which took place between 15 and 20 December 2014 the DS team had its work cut out to ensure that not only graduands with disabilities were supported but also their guests with mobility difficulties and those who are frail. Year-on-year the number of guests who require support to access the Jameson Hall has been snowballing. The information regarding special needs arrangements is published in the graduation booklet, but we still have the occasional student that attends graduation with a disabled guest climbing up Jameson Steps!

Below are some statistics which may interest readers of this report;

During the December graduation the Disability Service assisted 11 students at graduation. These included students in wheelchairs, with back injuries, on crutches, with epilepsy, a Deaf student and a student with hearing loss. The DS also assisted:

- 45 guests with mobility difficulties

71 elderly guests, among whom was a 101-year-old very proud great-grandmother.

46 accessible parking bays were allocated

34 guests were collected from Drop-off venues

And 89 unexpected guests. This latter is the number of guests about whom we were not informed prior to the ceremonies and for whom on-the-spot access arrangements had to be made.

Not included in the latter were 22 guests who had accepted an invitation from DAD to return and participate in a golden graduation class of 1964, They all attended the Science /Commerce ceremony as part of the procession.



Picture: Lungile Ngubeni graduated who graduated with a Bachelor of Social Science degree. Seen here being hooded by Registrar elect Royston Pillay, and capped by Vice Chancellor Dr Max Price

Michelle Botha graduated during the June ceremony with a Master's degree in Gender Studies. This extremely talented young woman is someone about whom, I predict, we will hear a lot in the future. My hope is that Michelle will return to academia in the not too distant future. The field of Disability Studies in South Africa desperately needs scholars of her calibre.



Picture: Michelle Botha received a Master's Degree in Social Science (Gender Studies) with distinction. Seen here with her guide dog Panda



Trudie Theunissen, South African Sign Language Interpreter (SASL) in the UCT Disability Service, seen here interpreting at the start of a UCT graduation ceremony



CHALLENGES

Access to Jameson Hall continues to be an issue and guests are always challenging us as to why it is not accessible from the front entrance.

The number of guests accessing our services is increasing dramatically and the responsibility placed on the DS is also increasing as a result of this demand. More staff are required to provide the support offered by the University in order to continue to provide the level of service that is being provided at the moment.

The closest disabled toilet is in Menzies building and this has created considerable pressure on the guests and the DS staff. This issue needs urgent attention and a way forward needs to be discussed before the next graduation.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS AUDIT

June 2014 saw the completion of the Universal Access audit ordered by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). It is lamentable that for the funds we had at our disposal only 34 of UCT'S more than a hundred buildings were audited. This cost the University close to R1 million, more than the amount usually set aside in a financial year for retrofitting inaccessible infrastructure. Somewhere someone dropped the ball, because many universities received funding to have this work done. We had to dip into our precious fund earmarked for retrofitting inaccessible infrastructure. The trick going forward is to ensure that we at least get our share of what's going when it comes to implementing the recommendations contained in the report submitted to the Department of Higher Education.

In the meantime accessible hearing technology continued to be installed in more venues as part of the classroom facilities upgrade which is continuing apace, bringing the total number of venues which are now accessible to people using hearing aids and/or cochlear implants to 33.

A FIRST IN THE COUNTRY

In September we installed a unique assistive hearing solution in Mafeje room, a venerable meeting venue in which a large number of the University's senior committees meet, including the University Council. The system we installed ensures that the voices of speakers anywhere in the room will be picked up by anyone who has a hearing aid. The limitation of standard technology is that it is intended for a context in which there is one speaker speaking into a microphone and everyone else listening, as in a lecture situation. In this case microphones are dispersed throughout the room.

DISABILITY SERVICE HAS A NATIONAL FACE

In our 2013-14 annual report we mentioned visits by several Higher Education Institutes who came to UCT to light their candles around disability support provision. Our reputation as providing a best practice model has obviously spread beyond the country's borders. We were therefore proud to host, early in May 2014, Professor Pinalo Chifwanakeni, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lusaka, who wanted to learn more about the work we do, as his university is in the process of making provision for students with disabilities.

In August we hosted a thirteen-member strong contingent from the University of Namibia on the same mission. As a result of their visit, three members of that delegation have subsequently enrolled in the Post Grad Diploma in Disability Studies located in the Health Science Faculty. I'll have more to say about that presently.

HEDSA SYMPOSIUM

The UCT Disability Service was well represented at the Biennial symposium of the Higher Education Disability Service Association on 2-3 October in 2014 in Stellenbosch. I was elected as Chairperson of the Association for the next two years.

Denise Oldham did an excellent presentation on best practice in Text Conversion and Editing, Nafisa Mayat presented on the NSFAS Guidelines for the bursary for disabled students, and Margie le Roux presented on the assessment and support of students with Psycho-Social and Specific Learning Disabilities. (Earlier in the year Margie also presented on a similar topic at the invitation of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Disability Service.)

In the course of 2014 the Disability Service was active in the national Higher Education Sector. We are living through a time abuzz with conversations at the highest level concerning access to post School Education for persons with disabilities. Both in my capacity as Head of the Disability Service and Chair of HEDSA we have been providing input into several national discussion documents. These include a concept document commissioned by HESA to come up with proposals in the process of creating in time a national policy framework within which to ensure equitable support to students with disabilities across the sector. We also provided guidance to the UCT Executive around its strategic response to aspects of the Draft White Paper on Social Inclusion, in which issues of disability inclusion feature prominently. In its turn the prominence of disability in documents which have issued from the Ministry is a direct consequence of HEDSA's dialogue with the Minister, since its founding conference in 2010. Since assuming the leadership of HEDSA in October we have seen the appointment of a Ministerial Task Team to take forward the work of establishing the above mentioned national policy framework, and both in my capacity as Chair of HEDSA as well as that of Head of the UCT Disability Service I have engaged extensively with the task team. We have also met with Dr. Anlia Pretorius, Chair of the Ministerial Task Team

during which she acknowledged that extensive expertise exists in HEDSA around several of the areas outlined in their terms of reference.

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER SYMPOSIUM

At the end of October 2014 the UCT Disability service hosted a 3-day symposium attended by Sign Language South African. Sign Language interpreters from the four Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) which offer this service, together with several advocacy and service organisations representing the interests of deaf students at HEI's. The purpose of the symposium: to come up with a policy framework on the employment of South African Sign Language Interpreters at Higher Education Institutions. Discussions included minimum qualifications, accreditation, working hours, a code of ethics and rates of remuneration. A comprehensive draft policy document dealing with all these matters was agreed upon, and will be distributed as soon as it is finalised. We commend Kate and Trudie, our two SLI's for initiating and managing this very important discussion. Sign Language support at educational institutions is a relatively new field in South Africa, and one in which there is much uncertainty. The policy, once finalised, will be invaluable as institutions move forward to putting in place the support Deaf students require.

DISABILITY SERVICE STAFFING NEWS

In the course of the year we took leave of our Admin Assistant, Masibulele Zulu who resigned in order to pursue her studies full time. In July we welcomed Pearl Tukwayo as our new Administrative Assistant. Pearl has wasted no time in making herself an indispensable member of the team.

At the end of November we took reluctant leave of Aileen Klette, our 2014 psychometry intern. As was the case with her predecessor, Aileen proved to be an invaluable member of the Disability Service team. Under the supervision of Margie le Roux, our resident psychologist she assessed a number of students who would have been unable to afford the psychometric assessments they required in order to apply for extra time.

At the beginning of the 2015 academic year we welcomed back our two Sign Language interpreters, Trudie Theunissen and Kate Reynolds. Their load will be just a little lighter as David Silva, one of the four students for whom they interpreted graduated at the end of 2014.

Also joining us in February was Kate Swart or psychometry intern for 2015. Kate's CV literally bristles with distinctions, including: 8 distinctions in Matric and achieving both her B.Com. Psychology and B.Com Industrial Psychology Honours degrees cum laude.

Another member of staff who won the hearts of staff and students alike was Graham Baartjies, who we originally appointed as a Carer for a student with a progressive neuromuscular condition and who stayed on to assist as Allen

Petersen's Carer, driving the DS vehicle to cope with the overflow from the Accessible bus, and made himself useful in a thousand ways, especially when we were between Administrative Assistants.

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

When the University instituted the Jammie Shuttle service in 2004 it undertook to provide a parallel accessible service to staff and students with mobility impairments. The original intention was that the dedicated vehicle would cover exactly the mainstream shuttle routes, but it was soon recognized that it was necessary to provide a door-to-door pickup service to people with mobility impairments (which subsequently was extended to staff and students who were blind).

Over the years the numbers of staff and students who made use of the bus exceeded the capacity of the single accessible bus that was made available, and the DS has been providing its own vehicle and a driver/carer for the overflow.

In a meeting between André Theys, (ED of Properties and Services) and members of the Disability Policy Implementation Group it was agreed that given that financial considerations make it impractical to have a fully accessible fleet of Jammie buses, the University would continue to provide alternative dedicated accessible transport, but that this service would be expanded and improved. It was also agreed that this service would not be outsourced but be taken in-house and that the Disability Service would manage it. Two smaller accessible vehicles are being purchased and we have begun the process of recruiting and appointing two drivers.

In 2013 altogether 37 staff and students with disabilities made use of the accessible bus service on a regular basis:

6 wheelchair users and three more with significant mobility impairments

5 blind and visually impaired people

23 staff and students with temporary mobility impairments.

In 2014 24 members of staff and students have regularly used the transport service.

POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN DISABILITY STUDIES

The Disability Service was asked in the course of 2014 to convene and co-convene a course in the post Graduate Diploma in Disability Studies which is being offered this year for the first time as a blended learning course. The face-to-face lecturing time has been reduced and a significant proportion of the teaching will happen online. This has posed significant challenges for the whole team; many of those teaching on the course have no experience of online teaching, using online tools such as Vula and other online teaching applications, but there are also

significant challenges to overcome for both the visually impaired staff (including myself) and the students who are visually impaired. Vula poses serious access challenges for users of screen reading software. We have to pay tribute in this regard to Ikechukwu Nwanze, an Assistant Lecturer in the Disability Studies Programme who has done splendid work by tackling the screen reader access challenges and has made great strides in domesticating Vula for blind users! We have already had occasion to mention one sad loss. We were devastated to learn, only a week or so after the very intensive 2-week face-to-face bloc that Mikki van Zyl had passed away very suddenly. Mikki's contribution to the Disability Studies programme since its inception in 2004 has been massive. She brought to her teaching a rare blend of rigorous scholarship and grassroots accessibility. Her passion as activist and compassion for all of those whom she taught is legendary. It is difficult to conceive of how the void her going has created will be filled.

In conclusion, and before we thank the donors whom we have not yet mentioned, the table below gives some idea of the number of new students who have registered with us over the last four years.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN	June 2011	July 2012	February 2013	May 2014
Chronic Illness	21	14	7	4
Psychological Impairment	4	9	6	2
Hearing Impairment	3	7	5	8
Specific Learning Disabilities	99	220	122	180
Motor Impaired	23	17	22	4
Visually Impaired	9	4	7	2
Wheelchair Access	3		2	3
Temporary	23	26	9	23
Speech Impaired	1	4	2	1
Neurological Impairment		4	1	2
TOTAL	186	305	183	229

DONATIONS 2014

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Respectfully submitted

Reinette Popplestone

Manager: Disability Service Transformation Services Office

Phone: (021) 650 5090 / Cell: 071-883 9936

Fax: (021) 650 3794

Email: Reinette.Popplestone@uct.ac.za