



Title	GSU Disability Policy
Policy number	GSU-HR-011
Compiled by:	The Registrar
Recommended by:	The Nominations and Human Resources Committee
Approved by:	Council
Date of approval	

GSU Disability Policy

1. Preamble

The GSU disability policy is designed to create and maintain parity in consultation with students and staff with disabilities to ensure equal access to education and university resources. The university recognises that an accessible and inclusive environment is a human right for all members of the university community. The institution is committed to fairness, equity and justice and therefore recognises the importance of disability inclusion through the provision of universal principles of accessibility.

This policy resonates very well with the University's values of equity and ubuntu/unhu/botho/vhuthu/umuntu/bunhu as well as the National Disability Policy and national development policy of "inclusivity" which is defined as "leaving no one and no place behind". Against this background the University strives to create an enabling learning and occupational environment in consultation with students and staff with disabilities, where their learning experience and career aspirations are supported and enabled by the University and where their talents are identified nurtured and developed. The institution further subscribes to an environment where individuals with disabilities have equal and equitable access to opportunities and where diversity is valued.

2. Policy objectives

The GSU Disability Policy seeks to:

- Progressively avail resources for disability inclusion in all spheres of university life.
- Remove inequalities experienced by disabled persons by defining access as including physical, epistemological and social aspects
- Remove cultural, physical, social and other barriers that prevent people with disabilities from entering, being employed and developing their careers in the university.

3. Legal Framework

This Policy operates within the confines of national and institutional legislation that recognises and protects the rights of persons with disabilities. These include the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the University Act and the Labour Act. These legislative frameworks ensure that no one may unfairly discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability.

4. Principles and Provisions

- 4.1 This policy is premised on the principle of human rights and universal access design. It is acknowledged that all persons with all types of disabilities enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- 4.2 GSU is committed to the principles of inclusivity through the conceptual transformation framework and create equal opportunities for all staff and students with disabilities within reason.
- 4.3 The University is committed to keep abreast of all international instruments as well as relevant national legislation, policies and directives that affect the position of persons with disabilities. In its procedural and substantive application of the legal framework, due consideration will be given to the accommodation of needs of persons with disabilities to ensure equitable and fair application.
- 4.4 This policy and the benefits afforded by it are based on voluntary disclosure and self –identification, unless the disability is visible and self –explanatory. The University reserves the right to verify a person’s disability status based on medical evidence, should it deem it necessary.
- 4.5 This University realises that universal access relates to more than the built environment and will strive to include students and staff with disabilities through consultation and the provision of accessible education solutions and workplace accommodations.
- 4.6 All policies and rules of the University are also applicable to students and staff with disabilities.

- 4.7 The University will, where possible, make available opportunities, for the participation of persons with disabilities in sports, recreational and social activities.
- 4.8 The University will, through the Labour Act equity policy, implement affirmative action measures to ensure equitable representation of persons with disabilities for the staff population.
- 4.9 Any student's eligibility for a programme or module is subject only to those selection criteria which are ordinarily applied to applicants for that programme or module including any requirements. Students must be able to meet the requirements of the programme or module they wish to study.
- 4.10 Programme or module preference and choice should not be influenced by the level and type of disability unless even with the provision of reasonable adjustments, the student would be unable to meet the requirements of the programme or module.

5 The Disability Resource Centre

5.1 The University shall establish a Disability Resource Centre responsible for offering the following,

- Consulting on strategies to provide access and inclusion.
- Determining and implementing reasonable academic, workplace and visitors access and inclusion mechanisms for persons with disabilities
- Partnering with other university offices to support meaningful physical and technological access.
- Building accessibility and inclusion into university systems, processes and learning as well as working environments so that fewer individual accommodations may be required.
- Recommending and facilitating the procurement of relevant assistive devices for use by the persons with disabilities.

6 Language

- 6.1 Language that includes derogatory and discriminatory terminology is strictly forbidden.
- 6.2 Use of terminology that emphasises the inabilities of people is also strictly forbidden as it may lead to categorisation, stigmatisation, discrimination, and exclusion of certain people.
- 6.3 The university is committed and continuously strives for the use for appropriate language within the GSU community.

7. Communication

- 7.1 The university will ensure access to information and communication services to persons with disabilities. This includes appropriate, tactile signage, high contrast signage on notice boards, library data bases, circulars, learning materials and electronic media.
- 7.2 The university will maximise, through appropriate dissemination of information opportunities for people with disabilities to participate fully in all university activities including in debate, grievance mechanisms and decision making.

8. Reasonable accommodation

- 8.1 While every effort will be made to ensure the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of university life, GSU need not accommodate a qualified applicant (staff or student) with disabilities if they would impose an unjustifiable hardship on the operations of the University.
- 8.2 The university will therefore consider the effectiveness of the accommodation and the extent to which it would seriously impose an unjustifiable hardship on the university.

9 Disclosure of Disability, Record keeping and Management

- 9.1 Disclosure of disability is necessary where the student/staff member/visitor requests support and/or accommodation provision.
- 9.2 Staff is encouraged to disclose their disability to the Human Resources Section at their time of appointment in accordance with principles of best practice. Staff already employed by the University who acquire a disability after appointment is encouraged to declare their disability so that their profile can be updated accordingly.
- 9.3 Students are required to disclose their disability to the Admissions Section and to Disability Resource Centre in order to access services provided by the Centre.
- 9.4 Disclosed information will be treated as private and confidential and will be used to monitor progress in employment and student equity and to maximise levels of services provision.

10. Access to the built environment

- 10.1 The university shall apply universal design principles in the design, construction and/or maintenance of all buildings, thorough-fares, faculties, and security systems.
- 10.2 The Department of Physical Planning, works and Estates will therefore progressively develop and implement a comprehensive campus wide strategy to address physical and infrastructural barriers for persons with disabilities. The Disability Resource Centre will provide an oversight with the Department of Physical Planning Works and Estates in order to ensure compliance with regulations and universal design principles.
- 10.3 The university's emergency evacuation procedures should incorporate measures to ensure safe evacuation of persons with disabilities. The University will also ensure that relevant people will receive the necessary training to assist persons with disabilities during the evacuation exercise.

Evacuation equipment such as the evacuation chair should always be made available for persons with disabilities.

11 Accessible transport

11.1 The University should ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to university transport and that where possible the transport has provisions for persons with disabilities.

11.2 The university will avail parking for use by persons with disabilities and ensure that the parking is used exclusively for such persons.

12 Accessible Digital Technology

12.1 The university will progressively and within its available resources provide up to date adaptive and assistive technology for both students and staff with disabilities.

12.1 ICTs support staff will be trained and availed to assist persons with disabilities

13 Monitoring and Evaluation

13.1 The university will monitor this policy to establish how it is being used and whether it is effective.

13.2 The Disability Resource Centre in conjunction with supervisors and managers across the university will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and compliance with the policy as well as receiving complaints of harassment and discrimination on the basis of disability.

13.3 The university through relevant committees such as the Student Affairs Committee and Nominations and Human Resources Committee will then evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and recommend any changes needed.

14 Definition of key terms

14.1 Attitudinal Barrier

Refers to stigmas arising from prejudicial thinking and unconscious bias, negative attitude, behaviours and perceptions related to persons with disabilities.

14.2 Barrier – free access

Refers to equitable treatment (without discrimination) with respect to access to goods and services.

14.3 Disability

Encompasses persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in, interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis.

14.4 Disability Inclusion

Refers to addressing the needs of persons with disabilities as well as removing barriers that hinder their full participation.

14.5 Discrimination based on disability

Refers to imposing any distinction exclusion or restriction of persons on the basis of disability which has the effect to impairing or nullifying recognition employment or exercise on an equal basis with others, all human rights and freedom.

14.6 Discrimination based on the requirements of a job

Refers to discrimination based on the nature of a job. Also refers to “fair discrimination” e.g., a person with extremely poor eyesight cannot be employed as a driver.

15.0 Interpretation

The interpretation of this Policy rests with the office of the Registrar.

16.0 Effective date

The Policy shall take effect on the date it is signed by the Chairperson of Council.

17.0 Review of Policy

This policy shall be reviewed as and when the need arises.

Approved: 

Chairperson: University Council

Date: 21 / 12 / 2022