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Issue 2, April 2022

Dear Students

We hope you are having a good start to 2022. It really is great to see more students on campus this year. Our Disability Rights Unit (DRU) newsletter aims to share info on the DRU as well as bring awareness with regards to disability and inclusion at Wits.

If you are an existing student with the DRU and have previously applied for concessions then please remember to contact Mx Tish Lumos at Tish.Lumos@wits.ac.za for 2022 concession renewals.

For information regarding students with disabilities who wish to apply for concessions please see the following link: <https://www.wits.ac.za/disability-rights-unit/extra-time-and-other-concessions/>

As the DRU we aim to ensure that the rights of our students with disabilities are always on the university's agenda.



Back (from left to right): Andrew Sam, Subhashini Eilan, Tish Lumos White, Duncan Yates, Kobela Petja, Kheha Makoatsane, Dr Anlia Pretorius. Front (from left to right): Alfred Tlou, Alan Mlalachian

What is the Disability Rights Unit?



The Disability Rights Unit (DRU) is a support Unit dedicated to assisting all students and staff with a disability at Wits University. Staffed by a team of nine, the Unit provides reasonable accommodation to the university community. This is inclusive of South African Sign Language (SASL) interpretation, real-time captioning, assistive technology and devices, PC labs on two campuses with dedicated accessibility software, mobility training, editing of learning material into accessible formats, screening and guidance on adaptations for specific learning disabilities.

The Unit is also available to those who wish to apply for extra time and accessible parking bays.

Our offices are located on the 1st Floor, East Wing, Solomon Mahlangu House Building, East Campus. **Contact: Mx Tish Lumos - Tish.Lumos@wits.ac.za**

Our satellite office is on the 1st Floor, Administration Block, School of Education Campus. **Contact: Ms Kobela Petja - kobela.petja@wits.ac.za**

For further DRU details and contacts of DRU staff please visit <https://www.wits.ac.za/disability-rights-unit/>

"It's not enough just to enrol students with disabilities at Wits. Our commitment is to provide an enabling platform to promote academic success"

DRU Social Media

In considering universal access principles, one platform that is frequently forgotten is social media. Since 2011, Wits Disability Rights Unit has been reaching students, staff and prospective students through Meta platforms including Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. The aim is to offer popular content in accessible formats, and promote internal content consistently through the use of trigger warnings, access notes for videos that have subtitles, image descriptions, audio transcripts and linking to original screen reader accessible content.

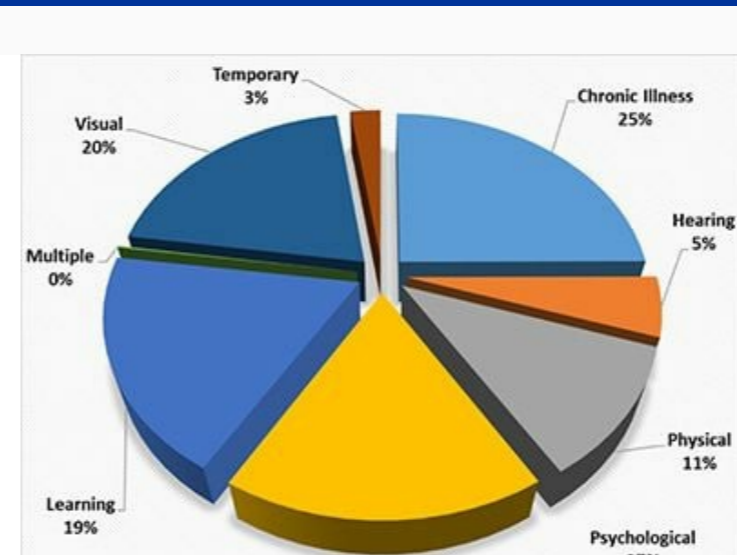
If you're curious about how to create and share accessible content, or want to show your support, please follow us:

Facebook – www.facebook.com/dru
Instagram – www.instagram.com/dru

Disability Statistics at Wits

In 2021 Wits University had over 1100 students indicating having a disability. This is 2.8% of the student population.

This graphic indicates the percentage and type of disabilities at Wits.



The Disability Awareness Movement (DAM)



The Wits Disability Awareness Movement, DAM for short, has been around since 2012.

It is once again picking up steam after two years of a pandemic. DAM is a movement started for and by students with disabilities on campus in the hopes of educating the Wits community at large about disabilities in an attempt to create a more inclusive environment. We do this through various events held online and on campus relating to disabilities and their cultures throughout the year.

The goal for DAM in 2022 is to have its impact on students with disabilities recognised and its importance noted by all members of the Wits community.

In an effort to grow our membership and spread our message, we had students play a game with us during O-week. They were tasked with completing a puzzle blindfolded, to give them some food for thought on what it might be like to complete daily tasks with a visual disability.

But we can't do it alone. Will you help us?

Join us Today - contact wits.dam@gmail.com
Follow us on social media to learn more about disabilities!
Facebook: [/Wits-Disability-Awareness-Movement](https://www.facebook.com/Wits-Disability-Awareness-Movement)
Twitter: [@WitsDam](https://twitter.com/WitsDam)
Instagram: [@WitsDam](https://www.instagram.com/WitsDam)

Check out the short video on DAM and disability awareness <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jTt9HwmPgXG5ixB-6QHSTwRS-ix94DWX/view?usp=sharing>

Graduate Feature: Don't Dis My Ability - Jimmy Ramokgopa



Tell us about yourself. Where are you from?

I was born and raised in Soweto. I enjoy engaging with people about current affairs, ideas, and solutions about the socio-economic prospects of South Africa.

What did you study?

I'm a Civil Engineer and graduate from Wits. I graduated in 2014, worked in the construction industry for 6 years and currently relocated to the Eastern Cape, where I am doing my Master's in Construction Management.

How did you find studying at Wits and being a student registered with the DRU?

I met really interesting people whom I could relate to, learn from and exchange ideas with. Some of the greatest friendships and treasured memories came from my time at the DRU.

What advice would you give current students with disabilities studying at Wits?

It's important to fight for your rights, and particularly, as being a member of a community of people living with disabilities. The awareness campaigns that DAM and the DRU facilitate are of crucial importance, not only in the short-term but also post-graduation. The world needs to know that accessibility is a basic human right and that everything must be accessible to all of us by default. This can be achieved if you start spreading awareness where we are, such as campus, and later, in the companies or organisations that you will be working in or owning.

What is your favourite quote?

"Chance favours the prepared mind" - Louis Pasteur

Assistive Technology Apps



1. Screen Readers



NON VISUAL DESKTOP ACCESS (NVDA): NVDA is a screen reader that allows blind and visually impaired people to access their computers by providing feedback via synthetic speech and Braille, and is free to download and use. For more information, please visit the following link: [http:// www.nvaccess.org/](http://www.nvaccess.org/)

2. Text-to-Speech / Literacy / Writing Support Software



READ&WRITE: Read&Write is a text-to-speech, literacy and writing support software which integrates reading, writing, studying, and re- search support tools with common applications. Enhances accessibility by offering features like reading out loud, built-in dictionaries, summary highlighters, and turning text to audio. All Windows have access to a full license of this software. Download and install the trial version for your device and then log in with a Microsoft account using your Wits credentials. Username: Wits email address and Password: Wits ICT password. For more information, please visit the following link: <http://www.texthelp.com/products/read-and-write-education/>



GOOGLE LIVE CAPTION / LIVE TRANSCRIBE: Google Live Caption and Live Transcribe are a new speech-to-text accessibility service built by Google for the deaf and hard of hearing, which performs real-time transcription of speech to text on your screen, so you can participate in conversations going on in the world around you. Live Caption can be enabled directly from Google Chrome and generates the captions/ subtitles when viewing media such as online lectures.

To enable Live Captions, please refer to the following link: <http://support.google.com/chrome/answer/10538231?hl=en>

Similarly, there is the Live Transcribe app for Android users which provides captions/subtitles on your smartphone or smart device.

For more information, please visit the following link: <http://www.android.com/accessibility/live-transcribe/>

3. Speech-to-Text Software



OTTER.AI: Otter is an AI-powered assistant which generates captions, transcripts and rich notes for meetings, interviews, lectures, and other important voice conversations. Also works well with Zoom and Microsoft Teams to generate live captions. Otter is free with limited features, a professional license is available for purchase (with a discount for staff and students from educational institutions).

For more information, please visit the following link: <http://otter.ai/>