



**VAAL UNIVERSITY  
OF TECHNOLOGY**

*Inspiring thought. Shaping talent.*



I N C L U S I O N

**DIVERSITY INCLUSION BELONGING EQUITY IDENTITY TOLERANCE ACCEPTANCE**

**Nov 2021**

## DISABILITY SERVICES AT YOUR SERVICE



The Disability Services Office started operating under the ambit of the Social Justice and Transformation Unit at the Vaal University of Technology in 2016. The mission of the Disability Services Office is to ensure that VUT increasingly becomes an accessible Higher Education Institution for people with disabilities.

This office has the following objectives:

- To offer reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities in all facilities and areas of university life, if not immediately, but on an incremental basis.
- To foster positive and empathetic attitudes towards people with disabilities.
- To provide individuals with the choice at registration/ employment to disclose their disability or not, in line with relevant legislation.
- To progressively ensure that all future buildings, renovations, facilities, and services provided by

the university comply with universal design principles.

- To ensure on an incremental basis the University architectural designs, layout, parking and access to its buildings (including private accommodation and leased facilities) accommodate the need of people with disabilities.
- To provide dedicated support services to people with disabilities.
- To promote equity for people with disabilities which implies access to courses, work, offices, buildings, learning material, residences, leisure and sport activities opportunities.

During this period, the Disability Services Office has developed strategies that effectively assist students with disabilities complete their studies with no obstacles in their paths and ensure that they get the best quality educational support. Services on offer include classroom support such as exam concessions, accessible study material, tutors, and desk magnifiers, which have been very useful to students.

The doors of the Disability Services Office are always open to assisting those in need of these services and creating a conducive environment where all staff and students of VUT can reach their full potential.

## CBI-ELECTRIC GROUP PROVIDES A HELPING HAND TO VUT STUDENTS



CBI-Electric Group is a well-established Vereeniging based, electric power cables manufacturer and designer which has been in business for over 80 years. This organisation takes pleasure in providing the best possible solutions for their customers and ensuring that they stay relevant and aware of new trends that arise in the technological aspect. Offering services ranging from Medium Voltage XLPE, ACSR, and Overhead Split Concentric to High Voltage XLPE Insulated Cables, they have associated themselves with many organisations to bring about the best outcomes that are best fitting for their various target markets.

In the past few years, CBI-Electric has also worked closely with the Vaal University of Technology, through the Disability Services Office to assist students with various disabilities. Ensuring that the students can swiftly manoeuvre around any obstacles that may arise during the course of their tertiary life. Since the beginning of their collaboration with the institution, CBI-Electric has paid off historical debt of 17 students during the year 2017 and have subsequently started offering bursary packages. The bursary covers tuition fees, book allowance and a monthly R1000 stipend for groceries for students in fields of study such as Logistics Management and Electrical Engineering.

Furthermore, the organisation has initiated a training programme in their facilities for students to gain experience in the workplace environ-

ment and complete their practical training, where they have absorbed over 10 students into their organisation.

The Disability Services Office (DSO) has ensured that CBI-Electric assistance reaches as many students as possible. The environment created by the DSO employees has made students feel at ease when coming to the office with any issues they may be facing. The DSO continue to create a positive atmosphere where students are willing to speak up on issues they may be encountering and how best they can be assisted. The DSO is very grateful for the continued financial support from CBI-Electric which has enabled many of the students to successfully complete their studies within the regulated time and to be productive members of society.

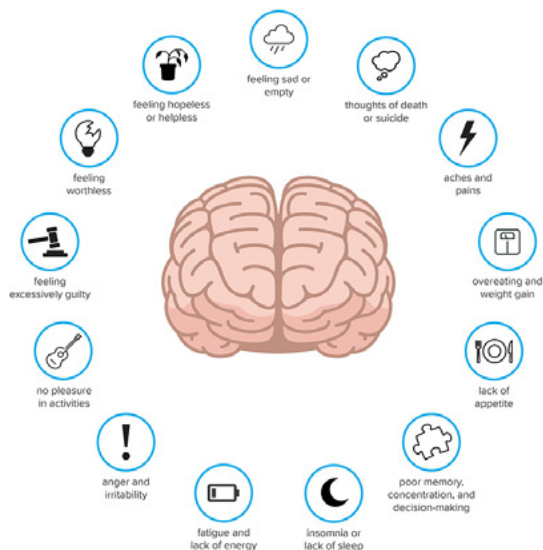
## TSHANDUKO, MAKING A CHANGE.

Amongst many of the students that the Disability Services Office has directly assisted is Tshanduko Ratshipanga. A recent Logistics Management graduate and current Advanced Diploma student of VUT. The 24 year old has a genetic disorder of movement, muscle tone and posture called cerebral palsy. During the course of his studies the Disability Services Office has helped him, like many other students by partnering with companies such as CBI-Electric who have assisted in funding his tuition.

Tshanduko is on an internship programme at CBI-Electric, where he continues to gain experience and exposes himself to different people of all walks of life. In his spare time he mentors logistics students through the CHED department of VUT, where he dedicates himself to providing a positive impact to students. His passion is driven by the fact that *"when you help someone, that person will in return help someone else at some point"*. He continues to assist those around him without any expectation other than hoping that that persons' situation can improve. Through it all Tshanduko strives to bring change bit by bit. He hopes that over and above all his efforts people will remember that *"you focus less on what someone does for you, but look more at what you do for others"*.

## THE SAD REALITY OF DEPRESSION

### Common Symptoms of Depression



In the past year we have observed how the entire world drastically changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions thereof. Many nations are still affected by these unforeseen circumstances that took a toll on the world's economy, technological advancements, the agriculture, and the health sector, specifically on mental health. During this time, the South African Depression and Anxiety Group has noted that 9.7% of South Africans are suffering from depression. Due to the societal disruption that has caused uncertainty in the workplace, a rise in unemployment and depreciation in the economy, 25% of SA employees are clinically depressed.

Depression can be characterised as a persistent depressive mood or loss of interest in activities that will have an adverse impact in an individual's daily life. This type of mental illness can affect the way someone feels and thinks about themselves, having sombre moods and irregular sleeping patterns. When suffering from depression, the individual cannot simply wake up and feel better after a good night's rest, this disorder may go on for weeks, or even months if one does not seek any appropriate treatment.

As devastating as this is, SA still has a long way to go in ensuring that there is appropriate infrastructure available for people with such illness. Where they have a safe and reliable environment for people to seek help and treatment, the Vaal University of Technology has departments such as the Student Counselling and Support Services on campus for those who may need assistance with regards to mental health issues.

### VUT Student Counselling and Support Services:

email: [scs@vut.ac.za](mailto:scs@vut.ac.za)  
tell: 016 950 9224

### South African Depression and Anxiety Group

website: [sadag.org](http://sadag.org)  
hotline: 011 234 4837

## WHAT IS VITILIGO?



In recent years we have seen an increase in South African celebrities embracing their vitiligo skin condition. Household names such as Brighton Ngoma, Kgathi Iman Dithabe and Leleti Khumalo have opened our eyes to this skin condition that is so rare. Vitiligo is an autoimmune condition where the body attacks cells called melanocytes. These are the cells that give the human skin its colour.

During this period white patches develop on the skin and may gradually grow bigger. Areas that are more likely to be affected is places of past injuries, skin exposed to the sun and areas where the skin folds for example elbow and knees. Vitiligo develops in the early stages of one's life from the years 10 to 30. People who have this condition more commonly have another autoimmune condition such as; thyroid disease, rheumatoid arthritis or diabetes. It is also possible that there is some difference in their pigment cells.

Through the years research has been done to help people with this condition restore complete pigmentation. The research being done on Vitiligo is linked to advancements in basic research, genetics and the treatment that includes surgical management of the condition. The main goal of treatment methods is to stop further depigmentation and to induce repigmentation.

On the 25th of June every year, the world celebrates people who live with vitiligo and to continue educating others of this skin disease. Creating awareness of this condition is a positive step in ensuring that the society we live in is knowledgeable and can help people with this condition be more integrated into our society.

*"The definition of beautiful doesn't mean that you are perfect – it means loving and accepting yourself for how you are uniquely made" – Breanne Rice*

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## MYTHS ON DISABILITY



### MYTH

1 Everyone in a wheelchair is chronically ill or sickly.

2 People with hearing disabilities can read lips.

3 People who are blind or visually impaired acquire a 'sixth sense'.

4 People with disabilities are more comfortable with 'their own kind'.

5 Non-disabled people are obligated to 'take care of' people with disabilities.

### FACT

Because hospitals generally transport ill people with wheelchairs, society has normalised thinking people who use wheelchairs are not well.

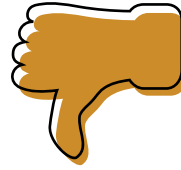
Lip-reading skills vary among people who use them and are never entirely reliable.

Although it is likely that people who are visually impaired develop their remaining senses more completely, they do not have a 'sixth sense'.

In the past, grouping people with disabilities in separate schools and institutions reinforced this misconception. Today, many people with disabilities take advantage of new opportunities to join mainstream society.

Anyone may offer assistance, but most people with disabilities prefer to be responsible for themselves.

## THE DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PEOPLE IN WHEELCHAIRS



- Sneak surreptitious glances but don't stare at someone with pity in your eyes.
- Someone using a wheelchair usually has some sort of plan on what they need done.  
Avoid randomly pushing someone without their consent or taking a blind persons' arm in order to start 'helping'.
- Curiosity is fairly normal but if someone doesn't allow a platform for personal questions, do not bother.
- Just because you're uncomfortable with disability doesn't mean you should make others uncomfortable, too.
- Treat us as any other normal person and give us the same respect. Be courteous enough to take a seat when having a conversation with us.
- If you're sitting on an accessible seat on a train or bus, please give it up for someone who need it.
- If your child loudly asks questions or is curious about different abled people, wait to see how the person reacts. You'll be shocked to find that they are friendly and smile at children.
- People with different abilities don't always want deep conversations. Sometimes light conversations about the weather or sports can be good ice breakers.

- DO NOT stare.
- DO NOT provide unsolicited help.
- DO NOT ask intrusive personal questions.
- DO NOT make condescending jokes.
- DO treat us like ANYONE ELSE.
- DO give up your seat.
- DO remain calm around kids.
- DO talk about the weather.

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