TU/e Policy Document

Studying with a Disability

Having consulted the University Council on June 19, 2006
Adopted by the Executive Board on June 29, 2006
Foreword
As far as possible, TU/e aims to offer equal opportunities of study success to students with a physical disability, chronic illness, psychological issues or dyslexia. One of the most important objectives is to ensure that students are prevented as much as possible from falling behind with their studies. In order to achieve this, the Executive Board considers it important to have an integrated policy plan for students with a disability. This policy plan intends to provide a transparent and coordinated approach that makes a positive contribution to ensuring access to higher education for students with a disability.
The Executive Board
1. Background
There have been several recent studies that show there is a group of students with a disability who in practice encounter difficulties in finding support and supervision and fall behind with their studies as a result. More specifically, the following studies are of relevance:

In 2004, the Higher Education Inspectorate conducted an initial study into students with a disability (Studeren met een functiebeperking).

A nationwide study conducted in 2005 by the Verwey-Jonker Institute suggests that there is a large group of students with functional disabilities who are not officially acknowledged as such and who lack facilities to deal with the issue of falling behind with their studies as a result of this disability.

In the most recent consumer survey “Studeren met een handicap 2005” (Studying with a disability 2005, Choice), assessing levels of satisfaction of students with a disability, TU/e was rated last.

1.1. Legal framework
Alongside the social duty of enabling students with a disability to embark on and complete an academic study program as far as possible, there is also a statutory duty to provide equal treatment. This is outlined both in the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW, Section 7.13, para 2 m) and in the Equal Treatment (Disability and Chronic Illness) Act (WGBHCz).

The WGBHCz entered into force on December 1, 2003, giving institutions greater responsibility in supporting students with a disability and chronic illness. In addition, in accordance with the WHW, every enrolled student is entitled to participate in education, take examinations, access the institution’s facilities and collections and make use of provisions for students (WHW, Section 7.34, para 1a, b, c and d). The institution therefore has a duty to provide a reasonable opportunity to students with a physical or psychological disability to follow the study program.

In this respect, it is prohibited for providers of education to discriminate between students in assessing and concluding the education intended to enable access to and involvement in the labor market (WGBHCz, Section 1, 2 and 6), unless that discrimination is intended to grant students with a disability an advantage “with a view to removing or reducing actual detriments and the discrimination is in reasonable proportion to the ends (e.g. creating equal opportunities)”. This prohibition means that providers of education are obliged, according to need, to make effective adaptations unless this would constitute an unreasonable burden on the educational institution. On the grounds of this right to equal treatment, a student can therefore ask an educational institution to make effective adaptations.

This Act applies to the entire study program. Internships and external activities that form part of the curriculum are also covered by the Act. A policy of this kind relates to education and assessment, policy on matters related to study as well as general student policy.

1.2 Plan of Action
The world of politics also acknowledges the need to establish a clear policy for students with a disability. Then State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science (OCW) Mark Rutte drew up a Plan of Action that was approved by the Dutch House of Representatives (November 2005). This Plan of Action applies to higher education and aims to reduce obstacles faced by disabled students at universities (including universities of applied sciences) that result in relatively high drop-out rates. Subsidies are allocated for this purpose and universities are invited to develop structural solutions in accordance with set guidelines.
2. Introduction
As already stated in Chapter 1, various studies have shown that students with a disability frequently face problems in finding supervision and support. Large numbers of students benefit from specially-adapted education or examinations, but are not aware of the options available for grants or the opportunities that departments can offer.

In 2004, the Education Inspectorate conducted a study ("Studeren met een functiebeperking") on the position of students with a disability in higher education. The Inspectorate pointed out the need to create greater clarity with regard to procedures, tasks and powers within the framework of policy implementation for students with a disability. The consumer survey "Studeren met een handicap 2005" (Choice) examined levels of satisfaction among students with a disability. The following aspects were included in this study: intake, buildings, resources, educational adaptations (curriculum), supervision and information. TU/e achieved a very low score (average of 5.7 out of 10), with the proviso that the assessment of building accessibility was not taken into account (TU/e scored 8.75 for this in 2004) and that the number of respondents at TU/e was low (18). There were particularly low scores for the aspects of intake and information (5.4 and 4.9).

Because of the lack of structural adaptations and the lack of clarity with regard to rights and responsibilities of both the institution and students, students fall unnecessarily behind with their studies. This may be as a direct result of the disability but may also be caused by the energy a student needs to invest in order to make individual arrangements. Research also shows ("Studentenmonitor 2002") that the drop-out rate for students with a disability is twice as high as for other students.

Because there is no general central registration system, the official figures with regard to the number of students with a disability at TU/e are not known. Research from 2005, conducted by Verwey-Jonker Institute in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, shows that the number of students with a disability is between 11 and 14%. The number of students facing difficulties in their studies as a result of a disability is between 5 and 10%. If these percentages are applied to the figures at TU/e, this means that there could be between 350 and 700 students with a disability at the University.

A list compiled by TU/e student disability platform Hinderniks shows that most problems relate to dyslexia, followed by RSI (see Annex 1). From this list it may be concluded that the number of students with a physical disability is relatively low. However, it should be noted that there are many forms of invisible disabilities that lead to limitations that may result in students falling behind or dropping out.

2.1. Vision
TU/e aims, as far as possible, to offer students with a physical disability, chronic illness, psychological problems or dyslexia an equal opportunity for study success as compared to students with no disability. TU/e also considers it important that students with a disability can successfully complete their studies without unnecessary delay. In this context, TU/e will take measures to prevent students falling unnecessarily behind with their studies and to optimize participation and integration of students with a disability. In more concrete terms, this means promoting accessibility of buildings, facilities and information as well as offering supervision and provisions to support study. In this, the key principle is to ensure that, by the end of their studies, students with a disability have equivalent competencies and the same level of knowledge as students without disabilities. In other words: the aim is an equivalent degree as an outcome, but the way to achieve that aim may differ. This is the purpose of this policy document: its intended result is to achieve a structural approach and the development of appropriate provisions.

2.2. Definition of disability
The concept of disability is described in various ways in the literature. This policy document is based on the description used by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science:

“Disabilities and chronic illnesses are defined as any physical, sensory or other disorder that delays progress in studies. These may be visual, auditory or motor disabilities, disorders affecting language (dyslexia), counting (dyscalculia), speech, stamina, memory/concentration capacity and organ functions, as well as phobias, depression, epilepsy, rheumatism, M.E., chronic RSI and severe migraine.”

A disability may be temporary (depression, illness or injury), but is usually structural. The nature and extent of the disability may vary per person as may the extent of any hindrance and/or delay caused in studies. In addition to the development of structural provisions, an individual approach is also required.

2.3. Objectives of this Studying with a Disability (SwD) policy
TU/e aims to achieve equal opportunities of study success for students with a disability by increasing access to education for this group of students. It does this by improving the provision of information, the effective and efficient deployment of resources and safeguarding and sharing expertise.

Provision of information
In order to offer the right kind of support to students with a disability at an early stage, it is important to ensure that this group of students comes forward as soon as possible. This implies that these students need to be aware of the contact persons within the University, the available information sources (brochure, website) and the provisions on offer. This group will be kept informed of the opportunities from enrollment through to graduation. To achieve this, it is important to have oversight of this group.

Efficient and effective deployment of resources
If resources are deployed efficiently and effectively, more students can be provided with greater assistance. To achieve this, it needs to be clear to every student and member of staff what specific products and services are and can be offered and a transparent and coordinated approach/working method is essential.

Safeguarding and sharing expertise
It is important that the supervision provided within TU/e is offered by people with appropriate expertise. Expertise can be acquired by on-the-job training or the hiring in of experts from outside the University. The sharing of knowledge and experience of SwD policy by those providing support is an important instrument in ensuring students receive the best possible support.
3. Principles

The policy TU/e aims to apply for students with a disability is based on several principles:

The outcomes/descriptors for study programs are a given; only in exceptional cases can an Examinations Committee provide an alternative for a specific practical skill, for example. Unless there are explicit admission requirements for a study program, a severely-disabled student cannot be rejected in advance.

A study program is expected to give disabled students a reasonable opportunity to take the program, of course with due observance of the WGBHCz.

Facilitating students will always require a personalized approach; this policy document can only put forward general rules. In practice, a balance must be struck between what the institution can and cannot achieve and the needs of a student.

TU/e assumes personal responsibility on the part of students with a disability. Effective support and supervision can only be provided if the problems or incapacities faced by students are known to the institution.

Failure to make effective adaptations can only be justified if this would constitute an unreasonable burden on the educational institution and/or would undermine the equivalence of any degree ultimately awarded.

The provisions described in Annex 2 are not necessarily available at TU/e as standard. In each individual situation, an assessment will be made of which solution is necessary and appropriate. In assessing an application for certain material facilities, it makes a difference if a student has already made use of other opportunities to apply for assistance that have been rejected, for example, the UWV (Employment Insurance Agency, responsible for the implementation of legislation governing employment and capacity for work) or the municipality (responsible for implementing legislation governing disability) where the student is registered as a resident.
4. Measures and provisions

4.1 Information
To raise awareness among students and prospective students that, in order to be eligible for provisions, they must make themselves known to the contact point, this information will be mentioned in the brochure sent along with the enrollment pack. In addition, at TU/e information events, there will be notification of where students with a disability can turn to for help. At a localized level, academic advisors have a role to play in improving the information provided. Effective cooperation between those involved at central and local level is essential in this. Finally, the existing brochure 'Ongehinderd Studeren' (Studying without Hindrance) and the information on the website will be adapted.

4.2. Contact point
Support and supervision can only be provided if the problems or incapacities faced by students are known to the institution. It is therefore important that students and prospective students make themselves known at an early stage in order to make best use of all of the facilities. If possible, prospective students should make requests for adaptations to education, examinations, practical exercises or for special facilities to cater for a permanent disability at the time of enrolling for the program and before the start of teaching, examinations or practical exercises by arranging an intake interview at the central contact point. Within the department, the academic advisor is the first person to turn to. In collaboration with the central contact point, effective measures can be taken. In the case of a disability that emerges during the study itself and the student believes he/she may be eligible for special facilities, he/she should report this if possible within two months of its emergence. Of course, in this case, the Personal Data Protection Act (Wet Bescherming Persoonsgegevens) will be fully applicable.

4.3. Education Information System
It is desirable that the Education Information System be adapted to enable students with a disability to be registered. This will enable academic progress to be monitored and early action to be taken if students for behind with their studies. By starting the process of supervision as soon as possible an attempt will be made to prevent students falling behind with their studies as far as possible. Of course, in this case, the Personal Data Protection Act will be fully applicable.

4.4. Central provisions
The intake information and follow-up actions will be registered in the Education Information System. This will provide information on the numbers of students with a disability, its nature and the provisions that need to be taken in response. Based on this information, an assessment will be made in order to decide whether it is desirable to offer the most frequently-used provisions centrally as standard. Of course, in this case, the Personal Data Protection Act will be fully applicable.

4.5. Educational adaptations
The necessary educational adaptations will be assessed on a student-by-student basis. In addition, based on research and experience and in consultation with program directors, the possible adaptations to the curriculum will be charted for each disability.

4.6. Transfer of knowledge/safeguarding expertise
The transfer and safeguarding of knowledge is of great importance in ensuring that the services for students with a disability run as smoothly as possible. In consultations between the Education and Student Service Center (STU) and the departmental academic advisors, the subject of studying with a disability will regularly be included on the agenda in order to facilitate the sharing of experiences and promotion of expertise. In addition, there will be close contacts with the students from ‘Hinderniks’, the platform for students with a disability, enabling a swift response to any needs that should arise.

4.7. Accessibility
Within TU/e, there is a special committee that ensures that the buildings are accessible to people with a disability (Bestuurscommissie Voorzieningen Gehandicapten, BCVG). The BCVG ensures that public spaces within the University complex are accessible and usable for people with a physical disability. The aim is to enable unassisted access for everyone. The special guidelines have been included in the Accessibility Handbook ('Handboek voor Toegankelijkheid') used by the BCVG as guidance. Currently all TU/e buildings, with the exception of Spectrum and Kennispoort, have the ITS vignette.

4.8 Expertise teams
Currently, the most prevalent disability is dyslexia. There are also signs of an increase in the number of students with autism or associated conditions. Expertise teams will be set up and external expertise hired in to support the departments and provide advice on the supervision of these students.

4.9 Program and Examination Regulations (OER)
The model OER stipulates that students with a disability are offered a reasonable opportunity to take examinations and that provisions for financial support are arranged by TU/e for students who fall behind with their studies as a result of disabilities.

The institutional section of the Student Statute includes an article stipulating that students with a disability have the right to personalized facilities, taking account of the key principles formulated above.
5. Implementation
5.1. Implementation plan
The implementation of the policy outlined in this document is intended to ensure that it becomes permanently embedded within the organization. For this purpose, the official procedure of consulting the various platforms involved will be followed. Modifications will be made based on any feedback where necessary. The policy will then be finalized in an implementation plan. This will provide the details of action points, lines of communication and the timeline.

6. Evaluation
6.1. Evaluation plan
It must be possible for the policy agreed to be assessed in terms of its effect. An evaluation plan will be necessary for this purpose. The evaluation plan will describe the timeline for implementation and modifications, the people to be involved in the entire evaluation and the evaluation tools to be used. The evaluation will need to be firmly incorporated within the quality assurance system (planning and control cycle, annual reports, inclusion in accreditation schedule) and will help to safeguard quality.
7. Action points

7.1 OER

**What:**
Include provisions on the way in which students with a disability are offered a reasonable opportunity to take examinations, etc.
Include article in the institutional section of the Student Statute

**Who:**
Education and Student Services Center

**Timeline:**
April 2006

7.2. Contact point

**What:**
Set up central contact point for students with a disability. Reporting will be essential in order to be eligible for provisions.
Develop forms for intake interview and report
Clearer procedures will be formulated to support the realization of measures

**Who:**
Education and Student Services Center

**Timeline:**
September 2006

7.3. Education Information System

**What:**
Modify Education Information System to enable students with a disability to be registered and monitored
Formulate a clearly-defined data-entry procedure in order to record responsibilities unambiguously

**Who:**
Education and Student Services Center

**Timeline:**
September 2006

7.4. Central provisions

**What:**
Register the intake information and resulting arrangements with the study program in the Education Information System. Based on this information, an assessment will be made to decide whether it is desirable to offer the most-used provisions centrally as standard.

**Who:**
Education and Student Service Center together with departments

**Timeline:**
September 2007
7.5. Educational adaptations

**What:**
Alongside personalized solutions, modifications made to the curriculum for particularly prevalent disabilities, based on research and experience and in consultation with program directors, will be charted.

**Who:**
Education and Student Service Center in consultation with the departments

**Timeline:**
September 2007

7.6 Information

**What:**
1. Information about contact point in enrollment pack brochure
2. Additional information about studying with a disability during information events
3. Update brochure ‘Ongehinderd studeren’
4. Update website

**Who:**
Education and Student Service Center

**Timeline:**
1. June 2006
2. Already implemented
3. May 2006

7.7. Transfer of knowledge/safeguarding expertise

**What:**
Ensure knowledge transfer and safeguarding of expertise between central and localized experts runs as smoothly as possible by means of consultations on SwD policy.

**Who:**
Consultations: Education and Student Service Center/Departmental academic advisors
Consultations: Program directors
Consultations: Education and Student Service Center/Hinderniks student platform

**Timeline:**
From September 2006

7.8. Accessibility

**What:**
Ensure that public spaces within the University complex are accessible and usable for people with a physical disability.

**Who:**
BCVG
**Timeline:**
Already implemented

7.9. Expertise teams

**What:**
Form expertise teams in the areas of dyslexia and autism

**Who:**
Education and Student Service Center and hired-in national expertise teams

**Timeline:**
September 2007
Annexes
1. List generated by Hinderniks student platform
2. List of possible facilities
Annex 1: List of disabilities (source, Hinderniks)
Students with a disability known to academic advisors
Results of straw-poll of academic advisors 2003

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Source: Hinderniks 2003
Annex 2: List of possible provisions (Source: Handicap en Studie)

The Handicap & Studie (www.handicap-studie.nl) student disability website offers a list of facilities as a service for students and academic advisors. The list depends on the nature of the disability and the type of assistance required. Clicking on a combination of these two factors reveals a list of possible facilities. The list that follows includes just some of the possible facilities mentioned on the website, focusing on facilities for which the institution must provide support. The list is not exhaustive and overlaps are possible.

The provisions described are not necessarily available at TU/e as standard. In each individual situation, an assessment will be made of which solution is necessary and appropriate. In assessing an application for certain material facilities, it makes a difference if a student has already made use of other opportunities to apply for assistance that have been rejected, for example, the UWV (Employment Insurance Agency, responsible for the implementation of legislation governing employment and capacity for work) or the municipality (responsible for implementing legislation governing disability) where the student is registered as a resident.

A. Material facilities

Offer of learning materials
- A3 format
- Braille
- Cassette
- Digital (diskette/ CD-ROM/network/internet)
- Appropriate use of color/color contrast
- Easy-to-read layout
- Enlarged font
- Video
- Webcam

Communication resources
- Screen enlargement
- Braille terminal in media center/computer room/study room
- Braille keyboard
- Lecture live on internet (via webcam)
- Communication with seminar via e-mail/chat/msn/telephone
- Participation via webcam
- Individual equipment for sound amplification
- Laptop
- Reading equipment/Braille terminal in media center/computer room/study room
- Magnifying glass
- Reading pen (see www.readingpen.nl)
- Scanning (enlarging/computer options)
- Writing equipment (e.g. special pens, black-lined paper)
- Interpreter (sign language, deaf-blind)
- Voice recorder

Outfitting/use of buildings/classrooms
- Modified worktop
- Reduced change of classrooms/reduced distances
- Modified seating (desk, lecture room)
- Individual student room for video/audio materials
- Appropriate additional lighting
- Locker (at suitable height)
- Low-stimulus study room
- Induction loop
- Quiet room
B. Facilities for teaching

Planning teaching

- Arrangements for absence/less strict attendance rules
- Arrangements for provision of information (e.g. by e-mail)
- Timetable adaptations/spreading of compulsory attendance
- Clustered classes
- Modules more evenly spread/scheduled
- Seminar meetings on favorable days/times
- Regular, structural progress meetings
- Examinations evenly distributed
- Submission dates evenly distributed
- Working in small groups
- Independent study instead of lectures (possibly with support)

Teaching presentation

- Record discussions/consultations on tape
- Additional pause for writing
- Internet module
- Extend reading pauses
- Verbal explanation of written information
- Record classes (tape/video)
- Written support by lecturer (slides/board/PowPPoint)
- Start with overview of subject matter to be covered and link with the rest of the subject matter
- Modified pace
- Regular and set structure in lesson

Additional supervision

- Supervision/training in assertiveness/fear of failure/social skills
- Supervision/training in communication skills
- Supervision by trusted person
- Supervision in cooperation with expert/health service (GGZ)
- Dyslexia support
- Additional (private) lessons/explanation
- Additional support from course lecturer
- Additional support from tutor/mentor
- Reading tips/lecturer issues key subject matter
- Option of catch-up lecture
- Summary of subject matter provided (explanation/written)
- Option to ask questions by e-mail/telephone
- Questions/explanation possible after lessons

Seminars/presentations

- Alternative assignment instead of group assignment
- Option to demonstrate group-work competencies in alternative way
- Presenting in small group
- Individual program (or individual assignments alongside shared seminar assignments)
- Option of later submission dates
- Complete/submit assignment in installments
- Obtain assignments/information by e-mail
- Explanation/questions answered about written report
- Submission dates evenly distributed
C. Facilities for examinations

Preparation
- Complete old examination
- Obtain clear information about form/content/assessment

Assessment type/rules
- Retakes at favorable times/days
- Divided into parts
- Oral rather than written
- Multiple-choice rather than open questions
- Open rather than multiple-choice questions
- Pauses
- Written rather than oral
- Written with verbal explanation
- Spread testing evenly (over day over a block)
- Take-home
- Extended time

Room
- Additional modified lighting
- Modified (desk) seating
- Individual room (to allow extra time, improve concentration, reading aloud, listening to spoken examination, option to take pauses, fewer distractions, voice recognition, speech synthesis, option to move around, change position, reduced stress factors)
- Low-stimulus study room
- Accessible (modified) classroom

Resources/tools
- Answers on computer/laptop
- Communication and technological tools/resources
- Computer/speech synthesis
- Readable thanks to large font, clear font (e.g. Arial), spacing 1.5
- Magnifying glass
- Reading pen (see www.readingpen.nl)
- Support with written work
- Spelling check (computer)
- Interpreter (sign language, deaf-blind)
- Enlarged type
- Via chat/MSN
- Questions on computer/laptop
- Dictionary/calculator