

Universities to improve access for disabled

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has invested about R175.6 million to ensure that students and staff with disabilities have improved access to university facilities.



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The department on Tuesday said the money will be invested in infrastructure, as well as teaching and learning aids for the disabled.

The multi-million rand project follows the department's strategic decision three years ago to support all universities with funding to improve or expand facilities and infrastructure for students and staff with disabilities.

This to ensure uninhibited and open access to all facilities for students and staff with disabilities that's not only limited to low lying facilities on the ground or first floors.

"While the long-term aim is to provide universal access, a differentiated approach which includes creating barrier-free built environments, both inside buildings and externally in the open space system has been implemented.

"This has also led to each university undertaking or planning to undertake a comprehensive and up-to-date disability audit

which would inform campus master planning strategies,” said the department.

Some of the upgrades at the country’s 22 universities have included improvements to areas such as lifts and walkways, general accessibility, assistive learning hardware, magnification of printed text, enhancement software, low vision aids, Braille embossers, computers, software, hardware and accessories.

The University of South Africa (UNISA) received the largest investment allocation estimated at R39 million.

“This was used towards restoring computer laboratories for students with disabilities and upgrading the institution’s Disability Study and Diagnosis Unit.

“Currently, the department is finalising its radical disability policy. This policy, following wide consultation, will help guide the post-school education and training sector on how best to harness the skills of the disabled.”

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