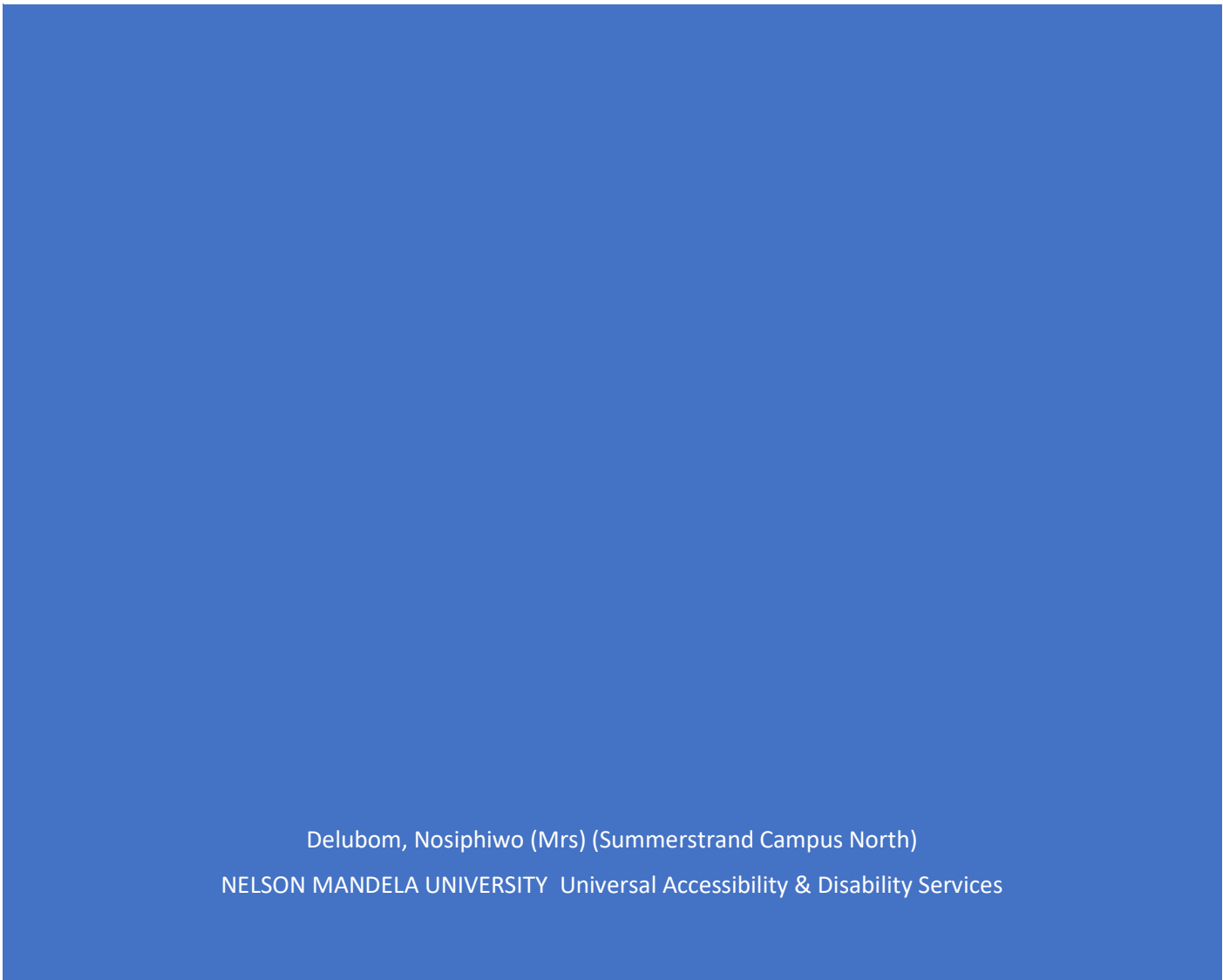




STUDENT SUCCESS &  
TRANSITIONING  
PATHWAYS@NMU



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## **Background**

The transition from high school to life after high school can be an exciting time in the life of a young person. It can also be a time of tremendous challenge, especially for students with disabilities. The new phase of postsecondary education is filled with dramatic and significant changes. Being prepared will help students have a better understanding of what lies ahead so that they can ultimately achieve their goals and dreams. The transition process includes adjustments to both academic and social settings. Students will need to take greater responsibility for their lives which involves being able to self-advocate for the support and services they need. It also involves being resilient and having the skill and motivation to move forward, even when things do not go right.

Each student undergoes a unique transition process and although the first weeks are of particular importance for successful transitioning, it would be inaccurate to say that the transition process begins or stops there. The transition process should be looked at as being on a continuum of interconnected experiences that can occur throughout the university years from first to final. Integrated services that will be offered by different stakeholders involved in the transition process for implementing successful transition from the schooling system to tertiary education and to employment as well as skills mobilised will create a huge impact in the life of students with disabilities.

## **Purpose**

The transition from the schooling system to the Post-School Education and Training system can be hard for students especially those who are coming from the Special Schools because it requires lot of adjustment dealing with the size and unfamiliarity of the campus, numerous academic matters, personal, and interpersonal demands and prioritising factors that may affect academic performance.

Student Success and Transitioning Pathways (SSTP) programme intends to create an opportunity that makes a positive first impression which will become a lasting impression. It also aims to enable, encourage and empower students with disabilities in gaining insight into their life aspirations, as they journey through their academic years at Nelson Mandela University until they reach employment, working independently within the mainstream classes.

## **Pre-entry Support**

The focus of pre-entry support is to offer integrated services that are constituted of different divisions in the university (Student Wellness, Admissions, Marketing, Financial Aid and UADS). This will be done through visiting the Special Schools and feeder schools in the Province.

### Activities

- Career choice & Learning styles
- Admission requirements
- How to apply for financial assistance
- Get ready for tertiary level
- Disability services support
- Supporting documents needed for reasonable accommodations support
- Follow up of prospective students through telephone calls and emails

## **On- Entry Support**

This is the first phase of the students entering the university. This phase is called ‘Honeymoon’ period and is considered to be short lived. In this stage, the majority of students imagine a life with opportunities for personal, social and intellectual growth (Tao, et al., 2000, page 38). The focus of entry support is to enable them to gain courage and strength to navigate the routes and life of the campus.

### Activities

- Process of registration
- Meet and greet
- Know your how to buddy student
- Know your House Committee member
- Who to consult for academic issues
- Evaluation of students support needs

## **Post entry Support**

When students are registered and been orientated by their faculties, learning and teaching resumes. During orientation, it is likely possible that some of them do not even understand the bulk of information that is provided to them. This is the time where reality begins. This is the second phase and is known as ‘culture shock’. During this phase, the student may experience high levels of anxiety associated with academic demands, feelings of isolation, emptiness, stress, homesickness and a sense of loss. These feelings may be brought about due to the changes within their environment (location and culture), their social life (meeting new people, sharing accommodation, interacting with academic staff) and academic and learning environment.

### **Activities**

- Academic needs (Understanding time tables, Tutor, Reader, Note taker etc)
- Difference between Supplemental Instruction and Individual Academic Support)
- Learning Styles
- Effective study techniques
- Form study Teams/ learning communities
- Evaluation of student support needs
- Conduct student interests’ surveys on Co-curricular programmes
- Listening to the voice of students (Society establishment)
- Self-advocacy skills (how to create Podcast, You Tube etc.)
- Organisational skills (best tools)

## **Exit Support**

The focus of exit support is to help students prepare for this next phase of life. Being prepared for the labour market will ease the transition. In addition to learning about how the workplace setting differs from tertiary level, this programme will help students learn more about themselves, their preferences and how they present themselves in the workplace. Collaboration with Graduate and Placement Unit, Student and Governance Development Entrepreneurship programme and other external stakeholders will be beneficial during the exit support.

### Activities

- Presentation skills
- Life skills
- Sighted Guide skills
- Work shadowing (AREP)
- Interview Skills
- Connect on networking sites

### **Roles and Responsibilities of UADS Practitioners**

It is significant to note that SSTP implementation overlap across all practitioners, including Student Assistant Coordinators in the unit. Collaboration and team work within the unit is encouraged. The roles and responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- Develop sub-activities from the activities in the manual.
- Engage with different stakeholders in the university.
- Record the attendance list of students attending different programmes of SSTP.
- Capturing of data for students in different co-curricular programmes

### **Conclusion**

Best practice is about having positive expectations of students, creating a winning attitude and providing learning environments that are inclusive, respectful, open and bright as well as being appropriately challenging, genuinely supportive and interested in adapting technologies as required to ensure all students reach their full academic potential. The university has adopted Humanising Pedagogy which means that practitioners has a responsibility to understand that students have knowledge and that their knowledge should be acknowledged. There is importance of building a relationship of trust between the two parties (Practitioner and student) (Zinn, et al., 2016)

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## **References**

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