



MINDANAO CENTER FOR EDUCATION
RESEARCH, TRAINING AND INNOVATION

Policy Brief

How can the USePAT be more Inclusive to students with Disabilities?

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This brief explores policies and actions to ensure students with disabilities have a more inclusive admission testing experience and equitable access to higher education, thus fostering an inclusive learning environment at USeP.

The Challenge of Inclusivity

The USePAT, despite decades of use by the university, has its own limitations. While it purports to measure skills necessary for university-level coursework, the current format and testing practices might disadvantage students with disabilities. To create a more inclusive environment, USeP recognizes the need for accessibility features and potential accommodations.

Fairness in admissions testing requires addressing accessibility issues. Students with disabilities often face several barriers that prevent them from showing their true knowledge and skills. Thus, accommodations & modifications have become important aspects of admissions testing. With modifications in the testing environment, procedures, and format, students with disabilities can effectively demonstrate their abilities (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2018). Likewise, research has also emphasized that, accommodations are also crucial for optimal performance (e.g., Geller, 2005)

For the USePAT to be More Inclusive

The University of Southeastern
Philippines may need to:

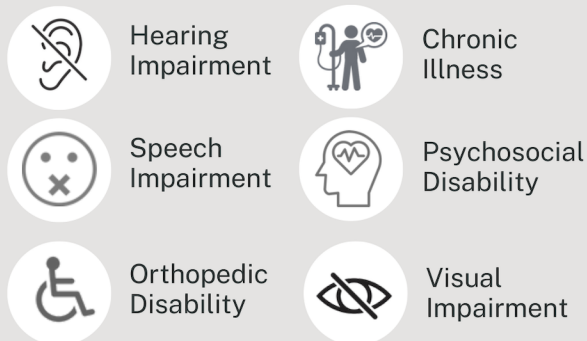
- Establish a support network of professionals (including specialists from outside USeP) to assist in test administration and in providing accommodations to examinees with disabilities.
- Develop a USePAT manual that shall include detailed accommodation protocols for students with disabilities.
- Develop alternative test formats that shall provide options like tactile figures and video formats to cater to various disabilities.
- Establish an institutional accessibility center to coordinate accessibility initiatives, resources, and communication between and among specialists, school personnel, and students within the university.





How Can the USePAT be more “Inclusive” to Students with Disabilities?

Commonly Reported Disabilities of Student Applicants



Failing to address these challenges potentially compromises the fairness of the admissions process. Inclusive testing practices are essential to ensure all students have equal opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. Addressing these challenges is crucial for promoting inclusivity, equity and supporting the academic success in higher education.

Our Research Approach

This study is part of a project to redesign the USePAT to be more inclusive. Our initial findings revealed issues with differential item functioning (DIF) among applicants with disabilities, particularly pronounced among the hearing impaired. This follow-up study explored accessibility challenges in the USePAT through focused group discussions (FGDs) with key university personnel involved in admissions (n=18).

To gain a student perspective, we also interviewed four students with disabilities who had taken standardized exams. This included three students with hearing impairments who had taken the USePAT and one student with a visual impairment who had taken a different exam. All participants were chosen for their experience with admissions testing and ability to provide valuable insights for improving USePAT accessibility.

Key Findings

Our analysis reveals a lack of accessibility features in the USePAT to address the needs of students with disabilities.

First, while the admission process enables the identification of disabilities, it does not capture the specific accommodation needs associated with those disabilities. This creates a twofold challenge: 1) test administrators may lack information to prepare appropriate accommodations; and 2) the university cannot accurately determine the necessary resources and specialist support required to facilitate an accessible testing environment.

Second, the absence of structures and procedures for addressing accessibility needs also disadvantages students with disabilities. The lack of a dedicated support network or established system for providing assistance before, during and after testing creates unnecessary barriers for these students.

Finally, The USePAT's current format presents accessibility challenges for students with special needs. Test format and information is only available in written format. There are no audio, visual, or tactile options available. This format may disadvantage students with visual impairments, learning disabilities, or those whose primary communication method is not written English (e.g., sign language users).

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