***Jaws Disability Training***

The School of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) has identified a serious need among visually-impaired students, for assistance with computer skills.

These skills are essential for their studies and also in the work place. Visually-impaired students use specific devices to participate in all their lectures. These devices include recording devices, laptops and headphones to name a few.

To boost their computer skills, the School of ICT, in association with the Disability Unit at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, hosted a Jaws Training Workshop (Jaws being the name of a screen reader programme, used by visually-impaired people).

The training took place from 20 to 24 June 2016 on North Campus R228. Bruno Savaria, the training instructor and software provider, demonstrated how the programme reads out loud what is on the screen for a particular individual and how the individual relies on that information to navigate around the screen.

Jaws training was attended by School of ICT lecturers, Disability Unit representatives and visually-impaired students. This training was free of charge.

The School of ICT lecturers were impressed with how well the students took to Jaws.

They explained that the ICT programme was challenging even for people who can see. The programme needs a different approach and level of expertise. The difficulty for visually-impaired students is that their interaction with the computer is done without the screen and the mouse, and completely relies on using the keyboard. Simply put, studying ICT is like learning a new language all together.

On the last day of the Jaws training, the students completed a test to make sure that they understood the information they had learnt during the week and could apply it to their daily learning environment. The students enjoyed the training and were grateful for the experience. After such a positive response from the students, the School of ICT is looking into making this workshop an annual event for visually-impaired students.