



## **Disability Action Plan**

**Faculty of Medical Sciences**  
**University of Sri Jayewardenepura**

This Disability Action Plan is based on the Policy for students with special needs/disabilities approved by the Faculty Board of Faculty of Medical Sciences on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

### **Disability Action Committee of Faculty of Medical Sciences**

The membership of the Disability Action Committee comprises of senior members of the Faculty who give credibility to the committee and may also have a special interest in the area. Membership works under the patronage of the Dean of the Faculty. The committee maintains an equal or near equal gender representation.

#### **Membership**

- Chairperson – Disability Action Committee
- Chairperson – Student Welfare Committee (ex-officio)
- Committee members - Three Senior academic members of Faculty of Medical Sciences

The committee undertakes responsibilities to set strategic priorities to create awareness, remove barriers and improve support. It receives, analyzes, and makes recommendations for action, for needs of students with special needs/disabilities.

The committee considers feedback from students with special needs/disabilities and from program validation reviews and makes appropriate amendments. It maintains records of students with special needs/disabilities in order to facilitate planning and implementation of actions for the continued development of quality services.

## Eligibility for special needs/disability support

To be eligible for special needs/disability support, students enrolled at the Faculty of Medical Sciences should declare their disabilities by providing a report by a qualified medical professional. A qualified medical professional is a board-certified consultant practicing western medicine in Sri Lanka. Reports from registered Ayurvedic medical practitioners are evaluated by a board-certified consultant at the FMS.

The report of the medical professional should include,

- the nature of the specific impairment
- the duration of the disability as permanent, ongoing, or temporary
- details of the impact the impairment is likely to have on academic activities
- recommended support services and/or reasonable adjustments to minimize impact on academic activities
- medical professional's title, credentials, stamp, and the signature

The report of the medical professional is valid for,

- one month for temporary conditions
- twelve months for ongoing conditions
- the duration of student enrolment for permanent conditions

## Declaration of special needs/disability needing support

At the time of admission to the FMS, a self-administered questionnaire (Annexure 1) is provided to all new entrants to disclose any special need/disability needing support. The questionnaire is made available at the Faculty website, to inform about the special need/disability at students' will at any point of time during the university stay (for ones who have not disclosed such on admission) or about an acute event leading to disability.

Students may directly inform their special needs/disability to the Disability Action Committee via a letter or email.

The information received by the Disability Action Committee will be kept private and confidential.

On disclosure of any special need/disability by a student, the Disability Action Committee/a member of the committee will meet such student needing disability support, assess the support services best suited to the student and discuss a plan for academic activities.

## Initial assessment and information sharing with relevant parties

Following the receipt of students' details needing disability support, the Disability Action Committee shall hold an initial assessment for each student with the following objectives,

- To understand the students' specific needs and identify the recommendations of the medical practitioner
- To direct students to obtain a report from a qualified medical practitioner, if such report is not available
- To assess the student's understanding about the condition
- To obtain student's consent to share information they provided with relevant academic members or service personnel in order to implement the supporting strategies. This may include University Medical Officer, consultant/s to whom the student would be referred to, Heads of departments, Clinicians, Director of Examinations, and wardens where relevant.
- To set up an individualized plan for each student
- In a serious condition to inform the administration for necessary action

All information received by the Disability Action Committee is confidential. To implement disability supporting strategies for the benefit of the student, the Disability Action Committee may share some information with relevant parties after obtaining informed written consent from the student expressing his/her willingness for such an act.

The student's information could be shared with following parties with the consent of the student,

- The University Medical Officer – to collaborate in provision of services
- The consultant to whom the student is referred to – to facilitate management process
- The Heads of the Departments – to arrange necessary support during the teaching programme
- The clinicians to whom the student is appointed during clinical rosters – to arrange necessary support at the wards
- The Director of Examinations – to allow special arrangements during examinations
- The wardens of residential hostels – to provide support at the hostels and to be prepared for emergencies where relevant
- The scholarship schemes – to help the student obtain financial support
- The courts and the police – to help the student in legal actions where relevant

The student's information could be shared with the following parties without the student's consent, when such divulging seems to have a benefit for the student,

- The treating medical officer/ medical team in an emergency condition of the student when the student is unable to provide information
- The treating consultant/psychiatrist when there is a significant risk of deliberate self-harm or suicide

## Follow up, monitoring and feedback

The Disability Action Committee may arrange follow-up meetings with the student to monitor the implementation of supporting strategies and the improvement or progression of the student's condition where relevant.

With the agreement of the student, the meetings may be frequent when the student needs support and only as and when necessary, when the supporting systems operate flawlessly.

The follow-up may be terminated when it is no longer required.

The Disability Action Committee evaluates the process based on feedback to assess the quality and effectiveness of supporting strategies/services. The committee obtains feedback periodically from involved parties, that may include,

- The student with special need/disability
- University Medical Officer where relevant
- Heads of Departments
- Clinicians where relevant
- Director of Examinations
- Wardens where relevant
- The medical officers/ medical teams/ consultants to whom the student was referred to

## Supporting facilities - Infrastructure

The faculty will apply principles of Universal Design in its design of facilities, buildings, and services in all its future developments.

Adjustments are negotiated to meet the needs of the students with special needs/disabilities with the administration of the Faculty to accommodate these students within existing infrastructure. They commonly include the following,

- Access to all venues (lecture halls, laboratories, library, student common room etc.) of the Faculty
- Disability friendly lavatories
- Chairs with forearm rest (for both right-handed and left-handed students)
- Front row seats/designated seats (visual impairment, hearing impairment, reduced mobility)
- Permission to use elevators and specialized ergonomic equipment (reduced mobility)
- Ground floor rooms in hostels

## Supporting facilities – Teaching/learning and recreational activities

The supporting facilities can be an aid, a facility or a service that the student requires due to his/her specific need/disability in teaching and learning activities. They commonly include the following,

- Regular breaks (for administration of specific drugs) or stand in class (musculoskeletal issues)
- Allowing recording of lectures/tutorials and availability of lectures in multiple formats (writer's cramp)
- Not using confusing colour schemes in images (colour blindness)
- Provision of a note-taker or assistive technology (reader, scribe, computer etc.)
- Provision to move to an area where there is more/less light (special visual impairments)
- Recognition and facilitation of participation in recreational activities

## Supporting facilities – Assessments

Reasonable adjustments are designed to place students with special needs/disability on a more equal position as other students, without providing any kind of advantage during assessments. They commonly include the following,

- Provision to accommodate student's own chair/wheelchair or adapted equipment
- Provision to stand or take short breaks to accommodate musculoskeletal issues
- Access to text-to-speech software where writing or typing of answers is impacted by the physical disability
- Provision to verbally provide a response to questions/use a scribe. Additional invigilators are appointed to write down and record answers (injury to writing arm)
- Additional time where a physical disability affects writing speed
- Provision of rest breaks

## Supporting facilities – Scholarships and hostel

The Disability Action Committee recommends and facilitates obtaining financial support and hostel accommodation for students with special needs/disabilities.

Faculty and hostel maps will be provided to students with special needs/disabilities indicating the access points to buildings (elevators) and disability friendly lavatories.

## Availability of information

Information on the Faculty Disability Action Plan for students with special needs/disabilities will be made available to students in several means and formats.

- During the orientation programme
- In the student handbook
- On the faculty website
- Through personal tutors/counselors