



Faculty of Medical Sciences
University of Sri Jayewardenepura



Policy title : Policy for students with special needs/disabilities

Policy number: 01

Functional area: Academic

Effective and revised dates: 11/11/2021

Approving authority: Faculty of Medical Sciences

Administrative responsibility: Dean and administrative staff of Faculty of Medical Sciences

Rationale and purpose

Both local and international acts recognize and emphasize that, no person with a special need/ disability shall be deprived of any facility or service from which any other member of the public has access or is entitled to use.

The Faculty of Medical Sciences, USJ is committed to assist in providing an inclusive and accessible environment where students with special needs/disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of teaching and learning activities of the faculty. The faculty is also dedicated to providing reasonable adjustments to ensure that academic requirements do not discriminate against students with special needs/disabilities.

Complying with the Gazette on Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) signed by the Government of Sri Lanka, the Faculty policy for students with special needs/disabilities, promotes and protects the rights of those students enabling them a barrier-free academic and social life in the Faculty. The policy also aims to foster positive attitudes among all students towards people with special needs/disabilities.

Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled in the Faculty of Medical Sciences, visiting students from other institutions and those who are involved in teaching/learning activities including staff.

Policy statement

Accessibility and equity

- The Faculty ensures that in all its policies, strategic plans and activities, an inclusive approach is considered enabling meaningful participation of students with special needs/disabilities, in all Faculty events and programs.
- The Faculty is committed to comply with relevant national legislature on access and equity for people with special needs/disabilities.
- The Faculty will strive to apply principles of Universal Design in its design of facilities, buildings, and services.
- The Faculty is obligated to provide equal access to students with special needs/disabilities as for students without special needs/disabilities,
 - in accessing services (academic, transport, accommodation etc.)
 - in receiving support services (academic, health, counselling etc.)
 - in receiving information (general, academic, extra-curricular activities in accessible formats)
 - in accessing infrastructure (building and lavatory)
 - in providing feedback and complaints.
- The Faculty denounces any type of discrimination against disabilities and aims to create awareness among the Faculty community regarding the rights of people with special needs/disabilities fostering informed positive attitudes towards them.
- The Faculty will not be obligated to provide facilities that would result in an undue financial or administrative burden to the Faculty.

Reasonable adjustments

- The Faculty will implement reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning and assessment methods without compromising the academic needs and standards or allowing an undue advantage to students with special needs/disability.
- In order to obtain reasonable adjustments, students shall provide documentary evidence from a qualified and relevant health professional regarding their specific needs/disability.
- In teaching and learning activities, an adjustment can be an aid, a facility or a service that the student requires due to his/her specific need/disability.
- In assessment, a reasonable adjustment aims to redress the impact of a students' specific need on their performance and to provide fair chance for them to demonstrate their knowledge and competency in examinations.

The reasonable adjustments may include,

- Extensions of time
- Use of an aid (ergonomic chair) or assistive technology (reader, computer etc.)
- A separate room
- Alternative formatting of examination papers or assessment.

- The Faculty will provide resources and staff development opportunities to assist staff in fulfilling the learning and support needs of students with special needs/disabilities.
- The Faculty will consider the feedback from students with special needs/disabilities and from program validation reviews and make appropriate amendments and reasonable adjustments to minimize the barriers identified.
- The Faculty will maintain records of statistical information on enrolment, performance and participation and graduation rates of students with special needs/disabilities in order to facilitate planning for the continued development of quality services.

Disclosure of Disability

- The declaration of the disability and the timing of such declaration belong entirely to the individual student.
- Students with special needs/disabilities who require adjustments are encouraged to declare their needs to the Faculty as early as possible to enable the Faculty to offer them support.
- The Faculty will respect students' rights to confidentiality. Student personal information and any adjustments needed may only be disclosed to the relevant staff members or service personnel on a need-to-know basis.
- The Faculty staff shall treat information concerning a students' special needs/disabilities as private and confidential.
- The Faculty cannot be held liable for not implementing reasonable adjustments retrospectively (i.e., prior to disclosure of special needs/disability)

Disability Action Plan

In conjunction with this policy, the Faculty will introduce a Disability Action Plan which sets out the Faculty's approach in meeting with its obligations and responsibilities towards students with special needs/disabilities.

Definitions

- Disability

Disability is defined in the Sri Lankan parliamentary act – Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disability as, 'Any person who as a result of any deficiency in his physical or mental capabilities whether congenital or not is unable by himself to ensure for himself, wholly or partly the necessities of life'. (Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.No.28 of 1996, p.14).

In relation to this definition, the classification of types of disability used by the Ministry of Social Welfare in Sri Lanka encompasses people who have visual, speech, hearing, mobility, intellectual, and psychiatric disability and disability arising as a result of epilepsy and other causes.

- Discrimination

Discrimination is considered when a person with disability is treated less favorably than a person without disability in similar circumstances or when a person with a disability is not able to comply with a requirement or condition, because of their disability. The requirement or condition will also be likely to have the effect of disadvantaging persons with disability in a way that is not reasonable (and otherwise as defined in the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 1996).

- Universal Design

The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Titles of related Policies, Procedures, Forms, Guidelines

1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

2. Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No 28 of 1996, Sri Lanka.

Accessible at

http://socialemwelfare.gov.lk/web/images/content_image/pdf/legislation/act1996.pdf

3. National Policy on Disability – 2003. Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Accessible at

http://socialemwelfare.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=159&lang=en.