



GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY



DISABILITY IS A MINDSET



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**MBARARA UNIVERSITY OF
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

SUCCEED WE MUST



GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF
THE DISABILITY
AND SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mbarara University of Science and Technology Institutional Policy on Disability and Special Needs provides the following guiding principles: A Human Rights-Based Approach, Disability mainstreaming, Inclusion and participation, Affirmative Action on the basis of disability, Reasonable Accommodation, Non-discrimination, Raising Awareness, Traffic safety, and Accessibility.

The principles are categorized for students and staff with disability and special needs in order to address their unique needs in the University and establishment of a Disability Support office which will coordinate all the PWDs activities in the University.



Staff and Students of MUST at the Disability and special needs consultative meeting

2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND INTERVENTIONS

2.1 A Human Rights-Based Approach

- a) The policy is based on a Human Rights-Based Approach to service delivery and seeks to minimize stigma and discrimination which act as a barrier to PWDs in accessing services at the University. Promotion and protection of the rights and dignity of PWDs will be upheld by providing the University Community with awareness-raising opportunities and activities such as “the international day for persons with disabilities” and providing students with existing or emerging disability opportunities for disclosure.
- b) **Intervention**
 - i) Recognizing, implementing, and disseminating the policy on Disability and Special Needs together with the relevant legal provisions to promote the equalization of opportunities and the rights of PWDs and equal opportunities for all.
 - ii) Advocating for rights of PWDS

2.2. Disability mainstreaming

- a) The University is obliged to identify, recognize, and make the learning and work needs of PWDs an integral part of its conscious planning, service implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The unique needs of staff and students with disabilities and special needs must be made the basis for planning and resource allocation at all levels in order to ensure that every individual in the University has equal access and opportunity to participate in learning and work execution.
- b) **Intervention**
 - i) Mainstream the concerns and needs of PWDs in all programmes, services and activities of the University.
 - ii) Conduct awareness-raising workshops on strategies of mainstreaming disability issues.
 - iii) Encourage staff and students to form their own PWD associations.

2.3. Inclusion and participation

- a) PWDs shall fully participate in the University academic, co-curricular and recreation activities of their choice. They shall be involved in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these activities at all levels. Every intervention by the University shall bring PWDs on board to take part in decision making so as to own and influence the environment around them.

- b) Principles that guide active inclusion
 - i) All people belong: inclusive education is based on the simple idea that every person and family are valued equally and deserve the same opportunities and experience. Inclusive education is about people with disabilities-whether the disability is mild, severe hidden or obvious-participating in everyday activities, just like they would if their disability were not present. it is about building friendship, membership and having opportunities just like everybody.
 - ii) All people Learn in different ways: Inclusion is about providing help people to learn and participate in Meaningful ways. In some situations, help from friends and teachers works best and in others, specially designed materials or technology can help. The key is to give as much help as needed.
 - iii) It is every person's right to be included: Inclusive education is a person's right not a privilege. The individuals with Disabilities Education Act Clearly states that all children with disabilities should be educated with non- disabled children of their age and have access to the general education curriculum.

- b) Intervention
All University programmed activities shall adhere to the principle of inclusion and participation as regards staff and students.

2.4 Affirmative Action on the basis of disability

- a) The University shall apply Affirmative Action where deemed necessary when:
 - i) Considering admission of students with disabilities whose examination grades do not qualify them to be admitted on merit.
 - ii) Considering admissions of students to the university, as a way of increasing the number of PWDs at MUST, functional fees for 10 students may be waved off. Priority shall be given to the physically handicapped.
 - iii) Recruiting staff into the university service.

- b) Intervention
 - i) Put in place an Affirmative Action criteria or guidelines for student admission and staff recruitment.
 - ii) Regularly review the existing Affirmative Action.

2.5 Reasonable Accommodation

- (a) The university is obliged to make reasonable modifications and adjustments to physical facilities, instructional methods and materials, examinations, work requirements and procedures to ensure effective inclusion, accessibility and participation of PWDs and to enable them to exercise their human rights on equal basis with other people in the university.
- (b) Intervention

The university shall Identify and carry out adjustments and modification in line with the reasonable accommodation principle.

2.6 Non-discrimination

- a) i) People with disabilities and other special needs in the university shall not be discriminated in any way or denied any service on the basis of the condition(s) they have. They must be supported to enjoy or exercise their human rights on equal basis with other people in the university.
- ii) Harassment and bullying. If a member of the University community feels that he or she has been subjected to harassment or bullying because of a disability, the appropriate Harassment and Bullying Policy should be followed.
- b) Intervention
 - i) The University shall implement non-discriminatory policies, guidelines, procedures and services at MUST.
 - ii) Disciplinary action will be taken against any student or employee who is found to be in breach of the Disability and special needs Policy.

2.7 Raising Awareness

- a) The University community shall be sensitized about the rights of students and staff with disabilities, and other special needs and the treatment they should be accorded so that the University environment and its activities do not place them at

a disadvantage. The University shall also ensure that all staff are aware of any liability in case of unfair discrimination and unacceptable treatment of any staff and student with a disability.

(b) Intervention

The university shall conduct sensitization activities for all staff and students on disability issues, as they are outlined in the policy in order to avoid bleed.

2.8 Traffic safety

a) All motorists, cyclists and pedestrians shall observe road safety rules by giving “right of way” to PWDs on the roads and walkways within the University campus. A speed limit of 50km per hour for all motorists shall be observed within the University to safeguard PWDs.

b) Interventions

- i) Install signposts on all roads indicating the maximum speed limit.
- ii) Install signposts on walk ways indicating “give way” for Persons with Disability.
- iii) The university will endeavor to provide a commuter van or other form of vehicle for transporting PWDs to and fro their lecture rooms and halls of residence.
- iv) Carry out sensitization or awareness-raising about PWDs traffic safety principle within the university to protect the PWDs.
- v) Pedestrians shall have right of way at all times.
- vi) Signage for PWDs such as Special car parking spots, ramp access, drop off zone, and right of way shall be installed.

2.9 Accessibility

a) The University shall ensure that all physical infrastructure such as buildings and walkways are disability-friendly.

b) Interventions

- i) All newly constructed buildings within the university premises shall have ramps and other disability-friendly provisions to ease movement for PWDs.
- ii) Adjustments on old buildings, where possible, to make provision for ramps.
- iii) Sanitation facilities within the University such as latrines, toilets and bathrooms

shall be adapted to ease their accessibility to PWDs.

- iv) A speed limit of 10 km/h shall be observed within the university where the disability signage is.

2.10 Confidentiality of information

- a) Any relevant information concerning an employee and students with disability such as reduced function or impairment and health status shall be kept in confidence by the University administration.
 - b) Intervention
 - (i) The University Secretary shall be responsible for all confidential information on staff.
 - (II) The Dean of Students and the Academic Registrar shall be responsible for all confidential information on students.

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIVERSITY POLICY ON DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS

3.1 In implementing the University Policy on Disability and Special Needs:

- a) A holistic approach will be required to ensure appropriate mainstreaming of disability issues in all programmes and activities of the University. This will facilitate effective delivery of services to staff and students with disabilities and special needs.
- b) The vice Chancellor shall appoint a Technical Committee for Disability and Special Needs which shall be at the forefront in marketing, supporting and implementing of this policy under his/her supervision. The committee functions and terms of reference are outlined under Annex 1 to this policy.
- c) The Vice Chancellor shall appoint a focal person who shall be the Coordinator of the Disability and Special Needs Office responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy through the supervision of the Technical Committee for Disability and Special Needs.
- d) The University will periodically review this policy in line with National Policies and in view of different dimensions of special needs that influence society.
- e) The Policy on Disability and Special Needs shall be distributed to key stakeholders of the University so that it can be widely read and implemented.

4.0 THE DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS OFFICE

To promote effective inclusion and participation of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs in the University, there shall be a Disability and Special Needs Office which shall offer specialized support services.

4.1 Functions of the office

The office shall perform the following functions:

- a) Planning and taking custody of specialized instructional materials and equipment required by students and staff with special needs.
- b) Carrying out periodic sensitization activities in the University community to ensure attitude change and disability mainstreaming.

- c) Issuing or lending out specialized materials and equipment to students and staff with special needs and keeping records of such transactions.
- d) Training students and staff with special needs in the use of specialized equipment they require for studies or work.
- e) Providing orientation and mobility training to students and staff with special needs who require such services.
- f) Transcribing coursework or examination scripts or other study material of students with visual impairment, where required into Braille or print.
- g) Recording lecture notes or other study material on audio tapes or computer discs for students with visual impairment where required.
- h) Providing guidance to departments and faculties, institutes and the University Management on appropriate modifications on facilities on campus and dining hall services to suit the needs of students and staff with disabilities.
- i) Following up implementation of the recommendations/decisions of the Technical Committee for Disability and Special Needs and submitting reports to the Committee for consideration.
- j) Serving as secretariat to the Technical Committee for Disability and Special Needs of the University and keeping a record of the Committee meeting minutes.
- k) Providing Sighted Guide, Disability Support Assistant (Wheelchair Guide) and Sign Language Interpreter services, where required.
- l) Providing special identification for both staff and students for easy access of facilities and services.
- m) Assisting students with special needs on practical issues relating to accommodation, registration and banking, where required.
- n) Keeping records of enrolment and support given to students with special needs in the University.
- o) Carrying out induction of personal assistants (Sighted Guides, Disability Support Assistants, and Sign Language Interpreters) of staff and students with disability and special needs.
- p) Liaising with the Academic Registrar, Dean of Students, University Secretary and the MUST Medical officer on academic and welfare needs of staff and students with disability and special needs.
- q) Planning and coordinating the University participation in relevant national and international disability events.
- r) Promoting the participation of staff and students with special needs in games and sports activities in the University.
- s) Networking with other providers of relevant disability services within and outside

Uganda for purposes of information sharing and seeking support to improve services delivery.

- t) Submitting reports on activities and services of the office to the TCDSN at the end of the semester.
- u) Performing any other function as may be assigned by the TCDSN.
- v) Communicate to the respective department in case a staff or student is unwell.

4.2 Staffing at the office

The office shall be managed by personnel with specialized knowledge and skills in the service areas relevant to its mandate. These shall include:

- a) One member of academic staff who shall be in charge of examinations and study material transcription or conversion.
- b) An ICT Technician with knowledge of working with specialized equipment and software for persons with disabilities.
- c) The staff in subsections (a) and (b) shall be required to have or acquire knowledge and relevant skills in some of the following skill areas to enable them to appropriately execute their functions:
 - i) Sign Language
 - ii) Sighted guiding
 - iii) Orientation and mobility
 - iv) Personal assistant training

4.3 Sections and requirements of the office

The office shall have the following sections and requirements:

- a) Braille and Low Vision Support Unit to provide support to blind and low vision students and staff. The unit will have computers with Braille programs, speech screen readers and print enlargement programs; an office Braille embosser; a closed circuit television; magnifying reading lenses; Perkins Braille and Braille paper.
- b) Sign Language Support Unit to provide support to students and staff with hearing and communication impairments. The unit will have Video and DVD camera and players, audiometer; television screen and Sign Language manuals and dictionary.
- c) Motor and multiple impairment support unit to provide support to students and staff with motor and multiple impairments. The unit will have computers with touch screens and audio-visual programs, body positioning seats and hand control devices for writing.
- d) Dyslexia and intellectual impairment support unit to provide support to students with dyslexia. The unit will have computers with podcast and audio-visual support programs.

5.0 FINANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

5.1 Mainstreaming disability and special needs issues requires commitment of immense financial and material resources and concerted efforts to combat unpleasant attitudes, beliefs and practices. The policy shall, therefore, be funded through:

- a) Strategic partnerships, collaboration with both public and private organizations at national and international levels that offer services for PWDs or work in the fields of Special Needs inclusive of education and rehabilitation. Areas where different stakeholders can channel support shall be identified and marketed. Existing partnerships shall be strengthened and expanded in light of this policy.
- b) Contributions from government, grants to the University, and appropriation in aid from various faculties, schools, and institutes of the University. The contribution rates shall be determined by the University Council from time to time.
- c) The Ministry of Education and Sports and other relevant agencies shall be lobbied by the University to have special grants to support the University's Policy on Disability and Special Needs.

5.2 Budget Allocation

- a) A vote shall be created in the University budget to cater for the needs of PWDs such as hearing aids, low vision devices, white canes, crutches, calipers, audio recorders and other assistive devices to ease their learning and stay at the University.
- b) Financial assistance may be accorded to students with disabilities regardless of whether they are on government sponsorship or private sponsored to facilitate their learning and participation and to promote their welfare at the University.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In order to ensure disability mainstreaming and effective participation of PWDs at all levels in the University, there shall be phased implementation of the Policy on Disability and Special Needs which shall include:

6.1 Phase One: Short Term (2016 / 2018)

- a) Developing the policy and guiding principles.
- b) Appointing the Technical Committee for Disability and Special Needs.
- c) Appointing the Focal Person.
- d) Establishing the Disability and Special Needs Office.
- e) Conduct initial sensitization of key stakeholders in the University on disability mainstreaming.
- f) Reasonable accommodation.
- g) Set up signposts and regulations for speed limits on the University campus.

6.2 Phase Two: Long Term (2021/2022 – 2023/4).

- a) Expand the Disability and Special Needs office and provide further equipment.
- b) Conduct further staff recruitment for the Disability and Special Needs office.
- c) Provide specialized training to staff at the Disability and Special Needs office, and members of the Technical Committee for Disability and Special Needs.
- d) Carry out assessment of the learning and work needs of students and staff with disability and special needs annually and provide appropriate interventions.
- e) Where required, implement further modifications of existing structures and facilities including setting up ramps and rails on walkways and entrances to buildings to further ensure accessibility of facilities to PWDs.
- f) Establish and strengthen strategic partnerships to support the University's efforts towards disability mainstreaming and service delivery.
- g) Conduct further sensitization of key stakeholders in the University on effective disability inclusion and service delivery.
- h) Review the University Policy on disability with stakeholders.

6.3 Attending to Routine Priority Activities

Activity	Frequency
PWD International commemoration day (3 rd December)	Once a year
Support to students with disabilities (medical or non medical)	Twice a year
Meetings/workshops/Seminars (Sensitization on Special Needs)	4 times a year
Repairs of Signage	Once a year
International meetings/Trainings/seminars	Once a year
School out reach	Once a year
Functional Fee waiver for Physically hand capped	Once a year

7.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- (a) Information received or collected regarding the recruitment, retention and development of staff across the range of protected characteristics such as equality and diversity of staff or students will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- (b) The University shall create an environment where staff and students are confident and willing to disclose personal information relating to any of the protected characteristics in order to enable and maintain a supportive environment which promotes equality of opportunity, dignity and respect. Complaints of discrimination based on grounds of protected characteristics shall be raised through relevant grievance procedures for staff or complaints procedures for students. Complaints regarding staff harassment or student bullying shall be raised in accordance with the Harassment or Bullying policy.
- (c) Monitoring and review of the policy shall be owned by the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group from the Disability and Special Needs Office.

8.0 REVIEW AND AMENDMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY POLICY ON DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS

The University shall review and amend the Policy on Disability and Special Needs every five years to ensure that the Policy remains relevant to changing institutional, national and international legal environment relating to disability mainstreaming. Reviews shall incorporate emerging issues and trends that impact on the University's provision of services to staff and students with disabilities and special needs.

ANNEX 1

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE OF DISABILITY AND SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY

1. To facilitate identification and assessment of the learning and work needs of staff and students with disabilities and special needs in the University, there shall be a Technical Committee for Disability and Special Needs of the University which shall be a committee of. Management.

2. Membership of Technical Committee for Disability and Special Needs

The committee shall consist of the following members:

- a) Human Resource department representative
- b) Legal Officer
- c) Student Representative
- d) Dean of Students
- e) NUDIPU member (External member of the National PWDs organization)
- f) Member for the worker's Union
- g) Focal Person
- h) Psychologist /Medical person

3. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the committee shall be elected by members of the Committee from among themselves through a procedure to be determined by the Committee. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall hold office for a period of three (3) years and shall be eligible for re-election for one more term.

4. Terms of Reference for the Committee.

The committee shall have the following Terms of Reference:

- a) To design, conduct and evaluate assessments of the learning and work needs of individual students and staff with disabilities and special needs and make recommendations to the University Management for appropriate interventions.
- b) To design, adapt and review, from time to time, assessment tools and operational guidelines necessary for the conduct of its work.
- c) To receive, consider and investigate complaints relating to disability discrimination and make recommendations to the University Management for appropriate action.
- d) To receive and consider reports on implementation of its recommendations or decisions

and make follow-up, where necessary.

- e) To provide advisory and supervisory support to the University Disability and Special Needs office.
- f) To explore and tap avenues within and outside the University for the purpose of enhancing the visibility and quality of the special needs assessment function of the University.
- g) To perform any other duties deemed appropriate to its mandate.



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