

Policy on Disability Access and Inclusion

Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna

1. Aim

To create a disability-friendly environment to empower people with disabilities to participate independently in Faculty life.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students and staff of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

3. Definitions

3.1 Persons with disability

As defined in the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (1996), a person with a disability is “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.”

3.2 Accessibility

Is created by using products, devices, or services, and building environments, to maximise the ability of people with disabilities to participate in Faculty life.

3.3 Faculty life

Encompasses academic, social, and cultural life as experienced by students and staff of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

3.4 Reasonable adjustment

An adjustment is viewed to be reasonable when it would not impose *unjustifiable hardship* on the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna. Here, the decision on whether or not an adjustment imposes *unjustifiable hardship* will be based on

consideration to not only the availability of resources, but also the impact of the absence of the adjustment for the student or staff member with a disability.

4. Policy statement

4.1. Access and Equity

The Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna is committed to:

- i) Proactively working towards creating an environment that is welcoming, accessible, and empowering to students and staff with disabilities;
- ii) Providing services and support for students and staff with disabilities;
- iii) Ensuring that no student or staff member faces discrimination based on their disability status; and
- iv) Fostering positive and unprejudiced attitudes towards people with disabilities.

4.2. Assessment, Adjustments and Accommodation

Ensuring that a student or a staff member with a disability can participate in Faculty life is a mutual and ongoing process between the Faculty and the respective student/staff member. Both parties are expected to engage in good faith to reach reasonable and workable solutions that will enable full and independent participation in Faculty life.

When a student or staff member with a disability is enrolled/recruited, the following protocol will be implemented to support the student (4.2.1) or staff member (4.2.2):

4.2.1 Students with disabilities

- i) On enrolment, all students who: declare a disability, enter the Faculty on the disability quota, or are referred by their mentors or other staff members, will be referred through the Dean's Office for assessment by the Committee on Disability Access and Inclusion (CDAI).

- ii) Based on this initial assessment, within two weeks of the student's enrollment, the CDAI will submit a report on the student's health and learning needs, including any recommendations for adjustments and/or accommodations, to the Faculty Board. Recommendations for the built environment will be guided by the Disabled Persons (Accessibility) Regulations (2006).
- iii) Based on the CDAI's health assessment, the student will be referred, if necessary and with their consent, through the University Medical Officer (UMO), for disability rehabilitation. Note: If the student has completed rehabilitation or is currently undergoing rehabilitation, they may opt out of medical referral through the UMO.
- iv) If adjustments to teaching and/or assessment methods are recommended by the CDAI, the student will be referred by the Faculty Board for a full assessment by an Independent Committee of Experts on Disability (ICED).
- v) The ICED will submit a report on the student's learning needs, including adjustments and accommodations for teaching and assessment methods, to the Faculty Board, within one month of the student's enrolment at the Faculty of Medicine.
- vi) On the recommendation of the Faculty Board, the Dean will inform the pre-clinical, paraclinical and clinical coordinators of the adjustments or accommodations recommended by CDAI and, if applicable, ICED.
- vii) Any financial support required for implementation of the CDAI or ICED recommendations will be referred to the Faculty's Student Welfare and Wellbeing Committee.
- viii) Two members of the CDAI will be appointed as mentors to the student, and will be tasked with monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the

CDAI, and, if applicable, ICED. They will submit 6-monthly progress reports to the Faculty Board.

Evidence of disability will be required for appropriate adjustments or accommodations to be made. If evidence is not available, the student, with their consent, will be referred for specialist opinion.

Adjustments will not in any way lower the academic standards of the Faculty of Medicine. All students will be supported to meet the core requirements of the academic programme;

Any concerns/complaints from internal and external faculty members regarding the recommended adjustments need to be submitted to the Faculty Board through the Head of Department (internal faculty members) or Head of the Institution (external faculty members). The final determination on adjustments will be made by the Faculty Board.

The procedure described above will apply with necessary adjustments to students who develop disabilities, either permanent or temporary, during the course of the study programme.

4.2.2 Staff with disabilities

- i) On recruitment to the Faculty of Medicine, staff may declare a disability and request adjustment and/or accommodation.
- ii) Evidence of a disability will be required for appropriate adjustments/accommodations to be made. If evidence is not available, the staff member will be requested to seek the opinion of a specialist with the relevant expertise.

4.3. Disclosure of Disability

A student or staff member with a disability who does not require any adjustments/accommodation is not obliged to disclose their disability at any time.

A student or staff member with a disability who requires accommodation or adjustment is encouraged to disclose their need, with appropriate documentation, as soon as possible.

The duly completed Disability Disclosure Form (Annexure 1) should be submitted to the Dean's Office, to be forwarded to the CDAI for consideration.

Information regarding the disability, and any adjustments needed, may only be disclosed by the authorities on a need-to-know basis with the prior consent of the student/staff member with a disability. This may include disclosure to the Faculty administration, relevant Heads of Departments, teaching staff, supervisors and invigilators of examinations, facilities services, and others who may be involved in the implementation of the recommended adjustments/accommodations.

5. Complaints

Complaints on breaches to this policy may be made to the Faculty Board.

6. Appointments and composition of committees

6.1 Committee on Disability Access and Inclusion (CDAI)

CDAI will be made up of 6 members appointed by the Dean, Faculty of Medicine, on the recommendation of the Faculty Board, for a 3-year term, renewable for an additional two terms.

CDAI members may include academic staff and external faculty members; a physician, surgeon, and psychiatrist should sit on the committee.

6.2 Independent Committee of Experts on Disability (ICED)

ICED will be a multidisciplinary committee made up of a minimum of 5 members appointed by the Dean, Faculty of Medicine on the recommendation of the Faculty Board, on a case-by-case basis, in a manner that ensures that the relevant expertise

(medical, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, etc.) is available based on the nature of the disability.

ICED should include at least three independent members who are not/have not been directly involved in the teaching or mentoring of the student, and at least one member nominated by CDAI.

References

Government of Sri Lanka (1996). Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act no. 28 of 1996.

Government of Sri Lanka (2006). Disabled Persons (Accessibility) Regulations, No. 1 of 2006.