



"Ability knows no boundaries"



Disability Support Policy at Baku State University





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Introduction

BSU is dedicated to promoting diversity, equality of opportunity, and eliminating discrimination as outlined in its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. This policy underscores the University's commitment to fostering an environment where students, staff, and visitors are treated fairly and not disadvantaged due to disability. The University proactively addresses the needs of its community and establishes inclusive practices, policies, and procedures accordingly.

Scope

The policy aims to promote values such as love, compassion, equality, and justice by eliminating social exclusion and raising awareness among students about the challenges faced by disadvantaged sections of society. It specifically focuses on promoting the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities. This policy applies to disabled students (prospective, current, and alumni), disabled staff (including permanent, fixed-term, associate, temporary, or other employees), and visitors to the University.

Objectives

The objective of the policy is to transform BSU into a disabled-friendly institution known for its suitable infrastructure, supportive facilities, and sensitized atmosphere, enabling individuals with disabilities to thrive and pursue their aspirations.

Definitions

Disability: Defined as a physical or mental impairment with a substantial and long-term adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities, lasting 12 months or more. The definition encompasses various impairments, such as physical, sensory, mental health conditions, and learning differences.

Reasonable adjustments: Positive measures taken by the University to ensure disabled individuals can fully participate in educational opportunities and other benefits provided. These adjustments aim to minimize disadvantages caused by disability.

Inclusive practice: A teaching approach that recognizes student diversity and uses this to ensure all children receive equal treatment, opportunities, and respect.



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Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination



Ensuring admission of students from diverse social backgrounds and providing them with intensive mentoring and counseling.

Strictly adhering to admission policies for individuals with disabilities.

Infrastructure Support

Upgrading campus infrastructure to enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities, including the installation of elevators, ramps, railings, accessible washrooms, and tactile pathways.

Providing and upgrading mechanical and technological support such as disabled-friendly software, wheelchairs, and accessible signposts.

Offering sports and wellness facilities tailored to the needs of students with disabilities.



Sensitization and Awareness



Organizing awareness and sensitization programs and events for the able-bodied staff and students to foster a safe and inclusive environment.

Hosting academic and cultural activities, as well as training, short-term courses, and workshops designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities.



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Providing training for college staff on disabled-friendly teaching practices both inside and outside the classroom.

Collaborating with external agencies and organizations to expand learning and vocational training opportunities for students with disabilities.

Counseling and Additional Support

Offering counseling facilities to address the mental health needs of individuals with disabilities.

Conducting remedial classes to support students with disabilities.



Responsibilities

The Disciplinary Committee are responsible for ensuring compliance with equality and diversity legislation, monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this policy, and recommending necessary changes.

Senior administrators, heads of colleges and departments, and managers at all levels are responsible for ensuring awareness of this policy among staff and supporting the development and maintenance of good practices.

Human Resources will ensure that all staff receive mandatory Disability Awareness training during induction, with opportunities for annual training on inclusive practice.

All members of the University community are expected to adhere to this policy and always treat others with dignity and respect, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and Dignity and Respect Policy.



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Disabled Students

Admissions

The University ensures that disabled students are admitted based on academic merit and ability. Reasonable adjustments are considered to support disabled students, with complex cases reviewed by a panel of senior members.

Disclosure, confidentiality, data protection

The University encourages students to disclose disabilities early, ensuring confidentiality and compliance with data protection laws. Students decide what information is shared and with whom, with options to keep specific details confidential.

Inclusive practice

The University adopts inclusive practices to support all students, with individual adjustments made where necessary. Disability Services consults disabled students regarding anticipatory adjustments and involves them in decision-making.

Individual reasonable adjustments

Disability Services recommends individual reasonable adjustments based on student needs, ensuring parity of experience for all students. Adjustments are shared with relevant colleagues with student consent and may be amended as needed.

Teaching and Learning

The University promotes inclusive teaching and learning practices, with support provided to staff through resources, forums, and training. Universal design for learning ensures accessibility for all students throughout the educational process.

Mitigating Circumstances

Disabled students may apply for extensions on coursework based on their disability. Decisions regarding extensions consider factors such as coursework context, parity across student cohort, and exam board demands. Each disabled student is granted a single extension for each piece of coursework, with further extensions requiring additional evidence of extenuating personal circumstances.



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Examination Adjustments

Disability Services may recommend consistent examination adjustments, considering student preferences and evidence provided. These adjustments aim to ensure parity across the student cohort.

Alternative Assessment

In exceptional cases where reasonable adjustments are ineffective, alternative forms of assessment may be considered. These alternatives are tailored to meet student needs while ensuring fairness.

Competence Standards

The University aims to develop non-discriminatory competence standards. While adjustments cannot be made to competence standards themselves, the assessment methods may be adjusted to accommodate disabled students.





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Off-Campus Activities

Field Trips

Modules with field trips ensure inclusivity for all students. Alternative experiences are provided for students unable to attend due to disability-related reasons.

Placement

The University works with placement providers to accommodate disabled students. Students are encouraged to disclose their disability and discuss adjustments with providers.

Study Abroad

Disabled students are supported in participating in Study Abroad programs, with adjustments arranged in consultation with partner institutes.

Student Experience

The University aims for an inclusive student experience across teaching, learning, service provision, information access, facilities, and extracurricular activities. All staff share responsibility for ensuring equal access to opportunities.



Specialist Support

Disability Services offer specialist advisory services to support students throughout their course. Disability Coordinators in departments disseminate information regarding individual adjustments and support inclusive approaches.



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Retention

The University endeavors to support disabled students in continuing their studies. Measures include making reasonable adjustments, exploring alternative programs, and offering support through Fitness to Study procedures.

Recruitment

Disabled applicants meeting the person specification are entitled to interviews. Applicants are invited to request reasonable adjustments to prevent disadvantage.

Staff Retention

The University supports disabled staff in their roles by making reasonable adjustments. If necessary, alternative roles are sought to accommodate their abilities.



Technology

The University employs technology to aid inclusion and support for disabled individuals. Measures include e-learning resources, assistive technology, lecture capture policies, web accessibility standards, and provision of alternative formats.

Estates and Campus

Accessibility and inclusion are integral to campus design and maintenance. Regular access audits are conducted to identify and address barriers. Facilities such as accessible accommodations and rest spaces are provided to support disabled individuals.

Training for All Staff

All staff receive training on meeting the needs of disabled students and are encouraged to signpost to relevant services. Training covers disability awareness and inclusive practice.



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Monitoring and Review

The University regularly reviews and monitors the implementation of this policy to ensure effectiveness and compliance with legislative requirements and equality objectives. Stakeholder consultation and engagement are key components of the review process.



Future Actions

To further enhance the Disability Support Policy at Baku State University, you may consider incorporating the following elements:

Peer Support Programs:

Establish programs where disabled students can receive peer support from fellow students who have similar experiences. This could include mentorship, study groups, or social activities.

Accessible Transportation:

Ensure that transportation services provided by the university are accessible to students with disabilities, both on and off-campus.

Accessible Communication:

Implement strategies to ensure that all communication from the university, including notices, announcements, and online materials, are accessible to students with disabilities, such as providing alternative formats or utilizing accessible technologies.

Accessible Events:

Ensure that all university events, including academic lectures, social gatherings, and extracurricular activities, are accessible to students with disabilities by providing accommodations such as sign language interpreters, captioning, or assistive listening devices.



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Career Support:

Provide specialized career support services for disabled students, including assistance with job searches, resume writing, and interview preparation, to ensure their successful transition into the workforce.

**Emergency Evacuation
Plans:**

Develop and implement comprehensive emergency evacuation plans that take into account the needs of students with disabilities, ensuring their safety and well-being in the event of an emergency situation.

Feedback Mechanisms:

Establish regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys or focus groups, to solicit input from disabled students, staff, and visitors on their experiences with accessibility and support services, and use this feedback to continuously improve policies and practices.

Research and Innovation:

Support research and innovation initiatives focused on improving accessibility and inclusion for individuals with disabilities, both within the university community and beyond. Foster partnerships with local disability advocacy

Community Engagement:

organizations and community groups to enhance support services and promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities within the broader community.

**Promotion of Disability
Rights:**

Actively promote awareness of disability rights and advocate for the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities within the university and society at large.

By incorporating these additional elements, the Disability Support Policy at Baku State University can further strengthen its commitment to providing comprehensive support and fostering a truly inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities.