

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Guidelines, Policies and Procedures

Policy Name	Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities
Policy Number	035
Approved by	Academic Council
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Contact	Office of the Registrar

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Aga Khan University (AKU) is committed to a policy of equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to pursue their higher studies in a fitting environment and to ensure accessibility for the disabled to higher education with provision of disabled-friendly campuses and classrooms.
- 1.2 Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (UNCRPD¹).
- 1.3 This policy aims at working towards creating an environment in which all individuals are able to participate fully in the academic and social life of the University.
- 1.4 This policy recognizes that "disability" covers a wide range of impairments including physical and mobility difficulties, hearing and visual impairment, and specific learning disabilities including dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health problems.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 The policy recognizes that persons with disabilities are valuable human resource for the University and seeks to create an environment that provides them equal opportunities, protection of their rights and full participation in University life. The focus of the policy shall be on the following:
 - 2.1.1 To comply with the statutory obligations in a progressive/phased manner.
 - 2.1.2 To recognise the University's obligations to take all reasonable steps to enable students with disabilities to avail the opportunities available to other students.
 - 2.1.3 AKU will endeavour to provide a 'level playing field' to the students with disabilities by all reasonable means to remove barriers and obstacles in this context.

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- 2.1.4 The University will provide focused support and counselling to students with disabilities to enable them to achieve excellence in the academic and career plans.

3.0 DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 3.1 Under the leadership of the Dean of Students (Pakistan) and the Director of Student Experience (East Africa and UK), the University will establish a Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) comprised of Deans of Academic Units, Heads of Academic Departments and Heads of Services and Administrative Sections, which will be responsible for ensuring that the policy is communicated effectively and is being fully implemented in their area.

4.0 DISABILITY SERVICES

- 4.1 Students with disabilities shall have access to disability advice and support services that will include:
 - 4.1.1 Information and advice to help identify support requirements.
 - 4.1.2 Referral services for psychological assessment.
 - 4.1.3 Non-medical assistance: note-takers, readers, lecture recording and enablers.
 - 4.1.4 Information and advice from offices responsible for admissions, enrolment, study and examinations, records, graduation, and hostel accommodations.

5.0 ADMISSIONS

- 5.1 This policy is committed to the principles of equity, access, opportunity and rights. It seeks to apply these principles to all aspects of admission process.
- 5.2 The University will ensure that applicants declaring a disability have full information about the support available so that they may make an informed choice regarding the optimal place for their studies.
- 5.3 Applicants who have declared a disability on their application form should be consulted about their needs and given advice as to how the University might meet those needs. They will have the opportunity to make their support needs known via a questionnaire and will be encouraged to arrange an information visit. Upon admission, students will be offered an opportunity to provide additional information about their needs.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

- 6.1 Students with disabilities will be offered an assessment of their study and support needs (assessment of needs) at the earliest opportunity, either before they enrol or shortly after the commencement of their course/classes.
- 6.2 Students with disabilities will be required to provide medical/ psychological evidence detailing the nature and extent of their disability or specific learning difficulty.
- 6.3 The views of a student with disabilities will be taken into account at all times during an assessment of their needs and the content of the assessment report will be discussed with them prior to the release of the report.

- 6.4 The report, containing detailed recommendations, will be sent or copied to the student and to the Dean of Students (Pakistan) and the Director of Student Experience (East Africa and UK).

7.0 CURRICULUM

- 7.1 The University will take all reasonable steps to ensure that courses (including placements, field trips, and other specialist learning environments) are organized to offer the best possible opportunities for full participation by students with disabilities.
- 7.2 Where a student with a disability is placed at a substantial disadvantage, the University will make reasonable adjustments to help alleviate this. Reasonable adjustments will depend upon the needs and difficulties experienced by the individual student.
- 7.3 Some examples of reasonable adjustments are:
- Provision of copies of overhead slides or typed lecture notes.
 - Permission to tape-record lectures or seminars.
 - Ensuring that rooms used for the delivery of courses are accessible (i.e., usable by students who use a wheelchair, or equipped with an induction loop for students with a hearing impairment).
- 7.4 Wherever practicable, the curriculum must be flexible, sensitive and aware of the needs of students with disabilities (e.g., a student with a mental health problem may have difficulty speaking in a group seminar).
- 7.5 Students with disabilities may discuss the specific requirements of their intended curriculum in advance with the Dean of Students (Pakistan) and the Director of Student Experience (East Africa and UK), to ensure that learning support and other needs are identified and made known to relevant staff. This mechanism should also be used to enable disabled students to discuss any emerging needs and identify appropriate possible courses of action to address those needs.

8.0 EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Appropriate modes of examination and assessment will be determined following an assessment of study and support needs, with a view to enabling students to demonstrate that they have met the criteria for progression or the conferment of an award.
- 8.2 Alternate arrangements of assessment may be offered to students with disabilities. The purpose of any alternative arrangements shall be to level the playing field without compromising academic standards. Any request for additional arrangements in relation to examination, assessed work and assessment procedures must be supported by medical/psychological or other evidence and it is the student's responsibility to make that available to the University for making final decision.

- 8.3 Requests for an alteration to assessment conditions, including requests for alterations to the forms of assessment, must be approved by the Dean (or designate) of the academic unit offering the course.

9.0 STUDENTS WHO BECOME DISABLED DURING STUDIES

- 9.1 The University will take all reasonable steps to ensure that a student who becomes disabled (or becomes aware of their disability) during their course has every opportunity to complete their course through the provision of the same level of adaptations and support as for a comparable student who was disabled at the start of their course and through a constructive approach to the interpretation of degree regulations.

10.0 OTHER SERVICES

- 10.1 The University shall aim to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to all student and academic services. While it is recognized that some of these services may be located in buildings that have access problems, the University will ensure that the service can be provided in such a way that the needs of the students with disabilities are met. Examples of this may be assistance in libraries to obtain books, provision of information in large print, access ramps to the buildings and other important academic/recreational areas, and dedicated washroom.
- 10.2 With reference to computer and lab facilities, the University will aim to ensure that in the design of official University web pages, within the limits of current technology, observes best practice as suggested by the W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative.
- 10.3 Various physical infrastructure in universities such footpaths, curb stones, road crossings, signage etc. shall observe the minimum requirements of International Disability Code in the Architecture planning and designing of such facilities.

11.0 ACCOMMODATION

- 11.1 Students with disabilities will be offered equal access to University accommodation, subject to availability.
- 11.2 Each applicant with a disability will be given individual consideration and advice about accommodation.

12.0 COMPLAINTS

- 12.1 Students with disabilities should communicate with the Dean of Students (Pakistan) and the Director of Student Experience (East Africa and UK) regarding any concerns related to any aspect of services provided by the University.