

Mohammad Ali Jinnah University

Policy for students with disabilities

2020

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INTRODUCTION

Mohammad Ali Jinnah University (MAJU) is committed to its founding objective that no one should be denied access to higher education in Pakistan, and this includes making possible equal opportunities of higher education for students with disabilities. This Policy aims to enable to not only motivate students with disabilities to undertake higher education, but also facilitate their participation in all co-curricular and extra-curricular activities at MAJU. The Policy recognizes that disability covers a wide range of impairments and different disabilities can have varying impacts on study, work and other aspects of life.

DEFINITION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

MAJU recognizes that persons with disabilities are valuable members of the country and it is its obligation to undertake all judicious actions to enable persons with disabilities to avail the opportunities for higher education available to other students. Through this policy MAJU seeks to create an environment that provides them equal opportunities, recognition of their inherent dignity and protection of their rights while studying at MAJU.

ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

MAJU shall establish a Standing Accessibility Committee comprising of 3-5 members from faculty and administration. This Committee will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated to students, faculty and staff effectively and is being implemented at their Institution in its entirety. The members of the Accessibility Committee will be designated by the honorable president. The responsibilities of the Accessibility Committee are detailed below: -

1. Promote awareness of different disabilities and disability related issues, and emphasize the need to protect and promote rights of persons with disabilities through seminars, workshops and community engagement activities.
2. Provide information and advice on facilities and support for persons with disabilities to students, parents, staff and faculty.
3. Determine access requirements of students with disabilities that take admission in MAJU.
4. Arrange assessment of the extent of disability and access requirements of students with disabilities.
5. Arrange counseling by a psychiatrist for students with disabilities whenever needed, especially in situations beyond the expertise of the Accessibility Committee.

6. Arrange and oversee the provision of academic support, specialized equipment and facilities for the students with disabilities in MAJU.
7. Provide advice to their institution on admissions, examinations, dissertations and other affairs of the institution for improving access for students with disabilities.
8. Advise the faculty on the policies and procedures relevant to students with disabilities.
9. Advise the University on the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1981 and other relevant legislations.

FOCAL PERSON FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

One member from staff or faculty in the Accessibility Committee will be designated by the President as the Focal Person for persons with disabilities. The name and contact details of the Focal Person will be displayed on the website, prospectus, brochures, and student handbooks of MAJU and outside Admissions Office and the Office of the Registrar. The Focal Person for persons with disabilities will be responsible to ensure the following:

1. Be a point of liaison between Accessibility Committee and students with disabilities.
2. Advise students with disabilities interested in seeking admission at MAJU in broader choice of academic discipline.
3. Guide students with disabilities interested in seeking admission at MAJU on the facilities available and arrange able at MAJU for persons with disabilities.
4. Seek and record information on access requirements of individual student with disability enrolled at MAJU.
5. Arrange regular meetings with students with disabilities and maintain records of interactions. This practice should be used to assess any emerging needs the students and decide appropriate course of action to facilitate the student.
6. Advise and facilitate students with disabilities in fulfilling administrative requirements of the institution, and benefiting from other services such as accommodation, transport, library, career counselling, extra-curricular opportunities etc. during the course of their studies.
7. Advise the students with disabilities before commencement of each semester/academic year on their courses selection and learning activities entailed.
8. Refer students with disabilities to the Accessibility Committee for determination of their access requirements.
9. Refer students with disabilities to the Accessibility Committee for arrangement of psychiatric counseling; if a student requests or whenever substantial need is established.
10. Ensure that the students' access requirements are identified and made known to relevant faculty well ahead of commencement of classes.
11. Arrange academic coaching for students with disabilities whenever needed.
12. Widely communicate his role to students, staff and faculty at MAJU.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

MAJUs shall provide reasonable services to students with disabilities and make reasonable accommodations² whenever required to encourage their participation in higher education. Accessibility Committee will provide advice and support to MAJU on improving accessibility and enhancing other services for students with disabilities. These services include: -

1. Arrangement of medical assistance (including psychiatric counseling) and non-medical assistance such as note-takers/scribes, readers, lecture recordings and enablers.
2. Provision of Laptops, high-tech computers capable to run heavy screen reading software, special softwares, Braille, headphone, video cameras, video conferencing, computers, scanners, braille embosser, Braille Magazines, Audio.
3. Books/Tutorials, Books-Scanning, laser printers, speakers, tape recorders, class printed notes, and wheel chairs at the institution as per requirement and policy.
4. Some textbooks are also available in other formats -- such as large print versions, e-books, or media with closed captioning, audio versions -- that may be more accessible for students with disabilities. University's library should be equipped with standard textbooks in alternate formats, or should make them available on request.
5. Specialized Trainings on using learning aids for students with disabilities and staff/faculty, when needed.
6. Access and assistance in libraries, laboratories, cafeterias and sports centers.
7. Tuition Fee waivers and concessions on other fee components such as Admission Fee, Registration Fee, Library Security Fee, Examination Fee etc.
8. Age relaxation in admission requirements, quota as per the national and provincial legislation and alternate suitable entrance test arrangements for students with disabilities.
9. The website of MAJU and other web-based services such as student portals, LMS etc. shall conform to level AA of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).
10. Physical infrastructure in MAJU such as footpaths, road crossings, signage etc. shall be developed by observing the recommended accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.
11. Where access is limited, MAJU will provide reasonable alternative arrangements.
12. Students with disabilities shall be encouraged to suggest improvements in accessibility services available at MAJU.

Accessibility Committee will submit its recommendations in regard to provision of above services for students with disabilities to the honorable president for consideration and approval.

ADMISSIONS

1. MAJU will clearly provide contact details of focal person and information on facilities available for students with disabilities on their prospectus, website, and advertisement for admission.
2. The website and prospectus will clearly mention the age relaxation, details regarding application procedure, and available fee waivers and concessions.
3. Accessibility Committee will be involved in admission, interview, and entrance test processes for students with disabilities.
4. Applicants should be made aware that if they disclose their disability, the information provided on their application will be retained on MAJU's records and made available to all involved in the admissions process and those concerned with student welfare.
5. 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 suitable place for their studies.
6. Students with disabilities will be advised to visit the University before application to assess the suitability of the premises and their surroundings.
7. Applicants who have declared a disability on their application form will be consulted about their needs and given advice on how MAJU will manage their accessibility requirements.
8. Upon admission students with disabilities will be offered an opportunity to provide additional information and documentation about their accessibility needs.
9. Admission application forms will include a portion through which students can convey information on their disability.
10. The Admission application form shall include a questionnaire for students with disabilities to inform their accessibility requirements for undertaking their studies and taking the entrance exam. They will be encouraged to arrange an information visit of MAJU.
11. The students with disabilities can request special arrangements for entrance test or interview as per their needs. Where applicable they may be considered for similar alternate arrangements as they had for their higher secondary examinations.
12. MAJU will ensure the provision of appropriate facilities for students with disabilities during their entrance exam: -
 - a. Modified exam materials including Braille papers (Grade 1/un-contracted or Grade 2/contracted), large print: either A4 size (18pt bold font) or A3 size (15.5pt font), listening materials such as special needs CD or lip-reading test, speaking materials such as Braille or large print written prompt or large print visual prompt
 - b. Other administrative arrangements such as extra time (25-100 per cent extra time depending on student's need), supervised breaks during the examination, use of a computer, an amanuensis/note-taker (a person who will write down students

answers), a reader, a scribe/copier (verbatim transcript), speaking test, separate invigilation, a private area to take tests with a note taker.

13. The students with disabilities will be informed well in advance about the arrangements being provided for them to undertake the entrance exam.
14. In some cases, students with disabilities may be exempted from a part of an examination because of a disability or difficulty. MAJU may decide to use an alternate assessment tool to ascertain suitability of the student for the degree program. This will be decided by the Academic Council of MAJU.
15. In case, MAJU is unable to provide appropriate facilities or make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities to study at their institution on legitimate grounds, they may refuse admission to the student only through decision of the Academic Council. This decision will be communicated to the student via the Office of the honorable president.

ASSESSMENT OF NEED

All students with disabilities shall be offered an assessment of their study and support needs at the earliest opportunity, preferably before they enroll, or shortly after the commencement of their program. The views of disabled students shall be taken into consideration 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. The report, containing detailed recommendations, will be shared with the student, the focal person and Dean of their faculty. The Accessibility Committee will monitor the implementation of academic support arrangements.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. During the orientation session and at the commencement of each course, staff and faculty shall clearly inform the students that any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor or the Focal Person for students with disabilities as soon as possible so that requisite arrangements can be made.
2. The instructor, focal person and the student may mutually discuss and decide the alternate special requirements (including those needed for mid-term or final examination) at the start of the course, and share with the Accessibility Committee if their support is needed.
3. The University will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all study components are organized to offer the best possible opportunities of participation for all students including students with disabilities.
4. Where a student with disability is placed at a substantial disadvantage, the University will make reasonable accommodations to help alleviate this. Reasonable accommodations will

depend upon the needs and difficulties experienced by the student. Accessibility Committee will be responsible for determining the students' accessibility requirements and the extent of reasonable accommodations needed on part of MAJU.

5. It is important to remember that accommodations are not advantages, but are a means of providing each student with full access to study programs.
6. Standards for academic credit should not be modified for students with disabilities. They may need accommodations in testing, but the content should not be changed.
7. Faculty is encouraged to use textbooks that are available in alternate format. It is not necessary to rewrite a course to accommodate students with disabilities; simply modifying the presentation of materials may make it fully accessible.
8. If one student with a particular type of disability had difficulty with a specific task, the faculty and the focal person may not assume that the next student with the same type of disability will experience similar problems. Students with disabilities are frequently sensitive about their disabilities, so faculty, focal persons and staff should make every effort to treat these issues sensitively and confidentially.
9. Some examples of reasonable accommodations are: -
 - a. Provision of copies of lecture slides or typed lecture notes.
 - b. Permission to tape-record lectures or seminars.
 - c. Improving accessibility of lecture rooms used by students who use a wheelchair, or equipping them with an induction loop for students with a hearing impairment.
 - d. Faculty to wear a lapel microphone (to carry the voice of the lecturer to the student using an assistive listening device).
 - e. Stenographers to transcribe lectures etc.

EXAMINATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

1. At the commencement of each course appropriate arrangements for examination and assessment will be determined through mutual consultation between faculty, focal person and the student. Alternate arrangements will be made with the view that students are able to demonstrate their learning appropriately and suitably meet the criteria for progression or the conferment of an award.
2. Alternate arrangements for examination (for example, extra time) must be approved by the Accessibility Committee in advance.
3. Where needed, students with disabilities can choose whether or not to have their disability declared on their exam booklet so an external examiner is alerted to their disability.

STUDENTS WHO AQUIRE DISABILITIES DURING STUDIES

The University shall ensure provision of the same level of services and support to students who acquire disability/s (or becomes aware of their disability) during the course of their study. Every reasonable opportunity shall be provided to them to complete their studies successfully.

ACCOMMODATION

Applicants with disabilities shall be given suitable advice about accommodation facilities before enrollment. MAJU shall ensure provision of on campus residential facilities/hostel to students with disabilities if they require.

GRIEVANCES

Any grievances pertaining to disability services available at MAJU or mistreatment of students with disabilities will be submitted to the Focal Person. If they are unable to resolve the concern, Accessibility Committee may be approached. The matter may be referred to the honorable president if the issue is not appropriately resolved by the Accessibility Committee. The Accessibility Committee may recommend removal of the designated focal person or one of its members to the honorable, if substantial grounds are established such as harassment, discrimination, indolence etc.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

MAJUs shall encourage its staff, faculty and students to participate in development opportunities related to provision of education to persons with disabilities.

CONVOCATION

The University shall make every effort to ensure that students with disabilities are able to participate fully in their convocations and enjoy this day along with all their fellow graduates.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH UNIVERSITY

1. MAJU will assign a weightage to compliance of international accessibility standards and implementation of this Policy in the recurring grant formula; the ranking criteria and the Institutional Performance Evaluation (IPE).
2. Students with disabilities shall be assisted by MAJU's staff during the degree attestation/equivalence process, including the submission of application for degree attestation/equivalence.
3. MAJU shall designate a disability officer who will provide guidance on the matters pertaining to this policy, and act as a focal person for persons with disabilities interacting with MAJU.