



**Policy document for differently abled students**  
**Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna**

The policy document was	
recommended at the IQAC meeting held on	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2021
approved at the Faculty Board held on	14 <sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Definition:**

Differently-abled or disability is defined as a physical, mental or medical condition or circumstance that requires ongoing support or study adjustments. This includes conditions that currently exist, previously existed or may exist in the future. (Refer Annexure I for details)

According to the National Action Plan on Disability (NAPD) approved by Cabinet 2014 full participation of such students in higher education shall be ensured with reasonable accommodation when necessary, through training of teachers, accessible teaching methodologies, alternative learning strategies, learning materials, assistive devices and technologies, accessible physical environment, accessible extra-curricular activities and accessible sports.

The objective of this policy document is to offer differently abled students relevant and timely advice, guidance and medical, psychosocial and academic support as necessary to enable equal and equitable access to university education as their peers without disabilities, promoting individual growth and independence and to support them to achieve the least minimum standards to qualify as basic doctors without compromising their required level of training.

In this process, faculty has to deal with two groups of students; those who are differently abled from enrolment and those who become differently abled during the course of their training. However, the need to have a consensus document (for e.g., UGC policy document) acceptable to all medical schools in Sri Lanka defining the disabilities that could allow a student to commence following or continue to follow medicine and become a basic doctor is felt necessary. Such a document would also allow a differently able Advanced Level student in the biology stream to be aware of what prospects he/she would have at the end.

**Requirements**

1. It is mandatory to screen the medical certificates of all new entrant medical students by the University Medical Officer prior to the enrollment to identify the students with major disabilities

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2. A committee comprised of Dean/representative of the dean, Senior Assistant Registrar, Senior Student Counsellor and one academic staff member from each department should function as the technical committee to address issues related to differently able students. The Dean of the Ruhuna Faculty of Medicine is entrusted to activate the faculty policy on differently-abled

students as per the directions of the faculty Technical Committee, Faculty Board and the University Council by acquiring the required resources.

3. Students, upon the registration at the faculty should be encouraged to declare their disabilities and apply for special considerations. The relevant application forms will be distributed to the new students during the registration process and need to be handed over to the dean's office within two weeks of enrolment. The faculty should develop a process to collect and maintain a confidential database of such students.
4. Differently able students should inform in writing to the Senior Assistant Registrar beforehand when they need special assistance for the exams. Eligibility for granting special assistance will include;
  - a. Permanent physical conditions that will require special assistance (e.g., impairment of vision/ hearing, anatomical deformities)
  - b. Temporary physical conditions that will require special assistance (e.g., injuries/fractures)
5. The applications will be evaluated by the technical committee. The decision of the committee will be conveyed to the dean, who will make final recommendations on granting privileges/reasonable adjustments appropriate for the situation. (Refer Annexure II)

The special assistance granted will be decided on a case-by-case basis and within the purview of Examination By-Laws of the Faculty of Medicine University of Ruhuna. These are intended for facilitating the requirements of a student to minimize the obstacles in achieving his/her fullest potential.

Further, the technical committee should follow up each case and refer the individual for further assistance to relevant places/individuals if and when required.

6. Faculty within its limitations will make the best effort to provide physical and psychological support for the differently abled students and will ensure equal and equitable participation of all students with disabilities in all aspects of university life by decreasing barriers and promoting inclusion.

This can be achieved by;

- Improving the infrastructure of the existing buildings to provide disability access, making accessible sanitary amenities and washrooms and appropriate hostel facilities
- Planning new infrastructure according to current legislature
- Training academic staff in accessible teaching methodologies, alternative learning strategies, learning materials
- Introducing assistive devices and technologies, accessible extra-curricular activities and accessible sports

- Creating awareness on and implementing measures to minimize societal and attitudinal barriers deterring students with disabilities from full and equal participation in University life

It is recommended that once approved, the policy on differently abled students, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna, should be reviewed and revised periodically.

## **Annexures**

### **Annexure I**

Disability, in relation to a person, can mean:

- Total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions
- Total or partial loss of a part of the body
- The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness
- The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body
- A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction
- A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgments or that results in disturbed behaviour

### **Annexure II**

Adjustments are made on a case-by-case basis, and may include:

- Alternative exam arrangements
- Assistance from an academic support worker
- Assistive technology
- Accessible formatting of course reading materials
- Extensions to assignments
- Flexibility in attendance requirements
- Accessible teaching spaces and specially designed furniture.