



**OPEN
UNIVERSITY OF
CYPRUS**

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**INTERNAL
REGULATIONS FOR
PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES
(PWDs)**

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1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES – PWD FRAMEWORK

- 1.1. Based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 December 2006, signed by the Republic of Cyprus and ratified with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Related Matters Law of 2011 (L. 8(III)2011), Persons with Disabilities include “those who have long-term physical, intellectual, mental or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society, on an equal basis with others”.
- 1.2. Article 24 titled “Education” of the aforesaid Law provides the following in connection with the education of PWDs:
1. *States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realising this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:*
 - (a) *The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;*
 - (b) *The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;*
 - (c) *Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.*
 2. *In realising this right, States Parties shall ensure that:*
 - (a) *Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;*
 - (b) *Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;*
 - (c) *Reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements is provided;*
 - (d) *Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;*
 - (e) *Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.*
 3. *States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures including:*
 - (a) *Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;*

- (b) *Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;*
- (c) *Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deaf blind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development.*
4. *In order to help ensure the realisation of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, education techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.*
5. *States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.*
- 1.3. The University is particularly sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities and procures, to the extent possible and in the framework of the relevant Legislation and international practice, the necessary infrastructure, support and conditions, aiming at ensuring effective equality of access to education.
- 1.4. These Internal Regulations for PWDs are based on the following Laws of the Republic of Cyprus:
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Related Matters (Ratifying) Law of 2011 (L. 8(III)/2011)
 - The Law to Combat Racial and Other Kinds of Discrimination (L. 42(I)/2004)
 - The Persons with Disabilities Law of 2000 (L.127/2000)
 - The Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Law of 1999 (L. 113(I)/1999)
 - The Training and Education of Children with Special Needs Regulations of 2001 (Regulatory Administrative Act 186/2001)
- 1.5. Each year the University offers an additional number of places for each Undergraduate Programme of Study to PWDs who satisfy the minimum admission requirements of the relevant Programme.
- 1.6. Students with disability may be admitted to the University through the normal procedure, upon satisfying all the requirements of the Programme of Study for which they have applied.
- 1.7. Following their enrolment at the University, students with disabilities may, if they wish, complete the Disability Verification Form, *Annex_I*, and submit it together with the required medical certificates which must be issued by an accredited doctor. Medical certificates relating to chronic conditions are submitted to the Students and Programmes of Study Support Unit (SPSSU) only once, whilst medical certificates for non-chronic conditions must have been issued by an accredited doctor within the last two (2) years. For students with dyslexia,

medical certificates issued by a psychologist are also accepted. The original documents or certified copies must be submitted to the SPSSU. The Unit examines requests on a case-by-case basis and informs each student whether their application has been approved and which necessary accommodations will be granted during their studies at the Open University of Cyprus.

- 1.8. Responsibility for providing support to students with disabilities lies with the SPSSU. The Unit, in collaboration with the Programmes of Study and other Administrative Services, makes every effort to provide facilities to students in need. All necessary facilities are granted based on the nature of the disability or other particularities of each case, with due regard to the decisions of the University Senate, the relevant Legislation and what the University is able to provide from a practical point of view.
- 1.9. Communication between PWDs and the SPSSU is strictly confidential. Upon receiving a written authorisation from the PWDs, the SPSSU informs the teaching staff on the issues they are facing and any necessary facilities that must be provided to them.
- 1.10. Tutors play a key role in supporting PWDs. Their aim is to form a complete profile for each student (learning and individual characteristics, interests and educational needs, strengths and weaknesses in the learning process, problems and difficulties faced, etc.) in order to establish a strategy that will allow them to provide individualised support and advice. They attach particular importance to their communication with students identified to have difficulties in their studies, students lagging behind in their coursework or at risk of abandoning their course of studies (Thematic Units). Tutors must provide support both at scientific and personal level, in order to help these students overcome their difficulties (e.g. scientific guidance, counselling, empowerment, etc.).
- 1.11. The SPSSU cooperates on an ongoing basis with various PWD Associations, Organisations and external agencies, to receive guidance, exchange information and provide further support to students, if and where necessary.
- 1.12. When deemed necessary, the SPSSU may address specific requests to specialist doctors or educational psychologists, to ensure further specialised handling, whilst taking all appropriate measures to ensure non-discrimination on grounds of disability.

2. GENERAL FACILITIES PROVIDED TO PWDs

The reasonable accommodations and facilities to be provided to PWDs are specified in detail based on the needs and particularities of each student. No advantages or head start or privileged treatment not linked to the disability may be granted to the detriment of other students. Persons with disabilities may be offered the following accommodations and facilities, **when and where required**:

- 2.1 Extra time required for understanding and assimilating the lesson and for submitting or presenting assignments.
- 2.2 One (1) hour extra time in the final/resit examination based on the specific needs of each case.
- 2.3 Examinees who are unable to write or have writing difficulties or require support during the examination are allowed to use mechanical or technological devices, with the exception of spell checkers, online reference sources or similar electronic means or devices.
- 2.4 Where necessary, students with disabilities are allowed to use a “scribe” only if the answers cannot be provided otherwise. Should this be the case, answers are recorded verbatim in the presence of an invigilator. The “scribe” and the invigilator are designated by the University. It is understood that the time dedicated to the transcription of the answers by the “scribe” is not subtracted from the total examination time. Answers may also be recorded in auditory verbal form where necessary.
- 2.5 In examinations where spelling, punctuation and grammar are being assessed, all examinees are assessed using exactly the same criteria. It is understood that if a “scribe” is used, the examinee dictates to the “scribe” the correct spelling of the words.
- 2.6 In cases where spelling, punctuation and grammar are not assessed, these may be exempted from marking.
- 2.7 Where necessary, students with disabilities may take examinations in venues other than the designated examination centres, such as the examinee’s home, a hospital or any other venue as determined by the University, provided safety is ensured and it is possible to guarantee invigilation and safeguard the integrity of the examination process.
- 2.8 Regarding documented and chronic health problems which hinder participation in written examinations, the following facilities may be offered:
 - Students who have submitted in time all documents required under the relevant legislation will be assessed orally by a two-member committee comprising the student’s tutor or the Coordinator of the Thematic Unit and an additional member of the Teaching Personnel Team (TPT) of the Thematic Unit, designated by the Coordinator of the Thematic Unit.
 - The decision for the conduct of an oral examination is approved by the Rector’s Council.
- 2.9 Any other arrangements are subject to the submission of the required evidence and the approval of the Rector’s Council.

3. GENERAL FACILITIES PROVIDED TO STUDENTS WITH VISUAL DISABILITY

Persons with visual disability may be granted the following accommodations and facilities, **when and where necessary**:

- 3.1 One (1) hour extra time in the final/resit examination based on the specific needs of each case.
- 3.2 Changes to the visual presentation of the examination paper, e.g. magnification of fonts by a certain percentage, on a case-by-case basis, etc.
- 3.3 Transcription to and from Braille, in collaboration with experts.
- 3.4 The examination paper questions may be read out to the candidates in case access to the examination paper is impossible.
- 3.5 Questions in auditory verbal form: Such differentiation is allowed in exceptional cases and only if students cannot be supported in any other way.
- 3.6 Examinees who are unable to write or have writing difficulties or require support during the examination are allowed to use mechanical or technological devices, with the exception of spell checkers, online reference sources or similar electronic means or devices.
- 3.7 Students with visual disability are allowed to use a “scribe” only if the answers cannot be provided otherwise. Should this be the case, answers are recorded verbatim in the presence of an invigilator. The “scribe” and the invigilator are designated by the University. It is understood that the time dedicated to the transcription of the answers by the “scribe” is not subtracted from the total examination time.
- 3.8 Answers may be recorded in digital or auditory verbal form where necessary.
- 3.9 Extra time as required for understanding and assimilating the lesson and for submitting or presenting assignments.
- 3.10 Extra time during examinations based on the needs of each specific case.

4 GENERAL FACILITIES PROVIDED TO STUDENTS WITH HEARING DISABILITY

Persons with hearing disability may be granted the following accommodations and facilities, ***when and where necessary***:

- 4.1 One (1) hour extra time in the final/resit examination based on the specific needs of each case.
- 4.2 The examination paper questions are presented to deaf students by specialised teachers/trainers for the deaf using sign language or lip reading.
- 4.3 Use of special amplifiers for listening-comprehension papers for deaf students.
- 4.4 Use of a “scribe” only if the answers to the paper questions cannot be provided otherwise. Should this be the case, answers are recorded verbatim in the presence of an invigilator. The “scribe” and the invigilator are designated by the University. It is understood that the time dedicated to the transcription of the answers by the “scribe” is not subtracted from the total examination time.
- 4.5 When taking examinations, persons with hearing disability must state to the examining board whether their main language is sign language, in order for this factor to be duly considered.

5. GENERAL FACILITIES PROVIDED TO STUDENTS WITH MOTOR DISABILITY

Persons with motor disability may be granted the following accommodations and facilities, ***when and where necessary***:

- 5.1 Students with motor disability are granted additional arrangements during examinations, provided the necessary evidence is submitted. These arrangements include extra examination time, breaks for rest, possibility to take the examination at home, use of computer as well as a person offering assistance to the student with motor difficulties during the examination, mainly with regard to writing.
- 5.2 Students with motor disability may request the University permission to be accompanied to Group Advisory Meetings (GAMs) and examinations by any person or a specific individual they trust.
- 5.3 In cases where students with motor disability must attend GAMs or take an examination, the University will provide them with all necessary information on available facilities, access and parking. Students will be in contact with their Academic Coordinator and their tutors at all times regarding lesson arrangements.

6. GENERAL FACILITIES PROVIDED TO STUDENTS WITH MENTAL OR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

Persons with mental or intellectual disability may be granted the following facilities, *when and where necessary*:

- 6.1 In case of meetings at the OUC premises, students may not attend if they feel unable to do so and have the option to make personal arrangements with their tutor concerning the lecture.
- 6.2 When attending a lecture, students may be accompanied by a person of their choice if this makes them feel more comfortable.
- 6.3 Regarding assignments and submission deadlines, extra time is granted if necessary.
- 6.4 During the examination period, the University provides facilities to students with mental or intellectual disability upon submission of the required evidence. Such facilities include taking the examination either at home or in a separate room.
- 6.5 One (1) hour extra time granted in the final/resit examination based on the specific needs of each case.

7. GENERAL FACILITIES PROVIDED TO STUDENTS WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENT

Students with speech impairment are granted the following facilities, **when and where necessary**:

- 7.1 One (1) hour extra time granted in the final/resit examination based on the specific needs of each case.
- 7.2 In cases where spelling, punctuation and grammar are assessed, these may be exempted from marking.
- 7.3 Use of a “scribe” only if the answers to the examination paper questions cannot be provided otherwise. Should this be the case, answers are recorded verbatim in the presence of an invigilator. The “scribe” and the invigilator are designated by the University. It is understood that the time dedicated to the transcription of the answers by the “scribe” is not subtracted from the total examination time.
- 7.4 Use of a computer only if the answers to the examination paper questions cannot be provided otherwise. Should this be the case, the computer shall be provided by the University.

These “Internal Regulations for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)” were approved during the 9th Meeting of the Rector’s Council, held on 17/10/2014.

The revised “Internal Regulations for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)” were approved during the 10th Meeting of the University’s Senate, held on 9/11/2018, and entered into force on the same date.

The revised “Internal Regulations for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)” were approved during the 9th Meeting of the University’s Senate, held on 05/07/2021, and ratified during the 46th Meeting of the University’s Council, held on 14/07/2021.