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Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS)

Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Barrier-Free Campus Policy



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1. Barrier-free University Campus: An Introduction

Inclusive practices in education ensure quality education without discrimination to any learner. It fulfils diverse needs in a responsive and supportive manner. Higher education institutions (HEIs) need to create a common learning platform that is flexible and accessible for all the students to learn together including those from varied backgrounds and diverse abilities. Such an inclusive environment benefits not only the learners but also forms a strong foundation of social inclusion and accessible environments as a whole. Thus, it should result in **removing barriers by bringing necessary changes to infrastructure, curriculum, teaching-learning process, and all such components for equal and quality participation in both academic and social aspects of campus life**. Needless to say, accessibility and inclusion as a concept and culture in HEIs would eventually benefit everyone.

University Grants Commission (UGC) aims to improve the participation and learning experience of persons with disabilities in HEIs. During the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07), it provisioned the Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN) scheme that promotes greater accessibility and a barrier-free environment. Further, consequent upon the striving need of making the system inclusive, 'Scheme of Equal Opportunity Centre for Colleges' in XII Plan (2012-17) was made available to make the HEIs more responsive to the needs and constraints of the disadvantaged social groups including persons with disabilities. From time to time, UGC has always been committed to facilitate inclusive practices in all HEIs for the equal participation and academic achievement of persons with disabilities.

Effective guidelines are required to create inclusive HEIs duly supported by the existing acts and policies. India is a signatory to the convention of the United Nations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), in which the inclusive education has been conceptualized at para 11, p. 4 as *“a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences”* (United Nations, 2016)

To give effect to the United Nations Convention, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 was enacted replacing the existing Act, the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995. Section 16, 17, and 18 of its Chapter III (Education) pertains to the duty of the educational institutions and specific measures to promote and facilitate inclusive education; and adult education respectively. Also, Section 19 of Chapter IV (Skill Development and Employment) of the Act specified certain provisions of imparting vocational training and self-employment. Moreover, the provisions such as reservation in employment and admissions at educational institutions have also been implemented and adherence to the provisions/directions has been emphasized from time to time. Hence, with the emergence of the Act, it has become imperative for the HEIs to comply with such provisions of the Act to safeguard the interest of the persons with disabilities.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisages that education is the foremost primary measure to achieve economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equality. It highlights the inclusive practices by making corresponding changes in curriculum, pedagogies, continuous assessment, and student support systems to ensure quality education. The policy acknowledges that students from Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) including persons with disabilities need help and support to make an effective transition to higher education wherein there is a need for incorporating high-quality support centres with adequate funds and academic resources to carry out these effectively and efficiently.

Thus, as per NEP- 2020, the HEIs are required to adopt measures to make the admission process and curriculum inclusive as well as develop technology tools for better participation and learning outcomes. They also need to provide adequate financial assistance and scholarships to SEDGs and conduct outreach on higher education opportunities and scholarships among SEDGs. They must ensure that all buildings and facilities are wheelchair-accessible and disabled-friendly; develop bridge courses for those students that may come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds, and provide socio-emotional and academic support for all such students through suitable counselling and mentoring programs.

KISS-DU is committed to offering equal access to and full participation in all its academic and extracurricular programmes to any learner in general and youth with special needs in particular. The University resolves to provide an accessible, inclusive and welcoming learning and working environment to individuals with disabilities while complying with applicable UGC and government regulations.

2. Objectives of the Policy

The Barrier-Free Accessibility Policy, presented below, has been developed with three broad objectives.

- Objective 1: It seeks to create a barrier-free environment inside the University campus for individuals with disabilities by making necessary adjustments to the physical infrastructure.
- Objective 2: Secondly, it aims to enable a barrier-free environment in the teaching-learning process by suitably adapting its instruction, content and curriculum.
- Objective 3: Thirdly, it aspires to forge a barrier-free environment by encouraging a positive attitude among its students and the staff towards students or workers with physical or other disabilities.

3. Strategies

The University has resolved to adhere to the following strategies to achieve the three objectives stated above. These strategies act as a guideline for every member of the university community.

3.1 Strategies to achieve Objective 1

- The pathway from the entrance and navigation within the campus should be clearly labelled with visual icons and should be accessible to all Persons with Disabilities and not just wheelchair users only.
- Toilets inside the various buildings must be accessible to individuals with special needs. The toilets should be compulsorily fitted with grab-rails and commodes, along with cleaning devices.
- The drinking water dispensers should be installed within a height accessible to individuals with special needs.
- The walkways must be free from any hung or protruding obstruction, such as windows, lights, low branches, flowerpots or signposts. Tactile paving on the major pathways inside the campus must be made available. Sharp ramps or turns must not be near the walkways.
- A handrail should be provided to all walls, stairs or other walking points inside the campus, such as pavements, or ramps. Adequate lighting around the staircases must be ensured. The corners of the handrails should be pointed downwards to avoid injury.
- Steps should be of even and equal height.
- Bright colours, should be used at every turn, or change in a slope, or at the beginning and end of staircases for easy recognition.
- All signage should be in print and visual, at a readable height (minimum 3 feet).
- All the surfaces should have firm grips. Warning strips/textures may be provided before the beginning of steps/kerbs. Double leaf doors and thresholds should be avoided.
- There must be adequate lighting and ventilation. There must be an adequate number of windows in all buildings to optimize natural light.
- Instruction about seating arrangements in classrooms, offices, conference rooms or auditoriums should be prominently displayed and strictly followed, to allow individuals with special needs to sit or move about comfortably.
- Ramps must be provided with stairs at every level. The ramp should be equipped with sufficient landing space.
- Every building must have elevators equipped with auditory signals. Signs indicating the location of a lift should be provided in a location that is clearly visible from the building entrance.
- Hostels and Guest Houses should be designed based on universal design and access standards and have wider doors, controls on reachable heights, and circulation spaces among other access features.
- Some of the hostel rooms should be made friendly for wheelchair users and have attached accessible toilets complying with the approved standards.
- Mess and canteen services should be accessible based on universal design and accessibility and existing ones should be retrofitted. Cantilevered tables or tables with straight legs at each corner are preferable to central pedestals that might restrict wheelchair access.
- Amenities provided on the campus shall ensure physical accessibility for

persons with disabilities. Banks and ATMs must have ramps with handrails and wider doors for easy access.

- A reserved parking space with appropriate signage must be provided for individuals with special needs.

3.2 Strategies to achieve Objective 2

- Availability and accessibility of the teaching-learning material within the classroom and elsewhere must be ensured. Disability specific needs must be taken into consideration while designing the lessons. Reading material must be made accessible through enabling technologies such as Braille or Virtual Reality, or other assistive technologies such as the SAMR (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition) model, or Pac Mate, to the extent practicable.
- Individuals with special needs, especially students with special needs, must be encouraged to participate in all curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Special efforts must be devoted to reducing and removing any feeling of inadequacy or isolation among students with learning disabilities, or slow learners. Necessary modifications must be made to the plan for delivery of the curriculum. Use of ICT enabled resources, in compliance with Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) standards on ICT accessibility, namely IS 17802 must be operationalized.
- Digital content must follow the standards specified in clause 3.2.1 in the UGC Comprehensive Accessibility Guidelines and Standards for Higher Education Institutions and Universities (February, 2021)
- Regular awareness events must be organized for digital content producers, along with clear guidelines being issued to digital content producers about accessibility practices.
- Instructional materials such as prescribed books, recommended readings, books suggested by faculty to their students or the handouts provided by them, etc. need to be in a format that persons with disabilities could read themselves. Teachers and the staff must be made aware of the common online resource pool of accessible material being made available by the Government of India such as www.sugamyapustakalaya.in
- Teachers and the staff must be encouraged to practice total communication, including gestures, facial expressions, pictures, demonstration and language.
- Sign language, including Indian sign language, may be used by the resource persons, if and when necessary.
- Use of tactile and embossed teaching and learning materials (globe, maps, charts, models, diagrams, etc.) should be ensured.
- Availability of screen-reading and scanning software must be emphasized.
- Training in mobility and daily living skills should be provided regularly, with help from teachers/parents/peers and external resource persons, from time to time.
- Besides structured learning, incidental learning in higher educational

institutions (observation, social interaction, problem-solving) also contributes greatly to the educational outcomes of the students with disabilities. Students must feel that they have somebody to speak to when they are worried or upset. The teachers make themselves available to talk to them privately. The teaching-learning environment needs to provide opportunities for diverse students to improve their social skills too.

- KISS-DU is committed to utilising Universal Design for Learning (UDL) by using a variety of teaching and learning materials that represent all modalities (i.e., that make use of all the senses, that employ different media, and so on). The professors must be encouraged to work with multiple means of presentation, at various levels of difficulty, as appropriate for the students in the class (e.g., present information using visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic formats during instruction; this includes auditory as well as a visual mode of language including sign language).

3.3 Strategies to achieve Objective 3

- Regular and continuous efforts will be made to sensitize the university community regarding the needs of individuals with special needs.
- The centre will design and publish a guidebook on the various resources, initiatives and facilities available at the University for the benefit of individuals with special needs. The booklet should be distributed to every student, as part of a compulsory sensitization toolkit.
- Rallies and awareness camps must be held from time to time to refresh and renew the commitment of the university community to individuals with special needs.
- At least one awareness seminar per year must be organized on the latest assistive technology solutions with the help of assistive technology experts. At the same time, regular training on the usage of assistive technologies must be provided to individuals with special needs.
- At least two awareness and orientation events per year must be organized for the teachers and family members of persons with disabilities about Assistive Technology solutions so that capabilities developed through these solutions could be fully utilized and made part of teaching and learning.

4. Accessible Assessment and Examination Systems

Access to education only can be possible with an accessible curriculum and provisions for accessible assessment or examination systems. Diversification of assessment helps students having different abilities and disabilities to demonstrate their learning.

- Flexible assessment methods to be adopted to favour students with special needs (exp/; students with Intellectual Development Disorder or IDD);
- UGC Notification F.No. 6-2/2013 (SCT) dated 14 January 2019 has made the following provisions for conducting written examinations for persons with benchmark disabilities as per the guidelines issued on 29th August 2018 by

DoEPwD of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

- The facility of Scribe/Reader/Lab Assistant should be allowed to any persons with benchmark disabilities as defined under section 29(r) of RPwD Act, 2016 and has limitations in writing including that of speed if so desired by him/her (Blindness, Locomotor Disability [both arms affected-BA and cerebral palsy]).
- Persons with benchmark disabilities should be given as far as possible, the option for choosing the mode for taking an examination, i.e., in Braille, or the computer or in large print or even by recording the answers as the examining bodies can easily make use of technology to convert question paper in large print, e-text, or Braille, can also convert the Braille text in English or regional languages.
- Compensatory time (i.e., extra/additional time) should not be less than 20 minutes per hour of examination for the candidates who are allowed to use Scribe/Reader/Lab Assistant.
- Candidates should be allowed to use assistive devices like talking calculators in examinations (in a case where calculators are allowed), tailor frame, Braille slate, abacus, geometry kit, Braille measuring tape and AAC devices like communication chart and electronic devices.
- Proper sitting arrangements (preferable on the ground floor) should be made before the commencement of the examination to avoid confusion or distraction during the day of the examination. Examination center also should be accessible to persons with disabilities.
- ✦ Examining body should also provide reading materials in Braille or e-text or on a computer having suitable screen reading software for open book examination. Similarly, online examination should be in accessible format i.e., websites, question papers and all other study materials should be accessible as per the international standards laid down in this regard.
- ✦ Alternate objective questions in lieu of descriptive questions should be provided for candidates with hearing disabilities in addition to the existing policy of giving alternate questions in lieu of questions requiring visual inputs for candidates with visual disabilities. (For details, the complete guideline may be referred at UGC website or https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/7348678_Guidelines_Exam-Divyangjan-JAN-2019.pdf)

5. Governance and Monitoring

- A special cells/centre will function as a single-window information cell about various schemes, initiatives and facilities put in place by the university to respect and deliver the rights of individuals with special needs.
- The name of the Cell is Barrier Free Access Cell for Persons with Disabilities
- The members of the Cell shall monitor the day to day activities and organise activities and conduct meetings and carry-out documentation work accordingly.

- The tenure of the members is three years
- The Mission of the Cell is to create inclusive institutional culture by framing suitable accessibility and inclusive policies and implement these policies for inclusive practices.
- The functions of the Cell are as follows:
 - a) Aligning strategies with goals.
 - b) Monitoring the implementation of the Disability Policy of KISS-DU
 - c) Monitoring Examinations.
 - d) Examining the inclusiveness of the curriculum: Expert committee for approval of curriculum or courses should routinely include an individual who can address matters of accessibility in curriculum design.
 - e) To organize training of its faculty members on accessible curriculum and inclusive teaching-learning process for or encourage faculty members to receive similar training from elsewhere.
 - f) To develop a code of practice on teaching and learning to ensure inclusive education. (lecture notes, slides or other course materials to be made available to the students in advance.)
 - g) Sign language support services also should be made available wherever required.





KALINGA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (KISS)

Deemed to be University

(Established U/S 3 of UGC Act, 1956)
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

KISS, a fully free and fully residential institute,
is the only university exclusively for tribal students.

