

University of Delhi, Delhi

DRAFT Policy Document on the Differently Abled (2006)

1. PREAMBLE

This document constitutes a policy statement on behalf of the University of Delhi regarding differently abled students and staff for improvement in the overall infrastructure, and in the learning and teaching process for the differently abled academic community.

2. INTRODUCTION

The University of Delhi consists of several post-graduate departments, research centres, constituent colleges, non-collegiate students and students enrolled in the School of Open Learning. It also has common facilities such as libraries, computer centres, conference venues, hostels and cafeterias. At any given point of time, there are approximately 1,000 differently abled/ physically challenged students in the University in addition to a number of staff who are also differently abled. Following the enactment of the Persons with Disability Bill, provision has been made for a 3% reservation for admission of differently abled students as well as appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff in the University system. However, in the absence of equal opportunities and facilities, merely extending admission or appointing differently abled persons, is not enough. A large number of students hesitate to join the University due to inadequate facilities to participate on an equal basis with other members of the University in the teaching and learning process.

3. THE MISSION

Through this document the University of Delhi commits itself to providing all possible facilities to the differently abled irrespective of visual, hearing, orthopaedic, or other kinds of impairment. The mission is to enable all differently abled students and staff to participate fully in the academic, intellectual, social, and cultural life of the University and society.

4. OBJECTIVES

In keeping with the Mission, the University commits itself:

- 4.1** To undertake the task of sensitizing the academic community consisting of staff and students and the general public to the problems and strengths of the differently abled.

- 4.2 To make its total environments secure, accessible and friendly for the differently abled by encouraging its colleges, faculties, and departments to provide necessary infrastructure and academic support for the differently abled.
- 4.3 To generate resources to provide tuition assistance and special equipment, educational counseling, and trained readers and writers to the differently abled.
- 4.4 To fulfilling all statutory requirements for differently abled persons by providing equal opportunities in the teaching, learning, and employment process.

5. CURRENT STATUS

5.1 Admission: Undergraduate admissions are facilitated centrally by the Office of the Dean of Students Welfare keeping in view merit and convenience. It is estimated that about 300-350 differently abled students register themselves annually in the formal streams in different courses. The University Health Centre determines the degree of impairment of differently abled students.

The university allows for a 5% relaxation in eligibility criteria with respect to differently abled students. However, when entrance to a course is based on a written test, the student must take the same in order to qualify for admission.

5.2 Braille Library: The University Braille library was established in the 1970s and was indeed the first of its kind at that time. It still produces Braille material manually and is regularly used by the visually impaired. However, with the availability new Braille technology, the University is trying to augment the facility based on current needs. The Braille library is located in the Central Library of the University;

5.3 Audio-book Resource Centre (ABRC): The ABRC provides recorded cassettes to visually-impaired students. There are three recording studios in the ABRC which is located next to the Braille library in the Central Library. ABRC makes an effort to identify the books students might need most and undertakes to record them. It has a collection of several hundred recorded books available for use.

5.4 Courses: The University of Delhi recognizes several courses currently being run by organizations and institutes in Delhi:

- Bachelor in Physiotherapy, four and a half year course offered by Amar Jyoti Research & Rehabilitation Centre, Karkardooma, Vikas Marg, Delhi-110092.
- Post Graduate Diploma in Special Education, one year course offered by Action for Ability Development & Inclusion.
- B.Ed, Special Education of the Visually Impaired, Durgabai Deshmukh College of Special Education, one year course offered by The Blind Relief Association, Lal Bahadur Shastri Marg, New Delhi-110003

5.5 Computer Lab: The University has recently set up a Computer Lab with four computers and two scanners. The computers are equipped with the Jaws software. The Lab is used regularly. Approximately ten to twelve students visit it everyday. The computer lab has helped the University to start talking books and e-texts;

5.6 Employment: The University has undertaken the responsibility of inducting teaching and non-teaching staff in various departments units by advertising the positions. It has also requested all colleges to recruit such people and fulfill the statutory obligations;

5.7 Improvement in Physical Infrastructure: In the recent past the University has undertaken access audit work to identify the infrastructural pitfalls inhibiting the access of differently abled persons within the University premises. These pitfalls are being remedied with the construction of ramps, special toilets, and other modifications in selected university buildings.

6. OPERATIONAL AREAS

6.1 Sensitization: The primary task of the University is to undertake the sensitization of all concerned including students, teachers, administrators, government officials, NGOs and political leaders about the problems facing the differently abled. A complete support system is required to enable them to function creatively in society. In this direction, the University will organize advocacy programmes in the form of lectures, group discussions, leaflets, films etc to sensitize people about the differently abled. The prospectus of the University departments and colleges and the information bulletin brought out by different departments and faculties will have every possible information concerning the facilities worked out for the differently abled.

6.2 Barrier Free Environment: The University commits itself to providing provide a barrier free environment where all students including the differently abled can move freely. At present, visually impaired students find it impossible to cross university roads without some help. Students and employees with locomotor problems on account of polio, nervous disorders or orthopaedic abnormality face severe problems in an environment which is created only with 'normal' people in mind. It is mandatory on the part of the University and colleges to build a safe corridor to which no vehicular traffic has access. To this end the University is undertaking construction of a barrier free environment by building ramps that would provide easy access to some buildings on campus. It will also ensure that there is at least one toilet in each building which is accessible to persons using wheelchairs.

6.3 Resource, Research, and Rehabilitation Centre (RRRC): The University undertakes to build a comprehensive Triple R Centre which will function as a local as well as a national resource centre for all differently abled students. The facilities will include Braille Embossers networked to computers, digitised audio books, a collection of e-texts, aides for the hearing impaired and the orthopaedically challenged. The Centre will also collect data relating to the nature, quantum, distribution and needs of the differently abled. Finally, it will

provide counseling to help these students in getting suitable employment and rehabilitating them as individuals fully able to participate in community life. The University will make every possible effort to sustain and develop the RRRC, in collaboration with other national and international agencies. Within the University it will build links with the NSS and other voluntary groups.

6.4 Special Funding: The University commits itself to providing fellowships to the differently abled to help themselves with necessary personal equipments in the form of tape recorders or cassettes and sufficient reading materials.

6.5 Writers During Examinations: The University commits itself to making adequate arrangements and/or use of computers for the differently abled students in accordance with their individual requirements during their annual and term examinations.

6.6 Provision of Study Materials: The University will attempt to provide basic study materials in accessible format such as Braille, talking books, large print or e-text to all differently abled students.

7. PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

To actualize these goals:

7.1 University will draw up a detailed action plan to operationalise the areas identified in this policy document;

7.2 It will make adequate financial provisions for the implementation of the action plan emerging out of this policy document;

7.3 It will also commit itself to a time frame to bring about the changes as envisaged. This time frame should not exceed five years.

This document will be provided in different formats including audio-tape, Braille, large print or e-text and a CD in Sign Language for those who have hearing related problems for dissemination to all persons associated with the University.