



Policy for Admitting and Supporting Students with Special Needs – Version 2.0

Ref: UC/ P 693/2024

As approved by University Council Decision No. UC/2519/09/2023-24 of meeting No. UC/09/2023-24 held on Wednesday the 24th of April 2024.

This document is to supersede the previous policy for admitting and supporting students with special needs as contained in the University Council approved document carrying reference number UC/P 498/2021.



Deanship of Student Affairs

Policy and Procedure for Admitting and Supporting Students with Special Needs Version 2.0

Purpose and scope

Ahlia University welcomes students with disability and special needs to any programme offered. Students with disability and special needs are identified as students with physical or specific learning/invisible disabilities that require additional support and care, in order to reach their full academic potential. Examples include, but are not limited to, hearing and vision impairment, limited motor skills, Attention Deficit Disorders (ADD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), and limitations in executive functioning.

Students with chronic illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, or fibromyalgia, or any chronic illness which is a long-lasting health concern, are also considered as student with special needs and they will be provided with the necessary academic support and accommodation during their duration of study in order to reach their academic potential and be successful in their studies.

All applicants are required to officially declare their disability or special need during the application stage by filling in the relevant section in the application form. Students with special needs are provided with the appropriate support, accommodation and guidance from the Deanship of Student Affairs and specifically the Directorate of Student Counselling. The Directorate of Student Counselling is responsible for following up on the students with special need to ensure they are being well supported and to address any of their concerns and issues that may hinder their academic progress.

Admission of students with special needs is done through a Special Needs Students Committee, which assess the potential of candidates to succeed in their chosen academic programme. The policy for admitting and supporting students with special needs is in line with the admission policy at Ahlia University. This policy serves the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG); SDG 5 related to “Gender Equality” and SDG 10 related to “Reducing Inequalities” which reflects the believes of Ahlia University in fostering an inclusive and supportive academic environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Policy Statements

1. Students with special needs ought to disclose the nature of their special need on the AU admissions application form.
2. Any student who fails to notify the University:
 - a. Waives any right that would otherwise have been obtained as per this policy
 - b. If assessed, based on the Universities sole discretion, that accommodating the nature of the disability or special need is posing hardship or risk to the University, then the student in question may be subject to having his/her registration cancelled and admission annulled.
 - c. Should registration be cancelled, pursuant to “b” above, the students forfeit all fees and tuition which have been paid to the University.
 - d. The committee can advise the student to change their programme of choice to another academic programme that can accommodate the nature of their special need or disability.
3. Having identified the nature of his/her disability or special need, the student, after having been provisionally admitted to the University, will be interviewed by the Special Needs Students Committee.
4. This policy is aligned with United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG); SDG 5 related to Gender Equality and SDG 10 related to Reducing Inequalities.
5. If the Committee decides that the University can accommodate the kind of disability or special need with which the student is encumbered, the student will be granted admission to the University, with a recognised disability or special need, after taking into account the needs and the requirements of the academic programme the student is applying to. Thus, making it possible for the student to avail of all the privileges/benefits conferred to students with special needs as contained herein.
6. If the Committee decides that the student does not have a known disability or special need, then the student will be granted ordinary admission – in which case the student cannot avail of all the privileges/benefits conferred to students with special needs as contained herein.
7. If the Committee decides that the student has a known disability or special need but the University cannot accommodate, the student will be denied admission and the provisional

admission will be rescinded. The University is not responsible for any costs the student may have incurred, of any sort, by reliance on the provisionally offered admission.

8. In the event that the Committee is divided on whether the student has a known disability or special need, the Committee will refer the matter to a professional from outside the University for Final Adjudication.
9. If the Committee decided the student choice of academic programme does not go well with their special needs or their disability and may hinder their academic progress, the committee can advise the student to change their programme of choice to another academic programme that can accommodate the nature of their special need or disability.
10. If the Committee is otherwise divided, the matter will be referred to the President of the University for Final Adjudication.
11. Privileges/Benefits offered to students with special needs:

A. Facilities:

- Car Park: AU will provide special car parking slots for disabled students and students with special needs.
- Bathrooms: AU will provide suitable bathrooms for disabled students and students with special needs.
- Entrances: AU will provide suitable ramps on entrances as well as railings and elevator services (where appropriate) for disabled students and students with special needs.
- Classrooms: Where needed, specially designed seating facilities in classrooms and labs will be provided.

B. Support for Learning:

A. In reference to Classes and Labs:

- Educating AU Staff & Faculty Members: AU faculty and staff will be made aware of respective students' special need, while further educating them on the nature of the disability and required accommodations.
- Support in classrooms and labs: AU will respond adequately to the kind of impairment that the *disabled* or *special needs student* has. The impairments could be physical (like visual impairment or hearing impairment) or medical like certain disorders (autism or epilepsy or other). Additionally, the class lists flag any students with special needs and

reasonable adjustments are made to support the student and integrate them into the learning environment.

- Assistive Devices: AU will allow students with special needs to use assistive devices in classrooms and labs and, where possible, will provide some supportive or adaptive devices that will help them learn better.
- Online learning environment: all instructors are made aware of the student's specific need, encouraging them to tailor online dissemination of information, conducive to student specific need (limitations). The university strives to adopt best practice and solutions in this regard.

C. In reference to Examinations:

- Location and Duration of Exam: where needed, the students with special needs will be provided with a separate examination hall in a suitable environment to write the exam. For the remaining students with special needs, extra time will be provided if needed (as per student case) to complete their exams.
- At all times, *discretion* in dealing with disabled students ought to be observed; an example would be if there is tardiness on arrival or difficulty in reaching the exam room.
- Where needed, AU will provide necessary support for the disabled student to complete the exam and this support could be, for example, in the form of notetaking (or other).

D. Activities

AU will support, guide, and encourage *students with special needs* to participate in general student activities inside the University and outside. AU will also encourage students to participate in local, regional, and international events that are designed to celebrate the achievements of *special needs* students.

E. Financial Aid

As part of Ahlia University's community engagement, the university offers 50% scholarships to all applicants with special needs. AU aims to provide the appropriate care and learning environment for these applicants to qualify and integrate them into society and the business market.

12. Student Satisfaction:

Every academic year a survey is conducted to collect the feedback and evaluate the effectiveness of the services and support offered to the students with special needs. The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) will run the survey using ADREG system. The outcome of the survey will be used to improve the facilities and support offered to students with special need and make informed decisions.

13. Identifying that the student has a special need during their course of study:

The student might show some symptoms or signs that they have a special need during their course of study, despite the fact that they did not declare their special need during admission, the following actions must be followed:

- The observer must document the concerns regarding the student's performance or behaviour that may indicate that special need or disability.
- The observer must formally inform the Directorate of Counselling and provide them with the documentation.
- The Directorate of Counselling will reach out to the Special Needs Committee to meet and assess the student and the normal procedure as accepting special need students will apply.

Procedure for Admitting and Supporting Students with Special Needs:

There is a systematic application process that verifies that applicants meet programme entry requirements and that all the documents for admission are in line with AU and HEC guidelines to ensure equal opportunities to all applicants.

The following outlines the procedure for admitting and supporting students with special needs:

- 1- All applicants apply to study at Ahlia University must fill in an application form. The applicant must officially declare their disability or special needs during the application stage by filling in the relevant section in the application form.
- 2- If the applicant declares that they have a special need or a disability their application along with the supporting documents will be transferred to the Special Needs Students Committee for review and acceptance.
- 3- The Special Needs Students Committee is a standing committee which among its responsibilities to review special needs student application forms. The committee

comprises dedicated full-time qualified professionals who provide the necessary support to students with special needs prior to admission and during their programme of study.

- 4- The Special Needs Students Committee will interview the applicant to determine whether the University can accommodate their particular needs and individually tailor the services, adjustment and support that the applicant may require in order to have a smooth academic progression.
- 5- The acceptance outcome of the Special Needs Students Committee is then transferred to the Directorate of Admission and Registration, where the normal application procedure will apply.
- 6- Once the special needs student accepts the admission offer, they will be marked in ADREG system as students with special needs and all the class lists will flag any students with special needs. This will help the faculty members make reasonable adjustment to support the special needs student and integrate them into the learning environment in line with the adjustment and support determined from the interview.
- 7- The Directorate of Student Counselling is responsible for supporting the student with special needs throughout their duration of study. They will follow up with the student and advise them with course registration in coordination with their academic advisor.
- 8- As a continuation of their support to students with special needs, every semester the Directorate of Student Counselling ensures arrangements are made for special needs students and coordinates with faculty members regarding any adjustments needed to smoothen student learning during the course term and the examination period. The faculty members are also briefed about the nature of the respective student's special need or disability.
- 9- Once the special need student is accepted, the student will attend a specialised orientation to familiarise them with resources, support services and accessibility features. They will also be introduced to the staff within the university who will assist them in navigating the transition to university life and accessing available support services.
- 10- As part of Ahlia University ongoing support and review of the services offered to students with special needs, the university conducts an annual survey to ensure that the services and facilities remain effective and appropriate.
- 11- As part of Ahlia University ongoing support, expert and professional training is provided to all faculty members and staff on the best practices for supporting students with special needs and creating inclusive learning environments.