

Rationale

The purpose of the Special Needs policy is to provide support for applicants and *students with special needs* to ensure fair and equal opportunities to access higher education programs at Qatar University, and all the ancillary educational services, facilities and activities at Qatar University (the University), in keeping with the spirit of Article 49 in the Constitution of Qatar, and in accordance with the People with Special Needs Law No. (2) of the year 2004. The policy and procedures articulate the University's vision of inclusion by establishing and maintaining a supportive and accessible university environment for students with special needs.

Definitions

Student with Special Needs A student who has one or more of the following special needs is serviced by QU Special Needs Section: physical impairment; visual impairment; speech and language disorder; dyslexia; hearing difficulties (but not totally deaf); students who suffer from temporary disability such as temporary diseases or accidents injury.

Special needs accommodation Academic or non-academic accommodation provided to students with special needs in order to afford students with special needs with opportunities equal to students without special needs taking into consideration the safety and welfare of the special needs student, fellow students and staff in the QU environment.

Amanuenis A person employed to write or type what someone else dictates.

Policy

1. The University is committed to providing equal opportunities to applicants with special needs to access higher education programs and services at the University.
2. Admission into the University academic programs is dependent upon the applicant with special needs being able to meet all the academic requirements for the program, with special needs accommodation.
3. The University provides support services to registered students with special needs.
4. It is the responsibility of the registered students to bring themselves and their needs to the attention of the Special Needs Section of the University and provide documentation upon admission, or at the onset of the condition if it occurs after admission, from qualified professionals to support an application for special needs accommodation.
5. University staff or faculty who identify a student with Special Needs should, with the student's consent in writing, bring the student to the attention of the Special Needs Section who will coordinate the follow up evaluation, referral and make recommendations for appropriate Special Needs Accommodation.

Procedure

1. Responsibility for Special Needs Service

The Special Needs Section (the Section) of the Student Services Department is responsible for providing special needs services.

2. Confidentiality

The section is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of student data in the service records. Information relating to the special needs students is not released without the consent in writing of the student.

3. Student Complaints

Complaints about the service are dealt with under the University Student Complaint Policy.

4. Special needs types

The section provides support and *special needs accommodation* to the students with the following special needs types:

- A. Hearing impairment (partially deaf)
- B. Learning Difficulties (including Dyslexia)
- C. Physical impairment
- D. Speech and language Disorder
- E. Visual impairment
- F. Temporary disabilities caused by illness, or injuries

5. Rights and Responsibilities of Students with Special Needs

On admission to the University, student with Special Needs are afforded the following rights and have the following responsibilities:

Rights

- A. To enroll in programs and register in courses provided he/she satisfies the admission criteria and requirements.
- B. To be assessed for the courses registered using appropriate alternative assessment methods approved by the Special Needs Section which may be variations from the academic procedures and requirements for students without special needs. Students of special needs must achieve the same academic standards as students without special needs.
- C. To participate in the University academic and non-academic activities with assistance and support from the Special Needs Section provided he or she meets the participation criteria or requirement.
- D. To access the university buildings.
- E. To be treated fairly and with respect by faculty and staff of the University.
- F. To confidentiality of their records relating to his or her disabilities and *special needs accommodation* unless the student consents in writing to the release of the information. Any such consent shall be to particular instances of releasing information and not be taken as a general waiver of the right to confidentiality.

Responsibilities

- A. To register with the Special Needs Section to request *special needs accommodation*.
 - B. To provide supporting documents from qualified professionals to the Special Needs Section.
 - C. To initiate communication with the Special Needs Section on issues and problems relating to *special needs accommodation*.
6. Register with the Special Needs Section, and supporting documents.
- A. On admission, or at the onset of the special needs condition if it occurs after admission, students with special needs must register with the Special Needs Section online http://www.qu.edu.qa/ar/students/services/special_needs/index.php and provide original supporting documents from qualified professionals to apply for special needs accommodation.
 - B. Where the student is unable to obtain documentation from a qualified professional, the Special Needs Section organizes an ad hoc committee consisting of the Head of the Special Needs Section, and experts in the community, where appropriate, to determine the details of the special needs accommodation based on the advice provided by qualified professionals and interview with the concerned students. In such instances, the ad hoc committee may refer the case to a qualified professional outside the University for advice.
 - C. On registration, The Special Needs Specialist conducts an evaluation of the student's condition to determine the appropriate type, and level of *special needs accommodation* based on the content of the supporting documents but the University may seek medical reports and professional advice from experts within or outside the University.
 - D. Based on the evaluation, the Special Needs Section issues a Certificate to the student containing details of the *special needs accommodation*, and the policies and procedures of the Special Needs Section.
 - E. It is the responsibility of the student to produce the Certificate to each instructor of the courses registered, and request the instructor to contact and collaborate with the Special Needs Section to provide the *special needs accommodation* as detailed on the Certificate.
7. Special needs accommodation

The special needs section provides students with special needs with *academic* and *non-academic accommodation* to support their learning and personal development.

A. Academic accommodation

- 1) The Special Needs Section supports students with special needs to work with course materials and assignments, and in examinations and course assessments through a range of assistive technologies and assistance including providing:
 - a) a “Text to Braille” service for visually impaired students to convert the content of learning materials, assignments, and course assessment materials from Braille into MS Word format, or provide large print fonts for students with low vision.
 - b) a “Braille to Text” service for instructors of students with visual impairment to convert the content of learning materials, assignments, and course assessment materials from Braille into MS Word format for course instructors.
 - c) a “Text to Speech” service for students with visual impairment and dyslexia to convert the content of learning materials, assignments, and course assessment materials from text to speech.
 - d) a “Speech to Text” service for instructors of students with visual impairment and dyslexia to convert the content of the learning materials, assignments, and course assessment materials from speech to text.
 - e) amanuenses as appropriate to the individual conditions of the student to support course assignments, assessments, and examinations.
 - f) arrangements for special examination venues for individual students with special needs to sit the examination in a separate room as assessed to be necessary depending on the condition of the individual students.
 - g) Accommodation for examinations for each category of the students with special needs:
 - i. Speech Impairment or language difficulties
 - o Extra time of at least a half an hour for each hour.
 - o Exemption from exams that take place in front of other students in the class where appropriate based on assessment of individual cases.
 - ii. Hearing Impairment (partially deaf only)
 - o Extra time of at least a half an hour for each hour.

- Exemption from the listening exams.
 - Seating at the front, near the invigilator.
 - iii. Learning Difficulties (including Dyslexia):
 - Extra time of at least a half an hour for each hour.
 - A Reader or Amanuensis if assessed to be necessary based on individual cases.
 - iv. Visual Impairment or Low Vision
 - Extra time of at least a half an hour for each hour.
 - Text to Braille conversion of the examination paper for students who are medically blind, and large font print question paper for students with low vision.
 - A Reader or Amanuensis where assessed to be appropriate based on individual cases.
 - v. Physical Impairment or mobility difficulties
 - Extra time of at least a half an hour for each hour.
 - A Reader and/or Amanuensis, where assessed to be appropriate based on individual cases.
- 2) Where the student is assessed to be in need of *special needs accommodations* in assessments, the student is responsible for making a request to the Special Needs Section for assistance at least one week before the exam date, and notifying the Special Needs Section of the date, time, and location of the exam. The student is required to confirm the arrangements with the Special Needs Section at least one day before the exam date.
- 3) Where the *special needs accommodation* includes assistance to convert course materials to Braille, the student is advised to request the instructor to provide the course content in writing, and where possible with an electronic version in MS Word format, at the beginning of the semester. The student provides the Section Needs Section with the content to be converted to Braille.

B. Non-academic accommodation

The Special Needs Section provides support and assistance to individual students registered with the section to attend classes and participate in activities in the University or in the community.

8. Special Needs Resource Room

The Special Needs Section establishes an Assistive Technologies Resource Room equipped with the latest technological tools and facilities to support and assist students with special needs throughout their enrolment at the University. The student has the right to use the resource room at any time with or without the presence of staff. If the room is locked, the student may present his or her student ID to ask security staff to open the room. Resources, facilities and services include:

- a. Braille books
- b. Braille printers
- c. Braille converters
- d. Computers with screen readers, and touch computers
- e. CCTV Machines (for low vision)
- f. MP3 with flash memory, recorder and radio
- g. Student and tutoring area
- h. All-in-one printer, scanner, photocopier, fax
- i. Medical mattress
- j. Wheelchairs
- k. Tape recorders
- l. Entertainment and activities for students with disabilities.
- m. Amaneosis service
- n. Mobility exercise program
- o. Exam Rooms

9. Records of Special Needs Students.

The Special Needs Section:

- A. tracks the student data related to special needs cases and special needs accommodations,
- B. produces an annual summary of relevant special needs data, and
- C. reviews and makes recommendations on cases for which students have requested reconsideration after their requests for accommodations have been denied.

10. Special Needs Support Committee

A Special Needs Support Committee works to establish effective communication links and coordination between the Colleges and the Special Needs Section to promote the academic

support and social inclusion of students with special needs. The Committee Terms of Reference is in Appendix 1.

11. Special Needs Alumni Committee

A Special Needs Alumni Committee works to establish a network of Qatar University graduates with special needs to promote employment of the graduates in the local community. The Committee Terms of Reference is in Appendix 2.

Stakeholder Impact

Faculty and staff should familiarize themselves with the guidelines and procedures and be involved proactively in assisting students with special needs. It is incumbent upon all faculty and staff to support the special needs accommodation approved by the Special Needs Section.

Policy Owner

Student Services Department

Review Date

30th June 2014

Appendix 1

Special Needs Support Committee Terms of Reference

Committee Name
Special Needs Support Committee
Committee Type
This is an ad hoc committee.
Committee Composition / Membership Eligibility
<p>This committee is appointed by and reports to the Vice President of Student Affairs. On appointment, members serve for one academic year. Members normally comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Head of Special Needs Section (Chair) - Two Special Needs Specialists – one male one female (Secretary) - A representative from each College - A student representative (a student with special needs)
Committee Purpose
To establish effective communication links and coordination between the Colleges and the Special Needs Section to promote the academic support and social inclusion of students with special needs.
Meeting
The committee meets at least once each academic year . Further meetings may be called for by the committee chair.
Committee Roles and Responsibilities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiate proposals to improve support services for students with special needs. 2. Initiate proposals to develop the academic and social inclusion of students with special needs. 3. Contribute to the annual strategic planning of the University Special Needs Section.
Governance / Decision making method
A majority of the members must be present to form the quorum which must include the Head of the Special needs Section. Committee decisions are informal and there is no voting. Decisions

are recorded in the minutes.
Deliverables
Recommendations to the Vice President of Student Affairs of actions by the University to support the academic success of students with special needs.
Resources and budget
N/A
Communication
Committee members communicate face to face, by phone, and email. Members are expected to respond to meeting requests within five working days.

Appendix 2

Special Needs Alumni Committee Terms of Reference

Committee Name
Special Needs Alumni Committee
Committee Type
This is an ad hoc committee.
Committee Composition / Membership Eligibility
The committee is appointed by an reports to the Vice President of Student Affairs. On appointment, members serve for one year. Members normally comprise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Head of Special Needs Section (Chair) - Two Special Needs Specialists - one male, one female (Secretary) - Three graduates of Qatar University (former students with special needs) - Two representatives from government or private organizations in Qatar with the mission of promoting the welfare of people with special needs.
Committee Purpose
To establish a network of Qatar University graduates with special needs to promote employment of the graduates in the local community.
Meeting
The committee meets at least once each academic year. Further meetings may be called by the Committee Chair.
Committee Roles and Responsibilities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain contact with QU special needs students after graduation. 2. Form and maintain an alumni of QU special needs graduates. 3. Assist special needs graduates to find employment after graduation. 4. Identify opportunities for special needs graduates to participate in the local community, through employment or other activities. 5. Collate data of QU special needs graduates who have found employment, and alumni who are in employment.
Governance / Decision making method

<p>A majority of the members must be present to form the quorum which must include the Head of the Special needs Section, at least one representative from a special needs organization, and two graduates.</p> <p>Committee decisions are informal and there is no voting. Decisions are recorded in the minutes.</p>
<p>Deliverables</p>
<p>Recommendations to the Vice President of Student Affairs on strategies to promote the employment of Qatar University graduates with special needs in the local community.</p>
<p>Resources and budget</p>
<p>None</p>
<p>Communication</p>
<p>Committee members communicate face to face, by phone, and email. Members are expected to respond to meeting requests within five working days.</p>

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