

Policy on Students with Special Needs

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Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya

SECTION 1: Deans office/ Student Affairs Committee (SAC)

The Faculty body responsible for the students with special needs is Dean's office/ SAC.

It would undertake the following duties:

- Identification of students with special needs
- Initial assessment of students with special needs (Subcommittee in the SAC)
- Offering counseling sessions
- Arranging referrals
- Collaborate with the University Health Centre
- Record keeping and maintenance of confidentiality of information
- Share confidential information with relevant parties for the benefit of the student
- Share information with relevant authorities on statutory or moral obligation
- Follow-up and monitoring
- Evaluate the process based on feedback

Identification of students with special needs

Student affairs committee actively seeks information on students' health by following methods:

- A self-administered questionnaire completed by all new entrants on admission
- Requesting a report of the mandatory medical check-up done by the student as per the instructions of the University Grants commission (UGC) within the first six months of admission

The Dean's office/ Student affairs committee (SAC) may passively receive information on students' health by following methods:

- Self-referral: the student directly informing about their health status via the help desk, letter or email. The student may inform about an acute event that left them disabled temporarily or permanently. Also the student may inform about their chronic conditions which were not disclosed to Dean's office/ SAC on admission.
- Via the academic staff, student counselors, ward staff and non-academic staff
- Via fellow students and family
- From the treating medical officer of the student
- Via patients, police and general public
- Anonymous complaints

The initial assessment by Student Affairs Committee

After collection of students' details based on the self-administered questionnaire distributed on admission SAC will identify students who may require special assistance during the programme.

An initial assessment session is held for each student with the following objectives:

- To obtain a crude understanding about the student's condition
 - To assess the student's insight about their condition
 - To seek student's consent to share the information they provided with specific parties for the benefit of them. This includes the University Health Centre, consultant/s to whom the student would be referred to, Heads of the departments, clinicians, chief examiners and wardens.
 - To set up an individualized plan for each student
 - To direct the student for initial investigations and referrals, preferably via the University Health Centre
 - To encourage the student to comply with a treatment plan
 - In apparently mild conditions, to counsel the student about possible disadvantages they may face due to their condition, with emphasis of motivating the student and eliminating their negative thoughts
 - In a serious condition to inform the administration for necessary actions
- Some of these objectives may be achieved on a subsequent meeting arranged on convenience.

Offering counseling sessions

Dean's office/ SAC will direct the student for counseling based on their preference:

- From senior student counselors
- From a consultant psychiatrist
- At a government hospital
- At the private sector

Arranging referrals

The SAC/ Dean's office will refer the student for necessary investigations and consultancy based on their preference:

- Via the University Health Centre
- At a government hospital
- At the private sector
- From a consultant

Collaboration with the University Health Centre

Dean's office/ SAC will function with the University Health Centre in provision of services to the student.

The two parties will share confidential information of the student with written consent from the student.

The two parties will share the workload without duplication in carrying out necessary investigations and referrals.

Dean's office/ SAC will not undertake any management of the student except counseling and referral.

Record keeping and maintenance of confidentiality of information

Record keeping by Dean's office/ SAC is for the following purposes:

- For smooth execution of services rendered to the student by the Faculty
- To benefit the student by provision of information to them or interested parties
- To benefit the Faculty by having a record of support provided to the student

All information received by Dean's office/ SAC regarding the student's health is confidential. Maintenance of confidentiality is the responsibility of Dean's office/ SAC . (See sections below.)

Sharing confidential information with relevant parties for the benefit of the student

The purpose of collection of information by Dean's office/ SAC is to share them with relevant parties for the benefit of the student. However, a written consent should be obtained from the student expressing their willingness for such an act. This is best done after the initial assessment.

The student's information could be shared with following parties with the student's consent:

- The University Health Centre – to collaborate in provision of services
- The consultant to whom the student is referred to – to facilitate management process
- The Heads of the Departments – to arrange necessary support during the teaching programme
- The clinicians to whom the student is appointed to during clinical rosters – to arrange necessary support at the wards
- The chief examiners – to allow special arrangements during examinations
- The wardens of residential hostels – to provide support at the hostels and to be prepared for emergencies

- The scholarship schemes – to help the student obtain financial support
- The courts and the police – to help the student in legal actions

The student's information could be shared with following parties without the student's consent, when such divulging seems to have a benefit for the student:

- The treating medical officer/ medical team in an emergency condition of the student when the student is unable to provide information
- The treating medical officer/ medical team when the student's insight is poor and not co-operating with the medical officer/ medical team
- The relevant consultant when the student's condition or behavior apparently becomes a threat to themselves
- The psychiatrist when there is a significant risk of deliberate self-harm or suicide

The following actions to be done by Dean's office/ SAC do not require consent from the student.

- Sending the number of left-handed students in the batch to arrange lecture halls
- Number of students with visual impairments

Sharing information with relevant authorities on statutory or moral obligation

The student's information could be shared with following parties without the student's consent, when such divulging seems to have a statutory or moral obligation

- The relevant consultant when the student's condition or behavior apparently becomes a threat to patients or general public
- To legal authorities when in a statutory obligation

Follow-up and monitoring

The follow-up shall be used to monitor the improvement or progression of the student's condition.

Dean's office/ SAC, has the freedom to arrange follow-up with the co-operation of the student. It may be frequent when the student needs support, and only as necessary when the student is coping with their condition.

The follow-up may be terminated when it is no longer required.

E.g. in case of a temporary disability developed during the programme and settled

Evaluating the process based on feedback

To assess the quality of the services rendered, and the effectiveness of the processes in place to offer the services, Dean's office/ SAC, shall obtain feedback periodically from all involved parties, which include:

- The student
- The University Health Centre
- The Heads of the departments
- The clinicians
- The chief examiners
- The wardens
- The medical officers/ medical teams/ consultants to whom the student was referred to

SECTION 2: SERVICES OFFERED

Virtually any medical condition of the student could be supported through counseling, arranging referrals and investigations.

However, special support could be arranged in the following situations for relevant conditions.

During teaching-learning sessions:

- Chairs with forearm rest (right-handed and left-handed students)
- Front row seats/ allocated seats (visual impairment, hearing impairment, reduced mobility)
- Regular breaks (for administration of specific drugs, hypoglycemia)
- Allowing recording of lectures/ lectures in multiple formats (writer's cramp)
- Permission to use elevators (reduced mobility)
- Permission to use specialized ergonomic equipment (injury)
- Not using confusing colour schemes in images (colour blindness)
- Medical leave

During clinical appointments:

- Regular breaks (for administration of specific drugs, hypoglycemia)
- Seating arrangements (fracture, injury)

During examinations:

- Chairs with forearm rest (right-handed and left-handed students)
- Front row seats (visual impairment, hearing impairment, reduced mobility)
- Extra time (writer's cramp, stammering)
- Medical leave

In hostels:

- Ground floor rooms (reduced mobility)

The Faculty will ensure the following arrangements as general regulations, to which <the body> can forward its inputs:

- Ramps allowing access to all teaching areas
- Chairs with forearm rest for right-handed and left-handed people in every lecture hall
- Capability of multiple delivery of lectures in every lecture hall

SECTION 3: AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

Information on the Faculty protocol for students with special needs will be made available to students actively and passively.

- During the orientation programme
- In the student handbook
- On the faculty website
- At the help desk
- Via student counselors/ mentors
- Via email