Disability Support Policy

Annoor Dental College & Hospital, Muvattupuzha

1. Legal Basis

This policy follows the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (Act 49 of 2016, in force from 19 April 2017) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017. The college also follows the directions of the university, the University Grants Commission and the regulatory bodies for dental education on the admission and support of students with disabilities.2. Head of the Disability Support Cell

2. Purpose

The college is committed to equal access, dignity and full participation for every student with a disability. This policy sets out how the college admits, supports and includes these students, as the Act requires of educational institutions (Sections 16 and 17).

3. Scope and Definitions

This policy applies to all students of the college: BDS students, interns, MDS (postgraduate) students and students on supplementary or repeat batches, and to candidates seeking admission.

- **Person with disability:** a person with a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment that, with other barriers, hinders full and equal participation in society.
- **Person with benchmark disability:** a person with at least 40 per cent of a specified disability, as certified by the competent authority (Section 2(r) of the Act).
- **Reasonable accommodation:** a necessary and appropriate change or support that lets a student take part on an equal basis, without imposing a disproportionate burden.

4. Guiding Principles

- No student will be discriminated against on the ground of disability.

- Every request is treated with respect and decided case by case, with the student's own views taken into account.
- Support is given in a way that protects the student's dignity and independence.
- Disability information is kept confidential.

5. Admission

- The college follows Section 32 of the Act, under which higher education institutions covered by it reserve not less than five per cent of seats for persons with benchmark disabilities. Admission is made through the process and rules set by the university and the government.
- Persons with benchmark disabilities get an upper age relaxation of five years for admission, as the Act provides.
- Candidates are informed of the support available before they take up a seat.

6. Accessibility of the Campus

The college works to make its buildings, classrooms, laboratories, clinics, library, hostel, toilets and common areas accessible (Sections 16 and 40 of the Act). This includes:

- ramps, handrails, lifts and clear, accessible routes where feasible;
- accessible toilets and seating arrangements;
- clear signage and, as needed, tactile or audio guidance;
- accessible digital material, such as the website and e-learning content.

Accessibility gaps are reviewed once a year, and a plan to fix them is placed before the Principal.

7. Reasonable Accommodation and Academic Support

On a student's request, and after the Cell has assessed the need, the college may provide:

1. study material in accessible formats, such as large print, soft copy or audio;
2. assistive devices and software;
3. seating, scheduling or classroom changes;

4. adapted ways of learning and clinical training, while the essential competencies of the course are maintained;
5. peer or faculty support, including a mentor from the Student Welfare Committee / Student Support Cell.

8. Examinations

A student with a disability may ask for exam support, such as extra time, a scribe or reader, or an accessible exam format. The Cell helps the student apply to the university within its rules and dates, and informs the examination section so that arrangements are ready.

9. Requesting Support

1. The student, or a parent or guardian, tells the Cell about the disability and the support needed. Disclosure is voluntary.
2. The student gives a disability certificate or medical record where it is needed to arrange support.
3. The Cell meets the student, agrees on the support, and records it.
4. The Cell reviews the arrangements with the student at least once a year, or sooner if needs change.

10. Disability Support Cell

The Cell is led by the Coordinator and includes faculty members, a representative of the Student Welfare Committee / Student Support Cell and a student representative. Its functions are to:

- receive and act on support requests;
- advise departments on accommodations and on clinical and practical postings;
- keep records of accommodations given;
- run awareness and sensitisation sessions for staff and students;
- review campus accessibility.

11. Awareness and Sensitisation

The college holds orientation and training for faculty, staff and students on inclusion, disability rights and respectful behaviour. Harassment or demeaning treatment of a student because of a disability is not tolerated and is dealt with under the college's disciplinary and anti-harassment procedures.

12. Grievances

A student who is not satisfied with the support given, or who faces discrimination, may complain to the Student Welfare Committee / Student Support Cell or directly to the Grievance Redressal Committee, which is headed by the Principal. The student may then appeal to the university.

13. Reporting to the University

All matters regarding students are reported to the university, including any untoward event.

- The college reports to the university and the UGC the number of students with disabilities admitted to each course, when they ask for it.
- Any untoward event involving a student with a disability is reported to the university without delay.
- A copy of each report is kept in the Cell's records.

14. Confidentiality

Information about a student's disability is shared only with those who need it to provide support, and only with the student's consent unless the law requires otherwise.

15. Review of the Policy

This policy is reviewed every year by the Disability Support Cell, and changes take effect once approved by the Principal. It will be updated if the Act, its Rules or the university's directions change.