

XAVIER UNIVERSITY, PATNA

DISABILITY-FRIENDLY POLICY

1. Introduction

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 defines a person with disability as "a person with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others." For students with disabilities, accessing higher education is often the biggest barrier. The Act promotes inclusive education, where students with and without disabilities learn together, and the teaching and learning systems are adapted to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

To foster inclusive and equitable higher education in India, Xavier University, Patna caters to the needs of students with specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia. The university has expanded its support to include students with visual, hearing, locomotor disabilities, and autism spectrum disorders, ensuring equal and integrated access to all academic, social, cultural, and recreational programs.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the need for pedagogical reforms across all educational stages. Key recommendations include recruiting teachers with cross-disability training, using assistive devices and technology-based tools to integrate students with disabilities into classrooms, and creating awareness and sensitization among all educational stakeholders. The NEP also encourages research to expand knowledge about the role of assistive technology in ensuring inclusive education.

2. Policy Statement

Xavier University, Patna is committed to being an inclusive education institution that welcomes and nurtures students with disabilities, ensuring they are not disadvantaged at any stage of their academic and non-academic journey. The University maintains its high standards of academic and non-academic performance while ensuring that students with disabilities have equal opportunities from application and admissions processes to their academic and residential life programs, and placement opportunities.

3. Policy Principles

Students with disabilities at Xavier University, Patna will have equitable access to university programs and activities, including but not limited to:

- 3.1 All academic and non-academic programs
- 3.2 All common spaces, buildings, and facilities
- 3.3 Campus services and events
- 3.4 Opportunities to share grievances and provide feedback
- 3.5 Opportunities for placements within and outside the university

4. Scope and Application

This policy applies to all Xavier University, Patna students with diagnosed disabilities enrolled in different academic programs offered by the university.

5. Objectives

The objective of this policy is to ensure that Xavier University, Patna becomes a disability-friendly institution that is chosen by people with disabilities for its suitable infrastructure, support facilities, and sensitized atmosphere, which can help them grow and achieve their dreams. The main objectives are as follows:

- 5.1 To avoid discrimination, exploitation, and exclusion of disabled students and staff in all spheres of work and education.
- 5.2 To create suitable regulatory mechanisms for the effective delivery of services to disabled students and staff.
- 5.3 To ensure the implementation of all legislations with respect to persons with disabilities.
- 5.4 To provide accessible and inclusive education.
- 5.5 To ensure full participation of persons with disabilities and provide them equal opportunities for development.

6. Responsibilities of the University

- 6.1 Counselling: Providing counselling for students with disabilities on the types of courses they can study at the higher education level.

- 6.2 Admission: Ensuring the admission of as many students with disabilities as possible through the open quota.
- 6.3 Fee Concessions: Collecting and implementing orders dealing with fee concessions, examination procedures, reservation policies, etc., referring to persons with disabilities as per government policies from time to time.
- 6.4 Educational Needs Assessment: Assessing the educational needs of persons with disabilities enrolled in higher education.
- 6.5 Awareness Programs: Conducting awareness programs for teachers about approaches to teaching, evaluation procedures, etc., which they should adapt in the case of students with disabilities.
- 6.6 Employment Support: Providing support to students with disabilities and assisting them in getting appropriate employment after their studies.
- 6.7 Assistive Devices: Ensuring the maintenance of special assistive devices procured and encouraging differently-abled persons to use them for enriching their learning experiences.
- 6.8 Remedial Coaching: Conducting regular remedial coaching classes for persons with disabilities.
- 6.9 Awareness Days: Celebrating important days pertaining to disability to create awareness about the capabilities of differently-abled persons.
- 6.10 Exam Concessions: Providing all extra time during exams to persons with disabilities as per university rules and regulations.
- 6.11 Sports Participation: Encouraging differently-abled students to participate in games and sports.
- 6.12 E-Learning: Encouraging visually-challenged students to make use of the 'Special Section for the Visually-Challenged' for acquiring knowledge through E-Learning.
- 6.13 Building Design: Ensuring that the design of buildings, such as ramps and lifts, is according to the needs of disabled persons.
- 6.14 Washroom Facilities: Ensuring accessible, gender-sensitive, safe, and functional washroom facilities for disabled persons.

- 6.15 Resource Support: Supporting learners with disabilities in and out of the classroom with adequate resources and assistive technology.
- 6.16 Technology Accessibility: Ensuring the accessibility of software tools and technology for people with disabilities.
- 6.17 Enquiry and Information: Providing provisions for enquiry and information such as human assistance, readers, scribes, soft copies of reading material, and screen reading software in the campus.
- 6.17 Personal Mentor: Providing a personal mentor for all disabled persons.

7. Action Plan

7.1 Policy Dissemination and Awareness:

- 7.1.1 Conduct orientation sessions for faculty, staff, and students to explain the key provisions of the policy.
- 7.1.2 Utilize campus communication channels (website, newsletters, and social media) to raise awareness.

7.2 Accessibility Audits:

- 7.2.1 Conduct a comprehensive accessibility audit of buildings, classrooms, pathways, and digital platforms.
- 7.2.2 Document findings and prioritize areas for improvement.
- 7.2.3 Establish a regular schedule for ongoing accessibility audits.

7.3 Physical Infrastructure Modifications:

- 7.3.1 Implement necessary changes identified in the accessibility audit, such as installing ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms.
- 7.3.2 Ensure all new construction projects adhere to universal design principles.
- 7.3.3 Provide tactile and Braille signage where needed.

7.4 Technology and Information Accessibility:

- 7.4.1 Conduct an audit of the institution's websites and digital resources for accessibility compliance.
- 7.4.2 Implement changes to make websites and online content accessible, including alternative text for images, captioning for videos, and compatibility with screen readers.
- 7.4.3 Provide training for content creators on creating accessible materials.

7.5 Academic Support Services:

- 7.5.1 Establish a resource centre for students with disabilities, providing services such as note-taking assistance, sign language interpreters, and extended exam time.
- 7.5.2 Train faculty on inclusive teaching practices and accommodating diverse learning needs.
- 7.5.3 Ensure that textbooks and learning materials are available in accessible formats.

7.6 Inclusive Events and Activities:

- 7.6.1 Develop guidelines for organizing inclusive events, considering the diverse needs of participants.
- 7.6.2 Provide accessibility features for events, such as sign language interpreters, accessible seating, and alternative formats for event materials.
- 7.6.3 Encourage student organizations to adopt inclusive practices in their activities.

7.7 Reporting Mechanism and Grievance Procedure:

- 7.7.1 Create a designated point of contact for accessibility concerns.
- 7.7.2 Develop an online form or reporting system for individuals to report accessibility barriers.
- 7.7.3 Implement a grievance procedure for addressing complaints in a timely and effective manner.

7.8 Training and Sensitization Programs:

- 7.8.1 Provide regular training sessions on disability awareness, inclusivity, and respectful language.
- 7.8.2 Incorporate disability awareness into new employee and student orientation programs.
- 7.8.3 Encourage student-led initiatives that promote inclusivity and understanding.

7.9 Monitoring and Evaluation:

- 7.9.1 Establish a committee responsible for monitoring the policy's impact.
- 7.9.2 Conduct periodic reviews and assessments of the policy's outcomes.
- 7.9.3 Use feedback from students, faculty, and staff to make continuous improvements.

7.10 Collaboration with Disability Organizations:

- 7.10.1 Establish partnerships with local disability advocacy groups.
- 7.10.2 Invite guest speakers and experts for workshops and awareness sessions.
- 7.10.3 Participate in community events that promote inclusivity and accessibility.

7.11 Budget Allocation:

- 7.11.1 Work with the finance department to allocate a specific budget for accessibility projects.
- 7.11.2 Seek external funding opportunities or grants to support larger initiatives.
- 7.11.3 Regularly review and adjust the budget based on the evolving needs of the campus.

7.12 Periodic Review and Revision:

- 7.12.1 Schedule regular reviews of the policy to assess its effectiveness.
- 7.12.2 Solicit feedback from stakeholders through surveys and focus groups.
- 7.12.3 Revise the policy as needed to address emerging issues and evolving best practices.

8. Conclusion

The implementation of a Disability-Friendly Campus Policy represents a significant step towards fostering inclusivity, accessibility, and equality within the educational institution. This comprehensive policy is designed to break down barriers, both physical and attitudinal, ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equitable access to all aspects of campus life. The journey towards a truly inclusive environment involves a collective commitment from all members of the campus community, including administrators, faculty, staff, management, and students.
