

JGU Disability Support Committee Policy Statement

The JGU Disability Support Committee (DSC) is committed to ensuring equal participation of persons with disabilities with others at OP Jindal Global University (JGU) in line with the University Grants Committee guidelines, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPD Act) and the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 (MH Act). This document sets out critical information regarding the functioning of the DSC. This is, however, subject to change as DSC evolves to meet the changing needs of the JGU community.

1. Who should apply for disability support to the DSC?

The DSC is guided by the definition of disability in the RPD Act. The RPD Act defines disability as a “long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others”.

The RPD Act also sets out a list of conditions that are classified as disabilities. These are Leprosy cured person, cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, acid attack victims, blindness, low vision, hard of hearing, speech and language disability, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, chronic neurological disorders such as Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, blood disorders such as Hemophilia, Thalassemia, Sickle Cell Anemia, intellectual disabilities, mental health conditions and multiple disabilities. All conditions must be long term or chronic in nature to fall within the definition of disability.

The RPD Act uses the concept of benchmark disability, which is a disability of more than 40% in one of the specified categories mentioned above. In accordance with the RPD Act, the DSC is guided by the concept of benchmark disability in decisions regarding provision of disability support.

People who meet this criteria may apply for registration with the DSC. Within this framework, the DSC may exercise some degree of flexibility in understanding and determining disability to meet the changing and varied needs of the JGU community.

2. What is the role of the DSC?

The role of the DSC is to assess students with long-term disabilities and determine necessary accommodations to ensure their equal and non-discriminatory access to all aspects of life at JGU.

The DSC does not give medical or mental health advice or provide counselling to students. Students experiencing symptoms of mental ill health should contact the **Sukoon- Centre for Mental Health** for therapeutic and medical relief.

The DSC may be contacted when the symptoms are long-term or chronic and severe enough to affect the everyday functioning of the student such that the student needs academic or other forms of support in order to carry out every day activities.

The DSC cannot provide medical or other relief in case of mental health or other health emergencies. Please contact the **Sukoon- Centre for Mental Health or the Health Centre** during any health emergency.

The DSC is not in a position to grant relief for short-term or last-minute health situations like injuries or fractures or panic attacks before an end term examination.

The DSC does not give medical or disability certifications.

3. Why are persons with disabilities given reasonable accommodations?

The DSC derives its mandate to provide reasonable accommodation from Section 16(3) of the RPD Act. A reasonable accommodation can be defined as a decision to recommend changes to be made to standard arrangements for staff and students in relation to their work/study. Reasonable accommodations help to remove the social/ environmental barriers that prevent the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society equally with others.

4. What kind of accommodations are recommended by the DSC?

The DSC provides accommodations on a case-to-case basis, depending on the nature and severity of the disability. Accommodations will be based on recognized kinds of support needed for persons with disabilities. Accommodations provided will follow the twin principles of reasonability and necessity. Once made, accommodations will not be changed within a semester unless there is an exceedingly exceptional change in the condition of the student.

Not all disabilities or conditions require academic accommodations. Regular counselling, other kinds of therapy and medications may alleviate symptoms of many conditions without the need for academic relief. For instance, counselling may be sufficient to support a majority of mental health conditions. Counselling support is provided by the **Sukoon- Centre for Mental Health** and not the DSC.

The DSC may ask that students requiring additional support such as scribes or end term support provide additional documentation reflecting the need for such support e.g. the DSC may ask for disability certificates in such cases.

DSC academic accommodations are recommendatory and not mandatory in nature.

5. What is the process of registration with the DSC?

The DSC gets hundreds of applications for registration. The process of registration is time consuming as medical professionals will evaluate a student before recommending accommodations. Thus, students should expect the DSC registration process to take a few weeks, at the earliest.

All deadlines set by the DSC are final and must be followed by students. The DSC will not be able to undertake last minute registrations or to entertain requests for last minute changes in accommodations. Requests for end term support to students not registered with the DSC will not be entertained by the DSC.

The process of registration has a number of steps and may be broadly classified into the following categories:

Stage I: Form filling - student fills up the registration form sent by the DSC at the beginning of each semester within the stipulated deadlines. Any mistakes, inaccuracies or missing information in the form will risk significant delay or non-registration with the DSC.

Stage II: Assessment

- (a) Student makes an appointment with the medical expert for initial assessment. The nature of assessment will vary based on the type of disability.
- (b) Student takes part in the medical assessment at the appointed time as soon as possible after filling the form. Students who fail to meet the JGU medical professionals within the appointed time period for their assessment risk significant delay or non-registration with the DSC.

Stage III: Implementation

Accommodations recommended by medical experts are communicated to the course instructors and the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) of the concerned school and the DSC is kept copied in the email. Students should reach out to faculty members to discuss and clarify how the DSC recommendations will be implemented by the faculty for their particular course. DSC will also send a confirmation email to the student once their DSC registration is completed for the semester.

This process will be maintained in all circumstances. Students should not approach counsellors or medical experts to write directly to faculty regarding DSC accommodations. Faculty members may disregard any requests for DSC accommodations that are not communicated in the manner described above.

Students must register with the DSC every semester. Previous registration with the DSC does not mean that a student will continue to be DSC registered in a subsequent semester. Furthermore, a student may be given different accommodations in a new semester. This is because a student's condition may change or a medical expert may take the view that DSC support is no longer required.

In cases where a student has a Unique Disability Identity card (UDID card) or a disability certificate in the proper form issued by a governmental institution, the student may not need a medical assessment to be conducted for re-registration every semester. However, depending on a variety of factors including the nature of disability and any change in circumstances, the DSC will retain the right to require a fresh medical assessment from the student.

6. What documentation does the DSC require for registration?

DSC registration is conditional on provision of relevant medical documents. Medical documents must be brought during the assessment process i.e., the meeting with the medical practitioner after submission of the registration form and must be in original, hard copy form. These will be returned after the assessment process.

The DSC will accept government disability certificates or medical practitioners' documentations of diagnosis along with supporting reports. In cases involving mental health, documents must contain a diagnosis, medical history, current symptoms, duration of symptoms, change in symptoms over the last six months and severity of symptoms.

- Mandatory documentation required by the DSC: medical history, symptoms, and diagnosis.
- Documentation to be provided, if available: treatment prescription/ therapy details (If

any)

- Documentation to be preferably provided, if available: government disability certificate/ UDID card.

Students who are unable to provide documents in the required form may first consult with medical experts at the JGU Health Center to obtain relevant documentation of a diagnosis. DSC support cannot be provided without appropriate documentation of disability.

Documentation of mental health diagnoses should be accompanied by evidence of at least three counselling sessions from the **Sukoon- Centre for Mental Health** at JGU or other evidence of a similar duration of counselling or psychological therapy.

All medical reports must be provided by professionals from recognized institutions with relevant medical expertise. For mental health conditions, DSC will accept diagnosis by mental health professionals, who should be either:

- **A psychiatrist with MD in psychiatry (MCI registered) or**
- **Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) registered clinical psychologist**

Students with mental health disabilities should submit medical documentation of diagnosis that is no later than eighteen (18) months old. However, any documentation that is longer than six months old should be accompanied by documentation of a follow-up visit / review of medical condition that is no longer than six (6) months old. Students with other kinds of disabilities such as physical, learning or intellectual disabilities should submit medical documentation of diagnosis that is no later than three (3) years old or a diagnosis and accompanied testing report that has been undertaken after reaching eighteen years of age.

7. Re-sit exams

DSC students giving re-sit exams in a particular semester will receive accommodations based on those given to them in the previous semester for end term examinations. Due to administrative reasons it is not possible to implement current semester accommodations for re-sit exams.

8. Confidentiality

DSC is committed to maintaining confidentiality in all aspects of its functioning. Information regarding the nature of disability is only shared between the DSC administrator, chairperson and member secretary with the medical experts making evaluations and accommodations. Further, only the status of a student as DSC registered and the accommodations given to them are shared on a need-to-know basis with the OAA, faculty members, examinations office and other administrative departments as necessary to effectively implement the accommodations being made.

Any faculty members and administrative staff with whom any information is shared are required to maintain strict confidentiality when dealing with information and identity of DSC registered students.

By registering with the DSC, students acknowledge, accept and agree that, for the DSC to coordinate, advise, or implement the recommendations for support, disclosure of student identifying information like name, school, batch, and courses in which the support is recommended along with the recommended support may be disclosed to the DSC school

representative, OAA of the particular school and concerned faculty members or appropriate administrators/staff as may be necessary and/or required.

9. Policy regarding data storage and sharing

By registering with the DSC, a student gives consent to share their data including sensitive medical records with the DSC. The DSC shares some of this data including a student's status as a DSC registered student and their accommodations with other faculty and administrative personnel at JGU for the purpose of implementation of accommodations. The DSC does not share any information that is not strictly necessary to efficiently implement accommodations. This includes all medical records, which are kept strictly confidential and are never shared without explicit consent of the student. The data shared with the DSC will be stored on [local drives / the server] for the duration of a student's registration with the DSC and / or completion of the degree programme at JGU. Once this period is over the DSC will remove this data from [its system and the server]. A student is free to withdraw their consent to share data with the DSC at any point. At such point, a student may no longer be registered with the DSC and may not receive accommodations. Students can approach the DSC for any clarifications or requests with respect to data storage and sharing.

10. Other work of the DSC

The DSC is working towards raising awareness of disability and eliminating the stigma around disability so that more open conversations can be had and better support can be provided to people with disabilities. Students with disabilities are part of the diversity that enriches JGU and make it a vibrant and dynamic campus.

11. Student code of conduct

Students registered with the DSC are required to maintain appropriate conduct and not to take advantage of DSC registration to ask for accommodations that may not be reasonable, necessary, or possible to give. Doing this will make it harder for the DSC to support students who are in real need.

Students who are applying for registration must maintain integrity and honesty at each step of the process. Submitting false documents or manipulation of medical records, medical history or medical symptoms or exaggeration of symptoms for obtaining DSC registration will not be tolerated and will be dealt with strictly.

Students who have taken an appointment for medical evaluation as part of DSC registration but are unavailable at the allotted time should inform the medical evaluators well in advance of their inability to keep the appointment. This will help the medical evaluators to schedule appointments with other students in those slots. Not showing-up for appointments and keeping medical evaluators waiting is a serious act of disservice to the DSC. It may impede a student's ability to obtain timely DSC registration.

Students who are denied registration or accommodations should understand that DSC registration is subject to careful expert evaluations and is determined by medical experts. Any disrespect for or attempt to manipulate the process of DSC registrations will be taken very seriously as it undermines the DSC's ability to support and assist other students.

Behavior during end term examinations:

- A. Students who get extra time to complete end term examinations must not use that time to bring or eat food in the examination hall unless they have permission to do so from the DSC medical expert.
- B. Students who get extra time to complete end term examinations should not disrupt the examinations of other students or undertake any activities not allowed in an examination hall.

Students who may knowingly or unknowingly come across information about their fellow students' DSC registration should maintain utmost confidentiality and sensitivity in their dealings with DSC registered students. It is a legal offence to demean, malign or berate a person with a disability. In case of any doubts about how to talk about disability, please contact the DSC.

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