



BLANTYRE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

BIU DISABILITY POLICY

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1.0 Purpose of the Policy

1.1 The primary objective of this Disability Policy is to unequivocally express Blantyre International University's commitment to ensuring equitable opportunities for a diverse array of students and staff members.

1.2 This document delineates the University's obligations and the available recourse for staff and students with disabilities seeking support or adjustments in their educational and working environments while at BIU.

1.3 The University is resolute in its efforts to embrace the Social Model of disability. This encompasses addressing various barriers to inclusion, which may include structural, cultural, organizational, and attitudinal obstacles adversely impacting individuals with disabilities, impeding their ability to access their needs, rights, and requirements.

2.0 Aims

2.1 This Disability Policy underscores the University's dedication to fostering an inclusive environment for disabled students and staff, thereby facilitating the ongoing development of an enabling academic setting for all members and service users of the University.

2.2 It is imperative to interpret this policy in conjunction with other University documents such as the Strategic Plan, which outlines the University's overarching goals. However, while these documents focus on broader objectives and aims concerning disability, this policy specifically addresses operational aspects for staff and students and serves as a guide for managers, staff, and students.

3.0 Responsibilities

3.1 The University bears the responsibility for the well-being of its current disabled staff and students while actively encouraging individuals with disabilities to join the institution. These responsibilities are delegated through department heads and appropriate representatives on both the staff and student sides to ensure support for disabled students and staff.

4.0 The Legal Framework

4.1 The Malawi Disability Act of 2012 (Section 11) imposes several requirements on all educational and training institutions. It mandates institutions not to deny admission, expel, discriminate, segregate, or withhold benefits or services from individuals based on their disabilities. For instance, the Act criminalizes any discriminatory acts by service providers against individuals with disabilities. Under these requirements, Blantyre International University is obligated to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- Eradicate harassment of disabled individuals.
- Promote equal opportunities between disabled individuals and others.
- Involve disabled individuals in the formulation of actions.
- Foster positive attitudes toward disabled individuals.



- Encourage the participation of disabled individuals in public life.
- Take measures to meet the needs of disabled individuals, even if it necessitates preferential treatment.
- Identify and analyze potential discriminatory policies, practices, and procedures across all University activities.

4.2 The University adopts an anticipatory approach, proactively considering accessibility to services and facilities for disabled individuals to ensure adjustments are made in advance of their utilization of such services or access to education.

5.0 Definition of Disability

5.1 Disability

As per the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), disability arises from the interaction between individuals with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers. The Convention recognizes persons with disabilities as individuals who have enduring physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which, when interacting with various barriers, may impede their full and effective participation in society on an equitable basis with others.

For the purposes of this Policy, “Staff” denotes an employee of the University, including employment applicants. “Student” refers to a registered student of the University, encompassing those applying for admission. A “Visitor” is any member of the public present on University property who is neither a staff member nor a student, including individuals with contractual associations with the University and those engaged in legitimate commercial activities within the University’s premises.

5.2 Discrimination on the Basis of Disability

Discrimination on the basis of disability pertains to the imposition of distinctions, exclusions, or restrictions on individuals based on disability, with the aim or effect of impairing or nullifying their equal recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in various domains, including political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or other fields. This encompasses all forms of unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, including the denial of reasonable accommodation.

5.3 Reasonable Accommodation

Reasonable Accommodation denotes necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments that do not impose a disproportionate or undue burden and are required in specific cases to ensure that individuals with disabilities enjoy the same human rights and fundamental freedoms as others.

5.4 Disclosure of Disability, Record Keeping, and Data Management

The University is dedicated to fostering an environment where the disclosure of disabilities is advantageous and secure. Disclosure becomes necessary when a student, staff member, or visitor requests support or accommodation. Such disclosure will be made to the Registrar. Information



about an individual's impairment will be shared with those responsible for facilitating specific accommodations only to the extent necessary to provide such accommodation.

Disclosed information will be treated as confidential and used for monitoring employment and student equity, strategic planning, and optimizing service provision. The University will identify and, where feasible, address barriers to facilities and services annually by budgeting for access solutions.

6.0 Health and Safety

6.1 The University acknowledges the importance of applying Universal Design principles to enhance the well-being, safety, and security of all individuals on its campuses.

6.2 Therefore, the University will develop and implement a comprehensive, university-wide strategy to address deficiencies in effective lighting within and outside buildings, ensure the presence of balustrades, handrails, stair markers, and effective signage, and establish reachable controls/buttons and auto cues. The University will also institute emergency evacuation procedures for individuals with disabilities and ensure that relevant personnel receive necessary training, including building curators, building health and safety officers, campus protection services, wardens, and personnel in various sectors of the university.

7.0 Access to Tertiary Education for People with Disabilities

The University acknowledges that disparities in access to education throughout the educational system have historically rendered individuals with disabilities particularly susceptible to exclusion from higher education. Consequently, the University commits to formulating admission, recruitment, and retention practices and policies for individuals with disabilities to enhance their participation in higher education at BIU.

8.0 Teaching and Learning Support for Students with Disabilities

The University is dedicated to addressing the learning requirements of students with disabilities, which may necessitate alterations, substitutions, or supplements to curricula and coursework requirements, including alternative but equivalent assessment methods. It is imperative to ensure that these modifications do not compromise academic standards and that students graduate with the necessary skills and competencies. Any adjustments to course requirements or assessment methods will be the result of discussions and agreements involving the Dean of the Faculty (or nominee), the Head of the Disability Service, and the student. In cases where, after thorough consideration, certain teaching methods and environments present insurmountable obstacles due to a student's impairment, and all stakeholders have genuinely sought solutions, the Head of the Disability Service, in consultation with the Dean of the faculty, may advise the student to enroll in a course with fewer accessibility challenges. Should a student believe that their rights have been violated, they can follow the procedures outlined in this policy. The University also commits to promoting:

- Universal Design Principles in new course offerings.
- Educating academic staff about a range of reasonable accommodations and alternative assessment methods.

9.0 Employment Equity and Employee Support



The University will incorporate disability into its employment equity plan and targets. Measures will be put in place to facilitate the recruitment, retention, and career advancement of individuals with disabilities, including reasonable accommodations to optimize their ability to meet job requirements.

10.0 Communication

The University pledges to ensure access to information and communication services for staff, students, and visitors with disabilities. This includes, where appropriate, tactile signage, high-contrast signage on notice boards, circulars, library databases, learning materials, and electronic media. It will strive to maximize opportunities for staff and students with disabilities to participate in university-wide consultation, debate, grievance mechanisms, and decision-making processes through the appropriate dissemination of information.

11.0 Research, Teaching and Learning

The University acknowledges the value of research and teaching in disability-related fields and recognizes the growing importance of Disability Studies as a pertinent academic discipline alongside other social justice disciplines. The University acknowledges the need to incorporate perspectives on disability in relevant undergraduate and graduate programs when appropriate.

12.0 Extension Services/Social Responsiveness

The University recognizes its obligation to the broader community, including disabled individuals not currently affiliated with the institution. It acknowledges its capacity to play a leadership role in supporting and encouraging initiatives that enhance the quality of life for disabled individuals in various domains. Through the Disability Service and disability advocates in the wider University community, the University will work to establish connections with professionals in other higher education institutions specializing in disability, organizations for and of disabled people, schools for disabled learners, schools involved in inclusive education and mainstreaming of disabled learners, and government entities, particularly in the realm of education.

13.0 Procedure for Channelling and Monitoring Complaints of Discrimination on Grounds of Disability

Harassment or discrimination may manifest as verbal abuse or other actions that make an individual feel uncomfortable, intimidated, or degraded. Complaints should be lodged with the Registrar's Office, which will initiate the standard procedure for investigating complaints of discrimination, similar to those based on race, gender, or sexual orientation. The relevant office may seek advice from the Disability Service, unless:

(a) The Disability Service itself is the subject of the grievance, in which case the relevant office will consult an independent recognized authority on disability discrimination. (b) The Disability Service has agreed to represent the individual bringing the complaint.

14.0 Performance Management and Appraisal

When necessary, a new staff member with a disability will engage in a conversation with their line manager, the manager of the Disability Service or their nominee, and an HR representative. The purpose of this conversation is to:



- Determine the accommodations required.
- Identify job areas that may pose challenges.
- Agree on solutions, which may involve technology or equipment procurement, workspace adjustments, or minor adjustments to job descriptions.

15.0 Advocacy, Awareness, and Education

The University commits to:

Supporting and allocating resources for initiatives that raise awareness throughout the University community, fostering respect for the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities.

- Promoting positive perceptions and greater social awareness.
- Recognizing the skills and abilities of individuals with disabilities.