

Coordinating Centre for Students with Disabilities

About the Centre

The *Coordinating Centre for Students with Disabilities* (CCSD) aims to be a central coordinating body offering support to all students with disabilities to enable equal access to university education. The remit of the CCSD is to offer students with disabilities relevant and timely advice, guidance and medical, psychosocial and academic support to promote individual growth and independence. The main focus of the centre is to offer a safe space in which students with disabilities can meet an advisor and discuss their concerns and needs and gain advice on a multitude of matters including their medical, academic, psychosocial or socio-economic concerns. In addition, the centre encourages diversity and equal and equitable participation of all students with disabilities in all aspects of university life by decreasing barriers and promoting inclusion. The centre is committed to challenging societal and attitudinal barriers that deter students with disabilities from full and equal participation in university life, with the support of the entire student body.

Philosophy

The CCSD has as its guiding philosophy the evolving concept of disability with the underpinnings of a rights-based model, championing the rights of students with disabilities to access higher education. It is strengthened by the articulation of the rights of persons with disabilities within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), ratified by the Sri Lankan government in February 2016 and the Fundamental Rights Chapter (III) of the Constitution of Sri Lanka, Article 12 (4) which provides for the possibility of “special provisions” for women, children and persons with disabilities.

Objectives

- To provide confidential advice, support and guidance to students with disabilities on academic matters to enable better access to education in order to reach the students’ fullest potential.
- To be the mediator between students with disabilities and Faculty members to promote equal educational access through disability-friendly learning and teaching environments.
- To offer advice on individual student applications for reasonable accommodations and special arrangements at examinations on a case-by-case basis. It must be stressed that accommodations at examinations are not automatic but decided on by an advisory group for students who apply through their Faculty representative.
- To liaise with non-governmental organizations and private and public companies to seek support for specialist assistive technology and disability-related support to enable better access to lectures and to university life.
- To explore possibilities of better physical and academic access to students with disabilities, making the university barrier-free, inclusive and disability-friendly.

Working Committee

The CCSD is comprised of an Advisory Committee with representation from different faculties together with members of staff from the Department of Disability Studies who form the advisory panel. Students would be able to meet a member of the advisory committee on appointment, as required.

What the Centre Offers Students

Students are encouraged to make an appointment to meet an advisor to discuss their individual concerns and needs through their Faculty representative.

The centre would be able to offer:

- Opportunities for confidential discussions on student concerns and needs including medical, academic, psychosocial or socio-economic concerns with a member of the advisory panel.
- Information, recommendations, guidance and appointments with relevant personnel to support student access to education and to all aspects of university life.
- Advice on available courses, course combinations and assessment demands. It will not be possible for academic requirements of each course to be waived due to the student's disability, although an advisor would be able to help the student to review the demands of each course and to discuss any student concerns.
- Special arrangements to access medical and psychosocial support and specialist assessments and intervention for speech, language, communication difficulties or dyslexia.
- Advice on examination accommodations in consultation with experts and in discussion with members of the faculty.
- Support to secure relevant specialist assistive technology and devices.