Checklist for University Disability Information and Self-assessment questions

Checklist for University Disability Information

Your university should have a policy with respect to people with disabilities and information for people with disabilities. Both should be easy to find, informative and accessible.

The policy document states

1. the rights of people with disabilities. Alternatively, you refer to a diversity policy that specifically includes people with disabilities.
2. the university's goals and rationale for a disability policy.
3. references to pertinent legislation, if there is any in your country.
4. the efforts that the University will make to remove or compensate barriers are clearly stated.
5. the details of how the policy is enforced.

Information for students with disabilities

Information for students with disabilities shall either include answers to the following questions, or tell people how to get the answers.

6. Is the university accessible to people with various physical or sensory impairments?
7. What services and support are available for students with disabilities?
8. How to get these services and support?
9. Who pays for these services?
10. Are there non-academic requirements for particular courses of study that restrict the eligibility of students with specific disabilities? Can prospective students easily and quickly get information and advice from specialized staff?
11. Examples of adaptations and accommodations already implemented.
12. Answers to frequently asked questions, for example, about the level of the organization's ambition in including persons with disabilities, the organization's experience in accommodating people with different disabilities or where to get more information.

Presentation of information

First the information must exist, second, people must be able to find it and, third, it has to be accessible. The technical aspects of web accessibility are

well covered by www.w3.org/WAI .

13. Information for students with disabilities is [well named](#) and [easy to find](#).
14. Information for students with disabilities is reviewed every year and the people responsible, along with the last update, shown on every page.

Notes

If half of your campus is not accessible for wheelchairs or a particular course of study cannot be made accessible for students with a specific disability then this should be stated in your prospectus and on your website, however, you should also indicate the extent to which this can be remedied - for example, through adjustments to buildings - and provide a timetable for any planned adjustments. If a course of study has physical or psychological prerequisites in addition to academic prerequisites then these should be explained in the course information.

Easy to find:

- Not more than three mouse clicks from the home page.
- Linked to from the admissions home page.
- Top of the result list for a search for "Office for Students with Disabilities" using your site search.
- In the top three of the result list on for a search for "Office for Students with Disabilities" plus the name of your University using Google.

Well named:

- "Information for Students with Disabilities"
- "Office for Students with Disabilities at The Open University"
- "Information for disabled students"

Not well named:

- "Equity and Diversity Unit"
- "Special Needs Office"
- "ADA Services"
- "SDRC"
- "AccessAbility Homepage"

Anything that does not contain the term "disabilities" is not well named ("disabled" is not as good a word to use). Don't label your information with terms that you would not expect a person to search for on Google or terms that may not catch the eye when scanning a list of links.

Do not invent your own better, nicer, more positive label for disabilities and then use it to hide your information for students with disabilities.

Examples of disability policy web pages

The following disability policy statements are provided as illustrations without judgment:

- University of California, Berkeley (US) Policy.
- Northwestern University (US): Policy Statements.
- The University of Houston (US): Student Disabilities and Academic Accommodations Policy and Procedure.
- The University of Waikato (New Zealand): Disability Support Services - Disabilities Policy.
- The University of Canberra (Australia): Policy Statement & Guidelines.

A good place to look for advice about policy and practice is the Disabled Student Services in Higher Education mailing list.

Self-assessment Questions

Questions for universities regarding the conditions for students and staff with disabilities

The following questions are intended as an aid in assessing a university's ability to accommodate students and employees with disabilities. Your answers to these questions will be helpful information for prospective students and employees as well for your own periodic internal monitoring purposes.

1. Does the university have a disability policy and an action plan, as integral part of its general plan for new construction, renovation and maintenance of the university's premises as well as for its operations and activities, to safeguard equal access for students, employees and visiting members of the general public with disabilities?
2. Does the university have a budget for the action plan, a coordinating office and/or designated officers in charge of its implementation throughout the university system?
3. Does the university have a budget for making additional adaptations, over and above the general measures, for individual students and employees with disabilities? Are there state subsidies available for this purpose? Would foreign students have to contribute towards these costs?
4. Is the university's website fully accessible to people with different disabilities?
5. Is printed material available in alternative formats?
6. Are there any way-finding aids (e.g. tactile markers, etc.) on the university's premises?
7. Do the lighting conditions in the various parts of the premises take into account the needs of persons with sight-impairments?
8. Do the acoustic conditions in the various parts of the premises take into account the needs of persons with hearing-impairments?
9. Are there optical equivalent solutions for acoustic signals, e.g. emergency sirens?
10. Are qualified sign language interpreters for deaf students available or can they be recruited? Also for foreign students who might need these

services? Can students with learning disabilities request that curricula and teaching methods be adapted to their needs?

11. Is the air quality in the various parts of the premises suitable for persons with allergies, asthma and substance sensitivities?
12. Is the university's physical environment suitable for persons with physical disabilities such as wheelchair users regarding parking, outdoor pathways, entrances, moving between different floors, auditoriums, hallways, lab rooms, cafeterias, gyms, toilets?
13. Do geographical distances between parts of the university require transportation for persons with ambulatory limitations and how is this need solved?
14. What are the possibilities for students with disabilities to obtain suitable housing?

For a more exhaustive and detailed self-assessment tool please see: "A Manual on Including People with Disabilities in International Development Programs",

See also "Practice of Yes: Working with Overseas Partners to Include Students with Disabilities", National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange,

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