

Disability-Inclusive Education Policy of St Xavier's College, Mumbai (Empowered Autonomous Institute)

Preamble

The foregoing policy is a document that gives effect to the accommodations being provided for students with disabilities and to overall disabled friendly environment that is sought to be created at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. This is a representation of the legal framework in the country as a result of our ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006 and passing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016. Both these documents allude to providing reasonable accommodations at all levels.

Policy Statement

The college is committed to equal opportunity admission based on merit to all students with and without disabilities and follows the legislative mandate of 5% reservation for students with disabilities. The college has support services for students with disabilities and an Enabling Committee that oversees concerns and solutions for effective inclusive education practices. The college prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all programmes and activities. The college is committed to ensuring physical, technological, and programmatic accessibility. The XRCVC coordinates support services for students with disabilities, ensuring their full participation and holistic development.

Objectives

- Ensure that all admission processes are transparent, equitable, and merit-based, providing equal opportunities for students with and without disabilities.
- Establish and maintain a robust framework of support services tailored to the unique needs of students with disabilities, including academic, social, and emotional support.
- Commit to continuous improvement of physical, technological, and programmatic accessibility across all college facilities and resources with the expressed limitation of this being a heritage building and may lead to restrictions on physical modifications.
- Implement ongoing training programmes for faculty, staff, and students to foster understanding, respect, and proactive engagement in inclusive practices.
- Empower the Enabling Committee to address concerns related to inclusive education, actively involving students with disabilities in the discussion and decision-making processes.
- Create accessible communication channels for current and prospective students with disabilities to inquire about support services and share their experiences or concerns.

Definitions

1. **Disability:** Persons with disabilities include those who have physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (RPwD Act 2016, art. 2(s)).
2. **Reasonable Accommodation:** The necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, without imposing a disproportionate or undue burden in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise of rights equally with others. (RPwD Act 2016, art. 2(y))

Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to all persons with any of the 21 specified disabilities as recognised by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, enrolled in St. Xavier's College, Mumbai who has submitted a disability certificate/Unique Disability Identification (UDID) card to the college issued by the State Government/Government of India. The policy also considers students with temporary disability and medical conditions based on the severity of their condition. Such persons must submit documents certifying their condition.

Confidentiality

The college respects a student's choice to self-identify as having a disability. Any student seeking accommodations must register with XRCVC. Students are not required to disclose their disability at any specific time. To ensure accommodations are in place, students with disabilities should inform the resource centre as soon as the need is felt but not later than three weeks in advance.

All disability-related information will be kept strictly confidential and only shared with relevant personnel as necessary to provide appropriate accommodations and support. The college is committed to protecting the privacy of students with disabilities.

Inclusive Education Facilities on Campus

The Enabling Committee: The Enabling Committee is a staff cum student representative committee that looks into all inclusion and accessibility needs on campus. The committee is headed by the Principal. It plans various inclusion-related initiatives on campus.

The Resource Centre - XRCVC (www.xrcvc.org): XRCVC is the department for students with disabilities. The centre works to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. In addition to meeting the needs of students on campus, the XRCVC is actively involved in creating awareness about disability rights and potentialities in the public and private spheres. It also actively engages with the policy framework in the disability space of the country.

Student Inclusion Cell (SIC): The SIC is a student body that works towards inclusion and accessibility on campus. The SIC is headed by a faculty coordinator and works with a team selected on an annual basis. The SIC works on diverse projects and events to promote awareness amongst the student community on inclusion and also provides support to ensure the effective delivery of inclusion ethos on campus.

Coordinator for Students with Disabilities: The coordinator is also placed at the resource centre who will be the main person to process all student requests and needs.

Roles and Responsibilities

College Offices at all Levels

- Gain sufficient knowledge, from time-to-time, about disabilities and inclusive practices through interaction with the resource centre.

Enabling Committee

- Approve and periodically review the Disability-Inclusive Education Policy of the college to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Ensure alignment with legal requirements and best practices.
- Facilitates the necessary financial and human resources to support the implementation of

accommodations, support services, and training programmes.

- Ensure that the physical and virtual infrastructure of the college, including but not limited to buildings, classrooms, outdoor spaces, documents, websites, web applications, announcements, notices, and social media posts complies with accessibility standards to the optimum extent possible.
- Develop inclusive emergency response plans that account for the needs of individuals with disabilities, including evacuation procedures and information made available to all stake holders from time to time in an accessible format.

Resource Centre - XRCVC

- Serve as the primary resource for students with disabilities, providing guidance on rights and available services.
- Maintain confidential records of disability-related documentation and accommodation requests.
- Assist students in navigating institutional processes to receive necessary accommodations.
- Evaluate accommodation requests, and collaborate with faculty, staff, and students to implement appropriate adjustments.
- Facilitate access to assistive technologies, adaptive materials, and other resources necessary for students with disabilities to participate fully in their educational experience.
- Organise workshops, seminars, and training sessions on disability awareness, inclusive teaching practices, and legal obligations. Provide resources to support the development of accessible course materials.
- Regularly review and update the policy to reflect changes in legal requirements or best practices.
- Prepare annual reports evaluating the effectiveness of accommodations and make recommendations for improvements.

Student Inclusion Cell

- Organise events, campaigns, and activities that raise awareness about disability inclusion, accessibility, and disability rights.
- Help establish peer mentoring or buddy systems to support students with disabilities in their academic and social integration.
- Collect feedback from students with disabilities regarding their experiences and advocate for changes that improve accessibility and inclusiveness.

Faculty and Visiting Faculty

- Incorporate inclusive principles in course design to accommodate diverse learning needs.
- Work with the Resource Centre to understand individual student needs and implement reasonable accommodations.
- Maintain open lines of communication with students regarding their accommodations and encourage self-advocacy.
- Seek student feedback on the effectiveness of accommodations and be willing to adapt teaching methods if needed.
- It will be incumbent upon the head of the department/responsible faculty to mandate all visiting faculties about the needs and accommodations of students with disabilities. This is essential to ensure that SwDs get equitable treatment to enable them to be at par with their class.

Students with Disabilities (SwDs)

- Responsible for disclosing their disability and requesting accommodations in a timely manner.
- Provide necessary documentation of their disability, following the guidelines established by the

Resource Centre.

- Actively participate in discussions about their accommodations and provide feedback on their effectiveness.
- Advocate for their needs while also respecting the processes and protocols of the college.
- If there is non-availability of any approved accommodation, students should immediately bring the same to the notice of the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities.

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are adjustments to teaching and learning methods that help students cope with learning difficulties caused by specific disabilities or sensory impairments. St. Xavier's College works towards providing appropriate provisions, initiatives, and accommodations that enable students with disabilities to perform optimally in their academic lives and fully engage in campus life of course, it may be noted that the syllabi will remain the same for all students including students with disabilities. All students with disabilities must register with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities to access disability-related provisions. The coordinator is expected to respond quickly to any requests for these provisions made by the students.

Inclusive Education Accommodation Request Process

It is imperative for students with disabilities who seek to have accommodations to schedule an appointment with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities. Within 15 days of the meeting, they must complete the Inclusive Education Accommodation form and submit all accommodation requests to the coordinator. The coordinator will use an interactive process to assess each student's needs, consulting with relevant stakeholders, if necessary, to determine suitable accommodations. Once the Enabling Committee approves, students will receive accommodation and examination provisions letters.

Students must provide a copy of this letter to all their current teachers. Additionally, they must share the letter with any new teacher who begins teaching them during the year. This must be done within seven days of receiving the letter or within seven days of a new teacher teaching. If the student fails to share this letter with their respective teachers the college may not be in a position to provide the support granted. The student is also expected to retain physically but especially electronically a copy of these letters in case of any exigencies. There will be no reissuance of said letters.

Students may request accommodations in the areas listed below. However, not all accommodations will apply to every student with a disability. The coordinator will work with the students to determine relevant accommodations and communicate them to the appropriate faculty members. Please note that the college strives to provide these services to the best extent possible. Hence, there might be times when, because of various difficulties, all the services may not be possible.

Academics

1. Course-Alternatives

- 1.1 The course alternatives are available only for certain subjects (such as second language) for students with Specific Learning Disabilities, Intellectual Disabilities, Autism, and Hearing Impairment.
- 1.2 These alternatives must be supported by a psycho-educational assessment report detailing the severity of the condition.
- 1.3 The application must be submitted to the respective Vice Principal and the Coordinator. The coordinator will then send the request to the admissions office for final approval.

2. Attendance Modifications

- 2.1 Students must attend classes according to the college attendance policy.
- 2.2 Students are responsible for communicating with the college regarding any extended or unexpected absences.
- 2.3 In psycho-medical cases such as depression, illness, etc. they should be supplemented with appropriate documents immediately after rejoining the college.

3. In the Classroom

- 3.1 **Preferential Seating:** Students with disabilities can access preferred seating to enhance engagement in classrooms. For example, those having difficulties sustaining attention can sit away from the windows and doorways.
- 3.2 **Note-taking:** Students can use assistive technology tools like speech-to-text, text-to-speech, and transcription software for note-taking. Students with disabilities may request additional note-taking support in class such as a peer buddy as a note-taker.
- 3.3 **Lecture Recording:** The coordinator will recommend audio recording of lectures only if it addresses a student's specific functional limitations. Faculties have the right to deny the request, in such cases alternative arrangements will be discussed.
- 3.4 **Flexible Breaks:** Students with attention difficulties and sensory needs will be allowed to take additional breaks during class sessions to rest and refocus if needed, even if they fall outside the scheduled times. The coordinator will determine the frequency and duration of these breaks based on individual needs.

4. Out of the Classroom

- 4.1 **Accessible Content Services:** XRCVC will facilitate the conversion of inaccessible content into an accessible format. The student/faculty must send accessible content requests 4 weeks in advance. The accessible content includes E-copy/ Large print/Braille/Audio Files/Easy-to-Read Content/Tactile Diagrams/Audio Visuals with Subtitles/Transcripts/Audio Descriptions.
- 4.2 **Teaching-learning Support:** Students requiring additional assistance may request a student teaching assistant/reader for reinforcement and learning outside regular class hours. If a student chooses to utilise a student teaching assistant, they must specify the subjects and the frequency of support needed for each subject in advance.
- 4.3 **Compensatory Skills Training:** Students can access individualised training sessions that focus on areas such as independent mobility, screen reader/magnifier for those with visual impairment, time management, organisation, note-taking, and study techniques for those with neuro-developmental disabilities, and self-advocacy.

5. Infrastructure

- 5.1 **Relocating Classrooms:** Due to the college's status as a heritage site, some modifications to existing spaces are challenging and hence students with mobility impairments can request to relocate their classrooms to accessible venues such as ground/first floor/wheelchair accessible classrooms.
- 5.2 **Access to Lift:** Students with physical and sensory disabilities will be allowed to use lifts.
- 5.3 **Accessible Hostel Accommodation:** If a hostel facility is requested by students with disabilities on the campus, all efforts will be made to provide accessible accommodation. It may be noted that the hostel facility is only available for boys.

Examinations

The following examination provisions are available for students with disabilities as per the Government of Maharashtra GR dated 16 October 2018, Guidelines issued by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India dated 29 August 2018, and Guidelines issued by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India dated 10 August 2022.

1. Persons with benchmark disabilities

Common Provisions

Common provisions available for all 21 types of disabilities as specified under the RPwD Act 2016 are as follows;

- 1.1 Compensatory time of 20 minutes per hour for examinations with longer duration and on a pro-rata basis for examinations with less than an hour duration.
- 1.2 Failed students get a concession of 3 per cent marks out of the total marks scored in written, oral, practical, internal and project research tests for any one subject or divided for all subjects.
- 1.3 Marks for spelling, grammar, punctuation errors will not be deducted.

Disability-Specific Provisions

In addition to these provisions students are also given disability-specific provisions (Annexures I and II) based on the disability type and student needs.

2. Persons with specified disabilities covered under the definition of Section 2(s) of the RPwD Act, 2016 but not covered under the definition of Section 2 (r) of the said Act, i.e. persons having less than 40% disability

The exam provisions for students under this category will be as per the guidelines mentioned above.

Placement

The Placement Cell of St. Xavier's College is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that provides equitable placement opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. The placement policy (Annexure III) outlines specific measures to ensure that students with disabilities are supported throughout the placement process.

The inclusive placement approach includes offering accommodations such as extended assessment times, information about the accessibility of interview locations, and the use of assistive technologies. The Placement Cell in conjunction with XRCVC also works with hiring organisations to promote awareness of the skills and potential of candidates with disabilities. For any queries regarding placements write to placements@xaviers.edu.

Grievance Redressal Mechanism

The Grievance Redressal Mechanism applies to all students with disabilities who have registered with the Resource Centre and are receiving inclusive education services. Students with a concern or grievance related to their accommodations or any aspect of the disability inclusion policy should submit a written complaint to the Principal. For any grievances, please contact the Principal at principal@xaviers.edu or visit the office during working hours.

For any disability services requests not covered in this policy, the college shall consider them on a case-by-case basis.

References

1. [Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(RPwD\) Act, 2016](#)
2. [Government of Maharashtra GR dated 16 October 2018](#)
3. [Guidelines issued by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India dated 29 August 2018](#)
4. [UGC Accessibility Guidelines and Standards for Higher Education Institutions and Universities July 2022](#), and
5. [Guidelines issued by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India dated 10 August 2022](#)

Annexures

1. **Annexure I:** Inclusive Education Accommodations Form (Senior College)
2. **Annexure II:** Inclusive Education Accommodations Form (Junior College)
3. **Annexure III:** Placement Cell Policy of St. Xavier's College (Empowered Autonomous Institute), Mumbai
4. **Annexure IV:** Scribe Policy of St. Xavier's College (Empowered Autonomous Institute), Mumbai