

Policy Name: Learners with Special Needs and Registered Disabilities Policy
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Learners with Special Needs and Registered Disabilities Policy:

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1. INTRODUCTION

Optimi College Pty Ltd (trading as *College SA*) offers distance learning. Therefore, students can continue their studies either part-time and full-time. Our goal is to accommodate and encourage lifelong learning in the South African labour force: employed, unemployed and discouraged job seekers.

College SA is committed to providing distance learning education that is inclusive and accessible to all students. We offer equal opportunity and participation for students with special needs or disabilities.

The need to identify and support learners with special needs is noted in the following SAQA statement:

“In respect of ensuring a quality experience for all learners, learners’ special needs need to be considered in the design of course and learning support materials, assessment arrangements and communication with teachers, tutors, lecturers, educators or trainers. Learners with special needs also need to be considered in the design of the institution which should be relevant to the form of delivery of learning programmes” (INSETA, 2014).

Furthermore, Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution (1996), the Charter for Human Rights, guarantees the fundamental rights of all South African citizens. In the equity clause, it stipulates the right to freedom from discrimination. The Charter describes some social criteria, one of which is described as *discrimination based on disability*. Within this context, no individual may neither directly nor indirectly be discriminated against on the grounds of a disability (Stellenbosch University, 2005).

2. PURPOSE

College SA recognises the individual needs of students. Student support forms an essential part of student progression toward completing a qualification successfully. Therefore, the rights of students with a disability or special needs must be fully appreciated to ensure that students have the opportunity to participate fully and engage in the learning journey.

Our view of the student journey includes the admission and enrolment process, participation in subjects and courses and use of *College SA* facilities and online services.



College SA is committed to considering the circumstances of all students with a disability or special needs towards granting them access to our learning environment in the same way as we offer our learning environment to students without a disability or special needs.

3. SCOPE

The policy applies to all programmes, students and prospective students with disabilities and is supported by process and procedure aligned to the respective Quality Assurance Councils, Professional Bodies and Institutions.

The policy will impact on all student-related policies and procedures.

4. PRINCIPLES

- To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by its students with disabilities;
- To provide a distant learning environment that supports and enhances the *College SA's* experience for students with a disability or special needs;
- To support and encourage a learning environment free from harassment and discrimination;
- To allow access for students with a disability or special need to appropriate support services;
- To advocate the provision of reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of students with a disability or special need with the respective QA Councils, Professional Bodies and Institutions (United Nations, 2008).

5. GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

5.1 DISCLOSURE OR DISABILITY/SPECIAL NEED

During the initial registration process students are invited to self-disclose a disability or special need to the *College SA Educational Planner (EP)*. It is the responsibility of the student to register with the **Educational Planner**.

The disclosure of a disability or special need is not a pre-request during registration but would be an the advantage of the student going forward. A student can never be required or obligated to disclose their disability or special need. If the student chooses to disclose at a later stage during their studies, they can do so at any time by contacting their lecturer or the student support staff with reasonable notice to the College.



College SA is a private educational institution and would, therefore, need the appropriate documentation to validate the students' disability or special need(s). Therefore, it would be a prerequisite that written confirmation of the disability or special need is submitted to *College SA* by a specialised medical professional.

All information provided by students regarding the disability or special need will remain confidential and restricted to a need to know basis within all permanent and contracted staff within *College SA*.

The *College SA* is not obligated to provide adjustments for a student who chooses not to disclose a disability or special need.

5.2 REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT

Each student registered as a disabled or special need learner will be reviewed individually. *College SA* supports each case within its merit and reasonable adjustment.

When modifying learning resources or assessment conditions, *College SA* will focus on increasing the learner participation and experience, without compromising the academic standard or requirements of the qualification.

For this reason, *College SA* will adhere to the detailed policies and procedure stipulated towards satisfying the regulatory requirements of the three sub-frameworks represented by the following Quality Assurance Councils:

- The Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi)
- The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QTCO) - This would include the Quality Assurance Partners

Practical and reasonable adjustment to a *College SA* procedure will be considered on an individual basis, taking into consideration the student's learning needs, including those of *College SA*, staff, and other students.

5.3 ACCESSIBILITY

College SA provides a distant learning environment for their students. At times, students may, however, visit the premises for whatever reason, e.g. academic, administrative or during an open day.



Regardless of *College SA* methodology, the importance of providing physical access to buildings and other facilities is regarded as both important for students and employees.

In unforeseen cases where *College SA* cannot meet the need of a student's disability, an alternate arrangement for services will be provided, e.g. when, in future, examinations are conducted on the *College SA* premises.

College SA will maintain and improve where possible the level of accessibility to existing buildings.

5.4 EXCEPTIONS

- *College SA* registration process and procedures (**Educational Planners**) make provision for students to disclose any disability or special need.
- *College SA* is not obligated to make any adjustment or accommodation that may impose an unjustifiable hardship on the College.
- *College SA* cannot compromise the academic standards or inherent requirements of a course.

5.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

College SA maintains its responsibility to:

- Ensure that this policy is made available to all staff, both contracted and permanent.
- All staff receive training regarding the policy and procedures.
- Ensure that this policy is implemented and applied consistently across the *College SA* learning environment.

The policies and procedures of *College SA* are aligned to the requirements of Quality Councils, Professional Bodies and Institutions.

5.6 COMPLAINT OR GRIEVANCE

Refer to *Student Grievance Policy* available at the following link:

<https://www.collegesa.edu.za/assets/Our-Policy/Student-Grievance-and-Complaints.pdf>



6. FUNDING

As indicated in the policy, each student registered as a disabled or special need learner will be reviewed individually. *College SA* supports each case on its own merit and reasonable adjustment.

Therefore, *College SA* recognises that additional cost may occur in addition to the conventional delivery costs. These costs and resource requirements need to be considered on an individual case, within the scope of *College SA's* budget and Terms of Registration.

7. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Disability:** The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities refers to a social construct resulting from the interaction between a person's impairment, attitudinal and environmental barriers (University of Pretoria, 2017).
- **Persons with disabilities:** As per the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments and/or chronic conditions which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (University of Pretoria, 2017).
- **Policy:** refers to this policy document and all procedures and guidelines issued regarding its provisions, and those that may be issued in future (University of Pretoria, 2017).
- **Reasonable accommodation:** The modification or adjustment to the environment that will enable a student with a disability to have access to or to participate or advance in academia (University of Pretoria, 2017).
- **Students:** refer to all full-time and part-time students enrolled in all academic programmes at *College SA* (University of Pretoria, 2017).
- **Students with disabilities:** for purposes of this policy refers to any person with an impairment (as defined) who is suitably qualified and who experiences restricted access to or progression in the learning experience due to their impairment and/or barriers and/or a combination thereof. Disability, as a consequence of impairment as well as environmental and attitudinal barriers, substantially limits a student from equal participation in the learning environment (University of Pretoria, 2017).¹

¹ Abovementioned definitions have been sources from University of Pretoria and adapted for the use of *College SA*

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