

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

AS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 21(1) OF THE
RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (RPWD) ACT, 2016
OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



GAUHATI UNIVERSITY

1. INTRODUCTION

Gauhati University (referred as GU), is a collegiate public state university located in Guwahati, Assam, India, established in 26 January 1948 under the provisions of an Act enacted by the Assam Legislative Assembly. It has 325 affiliated colleges offering undergraduate and post graduate courses in the faculties of Arts, Science, Commerce, Law, Medicine, Engineering and Technology. Gauhati University is always committed to be differently abled friendly. In admission to all the courses, GU have certain seats reserved for differently abled students. In all departments and offices, the university has disable friendly ramp, access point, and wash rooms. GU also has started upgrading its premises to a barrier-free environment for more accessibility. In execution, the University casts special attention to the specially-abled persons to provide equal opportunity in availing themselves of the resources of the University. Gauhati University offered various programmes in the Department of Disabilities Studies *i.e.*, Post Graduate Certificate Course in Disabilities Studies (PGCCDS); Post Graduate Diploma in Disabilities Studies (PGDDS); Foundation Course in Science Teaching for Visually Impaired (FCSTVI) - Under GU-NTPC Foundation Project and Certificate Course in Computer Literacy for differently able (CCCL)- Under GU-NTPC Foundation Project. In order to empower this, the University has formulated an Equal Opportunity Policy in the light of “The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act)” adopted by the Government of India.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (the “Disabilities Act, 2016”) along with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017, together, the “Disability Law” has been enacted by the Indian Government. The new Disability Law gives effect to the principles of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The Disability Law *inter alia* seeks to protect disabled persons from various forms of discrimination, increases measures for effective participation and inclusion in the society, and ensures equality of opportunity and adequate accessibility.

The University has already implemented a good part of the requirements under the Act and plans to take care of the remaining aspects in a prioritized manner so that the requirements are fulfilled at the earliest possible time.

The Equal Opportunity (EO) Policy has been made in conformity with The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, to the extent feasible under the present infrastructure of Gauhati University.

2. PURPOSE

The EO Policy of Gauhati University is to provide equal opportunities to the specially abled students and employees of the University without any discrimination, on the grounds of age, colour, marital status, physical ability, nationality, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or any other relevant for the purpose.

Based on the above considerations, the University shall strive to maintain a working environment that is free from any harassment. This EO Policy is subject to applicable regulations, qualifications, and merit of the individuals concerned. This Policy shall be consistently applied throughout the period of studentship (for students) and employment of the individual from the recruitment process until superannuation (for employees).

3. DEFINITION

The definitions of different terms used in this Policy will be as per the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

4. SCOPE

The EO Policy of Gauhati University (GU) shall cover all persons with disabilities, who come under the administrative control of the University. This would include employees (regular) and students along with interns and trainees. Further, the employees and students who acquire disability during their engagement with the University would also be covered by the present policy.

5. COMMITMENT

As specified in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, the University is duty bound to the following:

5.1 RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS

a) Equality & Non-discrimination

- (i) Gauhati University shall ensure that the persons with disabilities enjoy the right to equality, life with dignity and respect for his or her integrity with others.
- (ii) The University shall take steps to utilize the capacity of persons with disabilities by providing appropriate environment.
- (iii) It will make sure that no persons with any kind of disabilities shall be discriminated on the ground of disability, unless it is shown that the impugned act or omission is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- (iv) No person shall be deprived of his or her personal liberty on the ground of disability.
- (v) The University shall take necessary steps to ensure reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities.
- (vi) It shall take measures to protect persons with disabilities from being subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

b) Protection from Abuse, Violence, and Exploitation

Gauhati University shall take following measures to protect persons with disabilities against abuse, violence, and exploitation:

- (i) Create awareness and make available information among the public.
- (ii) Take cognizance and provide available legal protection to the persons with disabilities in matters relating to abuse, violence and exploitation;

c) Casual Leave

The employee with disabilities may avail extra days of special casual leave in addition to regular eight (08) days of casual leave per year as per the provision of GOI leave rules as notified from time to time.

5.2 EDUCATION

To provide inclusive education to the students with disabilities the University shall-

- (i) Admit students without discrimination and provide education and opportunities for sports and recreation activities equally with others;
- (ii) Detect specific learning disabilities in students (in terms of course curriculum) at the earliest and take suitable pedagogical and other measures to overcome them;
- (iii) Make the entire campus barrier free so that services become accessible to the Persons with Disabilities ;
- (iv) Provide necessary support, individual or otherwise, in creating an environment that would nurture academic and professional potentialities at par;
- (v) Ensure that the education to persons who are blind or deaf or both is imparted in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication;
- (vi) Monitor participation, progress in terms of attainment levels and completion of education in respect of every student with disabilities;
- (vii) Provide transportation facilities to the students with disabilities and their attendants.
- (viii) Promote teaching and research in disability studies including establishment of study centres / departments for such studies with due approval of UGC/MHRD.

5.2.1 Specific Measures to promote and Facilitate Inclusive Education

Gauhati University shall take the following measures for the purpose of facilitating inclusive education:

- (i) Train and employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and Braille and also teachers who are trained in teaching students with multiple / intellectual disability;
- (ii) Train professionals and staff to support inclusive education at all levels of education;
- (iii) Establish MoU with the institutions from which adequate number of resources could be drawn for the support of all levels of education;
- (iv) Promote the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes including means and formats of communication, Braille and sign language to supplement the use of one's own speech to fulfill the daily communication needs of persons with speech, communication or language disabilities, and to enable them to participate and contribute to their community and society;
- (v) Provide books, other learning materials and appropriate assistive devices to students with benchmark disabilities up to the completion of the degree;
- (vi) Assist / arrange to obtain scholarships in appropriate cases to students with benchmark disability;
- (vii) Make suitable modifications in the curriculum and examination system to meet the needs of students with disabilities such as extra time for completion of examination paper, facility of scribe or amanuensis, exemption from second and third language courses;
- (viii) Promote research to improve learning; and
- (ix) Any other measures, as may be required.

5.2.2 Special Provisions for Persons with Benchmark Disabilities

Reservation in higher educational institutions:

- (i) Gauhati University shall reserve seats for persons with benchmark disabilities as notified by the Government of Assam from time to time.
- (ii) The persons with benchmark disabilities shall be given an upper age relaxation of five years for admission for higher education.

5.3 SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Vocational training and self-employment:

The University would extend the following services:

- (i) Formulation of vocational training schemes and programmes for the students and employees with disabilities;
- (ii) Inclusion of person with disabilities in all vocational and skill development training activities within the ambit of Gauhati University;
- (iii) Providing of a platform for marketing the products made by

- students with disabilities;
- (iv) Assist / arrange to obtain loan at subsidized interest rates for the students with disabilities to initiate their own economic venture (terms & conditions apply);
- (v) Maintenance of disaggregated data on the progress made in the skill training and self – employment.

5.4 EMPLOYMENT

Non-discrimination in employment

- (i) Gauhati University shall provide reasonable accommodation and appropriate barrier-free and conducive environment to the employees with disabilities;
- (ii) No promotion shall be denied to a person on the ground of disability;
- (iii) Gauhati University shall not dispense with or reduce in rank, an employee who acquires a disability during his or her service;
 - (a) Provided that, if an employee after acquiring a disability is not suitable for the post he/she was holding, shall be shifted to some other post with the same pay scale and service benefits:
 - (b) Provided further that if it is not possible to adjust the employee against any post, he/she may be kept on a supernumerary post until a suitable post is available or he/ she attains the age of superannuation, whichever is earlier.
- (iv) Gauhati University may frame policies for posting / transfer of employees with disabilities (within the University).
- (v) The University shall organize various in-house programmes such as orientation, refresher course and other programmes as may be deemed appropriate and suitable for the employees with disabilities.

5.5 MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS

Gauhati University shall maintain records of the persons with disabilities in relation to the matter of employment and enrollment of students, facilities provided and other necessary information in compliance with the provisions, in such form and manner as may be prescribed by the Assam Government / UGC.

Such records maintained by Gauhati University shall be open to inspection at all reasonable hours by such persons as may be authorised in their behalf by the persons himself or by the competent authority.

5.6 GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL CELL AND GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL OFFICER

As per the mandate of The Rights of Persons with Disability Act, Gauhati University shall establish a Grievance Redressal Cell and appoint a Grievance Redressal Officer.

5.6.1 Composition and Tenure of the Grievance Redressal Cell

- (i) The **Grievance Redressal Officer** appointed under Section 23(1) of the RPwD Act, 2016, of the Government of India, as the *Ex-Officio Chairperson*
- (ii) Two permanent employees (one male and one female) having adequate legal knowledge or issues associated with persons with disabilities as Members.
- (iii) Two employee representatives with disabilities (one male and one female) as Members.
- (iv) Two student representatives (one male and one female) as Members.
- (v) Two student representatives with disabilities (one male and one female) as Members.
- (vi) One **External Member** from a disability organisation who is familiar with issues of discrimination on the basis of disability.
- (vii) **Nodal Officer** (for looking after the issues of implementation of reservation in employment and maintenance of rosters) as the **Member Secretary**.

The Members from the employee side and the external member to the committee would hold the office for a period of three (3) years while the membership of the student representatives would expire on the completion of their respective academic programmes or completion of three (3) years or whichever is earlier.

5.6.2 The Duties and Responsibilities of the Grievance Redressal Officer

- (i) Taking initiative and providing the requisite support to realize the goals of an inclusive and accessible workplace along with accommodation (*details mentioned in 5.11*);
- (ii) Addressing grievances of persons with benchmark disabilities;
- (iii) To maintain a register of complaints in the manner as may be prescribed by the Government. Complaint shall be inquired within two weeks of its registration. If the aggrieved person is not satisfied with the action taken on his or her complaint, he or she may approach the District- Level Committee on disability;
- (iv) Implementing the action plan and developing proactive strategies to prevent discrimination and harassment;
- (v) Ensuring employees and students are aware of the Equal Opportunity Policy;
- (vi) The Grievance Redressal Officer will share the quarterly report with the University authorities.
- (vii) Creating an environment where all employees are encouraged to report any incidents of violation of rights of the persons with disabilities to the

concern authorities.

5.7 SOCIAL SECURITY, HEALTH, CULTURE & RECREATION & SPORTS ACTIVITIES

- **Social Security** will be provided as per the rules of Government of Assam, applicable to the University.
- **Health** care services/ facilities will be provided as per the rules of Government of Assam, applicable to the University.
- **Culture and Recreation** services would include facilities, support and sponsorship to pursue their interest and talents. The University, *within the limit of its economic capacity*, would work to develop technology, assistive devices, equipment to facilitate, and inclusion of persons with disabilities in recreational activities.
- In **Sports and other Activities**, the University, *within the limit of its economic capacity*, shall take the following steps:
 - a) Gauhati University shall take measures to ensure effective participation of persons with disabilities in sports activities;
 - b) Gauhati University shall accord due recognition to the rights of persons with disabilities and shall make due provisions for promotion and development of their sporting talents;
 - c) without prejudice to the provisions mentioned under (a) & (b) above, the competent authority and the sport's authority shall take measures to-
 - (i) restructure courses and programmes to ensure access, inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in all sporting activities;
 - (ii) redesign and support infrastructure facilities of all sports activities for persons with disabilities;
 - (iii) develop technology to enhance potential, talent, capacity and ability in sports activities of all persons with disabilities;
 - (iv) provide multi-sensory essentials and features in all sporting activities to ensure effective participation of all persons with disabilities;
 - (v) allocate funds for development of sport facilities for training of persons with disabilities;
 - (vi) promote and organise disability specific sport events for persons with disabilities and also facilitate awards to the winners and other participants of such sporting events.

5.8 DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Gauhati University shall follow the Standards for Information and Communication Technology as given in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017, such as-

- a) Website Standards as per the guidelines of Government.
- b) Documents Standards like electronic publication (ePUB) or optical character reader (OCR) based pdf formats.

5.9 OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT/ASSISTIVE AIDS REQUIRED

5.9.1 Locomotors

- a) Ramps with railings/ lifts in all buildings up to the top floor including public utility areas.
- b) Wheelchair facilities in all buildings.
- c) Special furniture.
- d) Use of low floor buses for transportation (from the University campus to ASTC stand and vice versa).
- e) Availability of barrier free wash/ rest rooms facilities (at least one in every buildings preferably ground floor).

5.9.2 Visually Impaired (VI)

- a) Braille books and software (JAWS) and other reading assistive devices.
- b) Tactile pavers on corridors and other passages.
- c) Special ATMs for the Visually Impaired
- d) Availability of White Canes

5.10 RESERVATION

As per the rules of UGC and adopted by Government of Assam, applicable to the University.

5.11 GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING WRITTEN EXAMINATION FOR PERSONS WITH BENCHMARK DISABILITIES

Gauhati University shall follow the guidelines applicable to all PwD Candidates as issued by Department of Social Welfare (Differentially Abled Sector), Govt. of Assam.

5.11.1 Special Provisions for Persons with Disabilities with High Support Needs

- (i) Gauhati University shall make provisions for providing appropriate support to any person with benchmark disability who considers himself/herself to be in need of high support; or any person or organization on his or her behalf, may apply to the authority to be notified by the appropriate Government, requesting to provide high support.
- (ii) On receipt of an application, the Gauhati University authorities shall refer it to

an Assessment Board consisting of such members as may be prescribed by the concerned authority.

- (iii) The Assessment Board shall assess the case referred to it in such manner as may be prescribed by the State Government, and shall send a report to the authorities (Gauhati University) certifying the need of high support and its nature.
- (iv) On receipt of a report, the authority (Gauhati University) shall take steps to provide support in accordance with the report subject to relevant schemes and orders of the appropriate Government in this behalf.

5.12 MEASURES TO BE UNDERTAKEN

5.12.1 Awareness Campaign

- (a) Gauhati University shall conduct, encourage, support, or promote awareness campaigns and sensitisation programmes to ensure that the rights of the persons with disabilities provided under this Act are protected.
- (b) The programmes and campaigns specified shall also:
 - (i) Promote values of inclusion, tolerance, empathy and respect for diversity;
 - (ii) Advance recognition of the skills, merits and abilities of persons with disabilities and of their contributions to the workforce and professional front;
 - (iii) Provide orientation and sensitisation at the University and professional training level on the human condition of disability and the rights of persons with disabilities;
 - (iv) Provide orientation and sensitisation on disabling conditions and rights of persons with disabilities to employers, administrators, co-workers and among the students;
 - (v) Make efforts so that the rights of persons with disabilities are included in the curriculum.

5.12.2 Access to Transport

Gauhati University shall take suitable measures to provide facilities for persons with disabilities at bus stops (within the University campus).

5.12.3 Access to Information and Communication Technology

Gauhati University shall take measures to ensure that —

- (i) All contents available in audio, print and electronic media are in accessible

- format;
- (ii) Persons with disabilities have access to electronic media by providing audio description, sign language interpretation and close captioning;
 - (iii) Electronic goods and equipment which are meant for everyday use are available in universal design.

5.13 MANDATORY OBSERVANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY NORMS

Gauhati University shall ensure that all physical infrastructures including buildings, furniture, facilities and services in the building/campus are as per the accessibility Standards given in the Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards for Barrier Free Environment for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Persons, 2016 and the National Building Code, 2016.

5.13.1 Time Limit for making existing Infrastructure, Premises Accessible, and Action for that purpose

All existing buildings shall be made accessible in accordance with the rules formulated by the State Government within a period not exceeding five years from the date of notification of such rules/this policy.

5.14 SOCIAL AUDIT

Gauhati University shall undertake social audit from the beneficiaries involving the persons with disabilities to ensure that the facilities do not have an adverse impact upon the persons with disabilities and meet the requirements and concerns of persons with disabilities.

5.14 ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

5.15.1 Hearing Impaired

- a) Sign language expert to translate for the Hearing Impaired.
- b) A short-term academic programme in sign language.

5.15.2 Intellectual Disability

- a) To establish an effective and active tie-up with Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health (An Autonomous Institute, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India), Tezpur-784028, Assam, for dealing with persons with intellectual disabilities.
- b) Occupational Therapist.

Further, it has been noted that, the Equal Opportunity Policy will be updated whenever

there is an amendment in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (the "Disabilities Act, 2016") along with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017, together with the "Disability Law" or any other Govt. of Assam policy(ies) related to persons with disabilities.

** The above policy is approved by the competent authority of the University subject to ratification by the Executive Council (which is the highest decision making authority of the University).*

*** The Grievance Redressal Cell, as provided under Clause 5.6.1. is being constituted separately.*



(Dr. H. K. Nath)
Registrar
Gauhati University