

# POLICY ON STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

## INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COLLEGE MITROVICA (IBC-M)

### 1. PURPOSE AND APPLICATION

Working with students with disabilities (SwD) is nowadays a very serious challenge, unfortunately often underestimated. SwD are often invisible to society. The purpose of the International Business College Mitrovica - IBC-M's application in this regard is to encourage inclusion and improve the quality of studying of such students.

This refers to a complete approach throughout the whole study cycle, starting from the beginning with enrolment, dealing with technical issues, and providing complete assistance to SwD which will be aimed at full inclusion of these students in the labor market upon graduation.

The purpose of the application refers to overpassing the difficulties which SwD faces in the educational process and approaching the labor market. To achieve this goal, the initial steps will be the following:

- Approach to SwD will be careful to ensure their full trust and confidence. It will not have any sign or trace of compassion. These students will be treated from the very beginning of the process as equal with the other students;
- IBC-M is technically equipped for SwD, but there are many technicalities to be improved, depending on the kind of disability (blindness, motoric, etc.);
- Finally, IBC-M will carefully monitor the labor market needs, and accordingly prepare SwD for their future careers.

### 2. POLICY STATEMENT

IBC-M will fully support SwD in the procedures of recruitment, putting this issue in the highest priority, which will result in fully skilled graduates from this category of students. Accordingly, IBC-M is going to become a competitive institution in the educational market. It will improve the employees' capabilities to answer this responsible task. The crucial principle for this will be as follows:

- IBC-M will not focus on charity, but the primary goal is to offer the highest level of their skills, with the adjustment to their capabilities;
- IBC-M will continuously increase the skills and capacities of its staff and faculty to respond to this specific, responsible, and noble task;
- IBC-M will ensure proper accommodation for the SwD.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

Students with disabilities are those students who have certain long-term physical, mental or social problems. IBC-M aims to create an environment for them to enable full adaptability to the academic society, to get highly professional and intellectual skills, and aim for having an easy approach to the labor market.

- IBC-M will carefully analyze the categories of the students' disabilities and accordingly will act to gain the best didactical, social, and technical levels for creating the best environment that will upgrade their intellectual and practical skills and build various capacities.
- IBC-M will closely work with these students, offering them not only in-class lectures but individual coaching with their mentors, as well.
- IBC-M will actively monitor the situation in the labor market, for two reasons: to provide the best professional profiles of students, and to ensure students the best internship environment that will, eventually, support their future employment.
- IBC-M will work closely with SwD in improving the didactical tools: digital books, audio books, and all the necessary tools for fulfilling a teaching process.

### 4. POLICY

#### 4.1. PRINCIPLES

The main principle for admission of SwD at IBC-M will be to meet all necessary requirements; to enable maximum accessibility and appropriate environment that will properly accommodate all individuals with special needs. Obstacles that may affect admission of SwD in any form, will be removed accordingly and all needed changes will be applied to existing policies to ensure smooth admission procedure and pleasant learning surroundings throughout the whole study cycle. IBC-M Accessibility Unit will provide range of supporting services to all SwD with the aim to help them to develop all needed skills to become independent learners and assist them to reach their educational and vocational goals.

Legal framework and policy setting for admission and educating SwD, that will be also integrated into the general policy framework of the college, must be implemented properly by all relevant actors. Head of essential college departments will be responsible to ensure proper implementation of such policies, as well as, to promote equality and diversity at department but also at the institutional level.

Students with disabilities will be leading any new changes, policy reviews and/or adjustments in case when college policies are not fulfilling their needs and are proven to be ineffective. SwD are strongly encouraged to be engaged with all college units and relevant staff members they need and that can support their learning process and wellbeing at the college.

#### 4.2. DISCLOSURE AND CONFIDENTIALITY

IBC-M will encourage SwD to disclose the information related to their disability or learning difficulty during the admission process. This information is of a high importance for a proper organization of

needed services, as well as accommodation. When concerned SwD needs an additional support regarding the accommodation, exam or some other study activity, only information relevant to the particular situation can be disclosed to the responsible staff.

Confidentiality of information is the basis of efficient services for SwD. IBC-M will hold and maintain personal information that directly or indirectly identifies students as persons with disabilities as confidential information in full confidence for the exclusive interest of those students. This information should be kept by the responsible person in folders separate from the student's academic records in order to protect the student's privacy and prevent discrimination. IBC-M will carefully restrict access to the disability related information to third parties except in the case of a justified reason and with a written approval of the respected student.

IBC-M Accessibility Unit will provide certain procedure to the academic and administration staff in order to keep secure confidential information of SwD, such as:

- Information shared by SwD primarily serve for arranging their study;
- Confidential information of SwD should not be visible for everyone and should be kept carefully by responsible staff;
- Student with disability should not know about the other students with disabilities;
- The class should not be informed about the SwD;
- Accommodation and other needed services should be discussed with SwD in private, etc.

The Head of Student Service at IBC-M, in cooperation with respective college departments, is in charge of providing all necessary information and services to SwD, being responsible for implementation of this policy.

### **4.3. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF IBC-M**

IBC-M aims to offer an equal opportunities and involvement of SwD into the study process with the purpose of their full inclusion, providing access to flexible learning choices for achieving educational goals, but with possibility for additional support if SwD need. In particular, IBC-M:

- Provides access for SwD to study programmes, services, activities, premises, etc. based on the available resources;
- Provides available assistive equipment/technology and modifies them in accordance with the needs and profile of SwD;
- Maintains academic standards and ensures the implementation of best practices in teaching and other relevant activities to reach a diversity of all students, including SwD;
- Provides accommodation and academic adjustments to SwD in a timely manner;
- Raises awareness at institutional and individual level regarding people with disabilities, their capabilities and contributions, in order to respect their rights and prevent discrimination and harmful practices;
- Ensures relevant training to academic and administration staff for work in the context of inclusive education;

- Ensures the cooperation with institutions and staff specialized in this field based on the signed memorandum of understanding;
- Maintains confidentiality of students who disclose their disability.

#### **4.4 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT SERVICE DEPARTMENT**

The primary goal and responsibility of this department is to ensure that institution meets an obligation to provide to SwD: firstly, logistic support access in facility (Campus) and second to enforce and legitimate academic standards for all SwD. Particularly, this department:

- Identifies the data related to student disability during the admission process and formulate the proposals that entitles them to accommodation,
- Identifies and supports the suitable accommodations for SwD, by making sure their courses are designed so student can take part,
- Works closely with academic and other relevant departments, to ensure that accommodation provides essential requirements standards of the study program,
- Promotes awareness raising inside the institution, supported by student body, academics and other departments by making sure that this group of students are on all education activities and creating the clubs for additional support on homework and career advice,
- In cooperation with management and other relevant departments to facilitate and provide access on the education facility on the same basis as other students.

#### **4.5 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS**

During the admission process SwD are responsible for ensuring that the college is aware of disabilities that require accommodation in the educational process, by:

- Disclose him/her as a person with disability by providing relevant documentation to student service office;
- Being responsible for notifying the student service and academic coordinator if any problems occur during the study process;
- Completing the requested academic and administrative requirements from institution during the study cycle;
- Understanding and agree that nursing and personal assistance type are not on competence of the institution.

#### **4.6 EXCHANGE STUDENTS**

Exchange opportunities will provide great possibilities for SwD to spend part of their studies abroad and to utilize all benefits of such mobility programs. Based on the fact that inclusion of person with disabilities in every activity, especially in education, is very important, European Commission has

adopted a general policy that ensures full participation of such groups into exchange programs and other supporting services. By signing Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, participating institutions commits to ensure equal access and opportunities to participants from all backgrounds. Practically, it means that students and staff with physical, mental or health related conditions can benefit from supporting services in the same way that receiving institution offers to its local students and staff.

In addition to standard criteria set for participating in exchange programs, such as: adequate class attendance, good academic performance, motivation and cross-cultural competencies, proper adjustments and setting up required conditions at receiving institutions must be made. It is of the highest importance that SwD are not facing any difficulties while staying abroad thus written commitment of hosting institutions must be enabled proving that such institutions are ready to accommodate this group of students and enable smooth implementation of mobility activities for such participants. Receiving institutions have to provide supports and services in a way to ensure that eligible SwD can participate on an equal basis with their peers.

#### **4.7. FINAL PROVISIONS**

As per Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017-2021, Strategic objective/SO 1: Participation and Inclusion is as per below:

*“Increasing participation and providing equal opportunities for the development, training, and education of every individual in pre-university education. Increased inclusion and dropout prevention in education takes time and cannot be achieved without full implementation of the legal framework. Therefore, this Strategic objective has clear links to other aspects of the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP), in particular in relation to the creation of an integrated system for the collection, processing and use of data which will also enable monitoring of children with special needs and dropout children, and the improvement of the quality of teaching both through the provision of training programs for inclusion, and the implementation of the basic ideas and goals of the Kosovo Curriculum Framework”.*

Other provisions that are not included in this policy will be considered and reviewed based on the need and by analyzing national legislation on the inclusion and accessibility of disabled person.

#### **5. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Set of all policy related documents
- Documents containing relevant information
- Information guide for exchange students
- Written consent and authorization set of documents