

SOKOINE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE



SPECIAL NEEDS AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

2025

FOREWORD

The fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) declares that the world ought to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. The focus entails commitment to students' diversity, quality learning and education along the life course. In this context, the National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2021/2022-25/26) was developed. The strategy aimed to enhance educational services for children with special needs, by adopting an inclusive approach to policy-making and service delivery planning. It aims to ensure teaching and learning to all by developing specific staff capabilities, providing pedagogical support, promoting community participation and ownership of education, and facilitating the use of sign language and Braille. Following the rapid growth in basic and tertiary education, increasing concern about the quality of education, introduction of various education initiatives by both the government and non-government partners and the introduction of the Education and Training Policy of 2014 which amended the structure of education, as well as new international commitments; the new National Strategy for Inclusive Education (2018-2021) was proposed to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable groups. The strategy aimed to ensure that all children, youth and adults in Tanzania have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings.

The University has been recruiting staff and admitting students of diverse categories, including those with special needs. Therefore, it is necessary to establish an inclusive environment for both staff and students. This policy is a statement of intent and advocates a bold commitment to making inclusive education the norm at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) in line with the National Strategy for Inclusive Education. Significantly, the University policy on special needs pioneers the inclusive education agenda for higher learning institutions in Tanzania.

The policy is organized into four chapters, whereby chapter one provides the background information, chapter two provides the special needs situation analysis at SUA, chapter three gives the focus areas, policy statements and strategies, and Chapter four presents the policy implementation reviews and enforcement. It should be noted that the formulation of this policy involved a number of stakeholders. We, therefore, convey our gratitude to all who contributed to the formulation of this special needs policy. The vision of this policy will be realized only when there will be collective efforts of all stakeholders toward achieving the stated objectives.

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Vice Chancellor
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ABBREVIATIONS

CCBRT	Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DVC (ARC)	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic, Research and Consultancy)
DVC (PFA)	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Planning, Finance and Administration)
EAC	East African Community
KCMC	Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre
MOI	Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ORCI	Ocean Road Cancer Institute
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNAL	Sokoine National Agricultural Library
SNIE	Special Needs and Inclusive Education
SUA	Sokoine University of Agriculture
SUASO	Sokoine University of Agriculture Students Organisation
TCU	Tanzania Commission for Universities
UDSM	University of Dar es salaam
UN	United Nations
URT	United Republic of Tanzania

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Disability: Reduced function of the ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being resulting from impairment.

Discrimination: Negative treatment of an individual solely based on one's disability.

Hearing disability: Loss of hearing ranging from mild (Hard of hearing) to severe (deaf).

Hidden disability: A disability that is not readily apparent upon casual interaction with a person. This includes diagnosed chronic illness that significantly impedes a person's ability to live a normal life.

Impairment: Loss or reduced function of physical, mental or sensory organs on a long-term or permanent basis.

Inclusive education: An education system that accommodates all learners in the mainstream education by addressing and responding to learners' diverse needs.

Multiple disabilities: Combination of two or more disabilities resulting in significant learning, developmental, or behavioural and emotional problems.

Physical disability: Limitation on a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on an individual's ability to do normal daily activities.

Special needs policy: Set of ideas/statement of intent adopted to guide provision of special educational needs.

Special Needs: Supportive requirement an individual may present in given circumstances or when required to accomplish a certain task in the same way as other people, often due to intrinsic or extrinsic limitations/barriers. Students with significant functional disability may present Special Educational Needs or may need extra assistance from the teacher and/or the use of alternative educational approaches and tools.

Special Needs Education: Education that provides tailored instruction and support to students with disability. It aims at providing education services to students who may have needs for adjusted education different from the ordinary education.

Special Needs Help Desk: Refers to a subsection in the Special Needs Unit that provides services and other technical support to people with special needs through telephone, e-mail or physical means

Stakeholders: Authorities such as people, institutions, ministries and organizations that directly or indirectly engage in designing policies, generating and providing welfare for people with special needs.

Visual disability: Loss of vision ranging from mild (low vision) to severe or total blindness.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Since time immemorial, people with special needs have been facing hardship when struggling to fulfil their social, economic and academic needs. This is because they are underprivileged in various settings such as education, accommodation, transportation, medical care, and social security. The general life quality of persons with disabilities is affected by the lack of consideration for their special needs, in comparison to individuals without disabilities. This situation is due to lack of awareness and poor enforcement of stipulated policies and guidelines for special needs provision among stakeholders.

Over 15% of the world's population is disabled and about 150 million of these are children of whom 90% in low-income countries have never received any type of education (UNICEF, 2014). Also, among the 15% of persons with disabilities worldwide, at least 785 million of them are of working age (15 - 59 years (ILO, 2019). In Tanzania, out of 45,293,817 people, 4,094,561 (9.04%) had various forms of disabilities in 2014, the majority of whom were female (NBS, 2016). A big number of these people had visual impairment (2.48%), followed by people with physical impairment (2.15%), and finally people with intellectual disability (1.55%). It has been estimated that about 50% of people with disabilities in Tanzania are enrolled at various levels in the formal education system. Up to January 2023, SUA identified 161 students with visual impairment, 62 hearing impairment, 4 students with physical impairment, 2 students with albinism, and 3 students with persistent mental illness.

1.2 Policies and Guidelines Advocating Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

With regard to the statistics of persons with disabilities globally, disability is a cross-cutting issue and should be considered in every aspect of human life. To ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of human life, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy of 2019 advocates the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all their diversity through meaningful participation, the promotion and mainstreaming of their rights into the work, the development of disability-specific programs, and the consideration of disability-related perspectives, in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2019).

Conventions on human rights (UN, 2006) article mandates to promote, protect and ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Also, the declarations of human rights (UN, 2006), emphasizes to protect disabled persons against all exploitation, all regulations and all treatment of a discriminatory, abusive or degrading nature. The inclusion of persons with disabilities in education (Salamanca statement for Action of 1994) highlights the necessity and urgency of providing education for all children, young people and adults. This education should be provided within the regular education system because regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes. Inclusive schools also contribute to creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system. Also, inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG's 2030 Goal 4, article 5) foster strengthening of national policies and the legal system to ensure access to quality education by making schools and educational facilities accessible. Additionally, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) encapsulates rights of persons with disabilities against discrimination.

The East Africa disability policy also advocates that persons with disabilities are part and parcel of the society. The policy mandates fully inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life and their special needs be met within their communities instead of being isolated by institutional service delivery approaches (EAC, 2012).

In line with the International and Regional declarations, the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT, 1977; article 12; section 1) acknowledges that all human beings are equal and are entitled to equal rights irrespective of colour, tribe, gender and religion. Tanzania also has National strategies for Inclusive Education 21/22-25-26 which emphasizes inclusion of persons with disabilities in every aspect of national development. The Employment Act 1982 (No. 2) establishes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment and caring for disabled persons at workplace (Act 1982 (No. 3). In addition, the 2014 education policy in its section 3.3.1 firmly states that the provision of education in Tanzania should be inclusive to all persons regardless of their disabilities. Moreover, the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) (TCU, 2019) Guideline 6.1.2 compels all Universities within Tanzania to focus

on the provision of quality education to all students by ensuring the availability of various physical facilities for teaching, learning and other functions convenient to all categories of people including those with disabilities. Institutions in Tanzania, therefore, have the mandate of creating a conducive environment for people with disabilities to have equal access to all institutional facilities. In that regard, establishing a policy and guidelines that could guarantee supportive services and protection of rights to people with disabilities at SUA is inevitable.

1.3The Sokoine University of Agriculture: Overview

Sokoine University of Agriculture is a Public University located on the slopes of Uluguru Mountains in Morogoro, Tanzania. The history of SUA dates back to 1965 when it started as an Agricultural College offering diploma training in the disciplines of agriculture. After the dissolution of the University of East Africa and the subsequent establishment of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in July 1970, the Agricultural College was transformed into a Faculty of Agriculture of the UDSM and thereby started offering Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. In 1974, the Division of Forestry was established and hence became the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry. With the introduction of Bachelor of Veterinary Science in 1976 and the establishment of the Division of Veterinary Science, the Faculty was renamed Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Sciences.

On the 1st of July 1984 by the Parliamentary Act No. 6 of 1984, the faculty was transformed into a full-fledged University known as the Morogoro University of Agriculture (MUA), which was thereafter renamed Sokoine University of Agriculture in honour of the late Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, Edward Moringe Sokoine who passed away on 12th April 1984. In terms of growth, the University has grown from 28 to 42 undergraduate degree programmes, 6 to 8 non degree programmes and 45 to 69 postgraduate programmes between 2016/2017 and 2020/2021, respectively. Three postgraduate Diploma programmes have been introduced. By 30th June 2021, the total enrollment had increased from 7,299 in 2016 to 14,581 students in 2021, comprising 13, 540 (93.1%) undergraduate students, 754 (5.2%) postgraduate students and 631(4.3%) non-degrees' students. The overall proportion of female students enrolled has reached 35.4%. By June 2021, SUA had 1,234 employees, of which 472 are academic staff and 762 are technical and administrative staff.

The University has five campuses, namely Edward Moringe Campus (2,376 ha) and Solomon Mahlangu Campus (1,050 ha) in Morogoro, Olmotonyi Campus (840 ha) in Arusha, Mazumbai Campus (320 ha) in Lushoto Tanga, Mizengo Pinda Campus in Katavi Region (64 ha) and Tunduru Campus (509 ha). In addition, SUA has students' field practical sites in Mbinga, Ruvuma Region, Mgeta (Nyandira), Morning side and Kitulanghalo Forest in Morogoro Region.

By October 2020, SUA had succeeded to elevate two prospective Colleges into fully-fledged colleges, namely the College of Forestry, Wildlife and Tourism (CFWT), and the College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (CVMBS). In June 2021, the School of Agricultural Economics and Business Studies was elevated to a full-fledged College of Economics and Business Studies (CoEBS). Similarly, the School of Engineering and Technology (SET)¹ and School of Education (SE)² were formed. The College of Social Science and Humanities (CSSH) remains in the prospective status.

1.4 SUA stance on Special Needs and Inclusive Education

The University in its activities implementation adhere to the National Strategy for Inclusive Education of 21/22-25-26 that aimed to ensure that vulnerable children, youth and adults in Tanzania have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings.

In Alignment with the National strategic plan, the current SUA Corporate Strategic Plan (CSP) of 2021-2026 has mentioned intention to recruit staff and admit students of diverse categories, promote an inclusive working and learning environment that considers people with special needs, support students and staff diagnosed with chronic conditions, improve the health of staff and students with HIV/AIDS, non-communicable diseases and other public health emergencies. In operationalizing CSP, the newly built and existing infrastructure has been made to accommodate people with disabilities by installing ramps and toilets.

1.5 SUA Vision

To be a leading University in the provision of quality knowledge, skills and innovations in agriculture and allied sciences.

1.6 SUA Mission

To undertake training, research in agriculture and allied sciences and deliver highly competitive outputs that contribute to national, regional and global socio-economic development.

1.7 SUA Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy Core Values

In alignment with SUACSP, SNIE Policy shall strive to realise institutional mission and vision by upholding the following principles to the students and staff with special needs:

- 1.7.1 Ensuring fairness in accessibility of education and other required services necessary to the staff and students with special needs.
- 1.7.2 Equal provision of assistive devices to students and staff with disability that will ensure almost equal opportunities and participation in various activities undertaken at SUA.
- 1.7.3 Considering equal participation in decision-making in various SUA emerging matters with regard to the position of people with disabilities.
- 1.7.4 Accepting and respecting the dignity and diversity of students and staff with special needs.
- 1.7.5 Ensuring friendly and inclusive environment that can accommodate staff and students with special needs when accessing services at SUA.
- 1.7.6 Ensuring that students and staff with special needs are given right information on services delivered to them.
- 1.7.7 Ensuring that everyone in the community provides quality and timely services to students and staff with disabilities.

1.8 Purpose of the Policy

This Policy sets the rights and obligations of community members with special needs and that of the institution. It also sets the guidelines in the provision of supportive services to persons with special needs within SUA settings.

1.9 Specific Objectives of the Policy

The policy intends to accomplish the following objectives, as categorized according to the nature of the services for students and staff with special needs:

1.9.1 Students with special needs

- 1.9.1.1 Ensuring standardized guidelines for identification and

assessment of students with special needs at SUA.

1.9.1.2 Maximizing fair treatment of students and ensuring that they are not discriminated on any ground.

1.9.1.3 Considering that enrollment of students with special needs is increasing

1.9.1.4 Enhancing quality support services and resource provision to students with special needs.

1.9.1.5 Providing guidance and counselling to the students with special needs

1.9.1.6 Promoting collaboration between colleges/schools/institutes/units in providing reasonable accommodations to the students with special needs.

1.9.1.7 Promoting equal education and social opportunities accessibility

1.9.1.8 Encouraging positive inclusion attitude within the SUA community through sensitization program

1.9.2 Staff with special needs

1.9.2.1 Developing an inclusive and accessible environment for all staff irrespective of their disabilities at SUA.

1.9.2.2 Providing equal opportunities to all staff with disabilities at SUA.

1.9.2.3 Facilitating recruitment, job retention and opportunities for advancement to improve staff with disabilities' employment prospects at the University.

1.9.2.4 Promoting effective utilization of the potentials of the staff with disabilities at SUA

1.9.2.5 Ensuring a safe, friendly and healthy workplace for staff with disabilities

1.10 Scope of the Policy

The SNIE policy will confirm reasonable accommodation and/or adjusted educational provision for individuals who may deploy significant efforts while accessing or using services and facilities of the University. The target groups shall be comprised of and not limited to the physical and non-physical environment of living, working, learning and teaching.

1.10.1 Staff and students with sensory special needs

1.10.1.1 Visual disability

- 1.10.1.2 Hearing disability
- 1.10.1.3 Multiple sensory disability e.g. Albinism,

1.10.2 Staff and students with health challenges

- 1.10.2.1 Incurable health problem, including cancer, HIV/AIDS etc.
- 1.10.2.2 Chronic illnesses
- 1.10.2.3 Persistent mental illness

1.10.3 Staff and students with Physical disability

1.11 Rationale of the Policy

Sokoine University of Agriculture is an inclusive public higher learning institution that recruits and enrolls all kinds of staff and students respectively regardless of their social, economic and health status. An inclusive institution must ensure all its members have opportunities to live and thrive in a supportive and responsive environment, and have equal access and participation to all institutional services. Institutional members (students and Staff) whose needs differ from the majority require special needs provision to meet their demands (Educational Policy, 2014; TCU, 2019; SUA CSP of 2021-2026). This is because their participation is restricted due to physical, sensory, mental health and many more needs. This calls for a policy to accommodate such diverse needs. The policy could serve as a roadmap in the process of identifying and intervening in special needs within the SUA community.

The absence of a specific policy in dealing with institutional members with special needs in an inclusive institution poses challenges in accessing some institutional services. The lack of supportive services, supportive infrastructure, and properly trained personnel are barriers to achieving quality services for members with special needs (Possi & Milinga, 2017). Successful inclusion of students and staff with special needs in an institution could be realized if there would be strong policy and collaborative efforts in managing an institution, positive values and attitudes cultivation (Naser, Fjolla & Donika, 2020).

The Tanzanian National Policy on Disability advocates the creation of a conducive environment that could encourage the development of people with disabilities, improve service delivery and allow participation in the implementation of important activities in society (URT, 2004). Moreover, the policy affirms awareness creation, identification and early intervention of people with disabilities to eliminate the onset of

disability and or reduce the impact of disability. It also requires higher learning institutions to establish institutional policies to accommodate persons with disabilities. In response to the Tanzania National policy on Disability which calls for provision of supportive services to persons with disabilities, SUA is developing its institutional special needs and inclusive educational policy that could mandate the provision of appropriate and supportive services to persons with special needs.

CHAPTER TWO

SPECIAL NEEDS SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Introduction

Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) has been admitting students with special needs into its diverse range of degree and non-degree programs. As of July 2023, SUA had a total of 272 identified students with special needs in Solomon Mahlangu, Edward Moringe and Mizengo Pinda campuses in the categories of students with low vision (188), students with hearing impairment (75), students with physical impairment (4), students with albinism (2), and students with mental illness (3).

The identification and assessment process of the students with special needs as indicated was done between March 2021 and July 2023 collaboratively between the SUA Special Needs project component of the Higher Education for Economic Transformation project (HEET) and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology.

Though the Dean of Students' office has been instrumental in assisting students with special needs by communicating their requirements to various university departments and units, challenges have become increasingly apparent due to the growing enrollment of students at the University. The absence of a special needs policy within the university has proven to be a significant hurdle, leading to inconsistencies in the provision of services for students and staff with special needs across the institution. Students continue to face several obstacles that often impede their seamless interaction with the University environment, both inside and outside the classroom. These challenges include the lack of standardized accommodations during University tests and examinations, inadequate provision of equipment for students and staff with special needs, substandard infrastructure with limited accessibility for individuals with special needs, the absence of transportation services tailored to the needs of students and staff with special needs, the lack of a dedicated unit or center responsible for supporting individuals with special needs, and the absence of personnel such as note-takers and readers.

Recognizing the overwhelming workload of the Dean of Students' office, the University is actively striving to develop a comprehensive policy that will establish

clear guidelines and principles to govern the provision of services to SUA students and staff with special needs. This special needs policy will encompass the following thematic areas. Coordination of special and inclusive services, recruitment, assistive technology, adapted sports and games, counselling services, Library services, Infrastructure and facilities, infrastructure and facilities, admission and enrolment, personal safety and security, curriculum, instruction, and assessment, disclosure and Confidentiality transport services, health care services, access to information, communication and special needs policy.

2.2 Coordination of Special and Inclusive Services

For a considerable duration, the task of coordinating special needs and inclusive services at SUA has primarily been managed in an informal or voluntary capacity by the Office of the Dean of Students, individual instructors, and other staff members. However, the University has taken a significant step forward by establishing the SUA Special Needs and Inclusive Education Unit, which aims to effectively cater to the requirements of individuals with special needs. Once the unit is fully operational and officially implemented, it is expected to address crucial aspects concerning students' enrollment, academic support, and access to essential services. The existing disregard for these matters presents substantial challenges in achieving both equality and equity within the university.

2.3 Recruitment

Section 15 of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act No. 2 of 1982 mandates employers to provide employment to registered disabled persons in numbers specified through regulations. Furthermore, Section 31(2) of the Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 9 of 2010 requires employers with a workforce of 20 or more to implement a quota system, ensuring that three percent (3%) of their workforce comprises persons with disabilities. Similarly, Section 11(d) of the National Employment Promotion Services Act No. 9 of 1999 states that every employment promotion officer should maintain a register of persons with disabilities. These legal provisions highlight the importance of deliberate efforts in employing people with special needs, rather than it being incidental.

However, the University currently lacked guidelines regarding the recruitment of people with disabilities and the provision of support for them and their assisting staff. Consequently, out of the 1356 staff members, only four (4) individuals are officially recognized as having special needs. The University followed a merit-based recruitment approach outlined in the Employment and Labour Relations Act Cap. 366 of R.E 2019, without a clear guideline on employing individuals with special needs. This lack of guidelines contributed to the absence of a formalized system for identifying and providing necessary support for staff members with special needs, resulting in potential support gaps. Although, SUA corporate strategic plan 2021/2022-2025/2026 requires the institution to identify and support annually at least 30% of staff and students with chronic conditions related to non-communicable diseases from July 2022; the University still lacks a defined guideline for employing personal assistants for both staff and students with special needs.

2.4 Assistive Technology

Assistive technology plays a crucial role in enabling students and employees to access a wide range of services throughout the University. It is essential to provide assistive technology to individuals with special needs as it empowers them to fully participate in academic and social activities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) mandates countries to implement various measures, outlined in Articles 4(1) (g, h); 20(b, d); 26(3); 29(a) (ii); and 32(d), to ensure that people with disabilities have the right to access assistive devices. These measures are localized in the Persons with Disabilities Act No. 9 of 2010, specifically in Section 5 (e) (ii) and 17, Section 12(2) (g), and Section 61(d).

For a long time, there have been no initiatives at SUA to provide assistive equipment for students and staff with disabilities or special needs. Recently, the Ministry of Education has started assisting in the provision of assistive technology such as hearing aids and tablets for students with hearing impairment. Nevertheless, there remains a challenge as other special needs groups among students and staff have yet to be considered for assistive technology. Having the Special Needs and Inclusive Education institutional policy could open up doors for special needs that need assistive technology to be addressed systematically.

2.5 Sports and Games

The SUA community has gained a reputation for its active involvement in sports and games, both within its campuses and in collaborations with other universities and organizations. Regrettably, individuals with special needs, including employees and students, have been overlooked or forgotten in this aspect. There are no dedicated playgrounds for them, no adapted sports and games tailored to their requirements, no specific competitions for the SUA community members with special needs and disabilities, and a lack of specialized personnel to train individuals with special needs in specific sports and games, among other challenges. Consequently, the community of persons with disabilities within SUA faces difficulties when it comes to participating in sports and games.

2.6 Counselling services

Before the formulation of this policy, the Dean of students' office played a significant role in providing counselling services to students with special needs. However, the staff members in this office do not have a dedicated office or designated individuals specifically assigned to handle such services. Despite this, the Office of the Dean of Students continued to offer counselling support to all students who required it. Additionally, academic advisors of students with special needs also contributed significantly by providing counselling on various aspects including academic, economic, and social matters. However, a notable challenge was that neither the Office of the Dean of Students nor the academic advisors (for the most part) possessed specialized training in counselling. As a result, they lacked the necessary professional skills and resources to effectively address the issues presented to them by both students with special needs and those without.

2.7 Library services

The Sokoine University of Agriculture acknowledges the crucial role of the library in offering accessible and inclusive services to students and staff with special needs. While the Sokoine National Agricultural Library (SNAL) has provided support to individuals with special needs in the past, it has lacked a formal guideline, resulting in

limited awareness and adaptation of services to fully address their needs. Given the increase of the individuals with special needs within the University's population, it is imperative to prioritize addressing accessibility concerns in library services.

To ensure inclusivity, SNAL should proactively work towards enhancing its services for individuals with special needs. This effort should encompass various aspects, including providing resources in diverse accessible formats, such as sign language interpretation, e-learning platforms, alternative fonts, braille materials, and captioned audio-visual content whenever feasible. Due to the lack of specific or formal services for users with special needs at SNAL, it is crucial to undertake comprehensive and dedicated initiatives to address the unique requirements of individuals with special needs.

2.8 Infrastructure and Facilities

The principle of accessibility is a fundamental aspect of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) established in 2006. Article 9 of the CRPD comprehensively addresses the provision of accessibility. Moreover, the CRPD emphasizes the right to an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning for individuals with disabilities in Article 24. Additionally, Article 27 highlights the right to work in an accessible, accommodating, and inclusive work environment. These rights are acknowledged in the 2004 National Policy on Disability. They are implemented through specific legislation such as the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act No. 2 of 1982 and the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2010, particularly in Sections 27, 34, and 35.

SUA has started to take some measures to ensure the accessibility of its buildings by individuals with special needs, for example, new structures being constructed across its campuses consider students and employees with disabilities (SUA, 2021). Construction of ramps in iconic buildings like a multi-purpose laboratory which is used for practicals, classroom teaching, learning, and examinations proves institutional commitment to considering people with special needs. However, the challenge was still very huge as most of the buildings here at SUA were constructed many years ago when there was no or very little consideration for people with special needs. As a result, existing infrastructural barriers at SUA continue to pose significant challenges

for both students and employees in accessing various services. For instance, reaching the library and administration block (located on the main campus) is particularly problematic for individuals using wheelchairs as these buildings lack ramps that would enable smooth passage for this equipment. This lack of accessible infrastructure poses a major hindrance to the inclusivity and participation of individuals with special needs and or disabilities and is violating TCU standards and guidelines (annex 6.9.3) which require every university to make sure that its infrastructures are accessible by people with special needs.

2.9 Admission and Enrollment

University admission is the process of accepting an applicant to enroll in an academic program, whether through government or private sponsorship. SUA follows a merit-based approach, where academic performance is the sole and exclusive criterion for acceptance and admission. Consequently, applicants with special needs are evaluated and enrolled based on their merit. However, the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) Guideline 6.8.4 mandates each University to establish policies and operational procedures that take into consideration students with special needs in terms of admission and other aspects (TCU, 2019).

This policy was formulated because SUA lacked apparent policies, regulations, processes, or practice barriers impeding the enrollment of students with special needs at SUA. However, concerns arise regarding the potential challenges faced by learners with special needs that may affect their performance. If their special needs are not considered when assessing their academic performance, it could put them at a disadvantage and perpetuate inequality. Therefore, admission is recognized as a critical issue that requires attention to promote the inclusion of students with special needs at the university. As a result, the consideration of affirmative action for the admission of students with special needs is being proposed.

2.10 Personal Safety and Security

People with special needs are often more vulnerable to becoming targeted victims of crimes. Recognizing this risk, Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) places an obligation on states to ensure that people with disabilities have the right to liberty and security. Feeling safe is a fundamental aspect

of one's life, enabling students and staff with special needs to fully enjoy their lives without the fear of physical, psychological, or financial harm. Creating a safe environment within higher learning institutions is crucial in empowering individuals with disabilities, reducing their vulnerability, and fostering their confidence.

To address this concern, SUA has implemented significant measures to prioritize the safety of all individuals, including staff and students with special needs, across its campuses. Special considerations are taken into account when assigning halls of residence to students with special needs, ensuring that their unique needs are met and minimizing security threats. As a result, no cases of physical or sexual violence or targeted crimes involving students or staff with special needs.

2.11 Curriculum, instruction, and assessment

The office of the Dean of students has been playing a crucial role in communicating some needs of the students with special needs to Deans of schools, Principals of colleges, and Heads of departments. Some students also have been proactive in communicating their needs to their respective course instructors. Recently, following the establishment of the special and inclusive education unit and appointment of its coordinator, most students are showing up for special considerations during the lectures, practical sessions, and examinations contrary to previous. All these efforts have not been able to finish the problem students with special needs are facing at SUA particularly due to the absence of policy specifically stating the rights of individuals with special needs.

TCU Guideline 6.8.4 specifically instructs each University to develop a policy that considers students with special needs, particularly in areas such as learning and assessment (TCU, 2019). In line with this guideline, SUA should strive to make efforts to provide necessary services to accommodate the academic needs of students with special needs, taking into account the unique learning requirements of each student.

2.12 Disclosure and Confidentiality

Disclosure and confidentiality play a crucial role in supporting individuals with special needs in an educational environment. The Sokoine University of Agriculture recognizes the importance of respecting privacy and has implemented measures to ensure confidentiality. Students and staff have the option to disclose their special

needs, creating a supportive atmosphere where they feel comfortable sharing relevant information. Any disclosed information is treated with strict confidentiality, and access is limited to authorized personnel who need it for providing necessary support. Informed consent is obtained before sharing personal information, and efforts are made to provide accessible formats for communication related to special needs. Staff members receive training on confidentiality and privacy laws to ensure the professional handling of sensitive information. SUA is committed to upholding confidentiality for both staff and students, fostering an environment of trust and inclusivity for individuals with special needs.

2.13 Transport Service

The matter of personal mobility for individuals with special needs and disabilities is addressed in Article 20 of the CRPD. This article provides guidance on facilitating the personal mobility of persons with disabilities, ensuring access to high-quality mobility aids, devices, technologies, and providing training on mobility skills, as well as access to live assistance and intermediaries. In relation to this, Section 48 of the Persons with Disabilities Act No. 9 of 2010 primarily focuses on promoting barrier-free movement.

The Sokoine University of Agriculture is committed to enhancing the mobility of people with special needs by implementing measures to facilitate easier movement. This includes providing transport facilities and ensuring that the University's roads are accessible to accommodate equipment such as wheelchairs. Currently, the University has two tricycles (Bajaj) available to accommodate four identified students who require transportation services. These efforts aim to support the mobility needs of individuals with special needs and disabilities within the University community.

2.14 Health Care Services

According to Section 26(1) of the Tanzania Persons with Disabilities Act No. 9 of 2010, individuals with special needs or disabilities are entitled to access achievable standards of healthcare services without facing any discrimination. This includes the provision of quality and affordable healthcare, early identification, and intervention. The SUA health care centres strive to provide their services without discrimination

and have the necessary infrastructure to accommodate students and staff with disabilities.

However, there are still challenges in meeting the specific healthcare needs of students and staff with special needs and disabilities. For instance, there may be difficulties in identifying certain special needs and disabilities, as well as providing specialized services such as transportation equipment and lotions for individuals with albinism. Additionally, University hospitals may lack medical personnel who are specifically trained to assist students and staff with disabilities.

These challenges highlight the need for further improvements in addressing the healthcare needs of individuals with disabilities within the SUA community. It requires enhancing the knowledge and capabilities of medical personnel, as well as ensuring that appropriate resources and support are available to meet the specific healthcare requirements of students and staff with special needs.

2.15 Access to information

Section 38(1) of the Persons with Disabilities Act mandates that when a public body communicates with individuals, the information should be conveyed in an accessible manner, taking into account the specific special needs or disabilities of the recipients. The effective participation of students and staff with special needs in various matters greatly depends on their access to information. Therefore, it is essential for the University to ensure that individuals with special needs and disabilities can independently and timely access information in a format that is accessible to them.

Currently, the methods of information sharing at SUA have not adequately considered the needs of staff and students with disabilities. For instance, the predominant method of presenting information is through ink print, which is not suitable for individuals with visual impairments. Braille and large font options are not utilized for disseminating information across the University. Furthermore, electronically shared information does not take into account the technical skills of students and staff with special needs and disabilities, which may hinder their access. Additionally, information posted on notice boards is not accessible to individuals with visual or physical impairments. Moreover, the oral information provided both inside and outside

the classrooms does not accommodate the needs of students and staff with hearing impairments, who may require sign language interpretation or speech reading.

To promote inclusivity, it is crucial for SUA to address these gaps and ensure that information is accessible to all individuals, regardless of their special needs and disabilities. This can involve implementing alternative formats, such as Braille, large font, or accessible electronic documents, as well as providing sign language interpretation or other means of communication for individuals with hearing impairments.

2.16 Communication

There is a significant lack of awareness regarding the presence and needs of students and staff with special needs at SUA. Only a small number of academic and supportive staff members make efforts to communicate with students using methods such as lip reading, and writing, or by involving student volunteers who act as language interpreters for those who cannot communicate through conventional means. However, it is crucial to recognize that SUA has students with low vision, individuals who are hard of hearing, and those who are deaf, all of whom require specific accommodations for effective communication. The appropriate treatment for such individuals includes the provision of braille printing for the bind, the use of enlarged fonts for individuals with low vision, lip-reading support, and the availability of sign language and trained interpreters to facilitate communication.

In order to promote a more inclusive and accessible environment, it is essential for SUA to raise awareness among its staff and students about the presence and needs of individuals with special needs. This can be achieved through recruiting experts with appropriate knowledge and skills, training programs, sensitization campaigns, and the implementation of appropriate communication methods and accommodations to ensure effective and inclusive communication for all members of the SUA community.

2.17 Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy

The Sokoine University of Agriculture has had employees and students with special needs for a considerable period of time. However, the absence of a policy specifically addressing special needs has resulted in the inconsistent provision of services to this

group, often relying on the discretion of individual office bearers. For instance, there needs to be a policy in place regarding the availability of language interpreters and other support personnel who can assist students with special needs. This lack of support poses significant challenges for these students, making it difficult for them to graduate from the University.

The absence of a comprehensive policy has inadvertently or knowingly caused distress and difficulties for individuals with special needs on various occasions. As a result, some of them have discontinued their studies due to the lack of appropriate responses to their needs. The absence of a policy has also created a lack of guidelines for admitting students with special needs to the University campuses. Additionally, the absence of specific financial and social support measures further contributes to a discriminatory environment at SUA for individuals with special needs.

In order to address these issues, it is essential for SUA to develop a comprehensive policy that outlines the rights and support systems for individuals with special needs. This policy should address areas such as the provision of language interpreters, assistant personnel, and necessary accommodations for students with special needs. Additionally, financial and social support be addressed to ensure that individuals with special needs are provided with equal opportunities and a supportive environment throughout their academic journey at SUA.

CHAPTER THREE

POLICY ISSUES, STATEMENTS, AND STRATEGIES

3.1 General Policy Statement

In line with the National Policy on Disability of the year 2004, the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) adheres to the conception of inclusive education as constituting the non-discriminatory enrollment of students and enabling them to participate fully and benefit from the education provided. The University is also committed to ensuring inclusive recruitment and the working environment suitable for and supportive for individuals with special needs.

The SUA special needs policy shall ensure fairness in recruitment, admission, and the delivery of its education programmes to all individuals regardless of their social, economic and health conditions upon meeting the University's requirements. SUA is committed to providing fair opportunities for students and staff with special needs and aims to create an environment that enables them to participate fully in all University's activities. The following sections elaborate SUA commitment in specific areas.

3.2 Institutional coordination of special needs services

3.2.1 Policy issues

SUA in-houses many students and staff that require special needs. However, the University lacks Specialised experts such as audiologists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, and occupational therapists who could diagnose, monitor, and support the community members with special needs. It also lacks a centre or unit for coordinating the provision of special needs services to the entire University community.

3.2.2 Policy Statement

The University shall establish a special needs coordination system enriched with human (specialists), material (assistive technologies), and financial resources to enable students and staff with special needs to realise their full potential.

3.2.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.2.3.1 Establish a centre for special needs to coordinate all special needs issues at SUA.
- 3.2.3.2 Establish SUA Special Needs Help Desk (SUA-SNHD).
- 3.2.3.3 Identify and post special needs focal persons to each school/college.
- 3.2.3.4 Ensure that Colleges, Schools, and Institutes coordinate and operationalise all issues related to disabilities.
- 3.2.3.5 Equip a special needs centre with sufficient and special resources that reflect common and advanced technologies.
- 3.2.3.6 Recruit sufficient supporting staff and essential specialists such as transcribers, sign language interpreters, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, audiologists and occupational therapists.
- 3.2.3.7 Provide a guideline that stipulates specific roles and responsibilities of SUA staff dealing with the coordination of issues for staff and students with special needs.
- 3.2.3.8 Provide capacity building to its staff on special needs issues.

3.3 Recruitment

3.3.1. Policy Issues

Before the formulation of the special needs and inclusive education policy, SUA lacked guidelines for recruiting the support personnel (personal assistants) for staff and students with disability. Lacking a clear University guideline on the employment of people with disabilities could imply that SUA fails to adhere indiscriminately to a meritocracy recruitment approach embedded in the Employment and Labour Relations Act Cap. 366 of R.E 2019. Lacking a guideline for hiring and firing personal assistants implies that the staff members and students with special needs do not get the necessary support they deserve.

3.3.2. Policy Statement

SUA shall ensure a conducive environment for hiring, equipping, and developing (training) both the University staff and personal assistants for community members with special needs.

3.3.3. Strategies

The University shall:

- 3.3.3.1 Establish a comprehensive guideline for the recruitment, contracting, training, equipping, support, and professional development of personal assistants assigned to staff and students with special needs.
- 3.3.3.2 Develop a set of guidelines that outline the processes for hiring, contracting, training, providing necessary resources and support, and facilitating professional development for personal assistants assigned to support staff and students with special needs.
- 3.3.3.3 Hire personal assistance with relevant qualifications.
- 3.3.3.4 Provide preferential employment opportunities for qualified academic and administrative staff with special needs.
- 3.3.3.5 Facilitate capacity building to relevant SUA supporting staff and personal assistants regularly for students with special needs.
- 3.3.3.6 Adhere to the guidelines for services provided to persons with special needs as specified in civil servants' circular number three of 2007.

3.4 Assistive Technology

3.4.1. Policy issues

SUA does not provide sufficient assistive technology and devices to students with special needs. There is also a need for more teaching and learning resources for students with special needs. Perhaps more importantly, students and staff with special needs have limited knowledge and skills in using devices for special needs.

3.4.2. Policy statement

The University shall ensure that there are appropriate assistive technologies for both staff and students with special needs. This shall go in tandem with

capacity building for the use of such technologies to meet the needs of students and staff with special needs.

3.4.3. Strategies

The University shall:

- 3.4.3.1 Regularly conduct assessments to identify and prioritize the specific needs for assistive technologies among staff and students with disabilities.
- 3.4.3.2 Carry out regular surveys to ensure that assistive technologies for students and staff with special needs are available.
- 3.4.3.3 Allocate sufficient resources and establish a collaborative partnership with MoEST and other stakeholders involved in special needs support to secure and provide appropriate assistive technology for students and staff with special needs.
- 3.4.3.4 Provide regular capacity-building skills to supporting staff, students, and persons with disabilities.
- 3.4.3.5 Ensure security for facilities and equipment for students and staff with special needs.
- 3.4.3.6 Ensure timely maintenance of the assistive technology devices.

3.5 Adapted Sports and Games

3.5.1 Policy issues

There is no training, playing grounds, or fields specific for students and staff with special needs. There are no adapted sports and games facilities and equipment. There is no staff specialized in adapted sports and games.

3.5.2 Policy Statements

SUA is committed to ensuring inclusive and equitable opportunities for students with special needs to participate in sports and games activities. To this end, it shall establish a special budget and relevant expertise to facilitate adapted sports and games catering to the needs of students and staff with special needs to enable effective participation of students and staff with special needs.

3.5.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.5.3.1 Develop guidelines to enhance the implementation of adapted sports and games for students and staff with special needs.
- 3.5.3.2 Foster partnerships with local disability organizations, community sports clubs, and relevant stakeholders to promote the integration of students with special needs into broader sports and games activities.
- 3.5.3.3 Set aside a special budget to facilitate the availability of special equipment for adapted sports and games for the effective participation of students and staff with special needs.
- 3.5.3.4 Recruit/train personnel specialized in adapted sports and games to train students and staff with special needs.
- 3.5.3.5 Design sports and games programs that accommodate the diverse abilities and interests of students with special needs, providing a range of activities that cater to different skill levels and preferences.
- 3.5.3.6 Provide accessible sports and games facilities, equipment, and resources that cater to the diverse needs and abilities of students and staff with special needs.
- 3.5.3.7 Coordinate and run adapted sports, games, and recreational activities for students and staff with special needs.
- 3.5.3.8 Introduce and monitor competition for students and staff with special needs so that they can participate in national and international contests.
- 3.5.3.9 Establish and develop special play grounds for indoors sports and games.

3.6 Intervention and counselling services

3.6.1 Policy issues

Students and staff with special needs as well as others may face situations that necessitate expert advice and counselling. If attended by counsellors who are not trained to deal with such students, problems might occur. Currently, SUA has not employed experts specialised in the guidance and counselling of students with special needs.

3.6.2 Policy Statement

SUA intends to build the capacity of its staff with knowledge and skills to provide students and staff with special needs with relevant guidance and counselling services. This endeavour should be accomplished parallel with acquiring resources required for rendering such services.

3.6.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.6.3.1 Ensure that there is a guideline for standardizing the provision of guidance and counselling services to student and staff with and without special needs.
- 3.6.3.2 Adopt a proactive guidance and counselling service system for not only dealing with students and staff seeking counselling voluntarily but also to identify effectively early warning signs and reach out to all students and staff who may manifest indicators of needing such services, especially those with special needs.
- 3.6.3.3 Build capacities of its counsellors to enable them competently provide guidance and counselling to the University community by considering both normal individuals and those in need of special needs.
- 3.6.3.4 Develop cooperation and linkage between the office rendering guidance and counselling services and the University centre for special needs.
- 3.6.3.5 Develop guidelines on the best practices on cooperating with other agencies such as hospitals, police, legal departments, e.t.c. and establish proper ways of referral.

3.7 Library Services

3.7.1 Policy issues

Staff and students with special needs face challenges in accessing library services, information, and facilities at SUA. The libraries lack adequate or special resources, assistive technology and specialized staff to meet the unique learning needs of staff and students with special needs. There is a lack of knowledge and skills on assistive technology among staff and students with special needs to access academic materials in electronic format.

3.7.2 Policy Statement

The University strives towards inclusivity by offering quality library services to both ordinary users and those with special needs to meet their needs. Library service delivery shall consider the use of assistive technology in accessing both hard and electronic sources of knowledge.

3.7.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.7.3.1 Conduct a needs assessment exercise to inform itself of critical priorities for making it inclusive and universal.
- 3.7.3.2 Develop guidelines to guide the provision of library services to persons with special needs.
- 3.7.3.3 Train library users with disabilities on the use of assistive devices and software in the libraries.
- 3.7.3.4 Train librarians and library attendants in providing services to users with special needs.
- 3.7.3.5 Provide adaptive technology, particularly assistive devices or software, to enable staff and students with special needs, particularly those who cannot access standard print due to blindness, low vision, dyslexia, or other learning disabilities acquire scholarly materials/texts independently through publishers and other resources.

3.8 The physical environment

3.8.1 Policy Issue

Effective participation of people with special needs within the SUA community largely depends on environmental accessibility. Largely, infrastructure and facilities at SUA still need to meet the universal design standards to accommodate those with special needs. Public spaces, roads, and pathways around the campus are, for example, inaccessible for persons with disabilities. To become an inclusive institution, SUA must address these concerns.

3.8.2 Policy statement

SUA is excited to take measures to ensure that people with diverse abilities and those with special needs can use the University's public spaces, facilities, and infrastructure easily, contentedly, comfortably, and safely. To this end,

SUA will apply the principle of Universal Design in constructing its public space and infrastructure.

3.8.3 Strategies

To be an inclusive society, SUA shall:

- 3.8.3.1 Assess the condition of roads, pathways, and public spaces within its campuses to determine the type and level of improvement required to meet principles of universal design standards.
- 3.8.3.2 Review locations and conditions of its buildings to establish improvements required to meet principles of universal design standards.
- 3.8.3.3 Develop and implement a rolling plan of adjustments to improve existing facilities, pathways, infrastructure, and public spaces on all campuses as per the universal design standards.
- 3.8.3.4 Ensure all new buildings are accessible to students and staff with special needs as per the principle of Universal Design.
- 3.8.3.5 Review and ensure appropriate installations of poster signs for individuals with special needs across all campus areas.
- 3.8.3.6 Schedule lectures, workshops, and tutorials for courses in readily accessible places and times to enable students with mobility impairment(s) to move to the next scheduled activity at their own pace.
- 3.8.3.7 Give priority to students with special needs for on-campus accommodation and allow them to choose roommates where necessary.
- 3.8.3.8 Allocate on-campus parking spaces accessible to community members with special needs.

3.9 Admission and Identification of students with special needs

3.9.1 Policy issue

Inequality exists throughout the higher education system in Tanzania for people with disabilities, not only on access to education, but also on demonstrating their learning potentials. This situation is partly due to the lack of learning and social support systems that could reasonably identify and accommodate students with special needs. Ultimately, this situation renders people with disabilities and other special needs vulnerable to exclusion from

education. SUA is no exception because it lacks a precise regulation/guideline that guides the admission of applicants with disabilities.

3.9.2 Policy Statement

SUA is committed to adopting admission practices that do not discriminate against applicants based on disabilities and special needs reasons. During the application process, an applicant with a disability shall be encouraged to disclose any disability they think may affect their academic and social experience at the University. Disclosing one's disability and special needs will permit the SUA management to discuss with admitted candidates about special support requirements and arrange them in advance before they report and enroll for studies.

3.9.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.9.3.1 Develop admission guidelines that explicitly state the commitment to inclusivity and the acceptance of students with special needs.
- 3.9.3.2 To promote the inclusion of applicants with disabilities, incorporate disability as a crucial consideration in the admission process.
- 3.9.3.3 Establish clear guidelines and criteria for identifying students with special needs during the admission process.
- 3.9.3.4 Encourage people with disabilities and special needs to seek admission into the University.
- 3.9.3.5 Make admission and enrolment procedures accessible to all individuals.
- 3.9.3.6 Admit all students regardless of one's disability and special needs.
- 3.9.3.7 Develop mechanisms for students to disclose their disability before admission and enrolment to control risks accurately.
- 3.9.3.8 Provide reasonable accommodation to students with special needs.
- 3.9.3.9 Provide information to prospective and enrolled students about how to access support services at the University.
- 3.9.3.10 Conduct mandatory assessments by specialists during registration of admitted students to determine the severity of disability and support needed.
- 3.9.3.11 Place students admitted with special needs and or a disability on the University tracking system.

3.10 Personal Safety and Security

3.10.1 Policy issues

Community members with disabilities and special needs at SUA are at a higher risk of experiencing theft, rape, or sexual harassment, especially from people familiar with their life patterns. These risks are heightened, among others, by the lack of enough security guards and road signs and by inadequate streetlights in various areas within SUA campuses.

3.10.2 Policy Statement

The University is committed to sustaining and increasing personal safety and security for its community members, particularly staff and students with disabilities and special needs.

3.10.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.10.3.1 Assess continuously personal safety and security threats to staff and students with special needs.
- 3.10.3.2 Raise awareness among the SUA community members on safety and security for persons with disabilities.
- 3.10.3.3 Install security alarms for the deaf and blind in all housing facilities and elevators for students with physical impairment.
- 3.10.3.4 Give priority to accommodate students and staff with disabilities within the University campuses for security purposes.
- 3.10.3.5 Redress personal safety and security threats to staff and students with disability.
- 3.10.3.6 Ensuring University roads have essential signs and speed humps to allow convenient use by students and staff with disabilities and ensure drivers strictly adhere to the safe road use measures.
- 3.10.3.7 Construct road demarcations in all risky areas, such as along different bridges.
- 3.10.3.8 Develop and orient staff and students with disabilities with the security protocols to ensure their safety and security
- 3.10.3.9 Allocate security guards to all halls of residence for students with disabilities.
- 3.10.3.10 Install CCTV cameras in all housing facilities, including residence

halls, for students with disabilities and special needs.

3.11 Curriculum, instruction, and assessment

3.11.1 Policy issue

The general teaching, learning and assessment environment has not satisfactorily paid particular attention to students with special needs and disabilities. Anecdotal records, for example, have revealed the presence of examinations not formatted in favour of some students with special needs, leading to examination failures. Thus, there is a lack of: (i) specific policy or operational procedures that guide the provision of academic services to students with disabilities; (ii) guidelines to identify students with disabilities in order to establish their actual learning needs; and (iii) system institutionalized to identify disabilities, particularly the hidden learning disabilities such as sight and hearing.

3.11.2 Policy Statement

SUA strives to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, learn and achieve curriculum objectives, considering their unique learning needs. Meeting such needs entails, in some cases, modifying or adjusting delivery and assessment methods while upholding the prescribed academic standards.

3.11.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.11.3.1 Carry out regular reviews and amendments of its programs and teaching and examination policies and procedures that may pose challenges or institutional obstacles to persons with special needs to ensure their requirements are considered.
- 3.11.3.2 Facilitate capacity building of academic staff inclusive teaching techniques and enforce their use during curriculum implementation.
- 3.11.3.3 Provide access to academic and vocational placements that meet the demands of students with special needs and disabilities.
- 3.11.3.4 Develop guidelines and regulations to ensure teaching and assessment are adapted to respond to the unique learning needs of students with disabilities.

- 3.11.3.5 Develop and institutionalize alternative assessment and examination strategies, mechanisms, and procedures (e.g., mode of response, use of separate examination rooms, extend or alter assessment time lengths or periods) for students with disabilities whenever their disabilities limit the general fairness of the examination process.
- 3.11.3.6 Develop individualized plans that outline the necessary curriculum accommodations and modifications to ensure a fair assessment process.
- 3.11.3.7 Ensure flexibility in assessment formats to accommodate different disabilities. Institutionalize assessment options such as oral exams, alternative assignments, open-book exams or assistive technologies to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills effectively.
- 3.11.3.8 Institutionalise a plan and mechanism to avoid compromising a student's academic progress due to a disability-related cause.
- 3.11.3.9 Institutionalise a plan and mechanism to avoid compromising the career growth of a staff member due to a disability-related cause
- 3.11.3.10 Record all academic progress files using non-prejudicial terms and make appropriate adjustments (e.g., study completion plans, the extension of examinations) where a delayed completion (or submission) of assignments, failure to attend examination(s), deferral or withdrawal is due to sufficient evidence of a disability-related cause.
- 3.11.3.11 Provide information and training through convenient means to students with special needs.
- 3.11.3.12 Ensure research supervisors, academic advisors, and counsellors meet students with disabilities and special needs in accessible and convenient locations
- 3.11.3.13 Ensure all training sessions have sign language interpreters to assist students with hearing impairments.
- 3.11.3.14 Develop a system to monitor the academic progress of students with disabilities, including their participation in learning, performance, and completion rate, to optimise their retention.

- 3.11.3.15 Provide capacity building on sign language to all academic members of staff of SUA to enhance communication between them and students with hearing difficulties.

3.12 Field placements, practical training, and internship

3.12.1 Policy issue

The lack of a policy on Field Attachments and Internships for Students with Disabilities at SUA creates barriers to equal opportunities and inclusion for students with disabilities in accessing practical learning experiences. Without clear guidelines and support, these students may face discrimination, inadequate support, and limited participation in field attachments and internships, hindering their professional development and career prospects.

3.12.2 Policy statement

SUA recognizes the importance of providing reasonable and individualized support and services to enable the successful engagement of students with disabilities in practical learning experience, field attachments and internships.

3.12.3 Strategies

- 3.12.3.1 Establish partnerships with disability organizations, employers, and industry stakeholders to create opportunities that are more inclusive for students with disabilities in field attachments and internships.
- 3.12.3.2 Conduct an accessibility audit of field attachment and internship sites to identify barriers and develop a plan to ensure physical accessibility.
- 3.12.3.3 Allocate students with special needs and disabilities to field attachments convenient to them, and where necessary, field placements shall consider their choices and preferences.
- 3.12.3.4 Develop individualized support plans that outline accommodations, communication channels, and mechanisms for monitoring and addressing concern of students with disabilities.
- 3.12.3.5 Collaborate with host organizations to ensure they are aware of and prepared to provide necessary and appropriate

accommodations, including accessible transportation, modified workstations, assistive technologies, and disability-inclusive policies and practices.

- 3.12.3.6 Establish mechanisms for collecting feedback from students, host organizations, and relevant stakeholders to assess the experiences of students with disabilities during field attachments and internship.
- 3.12.3.7 Assign trained mentors or supervisors who are knowledgeable about disability-related issues and can provide guidance and support to students with disabilities throughout their field attachments and internship.
- 3.12.3.8 Implement a monitoring and evaluation system to track the participation and experiences of students with disabilities in field attachments and internships.

3.13 Disclosure and Confidentiality

3.13.1 Policy issue

While a disability may be identifiable by specialists, it may, in some situations, be a subjective issue. We may designate a person as a person with a disability, while that person may not consider himself/herself so. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the person in question to disclose his/her disability status. Moreover, in some circumstances, it may be necessary to keep information/records about disability confidential due to the nature of the disability and or the desire of a student with a disability. Currently, SUA lacks a guideline regarding protecting the privacy of individuals with special needs. This problem may threaten the general well-being of individuals with special needs at SUA.

3.13.2 Policy Statement

SUA is committed to developing an environment in which study applicants and its community members can doubtlessly disclose their disabilities that could have substantial and long-term effects on their daily activities during their studies and ensuring that such information remains confidential whenever necessary.

3.13.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.13.3.1 Encourage staff and students (including applicants) to disclose any information regarding their health conditions/status.
- 3.13.3.2 Ensure that the information regarding disabilities is held securely to protect one's privacy.
- 3.13.3.3 Prohibit disclosure of one's disability-related information without that staff's or student's written permission.
- 3.13.3.4 Inform a student or staff why the University has disclosed their disability-related information.
- 3.13.3.5 Observe confidentiality principles when handling the affairs of students and staff with special needs.

3.14 Transport service

3.14.1 Policy issue

The transport service remains a challenge for people with disabilities at SUA. Movements between libraries, lecture halls, seminar rooms, staff offices, recreational places, and dormitories within and across campuses are challenging for students with disabilities. Unfortunately, SUA had no mechanisms for the easy movements of students with various forms of physical disabilities. In these cases, the University is responsible for providing transportation services at no cost to a student with some disabilities to attend lesson sessions and other social activities within and across the University campuses.

3.14.2 Policy statement

SUA aspires to take necessary measures to ensure that transport facilities are adequate and accessible according to the needs of students and staff with disabilities, particularly physical disabilities. Any modifications to the University's general environment will be catered for as required.

3.14.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.14.3.1 Allocate sufficient resources to ensure that campus transport services for staff and students with disability are adequate.

- 3.14.3.2 Ensure that University timetable arrangements allow enough time for students with special needs to move from one lesson (or examination) to the next without delay.
- 3.14.3.3 Adjust its pathways reasonably for easy accessibility by students and staff with disabilities.
- 3.14.3.4 Provide free transport services for shuttling within and between campuses to students and staff with disabilities.

3.15 Health care

3.15.1 Policy issue

Providing health care and support for students and staff with special needs is crucial to the holistic development and social well-being of the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA). Currently, the SUA Health Centre does not have sufficient personnel specialised in health care needs, particularly for those who need regular assessment and treatment, such as those with albinism. There should be a conscious effort to meet the physical, psychosocial, and spiritual well-being of individuals with special needs, as this will help improve their lives, promote positive attitudes and raise their self-esteem.

3.15.2 Policy statement

The University shall ensure that its Health Centres and Hospitals provide optimal equitable healthcare services to meet the essential healthcare needs of people with disabilities consistent with the types of their disabilities.

3.15.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.15.3.1** Conduct a needs assessment, develop a plan, and make a budgetary allocation to acquire adequate essential medications and facilities for students and staff with disabilities and special needs.
- 3.15.3.2** Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with other hospitals such as Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT), Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH), Muhimbili Orthopaedic Institute (MOI), Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Centre (KCMC) and Ocean Road

Cancer Institute (ORCI) to ensure students and staff with disabilities access specialised health care services on time.

3.15.3.3 Adhere to the guidelines for services provided to persons with special needs as specified in civil servants' circular number three of 2007.

3.15.3.4 Ensure every student and staff join and contribute to the well-established health insurance company such as National Health Insurance Fund

3.16 Supportive technical staff and equipment maintenance

3.16.1 Policy issue

Upon the establishment of the Centre for special needs at SUA, it will also involve the use of equipment to facilitate teaching and learning for such students. Effectiveness and reliability of the equipment depend on their appropriate use to ensure durability and how they are maintained. Equipment maintenance requires regular service and troubleshooting, especially when they are in use. This goes hand in hand with the replacement of a defective device in any damaged equipment. Both purchase of a new equipment and maintenance of the existing ones require technical support staff with the relevant expertise.

3.16.2 Policy statement

The University shall ensure that there is a technical support staff with relevant expertise to be involved in purchasing and maintenance of the equipment for special needs. The staff will ensure not only durability of the equipment but also sustainability of the service of facilitating teaching and learning for the students with special needs using the available technology.

3.16.3 Strategies

SUA shall:

- 3.16.3.1 Recruit and train technical personnel specialised in the use, servicing and troubleshooting equipment for facilitating teaching and learning of students with special needs.

- 3.16.3.2 Be advised by the technical personnel on the type of equipment required for students with special needs including the appropriate way of their management.
- 3.16.3.3 Ensure that technical personnel train both staff and students with special needs on the appropriate way of using the equipment for special needs.
- 3.16.3.4 Ensure regular maintenance of assistive technology.

CHAPTER FOUR

IMPLEMENTATION, REVIEW, AND ENFORCEMENT

4.1 Organization and Mandate

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning, Finance, and Administration) (DVC (PFA)) shall be the overseer regarding the implementation of all activities stated in the SNIE Policy. The office of the DVC (PFA) shall have the mandate to ensure that Directorates, Colleges, Schools, Institutes, Heads of Departments, or Units comply with the Special Needs Policy and shall report to the DVC (PFA) regarding the implementation of this policy.

4.2 Role of Different Stakeholders

The implementation of the SNIE Policy requires a common understanding and usage at SUA. To attain University's SNIE Policy goals, objectives, and strategies, deliberate collaborative efforts within and outside SUA are required to enforce standards and procedures. Stakeholders within and outside SUA shall implement the SNIE Policy in various capacities. Stakeholders within SUA shall include, but are not limited to, the office of the DVC (PFA), Directorates, Colleges, Institutes, Schools, Departments, and other agencies such as the office of the Dean of Students, staff members, students, Special Needs Unit or Association, and Auxiliary Police. Stakeholders from outside SUA include: Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST), relevant government agencies as well as non-governmental organizations. For effective implementation of the Special Needs Policy, stakeholders shall develop strategic action plans and identify human and financial resources, responsible organs, and key individuals.

4.2.1 Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology

- 4.2.1.1. The MoEST shall provide infrastructure and facilities such as equipment and finance for SNIE centre as well as staff and students with special needs at SUA.
- 4.2.1.2. The Ministry shall collaborate with SUA on various projects or activities regarding special needs.
- 4.2.1.3. Oversee and monitor the implementation of the policy objectives

4.2.2 University Council

- 4.2.2.1. The University Council is the Higher Education Accreditation Council and the ultimate Financial Accounting Authority of the University as stipulated in the Education Act of 2005.
- 4.2.2.2. The council shall ensure that the University complies with policy and legal framework and treats staff and students with special needs according to the SNIE Policy.

4.2.3 Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning, Finance, and Administration)

The DVC (PFA) shall:

- 4.2.3.1. Oversee and monitor the implementation of the policy objectives.
- 4.2.3.2. Appoint SNIE centre Committee (Management Team).
- 4.2.3.3. Allocate a special budget to address the unique needs of staff and students with special needs.
- 4.2.3.4. Ensure employment of staff with special needs adheres to the requirement stipulated by the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act of 2010.
- 4.2.3.5. Adjust infrastructure to respond to students' and staff's special needs.
- 4.2.3.6. Ensure that Directorates, Colleges, Institutes, Schools, Departments, and Units provide services that respond to students and staff's special needs.

4.2.4 Sokoine University of Agriculture SNIE Centre

- 4.2.4.1. Shall propose SNIE Policy for consideration by the Vice Chancellor.
- 4.2.4.2. Shall coordinate the establishment, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and review of SUA SNIE Policy.
- 4.2.4.3. Shall advise the DVC (PFA) in making decisions on appropriate resources and facilities required by students and staff with special needs.
- 4.2.4.4. Shall ensure that the SNIE budget is prepared in alignment with categories of staff and students with special needs.
- 4.2.4.5. Shall coordinate and provide services to students and staff with special needs according to the stipulated strategies.
- 4.2.4.6. Shall identify students and staff with special learning or working needs.
- 4.2.4.7. Shall communicate with DVC (Academic, Research, and Consultancy) (DVC (ARC)) on the available number of students and staff with their respective types of special needs.

- 4.2.4.8. Shall ensure that teaching and learning materials as well as examinations are in accessible formats according to the needs of students and staff with special needs.
- 4.2.4.9. Shall facilitate communication between students and staff with special needs and SUA staff in inclusive settings.
- 4.2.4.10. Shall prepare and facilitate training on the use of assistive technology devices for students and staff with special needs.
- 4.2.4.11. Shall assign and oversee the implementation of the job described to Personal Assistants of students with special needs.
- 4.2.4.12. Keep up-to-date records of students and staff with special needs

4.2.5 Directors/Principals/Deans/Heads of Departments/Units

- 4.2.5.1. Implement directives regarding students and staff with special needs from the University's top management.
- 4.2.5.2. Provide appropriate services to students and staff according to their specified special needs.
- 4.2.5.3. Encourage academic and administrative staff to provide services and support to students and staff with special needs according to the SNIE Policy.
- 4.2.5.4. Communicate with the SUA management on the provision of teaching and learning materials, examinations, and information in an accessible format according to the SNIE Policy provisions.

4.2.6 Dean of Students

DoS shall:

- 4.2.6.1 Prioritise accommodation allocation for students with special needs.
- 4.2.6.2 Ensure accessibility of information about the services available at the University for students with special needs.
- 4.2.6.3 Coordinate college/school wardens to assess study-related needs, and provide guidance and counselling to enhance the conduciveness of the academic environment.
- 4.2.6.4 Collaborate with SNIE centre to work towards improving the provision of support for students with special needs.

4.2.7 Other Administrative Organs

Human resource administrative officer and auxiliary police shall:

- 4.2.7.1. Ensure the provision of services aligns with SNIE Policy in respect of students and staff's needs.
- 4.2.7.2. Optimise security and protection for students and staff with special needs around SUA campuses and students' halls of residence.

4.2.8 Staff

Academics, laboratory technicians, and supportive staff shall:

- 4.2.8.1. Create a stigma-free SUA community, where students and staff with special needs are respected and encouraged to succeed.
- 4.2.8.2. Recognize students and staff with special needs and accommodate them by considering required needs in the respective areas under their control.
- 4.2.8.3. Ensure security and confidentiality of accurate written and electronic records that relate to students' and staff's needs.
- 4.2.8.4. Familiarise with how to identify and intervene in different categories of students or staff with special needs.
- 4.2.8.5. Provide accurate information to prospective students or staff regarding the availability of support for students and staff with special needs in the University.

4.2.9 Sokoine University of Agriculture Students' Organisation (SUASO)

- 4.2.9.1. Shall bring the special needs information and issues to the attention of the Special Needs Unit through the Dean of Students.
- 4.2.9.2. Shall use inclusive approaches in organizing social and academic activities and events and in managing the affairs of the students' organization.
- 4.2.9.3. Shall ensure that students with special needs are engaged in the students' organization. The SUASO Ministry of Affiliation, Gender, and Special Needs specifically should be governed by students with special needs.

4.2.10 Students

- 4.2.10.1. Shall declare health conditions and disabilities that may have detrimental impacts on their ability to fulfil the commitments of the course during the application for studies or after admission.

- 4.2.10.2. Shall discuss with the SNIE Centre or dean of students with any necessary support arrangements prior to commencement of studies whenever possible.
- 4.2.10.3. Shall notify the University if they feel their examination or test performance has been affected by special needs.
- 4.2.10.4. Shall ensure that they have a clear idea of what is expected of them in their course of study.
- 4.2.10.5. Students without disability shall volunteer to assist students with special needs to take notes or read on behalf of the students with special needs.

4.3 Policy Review

The SUA SNIE Policy shall be reviewed after every five years or whenever pressing needs affecting students or staff with special needs arise. The review shall aim to appraise the effectiveness of the policy by incorporating new developments, amendments, and strategic plans within the University. The DVC (PFA) shall constitute a review team. The DVC (PFA) shall also mandate the review team to undertake the review exercise.

4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The aim of the monitoring and evaluation of the SNIE Policy shall be to obtain feedback on the progress of the policy implementation in relation to its established objectives, expectations, and strategies. Monitoring and evaluation shall be carried out at all levels of the University. The office of the DVC (PFA) under the SNIE Centre shall coordinate and facilitate the support needed for monitoring and evaluation of the Special Needs Policy. The University council shall receive annual progress reports on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Policy.

SUA shall monitor the applications, admissions, academic progress, and nature of impairment of students with special needs. SUA shall monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery for students and staff with special needs. An elaborate framework shall be established at all levels of the University to monitor and evaluate progress and identify opportunities for improvement. Timely monitoring of progress regarding this policy and associated action plans shall be done by the appropriate mechanism in the organizational structures of the University.

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