

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY OF INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (IGNOU)-2023

1.0 Preamble

Indira Gandhi National Open University (hereinafter referred to as IGNOU) recognizes the value of diverse workforce. IGNOU is committed to provide equal opportunities in employment and creating an inclusive work place and work culture in which all employees are treated equally with respect and dignity.

2.0 Policy

This Equal Opportunity Policy is in accordance with the provisions of "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016" hereinafter referred as the Act and "The Rights of People with Disabilities Rules, 2017", hereinafter referred as the Rules. It is the policy of IGNOU to provide equal employment opportunities, without any discrimination on the grounds of disability, caste, tribe, race, region, religion, marital status, beliefs, colour or sex. The IGNOU strives to maintain a work environment that is free from any discrimination based on above considerations.

This Equal Opportunity Policy will be consistently applied throughout the period of employment.

3.0 Scope

- The Equal Opportunity Policy covers all Persons with benchmark Disabilities (as defined in "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016) and shall be applicable to all classes and categories of workforce irrespective of their terms and conditions of engagement.
- Applicability of the Policy for Employment aspirants is restricted to the provisions upto pre recruitment, unless specifically stated otherwise.
- The policy would also cover those employees who may acquire disability during the course of their employment with the company.

4.0 Policy Statement

In accordance with the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and "The Rights of People with Disabilities Rules, 2017", it is the IGNOU's Policy to ensure that the work environment is free from any discrimination against Persons with benchmark disabilities. Further, IGNOU will take all actions to ensure that a conducive environment is provided to Persons with disabilities to perform their roles, responsibilities and excel in the same.

Further, in line with the provisions in the Act and the Rules, IGNOU has implemented the following policy provisions in order to promote inclusive growth of Persons with Disabilities in IGNOU.

4.1 Identification of Posts suitable for Persons with benchmark Disabilities

List of posts identified for recruitment of Persons with benchmark disabilities in IGNOU is attached as Annexure-I & II. The post identified by Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment will be taken as model, for identification of the post.

4.2 Manner of Selection

- Vacancies earmarked for PwBD mentioning the category of disability will be clearly indicated in Recruitment
- advertisement. Relaxations in age, other qualifying criteria and selection criteria shall be provided in line with Govt. guidelines issued from time to time.
- IGNOU shall adopt a transparent selection process based on merit and without any bias against the disabilities of the prospective candidates as per the provisions of IGNOU recruitment rules. Candidates with necessary disability certificate issued by the Competent Authority in accordance with the Rules under the Act shall be considered for appointment in IGNOU.
- All vacancy advertisements will include an appropriate short statement on equal opportunities for persons with benchmark disabilities.
- IGNOU shall facilitate ease of taking examination/test to candidates with disabilities by providing barrier free environment at test center/ interview center and shall provide scribes, wherever admissible.

4.3 Post-Recruitment and Pre-Promotion Training

IGNOU shall impart post-recruitment induction training and pre-promotion job specific inclusive training programs to employees with benchmark disabilities along with other employees.

IGNOU shall, to the extent possible, provide course materials meant for training in accessible formats. The requests for reasonable accommodation such as accessible training venue, accessible materials, scribe etc. shall be favorably considered to the extent possible.

Employees with disability shall be placed with experienced employees for a reasonable period on resuming responsibility of a post so as to enable them to pick up skills required to perform the job and also the adaptations that may be required in individual cases.

4.4 Preference in allotment of Accommodation

IGNOU shall provide special consideration for allotment of suitable accommodation for employees with disabilities based on medical authority's recommendations, in IGNOU Residential Complexes, with the approval of Competent Authority.

Wherever required, modification in bathroom, toilet, gates etc. shall be carried out in allotted accommodation to address the needs of disabled employee, subject to accessibility guidelines.

4.5 Accessibility

As per provisions of the RPwD Act 2016, IGNOU shall conduct Infrastructure Audit from time to time, but not later than every three years.

(a) Physical Infrastructure

- IGNOU aims to ensure that our physical infrastructure (buildings, furniture, facilities and services in the building/campus) adheres to the accessibility standards as prescribed by the Government of India from time to time. To the extent possible, all existing IGNOU buildings shall be made accessible to PwBD. All future establishments shall incorporate accessibility provisions such as ramps, grab bars, wider doorways, tactile paths, accessible parking, accessible toilets, braille symbols and auditory signals in elevators etc.

- IGNOU will, to the extent possible, provide suitable facilities and amenities to persons with benchmark disabilities for the effective discharge of their functions. Appropriate furniture, computers and other hardware etc. in accordance with their requirement shall be provided to persons with benchmark disabilities to improve their optimum efficiency.
- IGNOU will, to the extent possible, make all events and meetings inclusive by ensuring that these are conducted at accessible venues.
- On official travel/tour, conscientious efforts would be made for employees with benchmark disabilities for being provided accessible guest houses/hotels.

(b) Digital Infrastructure

- IGNOU, to the extent possible, ensure that all documents, communication and information technology systems adhere to the accessibility standards. IGNOU will ensure that as far as possible accessible technologies are procured.
- IGNOU will ensure that Information Technology interventions such as SAP, IGNOU websites, IGNOU Reports, DISHA, IGNOU Webmail, local Intranets and all other portals of IGNOU are in accessible formats.

4.6 Discrimination Free Work Environment

IGNOU will ensure that the work environment is free from any discrimination against persons with benchmark disabilities and that no opportunity is denied to persons with disabilities on the ground of disability.

4.7 Leave

IGNOU has following provisions of Leave Rules in respect of employees with benchmark disabilities.

a) Special Casual Leave

Nature of Contingency	Extent of leave admissible
Employees with disabilities for specific requirements relating to the disability of the Employee	4(four) days in a calendar year
Employees with benchmark disabilities for participating in the Conference/Seminars/Training/Workshop related to Disability and Development related programmes organized by Central/State/UTs/ Institutions / Universities / International agencies etc. Note: Special Casual Leave can be combined with regular leave as a special case.	Maximum of 10 (ten) days in a calendar year

b) Child Care Leave

Female employee or single male employee can avail child care leave with no age limit in case of disabled child having a benchmark disability.

4.8 Transfers and Posting

- IGNOU shall consider, to the extent possible, the transfer requests or preferred place of posting of employees with benchmark disabilities and those employees who are care givers of disability dependent family members, so as to optimally utilize their services.
- The above provisions shall however be subject to the mode/nature/ terms and conditions of the engagement of the individual and administrative feasibility.

4.9 Sports, Adventure and Recreation

- IGNOU shall encourage and provide equal opportunities for participation in Sports and recreational activities for its employees with benchmark disabilities in the form of conducting Para Games at different levels.
- IGNOU shall promote adventure activities for employees with disabilities and support their participation for inclusive programmes.

5.0 Sensitization and Awareness

IGNOU shall conduct awareness companions and sensitization programmes for all employees, periodically to ensure that the rights of the persons with disabilities provided under this Act are protected.

6.0 Liaison Officers and their Responsibilities

- Ms. Rajni A Jeet, Deputy Registrar appointed to look after welfare and all matters related to SCs/STs, also function as Liaison Officers for persons with benchmark disabilities and shall ensure compliance of guidelines/instructions issued for Persons with benchmark Disabilities by Govt. of India, from time to time.
- The Liaison Officer will be responsible for taking initiative and providing requisite support needed to realise the goals of an inclusive and accessible workplace.
- The Liaison Officer shall submit annual progress report to the office of Director, NCDS, as per the format given below:

Sl. No.	Action to be Initiated	Actual Realization during the period 1 st Jan to 31 st Dec each year	Limitations in achieving the set target	Remarks if any
1.	Making the workplace and IT systems accessible for employees with disabilities (a) Maintenance of Records regarding the employees with disabilities posted at a department. (b) Compliance from Infocom Services in respect of accessible IT infrastructure. (c) Compliance from Civil section in respect of Physical Infrastructure			
2.	Awareness among all employees about Equal Opportunity Policy (At least one sensitization program every year)			

- The Liaison Officer shall maintain records of Persons with Benchmark Disabilities in their respective work centres and submit returns as per the Act read with the Rules.

- The contact details of Liaison Officer shall be displayed on intranet and notice boards at workplace for its easy access to all the stake holders.
- IGNOU will make arrangements for training the Liaison Officer on matters pertaining to compliances under the Act & Rules.

7.0 Grievance Redressal Officer

- A Grievance Redressal Officer is nominated in compliance with the provisions of the Act. Any person aggrieved has the right to file a complaint concerning any discrimination with the Grievance Redressal Officer. Any policy violation i.e. when any person with benchmark disability is discriminated against or denied any opportunity/right available to them, will be construed as a grievance (Annexure-III).
- The Grievance Redressal Officer, so appointed, would receive and redress the grievances of persons with benchmark disabilities within a reasonable time frame. However, every complaint will have to be enquired within two weeks of its registration. The Grievance Redressal Officer shall investigate the complaint and shall take up the matter with establishment for corrective action.
- The Grievance Redressal Officer will maintain a register of complaints in the manner as prescribed under the Rules as per format attached as Annexure-IV.
- On investigation, if the employee against whom the complaint has been made is found guilty of discriminatory behaviour, she/he will be subjected to action as per provisions of Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964 as adopted by the University for its employees. However, the process of training and counselling would help sensitise all concerned towards PwBD personnel.

8.0 Responsibility

- In association with Director, NCDS and Liaison Officers for Persons with Disabilities will have the administrative and functional responsibility, for ensuring compliance with this Policy.
- A time-bound Accessibility Audit shall be conducted to ensure the compliance of this policy.

9.0 Communication of Policy

- This Policy will be available to all employees via the University website & IGNOU Reports.
- The Policy shall be included in the welcome kit provided to the new joiners/probationers.
- All recruitment literature and employment advertisements will indicate that IGNOU is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

10.0 The Vice Chancellor shall be Competent Authority to make amendments/modifications in any of the provisions in the policy from time to time.