

DAS ACADEMY

Diverse Learner Policy Handbook



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Published by the DAS Academy Ltd

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ABOUT DAS ACADEMY

DAS Academy is a Private Education Institution (PEI) registered with the Committee for Private Education (CPE) - part of SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG), and has achieved a 4-year validity period, under the committee's Enhanced Registration Framework. Incorporated on 19 February 2010, DAS Academy is led by a multi-disciplinary team that has extensive experience in providing direct support to people with specific learning differences (SpLD), the lecturers are able to use their skills and expertise in the design and delivery of the programmes offered by the DAS Academy. These programmes provide an academic pathway in the field of SpLD from foundation to postgraduate levels.

The DAC Academy formed a partnership with the University of South Wales, UK in 2013 to launch the Master of Arts in Special Educational Needs (MA SEN). Accredited by the University of South Wales and jointly delivered by DAS Academy, this programme has been well received by both educators and caregivers of people with special educational needs since its launch.

Working with professional and educational bodies in Singapore and the region, DAS Academy is committed to the professional development of teachers and staff in schools, to equip them with skills and strategies required to enable learners with SpLD reach their true potential.

Having established a good professional standing in the field of SpLD, DAS Academy works in collaboration with the government, educational and professional bodies to empower individuals who wish to make a difference in the lives of people with SpLD.

MOTTO

Enabling Excellence

VISION

To be a world-class academic institution providing education and research in the area of special educational needs.

MISSION

To empower special education professionals and caregivers to help people with special educational needs achieve their full potential.

DIVERSE LEARNER POLICY

The Diverse Learner Policy was launched in 2021 as part of DAS Academy's efforts to promote inclusive education.

DAS Academy strives to provide quality learning and teaching to students with diverse backgrounds, cultures, abilities and dispositions.

At the DAS Academy, we recognise that students' learning needs may vary and these differences may be due to, but not limited to, a learning difficulty.

The DAS Academy is therefore committed to fulfil the diverse learning capabilities of all students.

We aim to address the needs of students who may require additional learning and assessment support.

DIVERSE LEARNER POLICY

STATEMENT

The contents of this handbook outline DAS Academy's commitment to ensure that all students are provided equity of access to course content and learning activities as well as be given opportunities for achievements that are in line with their capabilities.



LECTURERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Identifying Students' Needs

i. Identify the areas in which to capture information about student needs. These areas should include, but not limited to:

- ◆ Physical / Visual / Auditory needs
- ◆ Language proficiency (e.g. English is not the first language)
- ◆ Social-emotional needs (e.g. currently under medication for Anxiety, Depression etc.)
- ◆ Foundational skills required for the module (e.g. highest education level, past & current occupation)
- ◆ Communication skills (e.g. speech and/or oral communication)

These should capture both strengths and areas the student may need support in. Refer to Appendix 1.

ii. Provide recommendations based on the needs identified.

iii. Identify a Point of Contact for the student to ensure familiarity and consistency.

iv. Information about student's needs and suggested recommendations should be reviewed and refined across modules the student attends. This allows lecturers to remain responsive to the evolving needs of students. Depending on the student's progress, there may be a need to review the above information halfway through a module.

v. In the event that student needs more than academic support, recommend a referral for professional support based on the student's needs.

2. Maintaining Confidentiality

- i. All information pertaining to students request for support are considered confidential and will be managed in accordance with PDPA regulations.
- ii. Maintaining a high standard of confidentiality serves to maintain an environment in which students feel respected, safe, supported, and protected.
- iii. DAS Academy offers the following guidelines to ensure that confidential student information is kept secure:
 - ◆ All information that a student shares with lecturers is to be used specifically for arranging reasonable accommodations for the course of study.
 - ◆ Do not leave student information visible on computers or in any printed format that others can see, and dispose of it securely at the end of the course of study.
 - ◆ Refrain from discussing a student's needs, request for support or recommendations for support within hearing range of others who do not need to know.
 - ◆ Send separate emails to students or blind copy (BCC) students so they are not privy to other student's information.
 - ◆ At no time, should other students be informed of a student's learning needs and that a student has requested for additional support, except at the student's request.
 - ◆ Discuss recommendations for support with students in private.
- iv. Students with a diagnosed learning difficulty may choose to disclose details of their difficulties during the course. However, lecturers are expected to maintain confidentiality and avoid unnecessarily drawing attention to the student's difficulties.

3. Addressing Barriers for Learning In Different Learning Environments

Dual-mode Delivery

- A. Recommend appropriate tools and provide accommodations that students can access independently before, during and/or after the module.

E.g. Provide an audio/video recording of assignment instructions. Introduce features such as text to speech apps to make the content uploaded online much more accessible.

- B. Provide clear details on how students will be facilitated and supported for each mode of delivery.

These can include:

- Synchronous learning opportunities such as 1:1 tutorial sessions or small group instruction
 - Asynchronous learning opportunities such as recorded mini lessons or formative feedback on online instructional platforms.
- C. When identifying technology tools, recognise the diversity of student needs and identify a tool that is flexible in meeting a variety of needs.
- Allow students to choose between online and offline support that meets their needs and provides them with meaningful feedback. Provide the necessary guidance on how to access and use the various technology tools identified.



- Select tools that allow students to maintain privacy in online group instruction e.g. the availability of breakout rooms, the option to turn off videos only when necessary and the opportunity to ask questions discreetly through a private chat function.
- D. Allocate time for screen/movement breaks for both online and offline students. E.g. For every hour of online learning, provide screen breaks of 5 to 7 minutes. This would also provide offline students a quick movement break.

4. Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

i. PRESENTATION OF SLIDES AND HANDOUTS

- ◆ Providing slides and handouts at least 3 days before the start of a module: Gives students time to prepare and look through the content.
- ◆ Think about different ways information can be displayed. Visuals are processed more effectively than a paragraph of text.
- ◆ Keep the content of each slide to three main bullet points or one diagram to make it easier for students to follow.
- ◆ Remember space! Space makes the slides easier to read and scan, and therefore improves readability and comprehension.
- ◆ Avoid using white backgrounds on slides.
- ◆ Use an accessible font (e.g. Sans-serif fonts) so that the text is clearly defined and spaced.
- ◆ Use font size 12+ for printed handouts and 28+ for slide presentations.
- ◆ Use a font colour that is highly visible and contrasts with the background.
- ◆ Ensure text is aligned to the left, rather than fully justified.
- ◆ More information on Dyslexia Friendly Publishing can be found in the DAS Handbook 2020:
www.das.org.sg/images/publications/das-handbook/DASHB2020/7-Dyslexia-Friendly-Publishing.pdf

ii. DURING LECTURES

- ◆ Consider the existing knowledge needed for the various modules and explain this to the students at the start. This will allow students to identify the areas they may need support in.

* Think about the accommodations that can be provided to students who do not have the pre-requisite knowledge needed.

- ◆ Break up lectures by incorporating Q&A sessions or group work/discussions. Allocate time in lectures to allow students to discuss or ask questions about the ideas, topics or concepts raised.

ii. ASSESSMENT MATTERS

- ◆ At the start of the module, make it clear to students about the assessment requirements and what will be tested in the different types of assessment.
- ◆ Provide sample assessment questions and answers (where possible).
- ◆ Make it clear to students when they can expect to receive their results and feedback. Feedback should be linked to the assessment criteria/learning outcomes. Feedback provided should be explicit and specific.
- ◆ Different forms of feedback can be given e.g. Online feedback, a facilitated discussion between lecturers and students half-way through a module, peer feedback.
- ◆ Use clear, unambiguous language for assessments. Avoid using abbreviations in questions unless they are explained.
- ◆ Think about reasonable adjustments that can be made for diverse learners.
- ◆ E.g. Extra time for timed assessments/online quizzes - additional 25% of the total time given; consultations on assignments; formative feedback on assignment drafts.

4. Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

iv. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- ◆ Identify how all students can experience success regardless of their grades and test scores.
- ◆ Modify and differentiate instruction where necessary so that students from diverse backgrounds will have an equal opportunity to learn.
- ◆ Find out about students' learning styles by asking them what works best for them.
- ◆ Observe students to identify their strengths and capitalise on those strengths.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for students to voice their thoughts and opinions; for students to be the 'expert' in discussions. Create a learning environment where students are comfortable to do so.



5. Supporting Learners with Mental Health Needs

- i. Students need to approach the course lecturer to request for support. While the lecturer may be able to identify if a student has learning needs and may require support, students are encouraged to be their own advocates and reach out for support.
- ii. If students have a diagnosed learning difficulty, students are encouraged to disclose this at the start of the course.
- iii. In discussing the recommendations for support, students need to be forthcoming if the support that will be provided may not be sufficient.
- iv. Students need to commit to the outlined plan for the recommendations for support and the period agreed to. In the event that student misses any scheduled consultations without a valid reason or without informing the lecturer prior to the session despite sufficient email or text reminders, the missed session will not be replaced.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- i. Students need to approach the course lecturer to request for support. While the lecturer may be able to identify if a student has learning needs and may require support, students are encouraged to be their own advocates and reach out for support.
- ii. If students have a diagnosed learning difficulty, students are encouraged to disclose this at the start of the course.
- iii. In discussing the recommendations for support, students need to be forthcoming if the support that will be provided may not be sufficient.
- iv. Students need to commit to the outlined plan for the recommendations for support and the period agreed to. In the event that student misses any scheduled consultations without a valid reason or without informing the lecturer prior to the session despite sufficient email or text reminders, the missed session will not be replaced.



RECOMMENDATION FOR SUPPORT

Some Guiding Questions:

- ◆ What support would benefit the student most?
- ◆ Is this support for accessing the content during lectures?
- ◆ Is this support to prepare the student for assessment?
- ◆ How long do you intend to provide this support?
- ◆ Will support be provided even after the assessment?

Note: If you are not the only lecturer on this course, do seek feedback from the other lecturers as you complete this form.

RECOMMENDATION FOR SUPPORT

The recommendations for support has been communicated to the student on _____ (Date).

The student has agreed to the recommendations and support will commence on _____ (Date) for _____ (Duration).

Acknowledged by : _____ Date : _____
(Signature)

Name: _____

Designation: _____



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