

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Al Ain University



جامعة العين
AL AIN UNIVERSITY

Contents

Al Ain University – Accessibility and Inclusion for People of Determination.....	3
Dedicated Support Services and Mentoring.....	3
Academic Accommodations and Learning Aids	4
Physical Accessibility and Infrastructure	5
Counseling and Psychological Support.....	5
Inclusion Training and Awareness Programs	6
University Policies and Commitment to Inclusion.....	6
Partnerships and Community Engagement	6
Al Ain University's team secures the first place globally in the Information Technology Challenge for People with Disabilities.....	7
Conclusion	8

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 10

Al Ain University – Accessibility and Inclusion for People of Determination

Dedicated Support Services and Mentoring

Al Ain University (AAU) has established a **People of Determination Support Office** under the Deanship of Student Affairs to ensure students with disabilities are fully supported and integrated into campus life. This office provides individualized assistance and mentoring throughout a student's academic journey. For example, AAU organizes special orientation sessions each semester exclusively for students with disabilities, where they are introduced to campus facilities and meet **professional counsellors for personal support**scribd.com. Staff from the support office (and trained volunteers) offer one-on-one guidance – such as **escorting students to their classes** if needed and arranging **sign-language interpreters** for hearing-impaired studentsscribd.com. These measures create a sustainable, supportive environment in which students of determination receive personal attention and mentoring beyond the classroom.

15.1 Orientation for New Students

Al Ain University is committed to organizing orientation sessions for new students at the beginning of each semester. These sessions provide guidance and advice on all academic and non-academic aspects. Each college organizes its own event to introduce new students to the college and its academic programs, and to inform them about the availability of academic advisors for every student. The sessions also cover various aspects of academic life, emphasizing the importance of keeping up with their studies and maintaining regular contact with advisors, especially during registration at the beginning of each semester. Additionally, the Deanship of Student Affairs organizes a special event for new students at the beginning of each semester. Students are introduced to the services and facilities offered by the university in general and the Deanship of Student Affairs in particular. They are guided on where to find information, the university's rules and regulations are explained, and the student handbook is presented, highlighting its importance for accessing

all necessary information throughout their university journey. This event is attended by the University President, members of the Deans' Council, Heads of Departments, Academic Program Directors, the Registrar, and all staff of the Deanship of Student Affairs. New students are introduced to all these individuals and informed about how to contact them. A Q&A session is also held to address any questions or concerns.

Additionally, People of Determination Support office organizes an orientation day at the beginning of each semester. This session familiarizes students with disabilities with the university's facilities and the availability of professional counsellors who provide personal support. The office also seeks suggestions from students to improve the services provided to meet their needs throughout their academic journey.

Academic Accommodations and Learning Aids

AAU provides a range of academic accommodations to ensure an inclusive learning experience. Students of determination receive **priority in course registration** and assistance in coordinating class schedules tailored to their conditions scribd.com. The university also ensures **accessible learning materials** – for instance, providing textbooks and resources in appropriate formats or assistive media to meet individual needs scribd.com. In assessment settings, AAU establishes **special examination committees** or arrangements for students whose disabilities warrant it scribd.com. This can include offering extended time or alternative exam venues as needed. Additionally, comfortable and accessible classroom arrangements are made (e.g. scheduling classes on ground floors for easy access) scribd.com. Such academic accommodations, coupled with learning aids (like assistive software or devices as required), empower students with physical, sensory, cognitive, or learning disabilities to perform on equal footing with their peers.

1. Offering grants and financial assistance up to 50% of their registered fees; as per regulations implemented by the grant Committee Humanitarian Aid.
2. Giving them the Priority in registration and assisting them in coordinating their schedules according to their conditions.
3. Organize an orientation event for students of determination to introduce them to the University's facilities such as: restaurants, clinic, library, Department of Finance, and the recreational facilities.
4. Providing special parking for them.
5. Guiding them to their lectures.
6. Providing sign language interpreters.
7. Assigning comfortable classrooms for them such as choosing classrooms on the first floor.
8. Providing books and resources appropriate to their needs.
9. Forming special examination committees for those whose condition requires this.
10. Facilitating their participation in various events, exhibitions, and celebrations.

Physical Accessibility and Infrastructure

Campus infrastructure at AAU is continually developed to be disability-friendly. Both the Al Ain campus and the Abu Dhabi campus feature **wheelchair-accessible facilities**, including ramps at building entrances, elevators between floors, and reserved parking spaces close to campus buildings [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com). Key facilities such as libraries, laboratories, cafeterias, and restrooms are equipped or designed to accommodate students with mobility impairments. The university also provides assistance with on-campus transportation when needed – for example, electric carts or accessible buses – to help students move between distant campus facilities. By assigning priority seating and **locating classes in accessible classrooms**, AAU ensures that physical layout is not a barrier to education [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com). These measures reflect AAU's commitment to **universal design**, enabling students with disabilities to navigate and use campus facilities independently and safely.

4. Providing special parking for them.
5. Guiding them to their lectures.
6. Providing sign language interpreters.
7. Assigning comfortable classrooms for them such as choosing classrooms on the first floor.
8. Providing books and resources appropriate to their needs.
9. Forming special examination committees for those whose condition requires this.
10. Facilitating their participation in various events, exhibitions, and celebrations.

Counseling and Psychological Support

AAU recognizes the importance of mental health and social inclusion for students with disabilities. The People of Determination Support Office works in tandem with the university's **Psychological and Social Counseling services** to address any personal or emotional challenges that students of determination may face. The university employs **specialized counselors** who are available to provide one-on-one psychological support and guidance to students, helping them overcome academic stress, social obstacles, or any disability-related anxieties [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com) [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com). These counselors maintain confidentiality and offer continuous encouragement, thereby fostering resilience and well-being. In addition, AAU's counseling center facilitates support groups and workshops that promote self-advocacy and coping skills. By ensuring robust counseling and mental health services, AAU helps create an environment where students with disabilities feel understood, included, and empowered to succeed.

Additionally, People of Determination Support office organizes an orientation day at the beginning of each semester. This session familiarizes students with disabilities with the university's facilities and the availability of professional counsellors who provide personal support. The office also seeks suggestions from students to improve the services provided to meet their needs throughout their academic journey.

Inclusion Training and Awareness Programs

To build an inclusive campus culture, AAU has initiated training and awareness programs for students, faculty, and staff. Over the past five years, the university has hosted **lectures and workshops on disability inclusion**. For example, in 2024 the university held a training workshop titled “*The Etiquette for Dealing with People of Determination*,” which educated participants on the concept and definition of various disabilities (physical, sensory, cognitive, etc.), as well as proper ways to communicate with and support individuals with such disabilities. Similarly, awareness lectures (such as a recent talk on “*Inclusion of People of Determination in the UAE Society*”) have highlighted the challenges that people with disabilities face and showcased key government and community initiatives supporting their empowerment. These events are aimed at faculty, staff, and students alike – helping to sensitize instructors and administrative staff on inclusive practices (e.g. how to accommodate students with learning differences in the classroom) and encouraging peer support among the student body. By investing in regular inclusion training, AAU ensures its community is equipped with the **knowledge, empathy, and skills** to maintain an inclusive learning environment.

University Policies and Commitment to Inclusion

Inclusivity is embedded in AAU's policies and institutional commitments. The university enforces a strict **non-discrimination policy** that protects individuals with disabilities. AAU's code of conduct explicitly prohibits any harassment or discriminatory treatment on the basis of disability (along with other protected characteristics), in line with its core ethics of respect and equality scribd.com. In practice, this means students with physical, sensory, cognitive, or learning disabilities have equal rights to access education and campus life, and any violation of these rights is not tolerated. Moreover, AAU has implemented a formal **reasonable accommodations strategy** to support students of determination. This strategy is backed by dedicated funding mechanisms – notably, the university offers **grants and financial aid of up to 50%** of tuition fees for students with disabilities who qualify, as a form of humanitarian support scribd.com. Such financial assistance lowers barriers to entry and ensures affordability of needed services or assistive devices. AAU's commitment to inclusion is also aligned with national policies in the UAE (which refer to persons with disabilities as “People of Determination”). The university's mission and values emphasize creating a diverse and inclusive campus where **differences are appreciated and all students can thrive in an environment of equal opportunity** scribd.com.

Partnerships and Community Engagement

Over the last five years, AAU has actively collaborated with external organizations and government bodies to enhance support for people with disabilities. For instance, AAU partnered with the **Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination** (a UAE government entity) in the **Global Information Technology Challenge for People with Disabilities**, a competition aimed at empowering youth with disabilities through technology. Not only did AAU host training sessions for participants, but an AAU team also mentored and **helped train students with disabilities**, leading to a first-place victory in the 2023 global finals [aaau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae). The university also encourages students to engage in national events like the **People of Determination Expo** and similar forums, where they can learn about the latest assistive technologies and inclusive education tools. Through its Community Engagement Office, AAU organizes volunteer initiatives that involve students and staff visiting or supporting local centers for persons with disabilities (for example, participating in **integration programs and sports events** for people of determination). These partnerships and outreach activities demonstrate AAU's broader impact – extending its inclusion efforts beyond campus and reinforcing the university's role in promoting **disability inclusion and empowerment** in the community [aaau.ac.ae](https://www.aau.ac.ae).

Al Ain University's team secures the first place globally in the Information Technology Challenge for People with Disabilities



Al Ain University's team, comprising students from the Colleges of Engineering and Business, secured the first-place award in the global Information Technology Challenge for People with Disabilities. This competition was launched by the Zayed Higher Foundation in collaboration with Al Ain University and several local community organizations. The team received recognition for their 'Smart Cane' project designed for the visually impaired. The cane features reduced vibration and an audio alert system to warn the visually impaired of nearby objects or obstacles, with a minimum detection distance of 2 meters.

The challenge consisted of various competitions held over two days. On the first day, two competitions were held: 'eCreative Smart Car,' which evaluated participants' skills in programming self-driving cars using Scratch software, and 'eContent,' where participants showcased their creativity by creating and editing video clips on specific topics. The competition aimed to promote digital awareness and impart digital skills to young individuals with disabilities, empowering them to access information independently without the need for assistance.

The organizing committee recognized and honored the participating teams and individuals for their exceptional achievements across various categories of people with disabilities. Prof. Amer Qasem, AAU Vice President (Abu Dhabi Campus), was present at the ceremony to celebrate the winners.

It's worth noting that Al Ain University supervised the training and qualification of students with disabilities who participated in the competition, providing training courses in the university's engineering labs in Abu Dhabi equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and technologies.

Prof. Amer Qasem, congratulated the winning team and encouraged them to strive for even greater success on various fronts. He emphasized Al Ain University's commitment to empowering individuals with disabilities as a vital component of society, aligning with the strategic vision of Abu Dhabi in supporting people with disabilities. He added, 'We affirm our readiness and commitment to provide all necessary support to our young talents with developmental disabilities.'

Dr. Faten Kharbat, Deputy Dean of the College of Engineering, emphasized that this victory and the collective effort align with Al Ain University's commitment to developing partnerships with local community organizations and activating community initiatives, particularly those related to people with disabilities. She praised the efforts of the lab supervisors in the College of Engineering, who provided training and qualifications to students with disabilities, enhancing their skills and enabling them to achieve first place.

Conclusion

Al Ain University's approach (2019–2024) to supporting people with disabilities is comprehensive and proactive. It spans **personalized academic support**, infrastructural accessibility, dedicated counseling, community awareness, and strong policy frameworks that uphold the rights of students with disabilities. By combining on-campus services (like the People of Determination Support Office, mentoring and accommodations) with university-wide inclusion policies and external collaborations, AAU ensures that students of determination are not only given access but are also set up to succeed and participate fully in university life. This multi-faceted commitment underscores AAU's alignment with international sustainability and inclusion goals – making it a model for higher education institutions striving to provide equitable and inclusive education for all. [scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com)