10.6.8 Support services

Alexandria University promotes equity, access, and inclusive education by providing integrated facilities and services that reduce inequality for students with disabilities. The University supports diverse population groups through accessible infrastructure—including wheelchair-friendly mobility pathways, ramps, elevators, and flexible classroom designs—ensuring fair participation and safe movement across campus.

Through specialized exam accommodations, assistive technology, psychosocial care, and dedicated programs at the Taha Hussein Centre, the University enhances student outcomes, strengthens public health support, and improves learning opportunities for individuals with visual, physical, developmental, and mental-health challenges. These measures reflect a comprehensive policy framework aligned with global development efforts to advance social justice, reduce educational barriers, and promote full inclusion within the university community.

Alexandria university accommodates students with special needs and disabilities with facilitates that enables them to pursue their life on campus. The existing capability include:

- Facilities for wheel-chair for movement disabilities
- Ramp access to buildings.
- Wide door elevators.
- Flexible classroom designs.

In case of exams Alexandria University provides:
- Exams and computer magnification for students with visual impairment.
- Special exam sessions with double duration for students with Down-syndrome and autism.
- Also AU provides additional services and facilities where students with special needs are, in specific cases, allowed to reside in the university's dorms for their entire study period .
- *Facilities for wheel-chair disabilities include:*

Other facilities include
- According to the university and media reports, the Center (and linked units) provide:
- Academic accommodations: converting lectures/textbooks into Braille for visually impaired students.

- Audio library: printed materials are converted into audio recordings.
- Assistive technology: the university provides tools such as computers with screen readers, possibly other assistive devices (wheelchairs, etc.) per the "Tamkeen" initiative.
- Mobility and infrastructure: ramps to replace stair steps, accessible toilets, elevators, wheelchair access in various faculties.
- Student affairs and administrative support: a dedicated Student Affairs department within the center handles admissions, paperwork, accommodation issues.
- Social, cultural, and artistic activities: The center runs an Arts Department, with theatre performances involving students with different types of disabilities.
- Psychosocial support: The university organizes psychological and social support, including conferences and awareness events around integration and mental health.
- Exams support: During exams (midterms, finals), special accommodations are made to ensure students with disabilities have equitable conditions.
- Parental support: The Center also provides guidance to parents of students with disabilities.
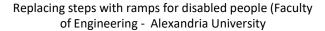
Access scheme for students with disabilities

Taha Hussein Centre for the support of disabled people (Alexandria university, Egypt)

Scheme of Taha Hussein Centre for the support for disabledstudents an staff at the Center on the Faculty of Commerce

1. Construction of corridors in all campus to facilitate their movement with wheelchair.

2. Provision of special priority elevators are available for any student with special needs.
3. Availability of wheel chairs in the Faculties for emergency and special cases.
4. A special place in the campus as clinics for the conscription site to physically examine the students with special needs and give them certificates of exemptionfrom conscription, as a contribution from college to reduce burden on them and their families.
5. Replacing steps with ramps for disabled people Alexandria University.
6. Accessible toilet for disabled people.

7. Special exam settings for students with visual impairments
8. Availability of shadow volutes to read for blind students
9. Special care centres for mental and health care.

Replacing steps with ramps for disabled people (Faculty of Engineering - Alexandria University	Accessible toilet (Alexandria University)

Training courses for children and people with special needs in the community

The Educational Services Center - Faculty of Education, Alexandria University

Description: The Educational Services Center provides training courses for children and

Community members with special needs. The Programs provided by the center
and the number of trainees in a scheduled Training programs developed from
March 2020 to October 2023

Activity of the Faculty of Early Childhood Education

As part of the celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Early Intervention Center offered a free workshop that included various perspectives and a new approach to feeding students with special needs. The workshop featured an interactive sessionfor parents and students on "How to Make a Paper Puppet.

Taha Hussein Centre

Vision

Planning and implementing of strategies to serve students with special needs a to ensure sustainability and funding through best use of resources and encouraging talents inside the university premises with collaboration with social families

Mission

Development of the content become the light house of cultural, social and services And inclusion of students with special needs to be able to face their challenges

The university has established a collaboration protocol; with AMIDEAST centre and the Dream Agency for education and training to establish this centre for students of special needs

The centre includes 105 students form different faculties of Alexandria University and 12 volunteer ,and 4 assistant staff from each faculty. Education material recorded on videos have been prepared to help students to understand their curricula

Honoring the Taha Hussein Center, Alexandria University, on the sidelines of the Second Inclusive Higher Education Conference, which was organized by the Ministry of Higher Education in cooperation with AMIDEAST and the Helm Foundation for Training and Consultations, on Saturday in Cairo, coinciding with the celebration of the International Day of People of Determination.

Dr. Ayman Ashour, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, on behalf of the Minister of Higher Education, thanked Dr. Abdel Aziz Qanswa, President of Alexandria University, in appreciation of the services and support provided by the center to Alexandria University students of determination since the signing of the cooperation agreement between Alexandria University, Helm Foundation and AMIDEAST for the development of the center In 2018, until the official opening of the center, to become one of the largest disability services centers in Egyptian universities. He also expressed his gratitude for all the decisions and policies that support the rights of students of determination at Alexandria University. Ashour Dr. Mona Al Moataz Billah, Executive Director of the Center Taha Hussein, the honor and excellence shield in appreciation from the Ministry for the efforts of the Center.

Participated in the honor Ms. Konsi Dermody, and Dr. Dina Mohsen from AMIDEAST, and Mr. Ramez Maher from the Helm Foundation.

Support Services for Disabled (Students of Determination) at Alexandria University

Key Institutional Support

1. **Taha Hussein Disability Service Center**

   o This is the main center at Alexandria University dedicated to students with disabilities.

   o Originally founded in 1976 for blind students, but in 2019 it was renovated and expanded to serve *all* students with disabilities across the university.

   o The Center's **vision** is to build an inclusive, accessible, and sustained university community.

   o Its **mission** includes: providing assistive and accessible technologies, eliminating discrimination, promoting equal services, and helping students develop confidence and social integration.

   o Center location: Faculty of Arts, El-Gaish Road, Al-Shatby, Alexandria. alexu.edu.eg+1

2. **Wide Range of Services Offered**

According to the university and media reports, the Center (and linked units) provide:

- o **Academic accommodations**: converting lectures/textbooks into Braille for visually impaired students.

- o **Audio library**: printed materials are converted into audio recordings.

- o **Assistive technology**: the university provides tools such as computers with screen readers, possibly other assistive devices (wheelchairs, etc.) per the "Tamkeen" initiative.

- o **Mobility and infrastructure**: ramps to replace stair steps, accessible toilets, elevators, wheelchair access in various faculties.

- o **Student affairs and administrative support**: a dedicated Student Affairs department within the center handles admissions, paperwork, accommodation issues.

- o **Social, cultural, and artistic activities**: The center runs an Arts Department, with theatre performances involving students with different types of disabilities.

- o **Psychosocial support**: The university organizes psychological and social support, including conferences and awareness events around integration and mental health.

- o **Exams support**: During exams (midterms, finals), special accommodations are made to ensure students with disabilities have equitable conditions.

- o **Parental support**: The Center also provides guidance to parents of students with disabilities.

3. **Initiatives & Strategic Programs**

- o **"Tamkeen" Initiative (Empowerment)**: In November 2024, Alexandria University launched the "Tamkeen" initiative, aligned with national efforts, to support and empower students with disabilities via education, training, and social integration.

- o **Collaboration with National Council for People with Disabilities**: The university works closely with the national body to enhance technical support, awareness, and shared resources. alexu.edu.eg

- o **Awareness & Integration Events**: Regular seminars, workshops, and performances are organized to raise awareness among students and staff about disabilities, inclusion, and equal opportunities.

- **Psychological Support**: The University Student Psychological Support Center is being emphasized as a core part of supporting students' mental health, especially for new students and those facing social integration challenges.

4. **Scale of Impact**

   - As of a recent report, the Taha Hussein Center supports more than **1,600 students** with various types of disabilities (physical, visual, hearing, etc.).

   - The center's infrastructure and services are meant to cover the **entire campus**, not limited to a single faculty.

Observed Strengths

- **Comprehensive Service Model**: The Center is not just academic; it covers social, artistic, psychological, and infrastructural support.

- **Institutional Backing**: Strong support from university leadership (President, Vice Presidents), aligned with national disability policy.

- **Inclusive Infrastructure**: Ramps, accessible toilets, and other physical accommodations show real commitment to accessibility.

- **Empowerment Focus**: With "Tamkeen" and arts & social programs, the university promotes not just access, but active participation and visibility of students with disabilities.

- **Collaboration**: Working with national bodies (Council for People with Disabilities) and NGOs (e.g., through Amideast) to improve capacity and resources.

- **Flexible Academic Support**: Converting materials (Braille, audio) ensures students with sensory disabilities can access learning equally.

Challenges and Gaps (Potential / Known)

While Alexandria University seems to provide **very robust** support, some challenges are likely or have been reported / implied in its implementation:

1. **Resource Intensity**

   - Converting printed materials into Braille or audio is expensive and time-consuming. Ensuring all courses each semester are converted requires sustained resources.

   - Assistive technology (computers, specialized software) and maintenance costs might strain the budget.

2. **Scalability Across Faculties**

   o Even though the Center is university-wide, the extent to which every faculty / department fully cooperates may vary. Some faculties may lag in providing exam accommodations, accessible classrooms, or adapted curricula.

3. **Awareness & Stigma**

   o Social integration efforts (seminars, integration events) are necessary because students with disabilities often face stigma or lack of awareness in the broader student body.

   o There may be gaps in day-to-day peer understanding, especially for "invisible" disabilities (e.g., mental health, learning disabilities).

4. **Mental Health Support**

   o The psychological support center is mentioned, but scaling up mental health services (counseling, therapy) to address the full range of needs (anxiety, depression, social isolation) may require more specialized staff.

5. **Financial Support**

   o While the "Tamkeen" initiative and social units may help, some students with disabilities may still face financial barriers (living costs, assistive devices) beyond tuition.

   o Ensuring consistent funding for assistive devices, especially advanced ones (e.g., speech-to-text software, specialized lab equipment) can be a challenge.

6. **Monitoring & Evaluation**

   o Tracking outcomes: The university should (or may) track how students with disabilities perform academically, graduate, and integrate into professional life, to evaluate the effectiveness of support.

   o Feedback mechanisms: It's important to have regular feedback channels (surveys, committees) to understand what works and what doesn't from students' perspectives.

Recommendations (for University & Stakeholders)

Based on the above, here are some **recommendations** to strengthen and scale support for disabled students at Alexandria University:

1. **Scale Up Assistive Technology**

- Invest in more and updated assistive devices (screen readers, voice recognition, alternative input devices).

- Explore partnerships with NGOs and international donors to fund high-cost tech.

2. **Faculty Training & Sensitization**

- Regular workshops for faculty/staff on inclusive pedagogy, universal design for learning, and disability awareness.

- Encourage faculty to proactively adapt course materials for students with disabilities (e.g., provide lecture notes, slides in accessible formats).

3. **Expand Mental Health Services**

- Hire specialized counselors / therapists familiar with disability-related mental health issues.

- Establish peer-support groups, mentorship programs, buddy systems.

4. **Strengthen Monitoring & Feedback**

- Conduct annual surveys of students with disabilities to assess satisfaction, pain points, and needs.

- Publish an annual "Inclusion Report" to track progress, challenges, and resource needs.

5. **Increase Financial Support**

- Offer scholarships, grants, or stipends specifically for students with disabilities to cover assistive devices, transport, and living costs.

- Work with government and non-profits to fund long-term assistive tech loans or grants.

6. **Promote Social Integration and Advocacy**

- Expand artistic, cultural, and sports programs for students with disabilities as shown in "Tamkeen" to enhance their visibility and agency.

- Use success stories to raise awareness and reduce stigma — e.g., highlight achievements of students with disabilities in university communications and events.

7. **Accessible Infrastructure Audit**

- Conduct a full audit of campus accessibility (ramps, elevators, signage, restrooms) and ensure continuous upgrades.

Implement wayfinding systems for visually impaired (e.g., tactile paving, Braille signage).