

Special Educational Needs Policy

Philosophy

Albanian College values diversity as a key aspect of being internationally-minded and as an important goal for all future IB programmes. Student diversity includes gifted as well as special needs students.

Albanian College believes in principles of good practice as defined by *Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes: Special educational needs within the International Baccalaureate programmes*, 2010, which include:

- Affirming identity and building self-esteem in all learners
- Valuing prior knowledge of our students and planning new courses of learning that reflect that prior knowledge
- Scaffolding strategies that provide a more concrete context for students to understand difficult and/or abstract concepts
- Extending learning provided by the teacher, combining high expectations with numerous opportunities for learner-centered practice and interaction with materials and experiences

Aims

Albanian College aims to:

- Identify special education needs as early as possible
- Ensure that all teachers understand and apply the principles of inclusion
- Consult with parents, students and others as necessary to best understand and meet individual student special educational needs
- Provide guidance and training for teachers as needed
- Accommodate special educational needs appropriately within the means available to the school
- Follow the school Admissions Policy regarding special educational needs

Statement of Inclusion

All students pursue their studies at Albanian College in a fully-inclusive environment. Pull-out support for special education needs is not provided.

Albanian College supports and abides by the following statements made with regards to the Primary and Middle Years Programmes:

“The school implements the Primary Years Programme as an inclusive programme for all students.”

Source: *Guide to school authorisation: Primary Years Programme*, p. 10, 2016

“The MYP is intended to be an inclusive programme that can cater for all students aged 11–16. However, there may be legitimate reasons why a school cannot offer the programme to all students. These will be considered by the IB when analysing the submission of Application for candidacy: Middle Years Programme. The general principle remains that schools are strongly encouraged to include all students within the relevant age range in the programme.”

Source: *Guide to school authorization: Middle Years Programme*, p. 12, 2016

In order to achieve an inclusive environment, Albanian College accommodates students' needs primarily through differentiation, but also through additional accommodations (see Accommodations of Special Education Needs Grades EY1 to Grade 12 below).

Definition of Special Education Needs

Albanian College's definition of special needs is based on the IBO-published document, *Candidates with special needs* updated in 2011.

According to this document, “Special educational needs...refers to candidates with individual learning needs, who have the intellectual capacity to meet all curriculum and assessment requirements, and who require special arrangements to demonstrate their level of achievement. Candidates who require special assessment arrangements may display the characteristics of one or more of the following special educational needs.

Specific learning issues, language and communication disorders

- Significant issues in reading, writing, spelling or manipulating numbers associated with issues in processing symbolic language (for example, problems interpreting music notation, dyslexia, dyscalculia).
- Speech and language issues characterized by communication problems (for example, aphasia, dysphasia, articulation problems).

Social, emotional and behavioural issues

- Includes: attention deficit disorder (ADD)/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); autistic spectrum disorders; withdrawn, depressive or suicidal attitudes; obsessive preoccupation with eating habits; school phobia; substance abuse; disruptive antisocial and uncooperative behaviour; and anger, frustration and violence.

Physical and sensory conditions

- Physical disabilities include a wide range of conditions that are not always immediately obvious, but affect mobility.

- Sensory issues: hearing—embraces an extensive range of hearing loss from mild to profound and can present communication difficulties; visual—includes difficulties with either the structure or function of the eye, affecting vision.

Medical conditions

- The most common being: congenital heart disease, epilepsy, asthma, cystic fibrosis, hemophilia, sickle cell anaemia, diabetes, renal failure, eczema, rheumatoid disorders, allergies, leukemia and other cancers.

Mental health issues

- A wide range of conditions that can affect a person’s state of mind, ranging from psychotic conditions, such as schizophrenia and manic depression, to eating disorders, anxieties and emotional distress caused by circumstances in a candidate’s life.”

Source: *Candidates with special needs*, p. 3, 2011

Admissions and Special Education Needs Grades EY1 to Grade 12

Applicants Below Age 12

Albanian College operates within the bounds of Albanian Ministry of Education guidelines and Albanian legal code. According to these guidelines, no testing may be conducted on students to diagnose special educational needs, such as learning disabilities including autism, before age 12. Therefore, Albanian College relies on parent-supplied information and the observations of its admissions staff when making enrollment decisions.

Applicants Age 12 and Above

For students age 12 and above, the school reserves the right to require a professional assessment by a licensed, school-approved outside provider in the case of suspected special, non-physical educational needs. If the family refuses to conduct the requested assessment, the school reserves the right to deny enrolment.

Currently Enrolled Students

Additionally, while the school is able to meet the needs of some students with special needs, it is unable to accommodate others. If a student is enrolled who requires accommodation for a special learning or physical need and the school is either unable to continue the accommodation or the student’s needs change, the school reserves the right to not re-enroll.

Applicants with Physical Special Needs

Albanian College strives to accommodate students with physical special needs, but reserves the right to not enroll a student if the school campus prevents ease of access to classrooms and other facilities. Physical special needs will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

Accommodations of Special Education Needs Grades EY1 to Grade 12

Albanian College accommodates the special needs of students when possible. It should be noted that the school does not provide a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinator or teacher at this time. Specific accommodations provided will vary based upon student needs and the categories they are classified under.

- Specific learning issues, language and communication disorders
- Social, emotional and behavioural issues
- Physical and sensory conditions
- Medical conditions
- Mental health issues
- Gifted learning needs

The main tool to accommodate most special educational needs is differentiation. According to the IB, "Differentiation is seen as the process of identifying, with each learner, the most effective strategies for achieving agreed goals."

Source: *Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes: Special educational needs within IB programmes*, 2010

Albanian College believes that each child is unique and plays a key role in identifying how they learn best. Through diagnostic and pre-assessments, observations, student reflections, and parent input, a student's needs can be identified and differentiation approaches determined.

Differentiation techniques may be applied to approaches to teaching, approaches to learning, and assessments (See *Approaches to teaching and learning*, 2014).

"The IB approaches to teaching skills are...

- Based on inquiry
- Focused on conceptual understanding
- Developed in local and global contexts
- Focused on effective teamwork and collaboration
- Differentiated to meet the needs of all learners
- Informed by formative and summative assessment"

Source: *Approaches to teaching and learning*, p. 1, 2014

Approaches to Learning skills are:

- Thinking

- Communications
- Social
- Self-management
- Research

Source: *Approaches to teaching and learning*, p. 1, 2014

Other accommodations and inclusive arrangements provided for a student with relation to assessments may include, but are not limited to:

- Additional time
- Internal deadline extensions
- Shortened or otherwise modified assignments
- Specialised assessment environment
- Appropriate and customised seating
- Rest periods
- Word processing
- Assistance with practical work
- Interpreter for hearing impaired
- Specialised preparation of written assessment materials such as enlarged font
- Accessibility aids, such as:
 - Magnifying device
 - Noise buffer
 - Colored overlay
 - Sound-amplification device

(See Assessment Policy)

In the case of educational needs with relation to a student's language, please see the Language Policy.

Specific Learning Issues, Language and Communication Disorders

Specific types of learning issues involving language and communication, may include, but are not limited to:

- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Aphasia
- Dysphasia
- Articulation problems

Accommodations provided

In the case of dyslexia, the school is able to work with a student to develop coping strategies.

The school is unable to provide accommodations for dyscalculia, aphasia, dysphasia, and articulation problems. Therefore, students who present these issues will either be denied enrolment or not re-enrolled.

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Issues

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Autistic spectrum disorders
- Withdrawn, depressive, or suicidal attitudes
- Obsessive preoccupation with eating habits
- Substance abuse
- Disruptive anti-social and uncooperative behavior
- Anger, frustration, and violence

Accommodations provided

ADHD

The school is able to accommodate these needs through elimination of undesirable learning and social behaviors and establishment and reinforcement of positive learning and social behaviors. Students may be referred to a counselor to support behavior modification efforts. The school will also work in partnership with parents to ensure consistency of approaches at school and at home.

Autistic spectrum disorders

The school is able to accommodate mild autism spectrum disorders through differentiated instruction, modified learning activities such as limited collaboration, referrals for social and emotional counseling, and physical items as provided by the family, such as specialized clothing.

The school is unable to accommodate the needs of a student who presents a physical risk to themselves and/or others (See Behavior Policy). Cases of autistic spectrum disorders will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The school may require authorised testing by a trained professional in order to determine whether or not needs can be effectively met by Albanian College.

Physical and Sensory Conditions

- Physical disabilities that affect mobility
- Sensory issues such as hearing and visual

- Medical conditions
- Congenital heart disease
- Epilepsy
- Asthma
- Cystic fibrosis
- Hemophilia
- Sickle-cell anemia
- Diabetes
- Renal failure
- Eczema
- Rheumatoid disorders
- Allergies
- Leukemia and other cancers

Accommodations provided

The school employs a doctor who is available to work with students and support low-level physical and sensory conditions that may affect learning. The school will accommodate and implement doctor-recommended strategies, when possible, on a case-by-case basis.

Mental Health Issues

- Psychotic conditions such as schizophrenia and manic depression
- Eating disorders
- Anxieties and emotional distress
- Anti-social and uncooperative behaviours
- Withdrawn, depressive, or suicidal attitudes;
- Obsessive preoccupation with eating disorders

The school is unable to accommodate the needs of a student who presents a physical risk to themselves and/or others (See Behavior Policy).

Other Issues

- Substance abuse
- Disruptive anti-social and uncooperative behaviour
- Anger, frustration, and violence
- Other disorders

To address other disorders, students and their parents will be referred to a counselor who will work with the school to determine if accommodations are possible. The school is unable to accommodate the needs of a student who presents a physical risk to themselves and/or others (See Behavior Policy).

Accommodations provided

The school employs a doctor who is available to work with students and who will make recommendations to the parents and the school and who may refer students and their families to licensed, mental health professionals who will also make recommendations through the doctor regarding accommodations that the school may apply to alleviate or address the above-listed disorders, on a case-by-case basis.

The school is unable to accommodate the needs of a student who presents a physical risk to themselves and/or others.

Gifted Learning Needs

Albanian College supports the following statement:

“Students identified as gifted and talented or exceptionally able...may be globally gifted, gifted in specific areas or indeed be gifted in some areas but experience learning challenges in other areas. Special talents need to be encouraged, nurtured and extended, and students need to be challenged to think laterally about complex ideas, issues and situations even if a student is receiving learning support in other areas. Creating opportunities for extension may well involve seeking out and working with local universities, local organizations or online providers. Curriculum and learning choices should be made in collaboration with the students and their parents.”

Source: *Meeting student learning diversity in the classroom*, p. 28, 2013

Accommodation provided

Differentiated instruction is the primary means of addressing students with gifted learning needs.

Given the inquiry-based nature of the programmes, gifted students have the opportunity to pursue extension activities that provide deeper, more advanced levels of learning and challenge.

Special Education Needs (SEN) and Inclusion in IB Diploma Programme

“The IB believes that all candidates should be allowed to demonstrate their ability under assessment conditions that are as fair as possible. Standard assessment conditions may put candidates with learning support requirements at a disadvantage by preventing them from demonstrating their level of attainment. Inclusive assessment arrangements may be authorized in these circumstances.”

Source: *Candidates with assessment access requirements*, p. 1, 2009

All inclusive assessment arrangements that may be authorized by the IB are based on the 19 principles from Candidates with Assessment Access Requirements, 2014.

Roles and Responsibilities

Albanian College recognises that there are roles and responsibilities for the IBDP Coordinator, student and parents with regards to special needs and accommodation in the Diploma Programme.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Student

It is expected that students will:

- Be proactive in asking for assistance from the IBDP coordinator and appropriate staff members, such as the doctor or counselor
- Be proactive in requesting inclusive assessment arrangements and confirm those arrangements have been requested and authorised
- Take an active role in communicating inclusion needs based upon previous accommodations and diagnosed needs

Roles and Responsibilities of the Parents/Guardians

It is expected that parents/guardians will:

- Communicate to the school all information and documentation, including updates, regarding their child's accommodation and inclusion needs
- Submit a request to the IBDP Coordinator for needed services from the school and/or the IB Program in a proactive manner that includes official medical or other required documentation or evidence
- Confirm that arrangements have been requested and authorised in accordance with stated IB timelines

Roles and Responsibilities of the IBDP Coordinator

It is expected that the IBDP Coordinator will:

- Inform students and parents about available accommodations for special educational needs, along with required procedures and documentation needed to support requests for accommodation
- Collaborate with the IB staff to communicate any special educational needs and recommended accommodations during regular courses and internal and external assessments completed during the two-year programme

- Apply to the IB for authorization of a student's special arrangements in relation to assessment type and circumstances
- Provide examination accommodations for individual students during the external exam sessions as needed and authorized by the IB.
- Maintain discretion and confidence regarding students' special educational needs and accommodations

Roles and Responsibilities of Other Staff

It is expected that additional staff members, such as the school doctor, counselor, and admissions officers will:

- Identify struggling learners and refer said learners to the IBDP coordinator for follow up and support
- Provide the appropriate accommodations and differentiated instruction as indicated by the IBDP coordinator
- Maintain accurate records of student progress
- Maintain discretion and confidentiality regarding students' special educational needs and accommodations

Accommodations in IBDP Exams

Special arrangements that may be approved by the IB for IBDP examinations, based on individual need include:

- Additional time
- Rest periods
- Information and communication technology (ICT)
- Scribes
- Readers
- Communicators
- Prompters
- Modifications to examination papers
- Audio recordings of examination papers
- Audio recordings of responses to examination papers
- Transcriptions
- Alternative venues for examinations
- Extensions to deadlines
- Assistance with practical work
- Exemptions from assessment

Source: *Candidates with special assessment needs*, Table of Contents, 2011

Special Educational Needs Policy Review Process

The Special Educational Needs Policy review process will take place as needed with participation from members of the leadership team, in association with the school doctor, special educational needs students, and their families.

A report of recommendations will be generated by the school Director and forwarded to the Executive Director for potential action. Policy changes are recommended by the Executive to the Board of Governors to implement any desired changes to the policy.

This policy will be made available in the Parent and Student Handbook.

How the Special Educational Needs Policy Was Developed

A Special Educational Needs Policy Committee first assembled in October 2014 with the task of developing a draft Special Educational Needs Policy. Further development of the Special Educational Needs Policy has been ongoing, with input from students, parents, staff, Governors and official and unofficial International Baccalaureate consultants. Revisions have been made and the current Special Educational Needs Policy has been submitted to the Board of Governors. All members of the Albanian College community will be encouraged to continue to reflect on the Special Educational Needs Policy on an annual basis (see Policy Revision Policy).

National special educational needs guidelines, as established by the Albanian Ministry of Education, were taken into account in the development and implementation of the Special Educational Needs Policy.

Further development work was carried out referring to the following documentation and guidance:

- *Guide to school authorisation: Primary Years Programme, 2016*
- *Guide to school authorization: Middle Years Programme, 2016*
- *Guide to school authorization: Diploma Programme, 2016*
- *Learning diversity in the International Baccalaureate programmes: Special educational needs within IB programmes, 2010*
- *Approaches to teaching and learning, 2014*
- *Meeting student learning diversity in the classroom, 2013*
- *Candidates with assessment access requirements, 2009*
- *The IB and inclusion: An update, 2015*
- *Candidates with special assessment needs, 2011*
- *IB continuum support resource: Inclusive education*
- *General regulations: Diploma Programme, 2011*
- *IB Learner Profile, 2013*