A student with SEN has a learning difficulty or disability that makes learning harder than the majority of others of the same age, or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities provided to general students. The challenges can be from a physical, mental or developmental impairment that has a substantial or chronic effect to a student’s ability to perform in a normal daily activity in education.
Not all students with SEN are considered to be disabled. Disabilities refer to part of the human condition that can be related to impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. The medical conditions have a long term (one year or more) and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day today activities. A student with such condition is not necessarily having SEN. However, there are significant overlaps between people with disabilities and those with SEN.

In universities, SEN are categorized into ten types of medical conditions, which can be either visible or invisible to others. Figures from University Grants Committee suggest that in Hong Kong, there are around six in every 1,000 students declared SEN with their universities.

A learning difficulty or disability may cause a student to struggle with:

- Accessing, reading, writing or understanding information
- Behaving properly in a learning or social setting
- Communicating effectively or appropriately with others
- Expressing oneself or understanding what another person are saying
- Fitting in the university life
- Keeping up with academic performance
- Making friends or engaging in social activities
- Managing physical or mental wellbeing
- Organizing oneself
How is SEN diagnosed?

Formal assessments by qualified professionals can determine if a student has SEN and recommend the type of support and intervention needed. Effective intervention can assist students with SEN to develop to their maximum potential.

### Types of SEN

- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Chronic Illness or Visceral Disability
- Hearing Impairment
- Mental Illness
- Physical Disability
- Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia (SpLD)
- Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)
- Visual Impairment (excluding color blindness)
- Others or multiple types of disabilities

### Specialists

- Psychiatrists or Educational/Clinical Psychologists
- Psychiatrists or Educational/Clinical Psychologists
- Medical Doctors
- Audiologists
- Psychiatrists, Clinical Psychologist or relevant assessment specialists
- Medical Doctors
- Educational/Clinical Psychologists
- Speech Therapists
- Ophthalmologists
- Multiple relevant specialists
What is a reasonable adjustment?

To ensure equal opportunities to access education, HKUST provides reasonable adjustments and support to students with SEN. The provision takes many forms including individualized academic accommodations, alternate options to access information, services and facilities, policies and assistance to engage in university activities, as well as disability awareness programs to promote campus inclusiveness.

Reasonable adjustments do not give a student with SEN an advantage over others, nor change any academic standards or learning outcomes or guarantee success. Every reasonable adjustment has to uphold the integrity of the qualification and to be justifiable.

Game: Matching the possible academic adjustment measures on the right with a special need in learning on the left.

- Not able to hear light voice in group discussion due to hearing loss
- Mobility challenge to commute between the Main and LSK campuses to attend a class
- Difficulties to read course materials with light color contrast due to low vision
- Clustered exam schedule for a student with brain damage who should avoid brain fatigue
- Difficulty in forming group for a student with ASD
- Longer reading time for a student with SpLD in final exam
- Tics (sudden, repetitive movement or sound) by a student with Tourette syndrome

- Coordination with course instructor to identify suitable groupmates
- On-campus Welcab service for wheelchair users
- Special course materials
- On-loan service of hearing aid
- Extended time in testing (Assessment and recommendation by specialist is needed)
- Separate room in testing
- Alternate exam arrangement

(Answers at the back)
Talking about your SEN

In universities, SEN declaration is on a self-identify basis and can be done at any time during the course of study as soon as the student is aware of the needs.

If a student at HKUST is diagnosed with or suspects his/her difficulties are related to any type of SEN, s/he is strongly advised to contact SEN Support of Counseling and Wellness Center right away for the verification of the disability in order to access the available services, resources (including scholarships, financial aids, extra-curricular activities and internship opportunities) and support to address the individual needs. Supporting documentation including medical proof or diagnostic reports in the recent three years will be verified during the declaration process. The student who wishes to declare SEN with the University will be invited to attend a needs assessment to confirm eligibility of reasonable accommodations and relevant support services. Confidentiality to all personal information provided is guaranteed while students are free to withdraw from the SEN declaration or given consent to release of personal information at any time without any consequences.

The student can also talk to the following people for making a referral to the service:

- SEN-Coordinators of Secondary School (for transfer of student profile to the University)
- Health care service providers
- Academic or program advisors
- Professors or course instructors
- Student Counselors
- Campus clinic
- Dean of Students’ Office
Not able to hear light voice in group discussion due to hearing loss
Mobility challenge to commute between the Main and LSK campuses to attend a class
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References

World Health Organization
https://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/

Education Bureau, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Common Data Collection Format (CDCF) Mart, University Grants Committee, Hong Kong
https://cdcf.ugc.edu.hk/cdcf/statEntry.action?language=EN

Community Care Fund – Enhancing the academic expenses grant for students with special educational needs and financial needs pursuing post-secondary programmes, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Contact Us

SEN Support
sen@ust.hk
http://sen.ust.hk/

Counseling and Wellness Center
Room 5003 (via lift 3)
(852) 2358 6696
counsel@ust.hk
http://counsel.ust.hk

24/7 HEARing (852) 8208 2688
This is a 24-hour helpline that supports exclusively all HKUST students 7 days a week. The service is made available by our Counselors in collaboration with the Christian Family Service Center.