



## **Mar Qardakh School**

Title: Special Educational Needs Policy

Related policies:

- Assessment Policy

# I. Philosophy

## Purpose Statement

The purpose of this document is to clarify the understanding of Special Educational Needs within Mar Qardakh School, and illustrate how Mar Qardakh School seeks to provide all of its students with equal access to the school's curriculum and other services.

***Mar Qardakh School seeks to empower the whole person by providing means for academic, social, spiritual and personal development.***

## Philosophy and aims

The support Mar Qardakh School provides for students with special needs is based on the following beliefs:

- All students are able to learn.
- There is a broad continuum of special educational needs that includes gifted students as well as mentally challenged students.
- Mar Qardakh School has the responsibility to provide a holistic, differentiated and inclusive class environment for all students.
- Mar Qardakh School teachers share in the responsibility of recognizing and providing support for students with special educational needs.
- Mar Qardakh School students are ultimately responsible for their own learning, and are therefore expected to play an active role in their own learning process, including recognizing their own specific needs and abilities, and seeking support and guidance accordingly.
- Parents of Mar Qardakh School students also share in the responsibility of helping their children receive a holistic education that meets their special educational needs. Accordingly, parents of students with special educational needs are expected to inform the school of any special needs they are aware of, maintain frequent communication with the school regarding their child's progress and/or any changes in his/her needs, and support the school's effort to help their child in the home.

# II. Program Inclusion

## Program Components

The following program components apply to all students, including those with special educational needs:

- Learning opportunities and projects that enable students to develop different attributes of the Learner Profile and foster international mindedness.
- All students will be provided with inquiry-based learning opportunities on a continuous basis.
- All students will receive language acquisition support for acquisition of a second language, as well as mother tongue support. Students with special educational needs will receive additional language acquisition support for their mother tongue, second language, and/or language of instruction as needed on a case-by-case basis.
- All students are expected to complete all components of their respective programmes. This includes completing the PYP exposition; completing the MYP personal project and community service requirements in addition to individual subject requirements; and completing all required subjects, as well as CAS, TOK and the Extended Essay in the DP (unless the students is not enrolled in the full Diploma Programme, in which case, they are required to complete all subjects they have enrolled in, participate in TOK classes, and complete CAS requirements).

### **Learning Support**

Students with special educational needs will receive individual support both inside and outside the classroom.

#### *Inside the Classroom*

Students with identified special educational needs may receive the following support in the classroom. Each teacher is responsible for providing such support to students with special educational needs. Certain modifications and accommodations require prior approval from the respective programme coordinator (indicated below):

- Supplemental activities tailored to their specific educational needs (gifted students will be given more challenging activities, and challenged students will be given simplified activities that help them strengthen their knowledge base and skills).
- Curriculum modification - learning goals and objectives may be modified on a case-by-case basis to help students with special needs. Goals may be made more advanced to challenge gifts students, or simplified to help academically challenged students. If the curriculum modifications a teacher develops for a student will not meet the minimum learning objectives and standards required by the school, approval from the respective coordinator must be obtained.
- Classroom accommodations, including but not limited to peer assistance, additional one-on-one feedback and guidance from the teacher, and additional time for in-class assignments may be provided for students with special educational needs. Regular classroom accommodations must be approved by the respective programme coordinator.

## *Outside the Classroom*

Students with identified special educational needs may receive the following support outside the classroom:

- Pull-out support for language acquisition
- One-on-one support from the appropriate subject specific teachers once areas of difficulty have been identified
- Individual counseling sessions with the Dean of Students

*Note:* Students with extreme special needs that hinder them from participating collaboratively and harmoniously in the school community and succeeding in their respective programme even with the accommodations allowed by the school and/or the IB will be strongly advised to transfer into an educational community better equipped to meet their individual needs and maximize their learning potential. If such students remain at Mar Qardakh School and are unable to succeed in their respective programmes even with the accommodations provided, they will be required to transfer in compliance with the admissions policy, if they fail more than one consecutive academic year.

## **Assessment Practices**

- Teachers will utilize a variety of formative assessments and provide feedback for all students based on formative assessment. Formative assessment results from students with special educational needs will be used to tailor instruction and, if needed, modify the curriculum for the said students. Students with special needs may be required to complete additional formative assessments used to further guide the teacher in making necessary modifications.
- Teachers will provide differentiated summative assessments that leave room for student choice. Summative assessments will be tailored for students with special educational needs when necessary to correspond to any curriculum modifications.

\*These assessment practices do not apply to internal or external assessments in the DP, or DP examinations. See *Special Needs in the DP* (below), for more details regarding special accommodations for internal and external DP assessments and DP examinations.

## **Identifying Special Needs**

Mar Qardakh School will offer special educational support to students based on the presence of one or both of two factors:

- Former documentation provided by the parents or previous school indicating the presence of special needs and the cause of such needs.
- Observations of Mar Qardakh School teachers based on documented student performance.

Mar Qardakh School does not require students to go through formal testing in order to receive special educational support (with the exception of final MYP assessments, internal/external DP assessments and DP examinations), as long as the said support does not require intensive curriculum and assessment modification that would prevent the student from succeeding academically in their respective program. Mar Qardakh School does communicate with the parents when a student seems to have special educational needs and will be receiving additional support. Parents are informed of the perceived challenges and may then choose whether or not to pursue diagnostic testing.

If the parents would like diagnostic testing, they are responsible for making all necessary arrangements; the school does not provide any diagnostic testing at this point. The school will, however, support the parents in their efforts to obtain diagnostic testing by providing supportive documentation and, if necessary, granting the student a temporary leave of absence in order to be tested.

#### *Special Needs in the PYP*

All special needs in the PYP can be accommodated based on former documentation and/or observations by Mar Qardakh teachers based on student performance. If a student seems to have special needs, however, parents will be strongly encouraged to have the student tested and diagnosed, both because a professional diagnosis will enable the school to respond more effectively to the specific needs of the student and because, should the student intend on passing the PYP and continuing into the MYP and/or DP at Mar Qardakh School, professional testing and diagnosis will be required for the student to qualify for needed accommodations at the MYP and DP levels.

#### *Special Needs in the MYP*

Parents of MYP students that seem to have special needs but have not been diagnosed are informed that the students will only qualify for special accommodations for the final MYP assessment if they are formally tested and diagnosed with a disability.

Parents of MYP students are also informed that if a student's special needs prevent them from being assessed on required objectives and skills, the student will not be eligible for the MYP Certificate, although they may still participate in the MYP program and receive an MYP record of achievement.

#### *Special Needs in the DP*

Parents of DP students that seem to have special needs but have not been diagnosed are informed that the students will only qualify for special accommodations for the internal/external assessments and final DP examinations if they are formally tested and diagnosed with a disability. If a student has been tested and diagnosed, the school will submit a request for appropriate accommodations for the internal/external assessments and final DP examinations to the IB, along with documented proof of the student's special needs, following the timeline and regulations specified by the IB.

Parents will be made aware that if a student has not been diagnosed, they will not qualify for such accommodations even if a special need does exist, and that, if the student's special need is significant, attempting to complete the DP internal/external assessments and final examinations without obtaining a diagnosis and applying for appropriate accommodations could risk the student's success at completing the DP and/or receiving certificates for individual DP subjects they have enrolled in.

### **Documentation**

- Any documentation that identifies a student's special educational needs will be kept in the student's file.
- Teachers will keep record of any accommodations and modifications made for a student with special educational needs. These records will be placed in the students' file on a monthly basis, and will be reviewed every 3 months to track progress, evaluate the effectiveness of the modifications and accommodations used, and determine whether such modifications and accommodations should be continued, stopped, or adjusted to best meet the individual needs of the student.
- Teachers and/or the Dean of Students will keep record of any additional services a student receives to support special educational needs outside of the classroom.
- Minutes will be kept of all meetings pertaining to a student's special needs. This includes the following meeting types:
  - Meetings between teachers and the student
  - Meetings between the teachers and leadership team regarding a student's special needs
  - Meetings between the respective coordinator, Academic Dean, Dean of Students and parents
  - Any other meetings that directly address the special educational needs of a particular student.
- Students with a diagnosed learning difficulty or other disability will receive an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) that indicates what special services will be granted, and what responsibilities pertain to the school, the student and the parents, in implementing the IEP. All IEPs will be kept in the students' files and revised on an annual basis in order to best serve the students' needs.

- All teachers will provide a progress report on all students with special educational needs three times a year. These reports will be kept in the students' files.
- When students progress from one IB programme to the next, their comprehensive file, complete with all documentation regarding their special educational needs will be transferred to the new programme. If a student transfers out of Mar Qardakh School, a copy of all records pertaining to the student's special educational needs may be released to the new school at the request of the student's parents.

### **III. Faculty Professional Development**

- All faculty members learn about the importance of classroom inclusion when they receive new faculty orientation, and when they receive IB professional development pertaining to their specific program.
- Teachers have designated time in their regular schedule for collaborative meetings. One of the purposes of these collaborative meetings is for teachers to collaboratively discuss the special educational needs of students and ensure that, as a team, they are providing each student with the services needed. These collaborative meetings also include curriculum alignment and give the teachers time to make sure their methods of instruction and assessment leave room for student choice and include differentiation that enables students with special educational needs to succeed.
- Each year, the school provides training workshops on inquiry-based learning and assessment techniques. These workshops give teachers the opportunity to continue developing a greater understanding of how to incorporate special educational needs into the classroom, and learn more about scaffolding and other techniques that provide additional support for students with special learning needs.

## **Appendix I: Glossary**

**Special Educational Needs:** Any student that requires additional support, accommodations or modifications is defined as having special educational needs. This includes gifted and exceptionally talented students, as well as students with learning disabilities, and/or other psychological and emotional disturbances.

**Inclusion:** All students, including those with special educational needs, will receive equal access to all components of the IB programmes offered at Mar Qardakh School.

**Differentiation:** The written, taught and assessed curriculum will be modified to meet the individual needs of students.

## **Appendix II: Policy History**