

10.6.6 - Does your university as a body provide mentoring/counselling/peer support programmes to support students, staff, faculty from underrepresented groups?

Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) is committed to promoting diversity, inclusion and equal opportunity across its academic and administrative community. Recognising that students, staff and faculty from under-represented or disadvantaged groups may face systemic barriers in higher education, ASOIU has developed comprehensive mentoring, counselling and peer-support programmes to ensure equitable participation and success. These initiatives align with Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities, and are implemented under the university's Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Policy.

1. Institution-wide Mentoring Programme

ASOIU operates a structured Mentor–Mentee Programme designed to support under-represented students, early-career faculty, and staff in their academic and professional development. Key features include:

- Target Groups: women in engineering, first-generation students, individuals from rural or low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and international students.
- Mentor Allocation: mentors are selected from experienced faculty, staff, and distinguished alumni who share similar disciplinary or life experiences.
- Capacity-building: all mentors receive training in inclusive communication, cultural sensitivity, gender awareness and confidentiality.
- Programme Activities: individual and group mentoring sessions, career guidance, and personal development workshops each semester.
- Monitoring and Evaluation: participation data and feedback are reviewed annually by the Student Affairs Office and Inclusion Committee to improve the programme.



2. Peer-Support and Buddy Initiatives

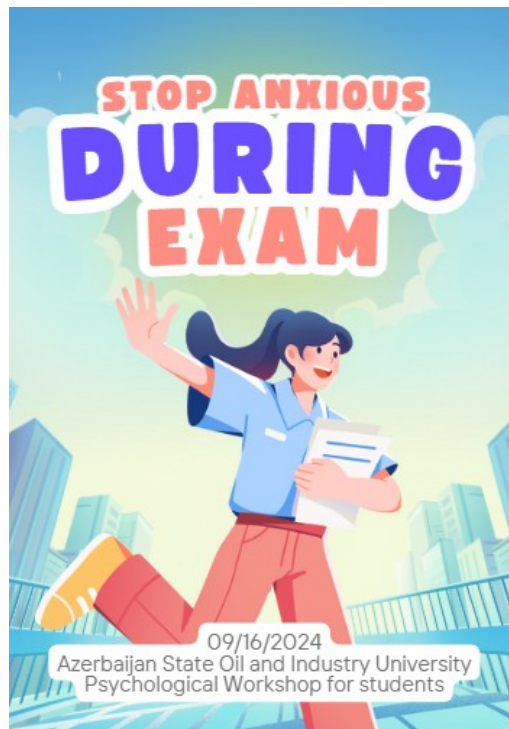
To enhance social inclusion, ASOIU maintains a Peer-Buddy System through which senior students volunteer to guide first-year or international entrants. The programme provides:

- orientation assistance, navigating academic procedures and student life;
- study-group formation, social integration events, and stress-management workshops;

3. Counselling and Psychological Support

ASOIU's Psychological Counselling and Guidance Centre offers confidential counselling, mental-health education, and wellbeing services to all members of the university community.

- Professional psychologists provide individual and group therapy sessions with special sensitivity to gender, age, cultural and socio-economic differences.
- Workshops address topics such as stress management, academic burnout, inclusion and equality in higher education.
- Students with disabilities receive tailored support plans, including academic accommodations and accessibility coordination.
- Collaboration with the Health and Safety Department ensures early identification and response to wellbeing challenges.

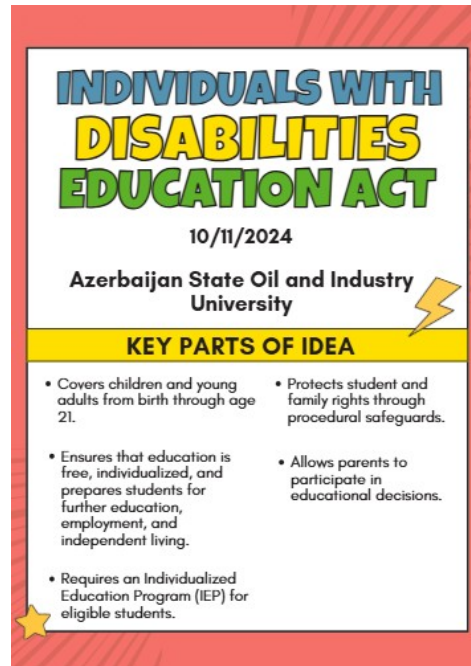


4. Career and Professional Development for Under-represented Groups

The ASOIU Career Services Center integrates the mentoring framework into employability training. It organises:

- networking sessions with successful alumni from under-represented backgrounds;
- seminars such as “Women in Energy and Engineering,” “Inclusive Leadership in the Oil & Gas Industry,” and “Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Students with Disabilities.”
- internship and job-placement counselling tailored to women engineers and first-generation students.

This structure ensures that support continues beyond graduation, connecting participants with industry mentors and inclusive employers.



5. Institutional Governance and Monitoring

- The programmes are overseen by the Dean of Students’ Office in cooperation with the Gender Equality and Inclusion Committee.
- Annual reports are prepared for the Rectorate, summarising participant numbers, outcomes and improvement actions.
- Disaggregated statistics on retention, graduation and employment are used to assess impact on under-represented groups.

This governance structure ensures continuity, accountability and institutional alignment with ASOIU’s strategic goal of inclusive excellence.

6. Impact and Outcomes

Through these mentoring, counselling and peer-support initiatives, ASOIU has:

- increased retention rates among first-generation and rural students by strengthening social integration;
- improved visibility of women and minority groups in engineering programmes;

- promoted staff wellbeing and inclusive culture through counselling and equity training;
- enhanced collaboration between students, faculty and alumni on equality-driven initiatives.

The combination of structured mentoring, proactive peer support and professional counselling creates an inclusive learning environment that empowers all community members to thrive academically and professionally.