

# Republic of Rwanda



**National Council for Higher Education  
B.P 6311, Kigali -Rwanda**

## **NATIONAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

Revised April 2007

## **NATIONAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **Foreword**

Rwanda is committed to the principles of promoting equality of opportunity, recognising and valuing diversity, and being inclusive of all sectors of society in all aspects of Institute life. These principles are a core part of Rwandan Higher Education's strategic objectives and vision. Therefore, all institutions are working towards creating the conditions whereby staff and students are selected and trained solely on the basis of their merits, capabilities and potential, regardless of sex, marital status, disability, HIV/AIDS status, religion or belief, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, or any other irrelevant distinction.

The Equality and Diversity Policy seeks to eradicate unfair and discriminatory practices whenever they occur, and to actively promote a culture of equality and diversity, where all staff and students may contribute as fully as possible. This policy, and its implementation, is central to the work of the HEIs. It has a role in shaping and informing all activities, and as such should not be viewed as a 'stand alone' policy.

The Rectors of HEIs, with the support of all members of the Executive Council, have Executive level responsibility for overseeing the implementation, monitoring and development of the policy, reporting to Senate and the Board of Directors. However, the Policy will only be fully effective if every individual member of the academic community, both staff and students, plays a full part in understanding and implementing the policy through placing it at the very heart of their everyday actions and activities, and by taking their individual responsibility to act in a non-discriminatory manner. Everyone associated with the HEIs has a responsibility to ensure that this policy is properly observed and fully complied with.

### **1. Introduction**

Rwanda's National Equality and Diversity Policy for Higher Education is in line with International Conventions ( *The UN Declaration of Human Rights, The UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, The UN*

*Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and The UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Internationally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*) and National Policies (*The 2020 Vision, The Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper and the National Gender Policy*). Its primary focus is the promotion of equality, and it requires that all staff, students and visitors to higher education institutions behave in a non-discriminatory manner and support, implement and develop institutional practices and procedures that promote and reinforce equality of opportunities and fair treatment for all. The HEIs are also committed to valuing the existing diversity of staff and students and any increased diversity that may result from successful implementation of the work on equality. However, diversity should not be viewed as a substitute for equality or considered at the expense of equality.

Policy and practice in higher education will be concerned with the prevention of both direct and indirect, covert and overt discrimination and the promotion of justice and equality

## **2. Policy Statement**

The Rwandan institutions of higher education are committed to the principles of promoting equality of opportunity through eliminating discrimination and disadvantage, and recognising the benefits of diversity. They aim to ensure that:

- All potential and current staff and students are treated fairly, and are not discriminated against on grounds of gender, marital status, disability, ethnicity, HIV/AIDS status, religion or belief, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, or any other irrelevant distinction
- An inclusive and supportive environment is created for staff, students and others associated with the work of the institutions, that truly recognises and values staff and student diversity, and promotes good relations between different groups
- A shared awareness, understanding and commitment to equality and diversity is developed to enable all staff and students to act in accordance with this

Policy, so that equality and diversity can be effectively mainstreamed into the core of all Institute functions

### **3. Commitment to mainstreaming equality and diversity**

The Rwandan HEIs are committed to taking active and reasonable steps to ensure that all functions, policies, processes, planning procedures, provision, mechanisms and initiatives do not discriminate on the grounds listed above, including those that relate to:

- 3.1 Governance and management
- 3.2 Student admissions and access
- 3.3 Student achievement and assessment
- 3.4 Guidance and support for students
- 3.5 Teaching and learning
- 3.6 Curriculum
- 3.7 Research
- 3.8 Staff recruitment, training, development and support
- 3.9 Partnerships and community links
- 3.10 Procurement and outsourcing
- 3.11 Grievance and Disciplinary procedures
- 3.12 Facilities and Estates
- 3.13 Marketing, Public Relations and information
- 3.14 Communications, language and terminology
- 3.15 Planning Units

Furthermore, the HEIs will ensure that equality and diversity are ‘mainstreamed’ into everyday functions of the Institute, so that they are an integral part of the areas listed above. Institutions will ensure that in the planning of all new buildings and the refurbishment of existing ones disability access will be taken into account. The responsibilities and implementation of these commitments are discussed in Sections 4 and 5.

#### **4. Responsibilities**

All individuals associated with an HEI have responsibility for adhering to the Policy and applying it in their day to day work. The following section outlines the specific responsibilities in relation to this Policy:

- 4.1 The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that the HEI implements the Policy and for making sure the Policy and its procedures are fulfilled. In order to fulfil this responsibility the Board of Directors will receive an annual report, via Senate and the Executive Council, on the implementation of the Policy to enable the members to ensure that it is being incorporated in forward plans, implemented, monitored, enhanced and continuously reviewed.
- 4.2 The Rector, who gives a consistent and high profile lead on equality and diversity issues, is responsible for ensuring that; the Policy is effectively implemented (with the Board of Directors); staff are aware of their responsibilities, accountabilities, and training needs to fulfil these; and appropriate action is taken against staff or students who are found to have undertaken or supported any acts of discrimination on the grounds listed above.
- 4.3 The Vice-Rector Academic is responsible for implementing the Policy with respect to students and all the academic work of the Institution. The Vice-Rector Academic is also responsible for dealing with reported incidents of discrimination and harassment for students.
- 4.4 The Vice-Rector Administration is responsible for the implementation of the Policy with respect to staff and specifying and implementing specific related policies and procedures and, in relation to facilities management, finance (including procurement), academic administration, marketing and public relations and, print and design related functions. The Vice-Rector is also responsible for dealing with reported incidents of discrimination and harassment for staff.

- 4.5 Deans and/or Directors of Support Departments are responsible for:
- 4.5.1 Implementation of the policy, strategy and procedures within their area of responsibility, including mainstreaming equality, and specifying this implementation within their annual planning submission.
  - 4.5.2 Ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this policy and that they receive appropriate support and training.
  - 4.5.3 Following the relevant procedures including those for possible action against staff or students who may be discriminating on the grounds listed in Section 3 of the Policy
  - 4.5.4 Working with other institutions, local communities and others in tackling discrimination, and promotion of equality and diversity
- 4.6 All staff and students have a responsibility to promote equality and diversity, to eliminate discrimination on the grounds listed in Section 3, and to abide by this Policy. Any act of discrimination (including harassment) by an employee or student is viewed very seriously and could result in disciplinary action through the appropriate Institute disciplinary procedures.

## **5. Implementation**

Section 3 outlines Rwandan Higher Education's commitment to promoting equality and diversity throughout all areas of its activities. Some specific mechanisms will be used to ensure that this Policy is implemented effectively and put into practice.

<b>5.1 Monitoring</b>
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- 5.1.1 To inform planning and to identify gaps in provision and representation, staff recruitment and progression, and student admission and progression, will be monitored by ethnicity, gender, disability, religion and age. The following will be monitored:
- 5.1.2 Applicants for employment – job application rates, selection success rates and success rates at different stages of the process, selecting and training panel members.

- 5.1.3 Staff – including representation of disabled people, gender, ethnicity and age balance and religious groups in relation to training, promotions, complaints, grievances and disciplinary proceedings, permanent, temporary and fixed term appointments, local or international status and leaving the Institute (including dismissals, resignations, redundancies and retirement).
- 5.1.4 Students – including admissions, selection methods, choice of subject, change of subject, selection method and drop out rates for each programme, assessment (including the results of different assessment methods), work placement, (including success rates, satisfaction levels and job offers connected to placements), results of programmes targeted at people from particular equality groups, complaints, grievances and disciplinary proceedings.
- 5.1.5 Data will be gained through:
- an equality monitoring form for all job applicants;
  - the HR record for employees;
  - application and registration forms for students;
  - the module evaluation questionnaire;
  - an exit questionnaire for staff
- (Data collected will be treated confidentially and will be used only for purposes of statistical analysis in connection with this Policy.)*
- 5.1.6 The Institute, through the Rector will make an annual report on the working of this Policy. This will include information on the outcome of the year's monitoring, and review specific measures to promote equality and diversity, and make appropriate recommendations where necessary.

**5.2 Positive Action**

*If the monitoring process identifies significant differences between equality groups in terms of student admissions, achievement levels, progress, or in staff recruitment and promotion, the institution will assess the reasons for this and will take positive action where appropriate to address under representation where appropriate.*

**5.3 Equality Impact Assessment of policies, practices and procedures**

The policies, practices and procedures of the institution, including this Policy, will be assessed for their impact on equality of opportunity for all groups including gender, disability, religion and age. The policies, practices and procedures subject to impact assessment will include those that relate to the curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, admissions, access and participation, student support and guidance, partnerships and community outreach, research and knowledge transfer, staff recruitment, training and career development, HR Policies and management and governance.

**5.4 Religious obligations**

Each institution will, where reasonable and practicable, meet the needs of an individual arising from their religion or belief and not place unreasonable constraints upon such individuals. Where this is not reasonable and practicable, it will provide an explanation justifying the inability of the Institution to respond to the individual need.

**5.5 Students with disabilities**

Applications for admission to academic programmes from people with disabilities will be considered against the same criteria as those from potential students without a disability. Institutions will not discriminate on grounds of disability through less favourable treatment where this cannot be justified, or a failure to make reasonable adjustments, where this cannot be justified. The institutions will take into account the need to provide physical access for people with disabilities when planning new buildings and carrying out the refurbishment of existing buildings



**5.6 Staff with disabilities**

Applications from potential employees with a disability will be considered against the same criteria for the post as applications from potential employees without a disability. Institutions will not discriminate on grounds of disability through less favourable treatment where this cannot be justified, or a failure to make reasonable adjustments, where this cannot be justified. The institute will take into account the need to provide physical access for people with disabilities when planning new buildings and carrying out the refurbishment of existing buildings

**5.7 Working arrangements for Staff**

Consideration will be given to arrangements for working part time and the introduction of flexible working hour, where reasonable and practicable, to improve job opportunities subject to effectiveness, efficiency and affordability.

**5.8 Training**

Training programmes will be offered to inform staff of this Policy and raise awareness of good practice in promoting equality and diversity, and also to meet the specific needs of Faculties and Departments. Staff will be required to attend training events on equality and diversity issues as appropriate to enable them to carry out their responsibilities with respect to this Policy.

**5.9 Communication, consultation and participation**

Each institution will ensure that its work on equality and diversity is communicated to staff and students to ensure that they are kept up to date. Staff and students will be consulted to gauge their opinions, experiences and ideas and they will be given the opportunity to participate in the development and implementation of policy and practice. This process will be extended to external stakeholders and groups; HEIs will seek to develop links with community and interest groups both locally and nationally with a view to

enabling them to be involved in informing and developing the equality and diversity agenda

#### 5.10 **Implementation Strategy**

The successful implementation of the Equality and Diversity Policy will be secured via an implementation strategy which provides:

- Clear aims
- Specific actions needed to achieve the aims
- Identification of the responsible senior manager
- Strict timescales to achieve them
- Ways of continually reviewing the aims, the outcomes and the policy

The implementation strategy will be carried through by an Action plan which will be monitored and reviewed regularly by the Staffing Committee in consultation with relevant parties.

### **6 Publishing, Monitoring and Reviewing Arrangements**

6.1 This policy will be provided to new employees within their induction pack, it will be accessible via the institution's website, as well as being made available in alternative formats where reasonable and practicable.

6.2 Consultations will take place on the outcomes from the annual monitoring and review process, and will involve representatives from throughout the institution including Students. Staff will be able to provide feedback through their line managers.

6.2 Recommendations for amendments will be considered, together with the monitoring and review report, by the Staffing Committee, Executive Council and Board of Directors.