Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Version	Version 1
Year	2023

List of Acronyms

ASDC	Access Disability Support Committee
CREA	Committee for Race and Ethnic Affairs
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EQC	Equity Committee
EQO	Equity Office
GESDC	Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee
GEMSAP	Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan
G+EP	Gender Plus Equity Plan
HRM & D	Human Resources Management and Development
UM	University of Malta
UM Community	University Community Members
UMSP	University of Malta Strategic Plan

1. Purpose and Statement of Intent

1.1 The purpose of the Policy is to support the University of Malta (UM) in achieving its strategic objectives, as outlined in the UMs [Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#) (UMSP), in particular, those pertaining to equity, diversity and inclusion, as articulated in the Key Areas of the [Gender+ Equity Plan 2022-2025](#) (G+EP). This Policy responds to government priorities, as articulated in the [Gender Equality And Mainstreaming Strategy And Action Plan 2022-2027](#) (GEMSAP).

1.2 UM values equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and has developed a number of policies and procedures to support and enhance EDI (see Section 7 of this Policy). It is committed to ensure that an equitable environment is created within the UM community. It endeavours to celebrate diversity, promoting inclusion and protecting the human rights of all individuals working or studying within UM.

1.3 UM had already set up the following three (3) UM Committees to consolidate its commitment to ensuring and promoting EDI, via an intersectional approach:

    (a) the [Access Disability Support Committee](#) (ADSC);

    (b) the [Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee](#) (GESDC);

    (c) the [Committee for Race and Ethnic Affairs](#) (CREA).

1.4 Further, UM has:

    (a) Developed a G+EP, with Key Performance Indicators for the monitoring and implementation of EDI targets at UM;

    (b) Set up an Equity Committee (EQC) to monitor the work of the EQO, and to ensure the promotion of EDI in all sectors at UM;

    (c) Established an Equity Office (EQO) and appointed an Equity Co-ordinator to coordinate the implementation of the G+EP.

1.5 This Policy reflects the applicable provisions of the Maltese Constitution and Maltese laws pertaining to EDI, and is informed by UM policies, including the UM Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

2. Definitions

Equality is ensuring that individuals or groups are not treated less favourably than others, on the basis of protected characteristics, in accessing employment, programmes of study, training, development, and other opportunities, without any direct or indirect discrimination, or conscious or unconscious bias.

Equity is concerned with access barriers to the inclusion of persons and groups with protected characteristics, and seeks the promotion of fairness, including positive measures, to achieve equality of outcome.

Diversity is not just about acknowledging and tolerating difference, but involves understanding, appreciating and embracing differences, and practising mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from the majority.

Inclusion is a sense of belonging, feeling respected and valued, and having the level of support and commitment from others so that one can achieve their best at their work or study.

Protected characteristics refer to age, belief, creed or religion, colour, ethnic or national origin, or race, disability, family responsibilities or pregnancy, family or civil status, gender expression or gender identity, genetic features, health status, language, nationality, political opinion, property, sex or sex characteristics, sexual orientation, and social class. Individuals have a right not to be treated less favourably, or subjected to an unfair disadvantage, by reason of such protected characteristics.

3. Scope

3.1   This Policy applies to all members of the University community (UM Community Members), including:

(a) Resident, visiting and casual academic staff;

(b) Administrative, technical and support staff;

(c) All current students, and where applicable, prospective applicants for UM courses;

(d) Researchers;

(e) Contractors;

(f) Visitors; and

(g) Alumni.

4.   Policy Guidelines

4.1   Principles and Values

4.1.1 UM strives to ensure that all students and employees enjoy the opportunity to participate in any activity or event concerning the UM, each according to their capabilities; it seeks to enable and facilitate the participation of staff, students, alumni and visitors within the UM community, while empowering them to achieve their full potential as contributors to the UM community, as well as the Maltese and global society.

4.1.2 UM is committed to respond to the needs of students and employees with protected characteristics, who may face extra challenges while working or studying at UM.

4.1.3 In order to do so, the UM will promote inclusion, and enable such persons to progress at UM, as employees, students and researchers, promoting their wellbeing, and that of the UM with an impact on society at large.

4.1.4 UM commits to promoting diversity at all levels, including at decision-making levels, recognising that the success of students and employees from diverse backgrounds and experiences provides a meaningful connection to the local and global communities the UM serves.

4.1.5 UM commits to the principle of non-discrimination, and shall not tolerate discrimination on the ground of any protected characteristic in any matter including but not limited to:

(a) student admission;

(b) student progression;

(c) provision of student support;

(d) staff recruitment and selection;

(e) everyday working experience;

(f) career development or promotion;

(g) staff development opportunities;

(h) employee pay and remuneration; or

(i) employee reward and recognition.

4.1.6 UM commits to tackle structural barriers and to using merit as the criterion for taking decisions affecting individuals, irrespective of class, gender, ethnic or other social group.

4.1.7 UM commits to nurturing a culture of respect, and does not, in any circumstance, tolerate unfair discrimination or harassment.

4.1.8 UM strives to increase knowledge and awareness of the principles and values of EDI, by providing education, training and information on the subject, to students, staff, visitors and the general public.

4.1.9 UM acknowledges that EDI barriers in society have a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of students. UM will provide mental health, psychological and other support for individuals facing EDI barriers.

4.1.10 UM upholds the principle of academic freedom and freedom of expression for staff and students to have the freedom with adherence to the law and while respecting the rights and dignity of others, to express their opinion, to question established ideas and create new ones, and to present controversial or unpopular points of view, without placing in jeopardy their employment or any entitlements or privileges they enjoy.

4.2 Individual Responsibilities

4.2.1 All UM Community Members, have a responsibility to:

    (a) Familiarise themselves with this Policy;

    (b) Participate in EDI training, as appropriate;

    (c) Treat others with dignity and respect, and to respect others' protected characteristics;

    (d) Support UM's commitment to eliminate discrimination, bullying, victimisation and harassment.

4.2.2 Staff responsible for research, schemes of work, teaching content and resources, must uphold to EDI principles.

4.2.3 Staff responsible for addressing complaints, appeals, grievances, staff discipline and student conduct, shall uphold to EDI principles.

4.3 University Responsibilities

4.3.1 The Rectorate is responsible for ensuring EDI at UM. The EQC is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the G+EP, and related issues. The EQO, in turn, works to ensure the implementation of UMs EDI targets, as described in the G+EP.

4.3.2 UM shall ensure that all UM Community Members are made aware of this policy through the UMs webpage, social media, induction and training, publications, and line management structures.

4.3.3 All publicity materials shall respect the diversity of the UM community, and shall be monitored and reviewed by the UM Marketing, Communications and Alumni Office to such effect.

4.3.4 UM will take prompt action over alleged discrimination, victimisation or harassment, in line with established policies (see Section 7 hereof).

4.3.5 UM commits to ensuring that reasonable accommodations are made, as appropriate, with respect to staff, students, alumni and visitors with disabilities, so that such persons can experience inclusive working, learning and recreational spaces at UM.

4.3.6 UM will ensure that all persons involved in staff recruitment, student admissions, and in selection and promotion panels, shall be sensitised on equity, diversity and inclusion principles.

4.3.7 UM will ensure that contractors are made aware of their responsibility in relation to EDI principles, and shall require their compliance to UM policies and regulations in this respect.

4.3.8 UM commits to raising awareness of EDI principles in relevant teaching materials and research projects, so that such materials and projects reflect UM's commitment to EDI principles.

4.3.9 UM will commit to ensure accessibility to all locations.

4.3.10 UM will monitor actions related to EDI through its Equity reports, and the Quality Assurance Unit.

(a)   Practices Related to Students

4.3.a.1 UM practices related to student recruitment, advice, selection, admission, support, retention, progress, completion, transition, international opportunity and exchange, built spaces, teaching, learning and assessment, shall reflect UM's principles of equity, diversity and inclusion.

4.3.a.2 Students are admitted to UM on the basis of merit, in terms of UM General Regulations and the Admission Regulations.

(b)   Practices Related to Staff

4.3.b.1 UM practices related to staff recruitment, selection, appointment, development and training, recognition, career progression, promotion, work allocation and retention, shall reflect the UM's principles of EDI.

4.3.b.2 Selection and progression of staff will be based on the principle of merit.

4.4   Unacceptable Behaviour

4.4.1 UM encourages behaviour that does not interfere with the rights of others.

4.4.2 Any attempt to coerce, harass, bully or threaten others through, for example, unauthorised distribution of literature, or through threats or offensive remarks will be condemned under the applicable disciplinary codes or regulations of UM, such as the Manual of Conduct and Procedure (see Section 7 hereof).

5.   Monitoring and Review

5.1   The EQC, EQO and working groups as set up from time to time will monitor the observance and/or implementation and propose any required revision of this Policy.

5.2   UM will gather institutional data to guide UM EDI action.

5.3   This Policy shall be reviewed in the event of a change to relevant legislation, or development within the UM community or society at large.

6. Concerns and Complaints

6.1 The protocol in this section applies when UM staff or students perceive that they have been treated unfairly in relation to any protected characteristic. In any such event:

(a) Staff should speak to their line manager in the first instance, and may seek further advice from the HRM&D Office, the EQO, their union, and, in the case of bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment, an assigned advisor in terms of the applicable policies (see Section 7 hereof);

(b) Students should speak to the Dean/Director or the Faculty Manager/Officer in Charge of studies in the first instance, and may seek advice from the Kunsill Studenti Universitarji, the EQO, and, in the case of bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment, an assigned advisor in terms of the applicable policies (see Section 7 hereof).

6.2 If the student or staff member is dissatisfied with the advice from their line manager or their Dean/Director, or Faculty Manager/Officer in Charge of studies, they may also seek the help of the Office of the Pro-Rector for Staff and Student Affairs and Outreach.

6.3 All UM staff and students are also able to avail themselves of the UMs Health and Wellness Centre Services, which UM provides as a response to supporting the UM Community, and addressing the impact of EDI issues on students and staff members.

7. Policies, Procedures, Plans and Legislation

The following documentation has informed, and is complementary to, this Policy:

i. UM Code of Professional Academic Conduct, as set out in the Manual of Conduct applicable to UM Academic Staff;

ii. The applicable Disciplinary Procedures for Administrative, Technical and Industrial Members of Staff, Research Support Officers and Contract Staff;

iii. The Collective Agreement for Administrative, Technical and Industrial Staff 2017-2021;

iv. Junior College Diversity Equality Inclusion Policy;

v. UM Student Charter 2021;

vi. UM Student Discipline Regulations, 2016;

vii. UM Harassment and Bullying Policy;

viii.   UM Sexual Harassment Policy;

ix.   Good Practices in Inclusive Language;

x.   The Equality for Men and Women Act (Chapter 456, laws of Malta, available here);

xi.   The Equal Treatment of Persons Order (Subsidiary Legislation 460.15, available here);

xii.   Access to Goods and Services and their Supply (Equal Treatment) Regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 456.01, laws of Malta, available here); and the

xiii.   Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (Chapter 540, laws of Malta, available here).

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