

HO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY



SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

AUGUST 2022

1.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION

1.1 Vision

Ho Technical University is dedicated to fostering a diversity and social inclusion community in which all students and employees are treated equally by eliminating unlawful discrimination, supporting equal opportunity, and nurturing respectful relationships.

1.2 Aims

- a) This policy promotes positive attitudes toward diversity and inclusion to ensure that everyone working, residing, and attending the University is treated fairly and decently. This policy seeks to ensure that no one who works, studies, or visits the University campus is discriminated against based on their age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origins, disability, health status, gender, marital or parental status, religious belief or non-belief, political belief or social or economic class, pregnancy and maternity, or any other reason that cannot be shown to be properly justified.
- b) The University will ensure that its policies, methods, and practices are compliant with and consistent with the country's current equality laws. It also describes the equality policies and schemes that the University will follow.
- c) The University is also committed to providing an environment that encourages an open and diverse community. This is reflected in our principles and behaviours, which respect the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their origins. Therefore, unlawful discrimination, intimidation, or harassment of anybody affiliated with the University based on race, religion or belief, age, gender, handicap, marriage or partnership status, or maternity and pregnancy cannot be accepted. In addition, we strive to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between all people at the University. However, as a learning organisation, we will provide an environment where people can address and debate differences and constantly reflect on practices.
- d) The aims and objectives of this policy will be addressed through the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan, quality processes, annual monitoring, business planning, policies, procedures and guidelines.

2.0 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- a) Social inclusion aims to ensure that all members of a society feel they belong and contribute to societal development. According to the United Nations (UN), "Social Inclusion" is "a process through which efforts are made to ensure that all citizens/stakeholders, at the national, organisational, and institutional levels, have an equal opportunity to develop to their full potential, irrespective of their background or personal circumstances." Initiatives in this category include policies and actions that increase people's opportunities to have a voice in decision-making that directly affect their lives and access to resources. Ghana's social inclusion policy frameworks are based on international and regional agreements and national laws.
- b) The 1992 constitution of Ghana states, "The State shall endeavour to secure and protect a social order founded on the ideals and principles of freedom, equality, justice, probity and accountability as enshrined in Chapter 5 of this Constitution; and the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that every citizen has equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law," which is the basis for the country's Social Inclusion Policy Framework. It has an equal footing in every social sphere, from academia to medicine to economic empowerment to nutrition. Consequently, an inclusive society results from a dedication to an effective implementation plan (Constitution 1992, as revised in 1996, Article 12).
- c) The policy framework for national development in Ghana has centered on the issue of social inclusion and the difficulties it presents. In light of these national ambitions and expectations, Ho Technical University (HTU) has given some consideration to social inclusion-related concerns over the years despite lacking a formal policy declaration on the subject.

3.0 SCOPE

This policy shall cover matters of equality, diversity, and inclusive culture that allows students and staff of Ho Technical University to reach their full potential, regardless of age, race, sex, gender, gender identity, or other factors.

3.1 Protected Characteristics

3.1.1 Age

The University embraces and supports the diversity of people of all ages and strives to treat everyone with fairness and respect, regardless of age. It is direct age discrimination to deny people chances or alter their job contract based on age if there is no objective justification.

3.1.2 Disability

The University is committed to complying with disability regulations and provides full support to staff, students, and visitors with a range of disabilities. *The University's work on disability equality is handled by the Disabilities Working Group, which advises and assists students and faculty with disability needs on campus. Disability Services within the Student Support Services of the University provides assistance and advice to students with disabilities.*

3.1.3 Marriage

The University seeks to guarantee that all married students and employees are treated with fairness and decency.

3.1.4 Pregnancy and Maternity

The University seeks to create an atmosphere in which its employees are supported and treated with fairness, dignity, and respect during pregnancy, maternity leave and breastfeeding. This policy extends to employees with immediate family commitments, professional obligations, and adopted children.

3.1.5 Ethnicity and Race

Ho Technical University is committed to racial and ethnic equality in on-campus jobs and student life. This includes a zero-tolerance policy for threatening, abusive, or insulting language or behavior, as well as the sharing and publication of materials and public activities that are likely to be ethnically or racially offensive.

3.1.6 Gender

The University is committed to integrating gender equality throughout its faculty and student body. The University will take proactive measures to address underrepresentation, including the advancement of women and men in their chosen fields and gender parity in certain academic courses.

4.0 UNIVERSITY SERVICES

All staff and Students of the University will take account of this social inclusion policy and guarantee that the academic environment remains impartial and open to all; however, some staff have specific responsibilities within this policy.

4.1 Student Admissions

The University is dedicated to distinction in matters of admissions as well as targeting the provision of competent, professional and equal or social inclusion services to applicants at various levels. Ho Technical University ensures that no student is treated less favourably for any reason, as long as the social inclusion factors are in place. This means that the University prioritises choosing students with the skills and motivation to enjoy the different programmes of study offered by the University. Students hope to benefit from these programmes and help the University's strategic growth. Nevertheless, Ho Technical University does not just pick students who are smart enough and motivated enough to enjoy the different programmes.

4.2 The University is committed to achieving social inclusion balance in students' enrolment

4.2.1 Admission Procedures:

- a) The University will adopt suitable concessionary procedures in selected programmes of study where numbers in a specific social status are unsatisfactorily low
- b) The University will guarantee social inclusiveness (equity, fairness and equality) in the grant of scholarships to deserving scholars (Dean of Students Scholarship Award Scheme, etc.)

4.2.2 Widening Participation

Widening participation in higher education is the hallmark of Ho Technical University. The University is firm on ensuring that its population comprising of staff and students are seen as socially inclusive and culturally diverse. Ho Technical University is engaged in taking up projects that are targeted at promoting the course of the University in the area of strategic development and accomplishing its social inclusion objectives. For this course, the University is keen on demonstrating and ensuring good practices and adhering to the principles of social inclusiveness, such as equality and fairness.

4.2.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The diversity of values, backgrounds and experiences that staff and students possess and bring to the institution in general and the academic environment, in particular, are appreciated by the University and held in high esteem. The University is therefore keen on ensuring that the diverse needs of these socially inclusive and changing University community are met by committing itself to staff and students equally.

The University undertakes equitable teaching, learning and assessment as its objective or priority to ensure that the awareness of the diverse needs of students is not taken for granted and that equal education, scholarship and evaluation strategies are enforced to boost the academic and personal advancement of all staff and students without any deprivation of individuals. In content development of courses, teaching methods and forms of assessment and evaluation, Ho Technical University recognises and considers the diversity of its socially inclusive community to ensure no individual(s) is disadvantaged on any grounds.

4.2.4 Academic Board Procedures:

Ho Technical University will address the all-inclusiveness subject in course content and materials design. The academic board will, therefore;

- a. Encourage the review and reorganisation of courses to ensure coverage of social inclusiveness.
- b. Promote social equality, fairness, and all-inclusiveness in every aspect, including teaching and learning methods, classroom management and organisation, social, cultural and physical setting, and values, principles and attitudes.
- c. Ensure that the University's yearly budget is in line with social inclusive budgeting.
- d. Strategies for the execution of social inclusion studies within the University within the first five years of the implementation of this policy.

4.2.5 Facilities and Services

All facilities and services made available by or in conjunction with any stakeholder in the advancement of the University are governed by the Ho Technical University Social Inclusion Policy for faculty, students, and guests. Catering services, accommodation services, sports provision, retail outlets, conferences, engineering services, and all social activities shall operate in accordance with the University's Social Inclusion Policy.

5.0 POLICY STATEMENT

HTU identified Social Inclusion as one of the core areas of strategic reforms and a key goal. This policy, therefore, reflects HTU's commitment to addressing Social Inclusion imbalances at all levels of the institution through the provision of a broad policy framework with commitments and guidelines in consonance with the institution's mission and vision and the national Social Inclusion Policy Framework in order to achieve the desired Social Inclusion outcomes.

5.1 Equity, Diversity and Social Justice

5.1.1 Equity

- a) HTU, through this policy, shall ensure fairness to all parties in its treatment of all stakeholders; members of the University Council, senior members, junior members, senior staff, and junior staff.
- b) This policy document seeks to establish a framework in which HTU endeavours to encourage equity in all staff and student activities and ensure equitable distribution of resources, participation, and representation of all persons in all its decision-making processes irrespective of their gender or disability.
- c) HTU Social Inclusion Policy endeavours to include all marginalised or socially excluded groups in its community, such as students, faculty, women, and people with different disabilities. Hence, the impartial and just treatment or behaviour towards individuals or groups in HTU without favouritism or discrimination is enshrined in this policy statement to ensure that all persons are given equal opportunity to access HTU's services and resources, and to participate in all roles impartially.
- d) The policy specifically commits HTU to apply the principle of equity in staffing, training, development, and student enrolment.

5.1.2 Diversity

- a) It is the state or quality of being different or varied, including people of different ethnicity, races, genders, religions, etc., in a group.
- b) HTU's mission statement captures social inclusion as a core value in the following words: "We believe in gender equity, people-centeredness, and fair opportunities for all".
- c) Similarly, in its ethics policy statement, the University upholds that it is a secular and non-partisan, technological institution where admissions and academic awards are based on

merits, regardless of ethnicity, race or nationality, religious affiliation or beliefs, physical disabilities, or gender.

5.1.3 Social Justice

- a) HTU believes in and upholds social justice, which is the fair treatment of all people in a society, including having respect for the rights of minorities and equitable distribution of resources among community members.
- b) Academic and social activities within the institution shall be governed by the principles of fair play, justice, honesty, moral rectitude, and respect for authority, human rights, and the environment.
- c) This policy endeavours to promote increasing representation of females or marginalised groups at all levels; students, faculty, and staff, thereby enhancing inclusion and empowering marginalised groups within HTU.
- d) HTU shall endeavour to create a safe learning environment for its students and faculty, to improve its physical resources in order to better achieve its social inclusion objectives, and to use its communication and advocacy channels to influence public opinion and institutional policy.

5.2 Equal Opportunity

- a) Equal opportunity refers to giving everyone the same employment opportunities, pay, and promotion without discriminating against a particular group. As a tertiary educational institution, HTU is guided by the Technical Universities Act (2016) Act 922 and its amendments. HTU prides itself on being a non-discriminatory tertiary institution promoting secular and non-partisan technological education.
- b) The University's social inclusion policy commits to applying the principle of equity in staffing, training and development; in student enrolment; and provides equal opportunities.

5.3 Accountabilities

5.3.1 Those Responsible for the Policy

All students and staff shall be made aware of and committed to social justice, accessibility, and other inclusion ideas. It is the job of all administrators, faculty, and staff, as well as University management, Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments and other supervisors, to make sure that all employees can learn, work, and provide services in an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment and is socially inclusive.

5.3.2 Implementation of the Policy

- a) The following steps are among those that shall be taken in order to implement this policy:
 - i) collaborating with the stakeholders to develop and implement a zero tolerance for ethnicity and racism policy and social inclusion strategies;
 - ii) Ensuring that all HTU policies, procedures, and plans adhere to the principles and practices of equal opportunity;
 - iii) Creating and applying proactive measures and tactics to remedy the underrepresentation and disadvantages that equity target groups often endure in education;
 - iv) Ensuring that procedures for resolving complaints relating to equal opportunity are consistently updated and offer students and staff timely, just, and efficient outcomes;
 - v) All directors, deans, and heads of departments in all areas and across HTU shall identify, encourage, and monitor proactive measures to support all areas of HTU in promoting social inclusion, inclusive teaching practice, inclusive service delivery, and equal opportunity in education.
- b) HTU shall do the following to guarantee that this policy is implemented effectively:
 - i) See to it that all Deans and Directors include objectives related to equality of opportunity, equity, diversity, and social inclusion in the strategic, operational, and functional plans for their areas of accountability.
 - ii) All Deans and Directors shall ensure that faculty, staff and students are given training on social justice, diversity, fairness, and equality problems so that they may discuss them in the classroom and when providing services.
 - iii) Promote diversity in the workforce and the lecture halls, and keep track of progress with inclusive lecture halls, programmes, and policies.
 - iv) Create a framework for measuring the success of initiatives to advance equity, diversity, and social inclusion.
 - v) Offer knowledgeable help to decision-making bodies and top management and encourage the institutionalisation of inclusive practices, equal opportunity, equity, diversity, and social justice throughout the University.
 - vi) Ensure that students and employees who are affected by this policy ought to receive support.

5.3.3 Promotion of the Policy

The HTU website shall have information about this policy; every employee shall receive soft copies via email. Staff development events shall also reinforce this information. The Students' Representative Council's website and other student platforms shall also make the policy available to students. Hard copies shall be made available for distribution to sections, units, departments and faculty offices, Nunya Library, etc.

5.3.4 Training Plan

HTU shall provide training on social inclusion, diversity, equality and equitability to better prepare staff and students for the challenges and benefits of a diverse and inclusive society.

6.0 HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

6.1 Bullying

- a) Although there is no legal definition of bullying, it can be described as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either:
 - i) Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting.
 - ii) Abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.
- b) **Bullying might:**
 - i) Be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident.
 - ii) Happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or calls.
 - iii) Happen at work or in other work-related situations.
 - iv) Happen in lecture halls, halls of residents/hostels, private homes occurred by students.
 - v) Not always be evident or noticed by others
- c) **Bullying at work could include:**
 - i) Spreading malicious rumours about someone
 - ii) consistently putting someone down in meetings
 - iii) deliberately giving someone a heavier workload than everyone else
 - iv) excluding someone from team social events
 - v) someone consistently undermining their superior's authority and vice versa
 - vi) putting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media
- d) HTU frowns on any form of bullying and encourages faculty, staff, students, and anybody on contract with the University to report the misconduct to the appropriate authority.

6.2 Harassment

- a) By law, harassment is when persistent unwanted behaviour, such as offensive comments, unwelcome touches, text messages, emails etc., is related to any of the following:
 - i) age
 - ii) disability
 - iii) gender
 - iv) ethnicity/race
 - v) Colour
 - vi) religion or belief
 - vii) any other basis refers to anti-sexual harassment policy
- b) For it to count as harassment, the unwanted behaviour must have either:
 - i) Violated the person's dignity, whether it was intended or not
 - ii) created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, frightening, insulting, threatening, undermining, disrespecting, humiliating or offensive environment for the person, whether intended or not, such that the person in issue becomes uncomfortable in his or her work or studies environment.
- c) The University does not tolerate harassment and would ensure that a congenial atmosphere is created for work and studies to go on smoothly.

7.0 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AND SUPPORT

7.1 Seeking support

- a) If one has experienced an incident that could be social exclusion, talking about the incident soon after that with a designated official of the University may be helpful. The University has designated community members who serve in their official capacity to assist in addressing the matter. These officials include Heads of Units and Departments, Deans of Faculties, Directors, the Registrar, Pro-Vice Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor.
- b) For counselling services for both victims and culprits of social exclusion, the University Guidance and Counselling Office and the University Chaplaincy offer services in that direction.
- c) Depending on the wishes of the person seeking help, the advisor's role may include any of the following informational or supportive activities:
 - i) listening to and discussing the incident with the individual;

- ii) helping the person decide whether to try to resolve the situation on their own;
- iii) Helping the person understand the University's social exclusion grievance procedures; and
- iv) While all offices are available for support, individuals shall feel free to contact the office where they are most comfortable.

7.2 Grievance procedures ---- in line with Schedule D

- a) Any community member who feels that he or she is the target of or victim of social exclusion should report the incident as soon as possible and preferably within a month of its occurrence, since prolonged delay may complicate the presentation of evidence in the grievance procedures. Complainants have up to one year to report alleged social exclusive behaviour.
- b) Complaints from students and staff who feels that he or she is the target of or victim of social exclusion shall be generally handled by following the already established procedures in the University.
- c) A staff or student with a grievance should contact an employee's head. Within five (5) working days of the incident, a formal complaint shall be made in writing to the Social Inclusion Monitoring Desk/Team in the University.
- d) If the complaint is about a member of the Social Inclusion Monitoring Desk/Team, complaints shall be made directly to the Vice-Chancellor.
- e) Any complaints, if found to have merit, shall be dealt with using the internal structures of the University as prescribed in the statutes of the University.
- f) Grievances shall be resolved within a month. In all cases, written notification of the complaint settlement shall be delivered to the complainant following the conclusion of the matter.
- g) If the person who filed the complaint thinks that the person or people who heard it did not solve the problem well enough, they can appeal to the Vice Chancellor through the Registrar in writing. A person has ten days from the time they get written notice that their complaint has been settled to file an appeal.
- h) The complainant is free to withdraw or proceed at any stage of the process. The University shall treat the identity of the parties and the substance of the claims as confidential throughout, except as is reasonably necessary to carry out the procedures and to ensure the safety of everyone at the University.

- i) The University Social Inclusion policy prohibits academic or otherwise retaliating against employees or students for bringing complaints of exclusive social behaviour.

8.0 MONITORING

The monitoring of this policy, its implementation, and all complaints and matters arising shall be handled by the University's internal social inclusion monitoring desk/team.

- a) The University is committed to keeping track of all students' applications, admissions, progression, and achievements to ensure social inclusion and fairness.
- b) Staff employment data on hiring, pay, promotion, and professional development shall be monitored for compliance with standards of inclusion and fairness.
- c) The University shall build a well-integrated approach to equality on campus to ensure no one is disadvantaged based on race, age, gender, under-represented group membership, or disabilities.
- d) Management through Academic Board shall review the Equality Impact Assessment reports of deans and heads on policies, practices, and processes of their respective domains. These reviews shall provide further directions for the practice of social inclusion in the University.
- e) The University shall establish an internal monitoring process as a critical way to ensure that victimisation, harassment, and discrimination are dealt with appropriately.
- f) There shall be an annual reporting system to provide information to the university community on details of how the University has handled social inclusion issues concerning the University's policies, programmes, and procedures for the year under review.

9.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Ho Technical University shall, as much as possible, ensure that every member of the University knows about this policy and any relevant processes that may apply. The following groups and people in specific jobs are in charge of different parts of the policy on staff and student diversity and inclusion.

- a) The Vice-Chancellor, supported by key Management Staff, ensures that the University's goals of fairness and inclusion are met by keeping an eye on the work of all Committees and Boards in the University.

- b) Management Officers, Deans, heads, and other senior officers shall actively support and grow a culture of tolerance, diversity, and inclusion in their respective areas by integrating diversity into the culture of the University and providing information, assistance, and support on a wide range of equality-related issues to both students and employees.
- c) Deans, Heads, and other key officers shall be directly in charge of ensuring this policy, training, and programmes related to social inclusion are followed. To ensure fairness and inclusion, they shall conduct Equality Impact Assessments of all their programmes policies, practices, and processes annually.
- d) Every employee and student leader at the University shall undertake a mandatory course on social inclusion within the first three years of the coming into force of this policy.
- e) Every member of the University community is responsible for upholding this policy, challenging unacceptable behaviour, and reporting any activity that violates this policy.

10.0 ANNUAL REPORT -----link with Gender policy (Gender Affairs Officer)

The University is committed to guaranteeing the efficacy of measures adopted to combat inequality on any basis, harassment, discrimination, and victimisation, as well as other tactics that do not promote social inclusion. Therefore, the University employs its monitoring mechanism to determine the success of the aforementioned measures, such as an assessment of the impact of the University's Social Inclusion Policy on the academic environment in terms of its impact on equality. The University will produce an annual report that integrates equivalency data and explains how diversity and inclusion activities are encouraged on campus. This will allow the University's social inclusion policy, initiatives, and practices to be evaluated annually. Also, the Vice-Chancellor's Annual report to Convocation shall have a section that reports on social inclusion.