



# **GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

**DR. HILLA LIMANN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY, WA**



**GENDER, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**



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## **1.0 Preamble**

The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana and many of its provisions came into effect in 1992. One of the objectives of the constitution is to consolidate the fragmented legislation on discrimination. This Policy, which is an integral part of Wa Polytechnic embraces the principle of equality which stipulates that all staff and students should be supported in fulfilling their potential, while respecting the needs of the individual at all times.

To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognized and valued, every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. Hence, no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated by management.

Again, since training, development and progression opportunities together with equality constitute good management practice and make sound business sense, all employment practices and procedures shall be reviewed to ensure fairness. In this regard, breaches of the equality policy will be regarded as misconduct and shall lead to disciplinary proceedings. This policy shall therefore be fully supported by management and unions and be reviewed by the appropriate authority.

### ***1.1 Equality and Diversity***

The Wa Polytechnic recognises that both work and learning require effective co-operation and teamwork, and that teams are strongest where their members have a wide range of skills, aptitudes, interests and backgrounds. Differences may occur in terms of gender, ethnicity, ability, age, nationality, beliefs, first language and religion. Others may include marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, social background and culture, appearance, experience and health. Diverse teams are able to cope with different challenges and opportunities in life and

work. Irrespective of such differences, all people are of equal values and deserve equal respect and opportunity to develop their full potential. Equality of opportunity does not necessarily mean that everybody is the same or should be treated exactly the same way. It means that everyone should be respected for one's own characteristics and abilities and that one should be treated in ways, which make the best of their abilities. In practice, this means that Wa Polytechnic will work to ensure that, in its own premises and in those places where it has influence, respect, tolerance, thoughtfulness and goodwill, it shall shape and control the behaviour of all. The opposites – violence, rudeness, offensive names or 'jokes', harassment of individuals or minority groups, bullying, display of pornographic or racist material, ignoring or shunning people – are all not acceptable and can attract disciplinary measures.

Achieving greater diversity and equality of opportunity is a practical matter, requiring careful thought, determined action and persistence. Success is measurable in the quality of the organization, as it affects the well-being of every member of staff and every student; in the quality of learning opportunities, both at the Wa Polytechnic and in the workplace; and in the careers which Wa Polytechnic students pursue over time. The laws of the Republic of Ghana have promoted equality of opportunity for many years. This legislation forbids unfair discrimination. The legal framework is being constantly refined and updated. Wa Polytechnic shall ensure that, during the policy committee review meetings, relevant laws are made clear and complied with.

### ***1.1.1 Aims***

The equality and diversity policy outlines the Wa Polytechnic's commitment across all operations of the institution with an internal and external focus. Internally, we are creating an inclusive work, research and study environment where differences are valued and equality of opportunity is advanced.

Externally, our focus is to continue to deliver a fair service to our students and visitors by meeting the changing needs of global, diverse communities.

The Wa Polytechnic shall be fully committed to ensuring respect and fair treatment for staff and students, eliminating discrimination and actively promoting equality of opportunity for all. In addition, the Wa Polytechnic shall support diversity and its aim shall be to treat all staff and students fairly, openly, honestly, with dignity and respect and value differences regardless of the following:

- a. Age
- b. Disability
- c. Marriage and Civil partnership
- d. Pregnancy and Maternity
- e. Race (colour, ethnic or national background)
- f. Religion or Belief (including non-belief)
- g. Gender
- h. Socio-economic background/grouping
- i. Union activity

The Wa Polytechnic shall ensure that equality is embedded in all its functions, operations and activities. The Wa Polytechnic shall unreservedly be opposed to any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. The Wa Polytechnic shall be committed to using fair and objective employment practices to ensure that;

- a. All staff and potential staff are treated fairly and with respect at all stages of their employment.
- b. All staff/volunteers/service users have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour.

- c. All staff/volunteers/service users shall have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination.
- d. All staff/volunteers/service users shall have the right to be free from discrimination because they associate with another person who possesses a peculiar characteristic or because others perceive that they have a peculiar characteristic.

Direct discrimination is when an employee or applicant is treated less favourably than someone else because of their marriage or civil partnership, gender, pregnancy and maternity leave, disability, race, religion or belief, age, and that there is no genuine occupation requirement for it. People also must not be discriminated against because they are on a part time or fixed term contract.

Indirect discrimination on the other hand is where there is a working condition, practice or rule that disadvantages one group of people more than another. In other words, it is more difficult for people from one group to comply with the requirement. Even if it is done accidentally indirect discrimination shall be unlawful.

### ***1.1.2 The Legal Framework***

The Wa Polytechnic shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that staff and students do not unlawfully discriminate under the following Acts that have already been passed:

- a. The Fundamental Human Rights as enshrined in the 1992 Constitution
- b. The Labour Act, (Act 651) 2003;
- c. The Disability Act, (Act 715) 2006; and

- d. Any other relevant legislation in force from time to time relating to discrimination in employment and the provision of goods, facilities or services.

### ***1.1.3 The Scope of the Policy***

This Policy shall apply to all relevant groups – staff, students, visitors, and clients/contractors. It shall also apply to all stages of employment including recruitment, promotion and training.

## **2.0 Indicative List of Equality and Diversity**

### ***2.1 Recruitment***

a. Applicants for positions/training shall be given as much clear and accurate information about opportunities through advertisements, open days, inductions, job descriptions and interviews to enable them assess their own suitability for the opportunity they are applying for. Information about opportunities shall also be placed and prominently displayed where it may reach individuals of all groups.

b. Advertisements and recruitment drives shall be aimed at a wider group of suitably qualified and experienced individuals.

c. All personnel specifications for positions shall include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job, as requirements that are convenient rather than necessary, may be discriminatory.

d. All interviews shall be thorough, conducted on an objective basis and shall deal with only the applicant's suitability for the job and ability to fulfil the job requirements and where necessary to assess whether personal circumstances will affect performance of the job.

e. Vacancies shall be given adequate internal circulation to enable staff who possess appropriate qualifications or have relevant experience to apply.

f. The Wa Polytechnic shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, marital status, age, religion or disability in the allocation of duties or shifts between staff in any grade or grades with comparable job descriptions, except where night work restrictions apply, in which case exemptions may be considered.

g. Where appropriate and/or necessary, the Wa Polytechnic shall endeavour to provide appropriate specific needs of staff, clients and students which shall rise from their ethnic or cultural background, gender responsibilities, careers, disability, religion or belief.

h. All new staff and students shall be issued with either the Statutes or the Handbook with details of all related issues.

## ***2.2 Staff Development and Training***

All staff shall be given the opportunity to develop and undertake appropriate qualifications relevant to their positions and/ or progression opportunities. To comply with good practices, the Wa Polytechnic shall guide staff to enroll on programmes which are relevant to their area of specialization.

### ***2.3 Age***

The Wa Polytechnic recognizes that people can be discriminated against based on their age and shall therefore not encourage any form of age discrimination. The Wa Polytechnic shall be committed to resisting all acts of discrimination and inequality with regard to age in all its practices and activities.

The Governing Council and Management shall affirm their responsibility for implementing equality for all regardless of age in all activities and responsibilities of the Wa Polytechnic. This commitment shall be consistent with the significant progress the institution has already made in this area.

The Wa Polytechnic shall continue to appreciate the valuable contributions made by staff and students of all ages in terms of quality of experiences brought to bear on learning, teaching, research, support services, consultancy, enterprise, administration, professional services and management.

All staff and students involved within the Wa Polytechnic community shall recognize that ageism is harmful and undermines the contributions that young and old people can make to an organization. The Wa Polytechnic shall take necessary positive action to recruit younger and older people where necessary to ensure an age balance in the workforce ensuring that it takes advantage of the valuable range of contributions that staff and students of different ages can bring to the Wa Polytechnic learning environment and workforce.

### ***2.4 Harassment and Bullying***

This is an undesirable conduct which violates a person's dignity and creates a hostile, intimidating, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment. It can be physical or verbal attacks on property as well as on a person.

The Wa Polytechnic shall make every effort to provide a working and learning environment free from all forms of harassment and intimidation. It is against the policy of this Wa Polytechnic for any staff or student(s) to harass another. Such conduct shall not be tolerated. All staff, students and clients of the Wa Polytechnic shall be expected to comply with equality and diversity legislation and take appropriate measures to ensure that such conduct does not occur. Appropriate disciplinary action, may be taken against staff and students who violate this policy.

All supervisory personnel shall be responsible for taking positive action to discourage all forms of harassment or intimidation which they are aware of.

It can range from extreme forms such as violence and bullying to less obvious actions like ignoring someone at work. Whatever the form of harassment, it will be unwanted behaviour, which shall not be entertained. Forms of harassment may include;

- a. Physical contact ranging from unacceptable touching to serious assault.
- b. Oral and/or written harassment through jokes, offensive language, gossip, slander, sectarian songs, letters or whatsoever may apply.
- c. Visual display of posters, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags, bunting and emblems.
- d. Isolation or non-co-operation at work, exclusion from social activities.
- e. Coercion ranging from pressure for sexual favours and pressure to participate in religious/political groups or union.

- f. Intrusion by pestering, spying, following and unwanted tele phone calls, e-mails, social networking postings.

### ***2.5 Gender and Sexuality***

Unacceptable behaviour may be directed towards men and women. It may consist of unacceptable name-calling, jokes, and hostile attitudes towards particular groups of people that override consideration for the individual, suggestive, vulgar or sexually explicit language and pictures, or unwanted physical contact. Where someone makes it clear that he/she considers a particular language or behaviour objectionable, it should stop. Persistence may constitute harassment or bullying.

Some examples of indecent behaviour to avoid;

- a. Sexually suggestive comments and gestures.
- b. Unacceptable physical contact.
- c. Derogatory remarks about people of a particular gender.
- d. Unwelcome requests for social and sexual relationships.
- e. Display or sharing of pornographic materials.
- f. Indecent exposure or sexual assault, which is likely to be criminal acts.

The Wa Polytechnic shall be committed to resisting acts of gender discrimination and inequality in all its practices and activities. The Governing Council and Management affirm their responsibility for implementing gender equality in all activities and responsibilities of the Wa Polytechnic. The Wa Polytechnic shall uphold gender equality by ensuring that, it is built into all aspects of the Wa Polytechnic's business. This duty applies to all the Wa Polytechnic's functions not just in education provision, employment and service delivery but, for example, in budget setting, course validation, procurement and strategic planning.

### ***2.6 Ethnicity***

The Wa Polytechnic frowns on all forms of discrimination with respect to ethnicity of staff, students and other stakeholders. Such acts are not only unlawful but also divisive and shall not in any way be entertained.

### ***2.7 Religion/ Belief***

The Wa Polytechnic shall be committed to resisting all acts of discrimination on grounds of religion and belief. The Wa Polytechnic affirms its responsibilities for ensuring equality on the ground of religion and belief in all activities and responsibility of the Wa Polytechnic. This commitment is consistent with the significant progress the institution has already made in this area.

The Wa Polytechnic recognizes that it is a fundamental human right to hold a religion or belief and that right should be treated with respect. With the understanding that people can experience discrimination or be treated differently because of their religion or belief(s), the Wa Polytechnic shall, where practicable, ensure a community where people can practice their religion or belief(s) without infringing on the rights of others

The Wa Polytechnic shall ensure that;

- a. Staff and students who hold different religion or belief are treated equally and fairly.
- b. Staff and students are advised to be sensitive and tolerant to other people's religion and belief.

Where practicable, consideration will be given to students and staff requirements to pray in any particular form based on the nature and depth of their personal belief and practice.

## ***2.8 Racial Abuse***

The Wa Polytechnic shall not tolerate any form of racial abuse which may be directed at men or women including unacceptable name-calling; jokes; hostile attitudes towards groups of people that override consideration for the individual; language or behaviour, which is known to be unacceptable to the culture of a person from a different ethnic background; and criticism of dress or appearance.

In the Republic of Ghana, where people come from a wide range of different ethnic groups, it is possible for a person from any background to commit offence accidentally or through ignorance. When it is made clear that the offence has been committed, the proper response shall be to stop and apologize.

Some examples of unacceptable behaviour to avoid are as follows:

- a. Ridicule for physical or cultural difference.
- b. Exclusion from the activities of the rest of the group, in learning or social engagements.
- c. Unfair allocation of work or responsibility.
- d. Racist comments, graffiti or wearing of insignia.
- e. Unreasonable rejection of traditional dress.
- f. Abuse, threats or attacks; these are likely to be criminal acts.

Religion is a prominent feature of life. This applies to all religions. It is not illegal to challenge religious beliefs, but it may cause greater offence than was intended.

Some examples of behaviour to avoid are as follows:

- a. Unreasonably teasing or criticising dress codes, which may be important to believers in a particular religion.
- b. Making mockery of other people's beliefs, particularly in front of a group or in public.
- c. Acting on an assumption that all people of a particular religion have the same qualities or characteristics.

## ***2.9 Disability***

The Wa Polytechnic shall be committed to resisting all acts of disability, discrimination and inequality in all its practices and activities. Management shall affirm its responsibility for implementing disability equality in all activities and areas of the Wa Polytechnic's responsibilities.

The Wa Polytechnic will implement best practice and compliance with legislation and provide supportive measures that will meet the specific needs of disabled staff, students, contractors and visitors. The Wa Polytechnic upholds and applies the definition of disability in accordance with the Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715).

The Wa Polytechnic shall provide reasonable adjustments where possible to enable staff, students, contractors and visitors to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Where necessary, a risk assessment may be undertaken and / or external specialist advice sought.

The Wa Polytechnic shall respect the wish for confidentiality by disabled people. Therefore, any support measure implemented shall be mutually agreed and acceptable to the individuals concerned. There shall be regular consultation with disabled staff and students and where appropriate, external organizations, to inform policy development and change practice where necessary. The Wa Polytechnic shall carry out periodic audits of all its accommodation, including information resources, such as loop systems, to ensure compliance with legislation and shall continue to promote positive images of disabled people in all spheres of the Wa Polytechnic's endeavour.

People with a wide range of disabilities are increasingly able to live a full life and work alongside able colleagues. The ability to learn and to enjoy appropriate support at the Wa Polytechnic shall have an essential foundation for widening of opportunities. The help and encouragement of every member of the institution shall be an important part of that support.

Some examples of behaviour to avoid are as follows:

- a. Unacceptable name-calling referring to a disability.
- b. Exclusion from the activities of the group.
- c. Unthinkable assumption about what a person with disabilities can achieve or do.
- d. Giving unwanted and unsolicited help.

### ***2.10 Political Affiliation***

The Wa Polytechnic shall affirm its responsibility for implementing equality in all activities and in all areas of its responsibilities irrespective of one's political affiliation or association.

### ***2.11 Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity/Breastfeeding***

The Wa Polytechnic shall be committed to resisting all acts of discrimination and inequality with regard to pregnancy, maternity, paternity and adoption in all its practices and activities. Management upholds its responsibility for implementing equality for all regard- less of marital status, pregnancy, maternity and adoption in all activities and responsibilities of the Wa Polytechnic. The Wa Polytechnic shall not tolerate any form of discrimination against staff or student who is pregnant or on maternity. To this end, the Wa Polytechnic shall work to comply with all requirements set out in the Labour Act 651, (2003) with regard to this protected characteristic.

## **3.0 Responsibilities**

Each individual shall be responsible for his/her own behaviour and must accept the principle that there is equality of opportunity and fairness for all staff and students and anyone associated with the Polytechnic (e.g. visitors, contractors and service providers), in all aspects of Polytechnic life.

Individuals shall ensure they do not support unfair behaviour by ignoring what is happening around them and shall not incite or collude with unfair or unlawful discrimination.

### ***3.1 Implementation of the policy***

Making Policy available to members (stakeholders) Monitoring exercise – Progress report

Lodging Complaint/Reporting Mechanism

All staff, students and clients of the Wa Polytechnic shall be involved in creating an equality environment and one that values diversity. Anyone who feels he/she is becoming a victim of harassment or bullying shall be assured of a fair treatment from Management.

#### **4.0 Monitoring the Policy**

This policy shall be monitored in order to determine its effectiveness while identifying areas for improvement. Monitoring shall relate to staff, students, clients and service users.

#### ***4.1 Reporting Discrimination / Potential Discrimination***

Staff and students who feel they have suffered any form of discrimination should be encouraged to raise the issue through the following means:

a. The victim should first report the matter to his/her immediate Head who would in turn conduct preliminary investigation into the case. Where the matter is not resolved at the departmental level, the appropriate channel shall be sought for redress.

b. Staff/students/service users shall use the appropriate authority if they feel they have been subjected to harassment from someone who is not an employee of Wa Polytechnic. The Wa Polytechnic shall not tolerate any harassment from third parties towards its staff/students/clients and shall take appropriate action to address the issue.

c. If a staff/student(s)/service user witnesses offensive behaviour in relation to age, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, disability, gender, race, religion or

belief, even if it is not directed at him/her the appropriate procedure shall be employed.

#### ***4.2 Disciplinary Action***

Any staff, student or client who does not abide by this policy shall be subjected to the disciplinary procedures as contained in the Wa Polytechnic Statutes. The Wa Polytechnic shall fully investigate any reported incidents of discrimination by clients with whom we work, including students and staff.

#### ***4.3 Grievances and Victimization***

Particular care shall be taken to deal effectively with all complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment which shall be reported in writing for investigation by the Disciplinary Committee.

#### ***5.0 Communication***

Communication of this policy to staff/ student(s)/ clients shall be done through appointment/ engagement/admission letters.

#### ***5.1 Policy Review***

This policy shall be reviewed periodically (or more regularly if the Wa Polytechnic identifies any non-compliance or problem concerning equality and diversity issues with staff, students, clients, sub-contractors or changes in legislation). The Wa Polytechnic shall take remedial action if it discovers non-compliance under this policy or barriers to equality and diversity. Management shall ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the institution.

This policy must be strictly adhered to unless there are legal limitations on employment or enrolment. Disciplinary procedure may be used in the case of a breach of this Policy.

