

1.11 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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Approved by	SMT		
Policy Group	Operations		
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External Reference points	- Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan – Quality Assurance Framework and relevant policies (where applicable) - Academic Regulations of Partner Universities and Awarding Bodies		
Version Control			
Previous Version	New Version	Date	Update/Notes
V01	V02	14-04-2026	Strengthened the reporting procedure for discrimination and harassment concerns and clarified staff responsibilities.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

IVY Academic Network is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, dignity, respect, inclusion, and fairness across all areas of institutional life. The institution recognises that a diverse and inclusive academic community strengthens learning, teaching, student experience, staff development, and institutional quality.

IVY Academic Network is committed to ensuring that students, staff, applicants, visitors, and all members of the IVY community are treated fairly and respectfully. Admissions, progression, learning opportunities, assessment support, employment, professional development, student services, and participation in institutional activities will be governed by merit, ability, performance, conduct, and relevant institutional requirements.

No student, staff member, applicant for admission, applicant for employment, visitor, or stakeholder will be treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic or personal background. IVY Academic Network will take reasonable steps to remove barriers to participation, support under-represented groups, promote inclusive practice, and create a culture where every individual feels respected and able to contribute.

This policy applies to all campuses, programmes, departments, staff, students, applicants, visitors, contractors, and institutional activities. It also applies to learning and teaching, assessment, admissions,



recruitment, student support, professional development, events, online learning, digital communication, placements, internships, and other activities arranged, approved, or represented by IVY Academic Network.

PROTECTED GROUPS

Protected groups include, but are not limited to, individuals who may experience disadvantage or unequal treatment because of sex, gender, age, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion or belief, language, socio-economic background, family circumstances, or any other personal characteristic protected by applicable law or recognised by institutional policy.

IVY Academic Network respects religious, cultural, philosophical, and personal beliefs, including the right not to hold any religious or philosophical belief. The institution also supports respectful academic discussion and debate, provided that such expression does not become discriminatory, abusive, harassing, threatening, or harmful to the dignity and safety of others.

Students or staff who require reasonable adjustments because of disability, learning difficulty, health condition, language barrier, or other recognised support need may request support through the relevant institutional process. Requests will be considered fairly, confidentially, and in line with available institutional capacity and academic requirements.

If any person admitted as a student or appointed as a member of staff considers that they are suffering from unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation in their admission, appointment, or progression through IVY Academic Network because of belonging to any of the above protected groups, they may make a complaint, which will be dealt with through the agreed procedures for complaints or grievances, or the procedures for dealing with bullying and harassment, as appropriate.

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

Article 25 of the Constitution of Pakistan provides a consistent approach to comply with the law and defines the types of unlawful discrimination:

- Direct discrimination – This occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic or personal background. For example, refusing an opportunity to a student or applicant because of gender, disability, religion, race, nationality, or age.
- Indirect discrimination – This occurs when a rule, practice, condition, or procedure appears to apply equally to everyone but places a particular group at an unfair disadvantage, unless it can be reasonably justified. For example, setting a requirement that creates unnecessary barriers for students with disabilities or students from particular backgrounds.
- Harassment – This occurs when unwanted conduct violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.
- Bullying – This includes repeated or serious behaviour that intimidates, humiliates, undermines, excludes, or harms another person.
- Associative discrimination – This occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of their association with someone who has, or is perceived to have, a protected characteristic.



- Perceptive discrimination – This occurs when a person is treated less favourably because others believe they have a protected characteristic, whether or not that perception is correct.
- Victimisation – This occurs when a person is treated unfairly because they made a complaint, supported a complaint, gave evidence, raised a concern, or intended to raise a concern under this policy.
- Hate-based conduct – This includes words, actions, symbols, online posts, or behaviour that target a person or group because of identity, background, belief, disability, nationality, race, gender, or other protected characteristic.

IMPLEMENTATION & ENACTMENT

IVY Academic Network will take active steps to promote equality, diversity, inclusion, dignity, and fairness. In particular, it will:

- Work towards the elimination of discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation, and unequal treatment, whether actual, perceived, direct, indirect, or associative.
- Advance equality of opportunity for students, staff, applicants, and visitors by identifying and reducing barriers to access, participation, progression, achievement, employment, and institutional engagement.
- Foster good relations among students, staff, departments, campuses, and communities by encouraging respect, dialogue, inclusion, and shared responsibility.
- Ensure that admissions, progression, teaching, assessment, student support, recruitment, promotion, professional development, events, and institutional activities are conducted fairly and transparently.
- Review institutional policies and procedures to assess whether they support equality, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and student success.
- Consider reasonable adjustments for students, staff, and applicants with disabilities, health conditions, learning difficulties, or other recognised support needs.
- Promote an inclusive culture, good practice in teaching, learning, and assessment, and good management practice, through the development of codes of best practice, policies, and training.
- Ensure that complaints or concerns relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation, or unfair treatment are addressed through clear, fair, confidential, and timely procedures.
- Monitor student recruitment, admission, progression, retention, achievement, complaints, appeals, support needs, and student feedback to identify equality-related trends or concerns.
- Monitor staff recruitment, induction, development, progression, complaints, and workplace concerns where relevant and appropriate.
- Provide staff and students with information, guidance, and training on equality, diversity, inclusion, respectful behaviour, reasonable adjustments, unconscious bias, and inclusive practice.
- Take appropriate action where behaviour or practice is found to breach this policy.
- Maintain confidentiality in all equality-related matters, except where disclosure is required for safety, legal compliance, safeguarding, investigation, or institutional duty of care.