

POLICY DOCUMENT

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

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The purpose of this Policy is to establish a comprehensive and coherent institutional framework that promotes equality, values diversity, and ensures inclusion across all areas of the University's academic, administrative, and social environment. It reflects the University's commitment to creating a fair and supportive setting in which all individuals are treated with respect and provided with equal opportunities to succeed.

MINGACHEVIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Creating a fair and supportive environment for all

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

Promoting equality, valuing diversity, ensuring inclusion

CORE PRINCIPLES

Mingachevir State University is committed to upholding the following fundamental principles.

- Non-discrimination**
Zero tolerance for discrimination based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, language, or socio-economic background.
- Equal Opportunity**
Ensuring fair and transparent access to education and career advancement based on merit and qualifications.
- Respect and Dignity**
Fostering a culture of respect, ethical interaction, and dignity for all members of the University.
- Inclusivity**
Actively supporting the meaningful participation of underrepresented and vulnerable groups in all university activities.
- Transparency**
Maintaining open, consistent, and accountable decision-making and communication.

In this context, the Policy seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination by ensuring that no individual is disadvantaged on the basis of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, language, or socio-economic background. It further aims to cultivate an inclusive academic culture that enables equal access to education, research, and professional development opportunities for all members of the University community.

The Policy is aligned with the legislative framework of the Republic of Azerbaijan and is informed by internationally recognized best practices in equality, diversity, and inclusion. Through its implementation, the University also seeks to strengthen its contribution to sustainable development by embedding inclusive and equitable principles into its institutional practices, decision-making processes, and long-term strategic priorities.

Mingachevir State University recognizes that diversity is a fundamental source of strength, creativity, and innovation in higher education. As a public higher education institution in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the University is committed to fostering an academic environment in which all individuals—regardless of their background—are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, and are empowered to contribute fully to the intellectual, social, and institutional life of the University.

In an increasingly globalized academic context, the University acknowledges that inclusive and diverse learning environments significantly enhance the quality of education, research output, and institutional development. For this reason, the University actively promotes a culture that values different perspectives, encourages critical thinking, and supports equal participation in all academic and administrative processes.

This Policy reflects the University's strong institutional commitment to academic fairness and equal opportunity, ensuring that all students and staff have equitable access to educational resources, career development pathways, and research opportunities without any form of discrimination or bias. It also reinforces the importance of inclusive teaching, learning, and research practices that accommodate diverse learning needs and promote active participation from all members of the University community.

Furthermore, the Policy emphasizes institutional transparency and accountability as key pillars of good governance. Decision-making processes within the University are guided by principles of openness, fairness, and responsibility, ensuring trust and integrity across all levels of operation.

In addition, this Policy supports the University's broader strategic priorities, including internationalization, enhancement of research excellence, and strengthening of social responsibility. Through the implementation of equality, diversity, and inclusion principles, the University aims to align itself with global standards in higher education and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development and societal progress.

Key Definitions



Equality is understood as the principle that guarantees fair access to rights, opportunities, and institutional resources for all individuals. Rather than identical treatment in all cases, it emphasizes fairness by addressing different needs so that everyone can achieve equitable outcomes without discrimination.



Diversity captures the variety of differences present within the University community. These differences may relate to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, disability, and socio-economic background, as well as cultural, linguistic, educational, and intellectual perspectives.



Inclusion focuses on the creation of an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and supported.



Discrimination describes any form of unfair, unjust, or prejudicial treatment directed at an individual or group based on personal or social characteristics. These may include, but are not limited to, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, language, or socio-economic status.



Harassment refers to unwanted conduct that undermines an individual's dignity or creates a hostile, intimidating, degrading, or offensive environment. It may take verbal, non-verbal, physical, or digital forms and can significantly affect an individual's ability to study, work, or participate effectively in University life.

Scope of Application

The provisions of this Policy extend to the entire community of Mingachevir State University, ensuring that principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion are consistently applied across all levels of institutional life.

All members of the University community fall within the scope of this Policy, including academic and administrative staff who are responsible for teaching, research, governance, and operational support functions. In addition, undergraduate and postgraduate students are fully covered, as they represent an essential part of the academic environment and are entitled to equal access to all educational opportunities and institutional resources.

The Policy further applies to visiting scholars and researchers who temporarily engage in teaching or research activities within the University. Their participation is expected to align with the University's standards on equality and inclusion, ensuring a respectful and supportive academic environment. Moreover, external partners involved in academic, scientific, or research collaborations are also subject to the relevant provisions of this Policy when operating within or in cooperation with the University.

Coverage is not limited to individuals alone; it also encompasses all institutional functions and activities. Teaching and learning processes are included to ensure that educational delivery is accessible, inclusive, and free from discrimination. Similarly, research and innovation activities fall within its scope, with an emphasis on equal participation, ethical conduct, and fair recognition of contributions.

Human resource-related processes such as recruitment and employment practices are also governed by this Policy, ensuring fairness, transparency, and equal opportunity at every stage of employment.

Core Principles

The equality, diversity and inclusion framework of Mingachevir State University is based on a set of fundamental principles that guide all institutional, academic, and administrative activities.

Non-discrimination

The University applies a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discrimination. No individual is allowed to face direct or indirect disadvantage on the basis of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, language, or socio-economic background.

Equal opportunity

Access to education, employment, and career progression is ensured on a fair and transparent basis.

Respect and dignity

Every member of the University community is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. The institutional environment promotes professional behaviour, ethical interaction, and mutual respect, ensuring that individuals are not exposed to humiliation, exclusion, or degrading treatment.

Inclusivity

Active efforts are made to ensure the participation of all individuals, particularly those from underrepresented and vulnerable groups.

Transparency

Decision-making processes are conducted in an open, consistent, and accountable manner. Information is communicated clearly, and governance practices are designed to strengthen trust, fairness, and institutional integrity.

Strategic Objectives

Integration of EDI principles into institutional governance



Equality, diversity, and inclusion considerations are systematically embedded into all university policies, regulations, and administrative procedures.

Promotion of gender equality and balanced representation in leadership



Efforts are directed towards achieving fair gender representation across academic and administrative leadership structures.

Improvement of accessibility for persons with disabilities



Physical infrastructure, digital platforms, and academic services are continuously developed to ensure full accessibility.

Development of inclusive curriculum and teaching practices



Academic programs are designed and regularly reviewed to reflect inclusive pedagogical approaches. Teaching methodologies are adapted to accommodate diverse learning needs, ensuring that all students can engage effectively and achieve academic success.

Strengthening international cooperation and intercultural engagement



The University actively expands partnerships with international institutions to promote knowledge exchange, mobility opportunities, and joint research initiatives. .

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Objective	Indicator (KPI)	Baseline (2024)	Target (2027)	Timeline	Responsible Unit
Strengthening gender balance	Gender ratio among staff and students	47% female / 53% male	Achieve 50% ± 5% balance	2027	Human Resources Department, Department of Teaching Organization and Planning
Gender representation in leadership	Share of women in academic and administrative leadership	28%	35%	2027	Human Resources Department
Participation of underrepresented groups	Participation rate in student events and projects	32% participation	40–45% participation	2027	Student Affairs Department, Student Organizations
EDI training and awareness	Number of annual trainings and participant rate	2 trainings / ~40% participation	5 trainings / ≥70% participation	2027	Human Resources Department, Lifelong Learning Center
Accessibility level	Compliance of physical and digital infrastructure	55% compliant infrastructure	75% compliance	2027	IT and Technical Support Department, Digital Transformation Department
Discrimination cases and complaint management	Registered and resolved complaints	100% recorded, 70% resolved	100% recorded, ≥90% resolved	2027	Internal Control Department, Department of Teaching Organization and Planning
Inclusive learning environment	Share of courses using inclusive teaching methods	35% of courses	55% of courses	2027	Department of Teaching Organization and Planning, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office, Faculties / Departments

Implementation Mechanism

The effective implementation of this Policy at Mingachevir State University is ensured through a coordinated, multi-level governance approach that integrates institutional planning, capacity building, and continuous monitoring. The Policy is embedded within the University's strategic development framework, ensuring alignment with overall academic, administrative, and sustainability priorities.

To operationalize the Policy, its objectives are systematically translated into annual action plans at both university and departmental levels. These plans define clear responsibilities, timelines, and performance indicators, enabling structured execution and measurable progress.

Capacity development plays a central role in successful implementation. For this purpose, regular training and awareness-raising programs are organized for academic staff, administrative personnel, and students. These activities aim to strengthen institutional understanding of the Policy and enhance practical application across all relevant areas of university life.

In addition, MSU ensures the existence of transparent reporting channels and grievance mechanisms. These systems allow staff and students to raise concerns, provide feedback, and report any issues related to policy implementation. All submissions are handled in accordance with principles of confidentiality, fairness, and accountability.

Adequate financial, technical, and administrative resources are allocated to support the realization of policy objectives. Resource planning is integrated into the University's annual budgeting process to ensure sustainability and continuity of implementation efforts.

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Governance and Responsibilities

Structure / Role	Responsibilities
Scientific Council	Provides overall approval of the Policy and ensures strategic oversight of its implementation. It defines alignment with academic and research priorities, establishes key directions, and supports evidence-based decision-making processes.
Vice-Rector for Science and Innovation Affairs	Oversees the strategic implementation of the Policy across the University. Ensures coordination between academic units, monitors implementation processes, and facilitates the integration of policy objectives into teaching, research, and innovation activities.
Academic Ethics and Freedom Committee	Receives and investigates complaints related to academic ethics, protection of academic freedom principles, and disciplinary violations. Conducts impartial reviews, ensures fair and transparent assessment, and makes decisions in accordance with university regulations.
Faculties / Departments	Responsible for the practical implementation of the Policy at faculty level. Integrate policy requirements into teaching, research, and administrative processes, conduct regular monitoring, and prepare reports on implementation status.
Academic Staff, Students, and Employees	Comply with the approved Policy and institutional regulations. Demonstrate ethical academic and professional behavior, contribute to a responsible academic environment, and report any violations or concerns through established channels.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Mingachevir State University applies a continuous and structured monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure the effective implementation of the EDI Policy. This system is designed not only as a compliance mechanism but also as a strategic tool for institutional learning and improvement.

Regular internal reviews are conducted on an annual basis, enabling the University to systematically assess progress across various academic, administrative, and support units. These reviews are structured around predefined performance indicators and institutional priorities, ensuring alignment with the University's strategic objectives. The evaluation process integrates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including statistical analysis of institutional data, document reviews, and stakeholder consultations, thereby providing a holistic and evidence-based understanding of the implementation of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles.

In parallel, the University ensures the systematic and continuous collection of data related to key EDI indicators across all levels of the institution. These indicators encompass a broad range of dimensions, including gender distribution among students and staff, representation of diverse social and cultural groups, accessibility of educational resources and infrastructure, participation rates in academic and extracurricular activities, and inclusivity within teaching, learning, and administrative processes. Data is disaggregated where appropriate to identify disparities and monitor progress over time, supporting targeted interventions and informed decision-making.

Feedback mechanisms constitute a fundamental pillar of the monitoring and evaluation framework. Students, academic staff, and administrative personnel are actively encouraged to contribute their perspectives through a variety of channels, including structured surveys, focus group discussions, consultative meetings, and digital feedback platforms. The collected feedback is systematically analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques, and the insights gained are integrated into institutional planning processes, policy refinement, and operational improvements.

Stakeholder Engagement

The University recognizes stakeholder engagement as a fundamental principle in the successful implementation of its EDI Policy. Inclusive participation ensures that the policy remains responsive, relevant, and aligned with the needs of the university community and its wider environment.

Students and student organizations are actively involved in consultation processes, contributing to the identification of challenges and priorities related to equity and inclusion. Their feedback plays an important role in shaping institutional practices and initiatives.

Academic and administrative staff also constitute key stakeholders in the implementation process. Their professional expertise, practical experience, and day-to-day engagement with institutional activities provide valuable insights for improving EDI outcomes.

Furthermore, collaboration with national and international partner institutions strengthens the University's capacity to adopt best practices and align with global standards. These partnerships facilitate knowledge exchange and support the development of innovative approaches to inclusion and equality.

Engagement with government bodies and civil society organizations further extends the scope of stakeholder participation. Inputs received from these actors are systematically considered in policy development, implementation, and review processes, ensuring a multi-level and participatory governance approach.



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Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals

In particular, **SDG 4** (Quality Education) is directly supported through the University's efforts to ensure inclusive, equitable, and high-quality educational opportunities for all learners. The elimination of barriers to education and the promotion of equal access remain central objectives.

SDG 5 (Gender Equality) is addressed through targeted measures aimed at promoting equal opportunities for all genders within academic, administrative, and leadership structures. The University actively works to improve gender balance and empower underrepresented groups.

In addition, **SDG 10** (Reduced Inequalities) is integrated into institutional policies and practices with the aim of minimizing disparities among different social, economic, and demographic groups. Special attention is given to ensuring fairness and equal participation within the University community.

Evidence and Reporting

Transparency and accountability are key principles guiding the University's approach to EDI implementation. To ensure these principles are upheld, all relevant activities are systematically documented and made accessible for review.

Policy documents, strategic frameworks, and implementation guidelines are published on the University's official website, ensuring open access to institutional information for stakeholders and the public.

Annual institutional reports include dedicated sections on EDI performance indicators. These reports not only present statistical data but also provide analytical insights into progress, challenges, and areas requiring further improvement.

Training programs, workshops, and capacity-building initiatives are documented in detail, enabling the University to track progress in staff and student development related to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

In addition, all complaints, concerns, and resolution procedures are formally recorded within the University's administrative system. This ensures traceability, accountability, and fairness in addressing EDI-related issues.

All evidence is stored within the electronic document management system of the University and is made available for internal review processes as well as external audits and evaluations when required. This structured documentation system reinforces institutional transparency and supports continuous improvement.