

Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy

Introduction

The British University in Egypt seeks to recognise, study and celebrate the diversity of humankind in its various cultural manifestations through the fostering of understanding and academic encounters between the world civilisations without prejudice to a particular culture or civilisation. The University aims to achieve and sustain excellence by providing a vigorous learning and research environment and developing its position as a first-rate university. Moreover, the University has among its aims to provide equal opportunity to those with the potential and willingness to be involved in the intellectual process of discovering, disseminating and learning knowledge, and to enrich the Egyptian and international communities with the skills, scholarship and ethics of its staff and graduates.

Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy

To achieve its strategic aims, the University strives to recruit and develop individuals of the highest calibre as staff and students. The University endeavours to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for work and learning through implementing the University Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy in all areas of University activities to ensure that staff and students realise their full potential.

The University is committed to achieving educational and research excellence by encouraging diversity, providing equal opportunity for staff and students, confronting discrimination on the basis of culture, race, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability or social class, and promoting academic creativity.

Diversity and equal opportunity principles and practices are not just confined to the recruitment process of staff or students, but are concerned in every aspect of the University’s relationship with staff and students including recruitment, training, probation, performance appraisal, promotion, disciplinary action, professional development, and communication. Equal opportunity entails raising awareness and changing attitudes to ensure people are treated fairly on the basis of individual abilities and needs and to build a university community which is diverse and reflects the wider Egyptian community and an international perspective.

The University appreciates that staff and students with special needs are valuable contributors to the learning and research environment and the University strives to meet their needs by making reasonable and appropriate adjustments within the available resources, such as providing tailored support or making changes to standard procedures to facilitate full participation of staff and students with disabilities in the mainstream of University life. Disability includes mobility and sensory impairments, mental health conditions and learning difficulties.
The University strives to make the campus premises accessible and safe for staff and students with disabilities, so far as is reasonably practicable and within the available resources.

The University endeavours to promote positive attitudes and respect for its staff and students through training and development. The purpose of the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy is to set the framework and clear guidelines to enable implementation of the following:

- to ensure University staff and students are treated fairly and on merit;
- to raise awareness of the issues of discrimination;
- to combat unfair and discriminatory practices within the University;
- to encourage positive contribution from all staff and students; and
- to achieve a supportive educational and work environment.

The University recognises that true diversity and equal opportunity can only be attained if all University staff, including academic, administrative and support, and students are committed to put into action the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy in all work, research and learning activities pursued in the University. To further diversity in the University, efforts must be exerted to reach and recruit qualified staff and students from both genders and all backgrounds in the community. Respect for and consideration of cultural and gender issues should receive adequate attention in formulating all University policies and practices. Equal opportunity means fair and respectful treatment of all staff and students, provision of professional and skills development, and prospects for progression based on merit and not affiliation to a particular group or background.

**Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office**

In its operations and activities, the University strives to prevent all forms of discrimination and harassment, whether direct or indirect, deliberate or unintentional, against staff and students. If cases of discrimination occur, staff members and students should report them to the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office in accordance with the Complaints Procedure, and the Office will provide guidance and support to resolve such cases. The Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office has the following responsibilities:

- To understand Egyptian legislation and best practice and to identify relevant issues that affect University policies;
- To update the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy after consultation with senior University administrators and approval of the University Board;
- To recommend the necessary steps to secure implementation of the University Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy;
- To provide information and guidance to departments and faculties to enable them to carry out their responsibilities while complying with the University Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy;
• To advise on and monitor the University academic and administrative staff recruitment plans and outcomes in order to ensure that diversity and equal opportunity have been satisfied;
• To review and advise on academic and administrative staff performance appraisals, merit increases, promotions and privileges to ensure diversity and equal opportunity have been satisfied;
• To investigate academic and administrative staff and student complaints regarding harassment or discrimination at the university;
• To build on the strengths of the University in order to develop creative and effective programmes of action which promote diversity and equal opportunity;
• To raise awareness of staff and students on issues of diversity and equal opportunity;
• To prepare an annual report about the progress achieved in implementation of the University Diversity and Equal Opportunity Policy;
• To liaise with local, community and international organisations that promote diversity and equal opportunity; and
• To provide guidance to the departments and faculties to support staff and students with special needs.

Complaints in regards to discrimination against staff or students are taken very seriously by the Head of the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office and could provide grounds for disciplinary action that may ultimately lead to dismissal from the university. The awareness and cooperation of all university staff and students are essential to ensure the effective implementation of the diversity and equal opportunity policy. All complaints by staff or students of the University which relate to unlawful discrimination because of culture, race, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability or social class are processed in the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office according to the Complaints Procedure.

Complaints Procedure

• When a written and signed complaint from a University staff member or student is received by the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office, the Head of Diversity and Equal Opportunity will discuss the complaint with the complainant to determine whether the information is sufficient to establish that a potential violation of the University policies and regulations or Egyptian law has occurred.
• If a potential violation is established, the Head of Diversity and Equal Opportunity will meet separately with the two parties to try to mediate between the parties.
• If the mediation is successful, then the complaint will be considered resolved and the parties will be informed.
• If the mediation is not successful, then the Head of the Diversity and Equal Opportunity will chair an Investigation Committee of three members to undertake an investigation into the complaint.
• The investigation will proceed with the written complaint and a written response from the other party given within 15 business days of filing the written complaint.
• Interviews of witnesses named by both parties will be conducted by the Investigation Committee while cognisant of protecting the privacy of all concerned parties as much as possible.

• After the investigation is concluded, the Head of Diversity and Equal Opportunity will submit the Investigation Committee report of the findings with a recommendation to the University Vice President within 40 business days of filing the written complaint.

• The University Vice President will make a decision regarding the complaint. The decision will be communicated to both parties and the appropriate Head(s) of Department(s) or Dean(s) for implementation.

• If the complainant or the other party is not satisfied with the results of the investigation, they can appeal within 5 business days to the University President. The University President's decision is final.

• Complaints filed with the Diversity and Equal Opportunity Office do not preclude the right of the staff or student to seek remedies through other legal avenues.