

***POLICY ON
EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION***

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES,
UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA,
SRI LANKA

Proposed by the Inclusivity Centre

Policy on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

1. Introduction

The 373rd Faculty Board of the Faculty of Humanities ('the Faculty') resolved on 10.01.2024 to adopt this policy with the aims of affirming and strengthening its commitment to respecting equality of all persons. This policy will guide decision-making within the Faculty on academic, administrative and any other matter that comes within the purview of the Faculty as it relates to equity, diversity and inclusion.

The Faculty dates back to the inception of the Vidyalankara Higher Educational Centre, which was established in 1875. This is the only Faculty in the Sri Lankan state university system which is set apart for Humanities. Today, the Faculty of Humanities comprises eleven Departments, eight Centres and Units, 121 academic staff and approximately 2500 undergraduates. The Faculty offers a range of programmes which focus on language, religion and fine arts.

The Faculty is established within the University of Kelaniya which in turn is established under the Universities Act of 1978 and is, therefore, a public body. In Sri Lanka, universities funded by the state operate on the basis of institutional autonomy and academic freedom which has been recognised as part of the Freedom of Expression by the Sri Lankan Supreme Court.¹ The Faculty is required to act within the powers vested with it under the Universities Act and is accountable to the Council and Senate of the University of Kelaniya. Furthermore, as a public body, the Faculty is required to respect the Constitution of Sri Lanka including fundamental rights.

Inclusivity is an aspect of the right to equality and the right to be free from discrimination that is recognised under the Sri Lankan Constitution. The right to be free from discrimination is specifically recognised under the Universities Act.

Subject to the provisions of Sections 29 (c) and 31, a University shall be open to all persons of either sex and whatever race, creed or class, who are citizens of Sri Lanka, and other persons who are lawfully in Sri Lanka, and no test of religious belief or profession shall be adopted or imposed in order to entitle any such person to be admitted as a teacher or student of the University, or to hold any appointment therein or to graduate thereat or to hold, enjoy or exercise any advantage or privilege thereof.

(Section 30, Universities Act, 1978)

Admission to undergraduate programmes at the Faculty is determined by the University Grants Commission (UGC). Under the Universities Act of 1978, the UGC is responsible for determining and implementing policies for admission of undergraduates including the admission of candidates with disabilities. The Faculty has consistently admitted undergraduates with disabilities to its programmes of study. In 2023, the Faculty included about 40 undergraduates who were designated as students with disabilities.

2. Objectives

This policy is being adopted to identify and describe the responsibilities of the Faculty to guarantee inclusivity in the governance of the institution including in:

¹ Special Determination on the Universities (Amendment) Bill SC(SD) 5/99, SC Minutes 3 May 1999

- a) Academic matters;
- b) Co-curricular activities;
- c) Extra-curricular activities; and
- d) Administrative matters.

3. Scope

This policy applies within the Faculty. Academic staff, administrative staff, students and any other person who acts on behalf of and under the aegis of the Faculty are expected to follow this policy.

4. Policy

4.1. Principles

- 4.1.1. The Faculty recognises that all persons are entitled to be treated with dignity and that they are bearers of human rights. Fundamental rights are recognised under the Constitution and human rights are recognised more broadly in international law. Sri Lanka has ratified the main international human rights treaties including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Moreover, ensuring respect for rights is not limited to legal responsibilities but is also a matter of a commitment to respect several values including respect for human dignity and autonomy.
- 4.1.2. The Faculty recognises that ensuring equality of opportunity may require that persons be treated with equity, that is to say, in a manner that recognises that fairness may require that persons be treated equitably.
- 4.1.3. All persons acting on behalf of or under the authority of the Faculty must respect the dignity and autonomy of other persons who they come into contact within the course of their work. This includes teaching and learning, field work, administrative processes, disciplinary matters, sports and leisure activities, residential contexts etc.
- 4.1.4. Disability is identified and determined in specific context and may involve social or biological factors. Disabilities can take different forms and may include physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive or related to learning forms.
- 4.1.5. The Faculty is committed to training its staff and students to ensure respect for human dignity and autonomy.
- 4.1.6. The Faculty is committed to periodically reviewing its procedures, physical infrastructure and to reflecting on the institutional culture to continuously improve in the way in which the Faculty ensures respect for the right to equality and the right to be free from discrimination.
- 4.1.7. The Faculty is committed to guaranteeing physical accessibility in its physical environment including lecture halls, administrative buildings, hostels, places of religious worship and canteens.
- 4.1.8. All the members of community of the Faculty including students, academic staff and administrative staff have the right to participate in activities of the Faculty on the basis of equality.
- 4.1.9. The Faculty, through the Inclusivity Centre will providing programmes to its staff and students (including administrative staff, janitorial staff and security services) and may invite other university staff who work with students of the Faculty to participate in such programmes (such as wardens of hostels). These training programmes will guide persons in treating each other with respect, fulfil their responsibilities professionally to all persons including persons with disabilities and to know how to identify and address inclusivity and accessibility needs.

- 4.1.10. The Faculty recognizes that caregivers and friends provide essential support services for students with disabilities. Parents of students with disabilities, in particular, are devoted to guiding and encouraging students with disabilities at all times. The Faculty recognises these services and will strive to recognise, include and support the allies of students with disabilities as far as possible.
- 4.1.11. The Faculty is committed to ensure workplace fairness and equality in matters within their purview, including respect for the dignity, autonomy and equality of staff members with disabilities.
- 4.1.12. Where a person under the authority of the Faculty has a complaint or grievance regarding respect for their rights, the Faculty and the Inclusivity Centre is committed to providing them with relevant support to seek remedies, including within the Universities Act. If anyone has a grievance or complaint related to inclusivity at the Faculty, such person may consult an academic staff, student counsellor, academic advisor, Director of the Inclusivity Centre, Head of Department or Dean. When such person is consulted they are required to respond to the grievance or complaint and direct the student to the relevant course of action. Any such person should respect the confidentiality of the grievance or complaint.

4.2. Admission of Students with Inclusivity Needs to the Faculty

- 4.2.1. When the University Grants Commission or the University consults the Faculty on admissions of students with disabilities to the Faculty, the Faculty shall strive to accommodate as many students with disabilities as possible.
- 4.2.2. The Faculty is committed to further improving its infrastructure and processes to increase its capacity to admit students with disabilities or other inclusivity needs.
- 4.2.3. The Inclusivity Centre may make recommendations to the Faculty Board on the number of students who may be admitted to the Faculty.
- 4.2.4. The decision on the specific number of students with disabilities or other inclusivity needs to be admitted to the Faculty will be made by the Faculty Board having considered the views of the Inclusivity Centre.

4.3. Identification of Students with Inclusivity Needs

- 4.3.1. Inclusivity needs of students at the Faculty may be identified:
 - a) At the point of admission to the Faculty, where the admission is based on the quota of the University Grants Commission for students with disabilities
 - b) At the point of admission to the Faculty, by the Faculty through its admission process
 - c) At any point during a student's studentship, by the student. In such a case, the Faculty, through the Inclusivity Centre will determine a reasonable and respectful verification process for the same

For the purpose of the above, the Inclusivity Centre may recommend documentation, information gathering and processing as relevant, to the Faculty Board.

4.4. Academic Matters: General

- 4.4.1. At the beginning of each academic year, the Inclusivity Centre will carry out a student survey for the Faculty. The purpose of this survey is to identify and assess the measures that the Faculty should undertake to ensure that all students are included in a meaningful way in all the academic activities of the Faculty. The survey will cover the following activities as a minimum:
 - a) Teaching & Learning
 - b) Assessment (assignments, semester-end examinations)

Examples:

A student with hearing-impairment may require that the lecturer speaks at a particular pace when delivering lectures

A student with visual-impairment may require that all instructions are issued in accessible format (Braille, digital or any other format as the case may be)

A student with physical disabilities may require the lecture hall to be accessible

- 4.4.2. The Director of the Inclusivity Centre will convene a meeting with the key officers and units to determine the specific measures to be taken to ensure inclusivity.

Examples:

Examination Unit, ICCMS, Quality Assurance Cell, Student Counsellors

- 4.4.3. The Director of the Inclusivity Centre will present a report on the survey and the proposed plan of action to the Faculty Board for discussion and for approval.

- 4.4.4. The plan for implementation and action points will be made available publicly for the community at the Faculty of Humanities.

4.5. Academic Matters: Teaching and Learning

- 4.5.1. The Faculty is committed to ensure that all teaching and learning is undertaken in an inclusive manner while respecting academic freedom.

- 4.5.2. The Department or the Faculty (as the case may be) will provide necessary support to ensure an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

- 4.5.3. No student will be denied enrolment in subject on the basis of the student's disability. The implementation of this policy lies with the Dean of the Faculty and each Department that offers the subject.

- 4.5.4. Where specific accommodations are to be made to accommodate a student with disabilities in a given subject, the Head of Department may consult the Inclusivity Centre on developing appropriate teaching and learning and assessment methods for such student and the subject.

- 4.5.5. When a student with disabilities is assigned to a specific subject or stream of study, the relevant Department shall have the following responsibilities:

a) Consult the Academic Advisor (see below) and Director of the Inclusivity Centre on meeting the accessibility needs of the student; and

b) Together with the academic coordinator from the Inclusivity Centre, brief the lecturer on the specific accessibility requirements of the student.

- 4.5.6. Equal and equitable access to education requires academics to ensure access to class participation, the freedom to dissent and express an opinion. All participants in any teaching and learning exercise must do so on the basis of mutual respect. Harassment or disrespect of any kind should not be practiced or tolerated.

- 4.5.7. Students with disabilities are permitted to use relevant assistive devices in engaging in teaching and learning activities.

- 4.5.8. Library services must include a designated service which works with students with disabilities to ensure that they can access academic material. This may include ensuring physical access to libraries, providing books in accessible formats and ensuring that library services are accessible. The Inclusivity Centre may work with the Library to ensure such accessibility.

4.6. Academic Matters: Assessment and Examination

- 4.6.1. In designing assessment, academics are required to consider accessibility needs of students, particularly the needs of students with disabilities.

Examples:

If field work is required reasonable accommodation to be made for students with disabilities.

In class examination may require providing the question paper in an accessible format to a student with visual impairment.

4.6.2. In providing feedback on continuous assessments, including the marks/grade assigned, the Faculty will, as far as possible, provide the feedback in accessible formats.

4.6.3. Students with disabilities are permitted to use relevant assistive devices in engaging in assessment and examination. The Faculty of Humanities is committed to updating its rules to incorporate technological developments in this regard.

Examples:

Permitting students with disabilities to use computers to take their examination.

4.6.4. Where necessary, students with disabilities will be provided with additional time to complete their assessments and examinations. The Faculty will work with the relevant officers and bodies within the University to obtain permission for providing that facility.

4.7. Co-curricular Activities

4.7.1. The Faculty will ensure that co-curricular activities are undertaken in manner that is inclusive. While merit and ability are criteria for participation in such activities, the Faculty is committed to providing equitable access and participation where relevant.

4.7.2. The Faculty is committed to seeking financial and administrative support that may be required for ensuring inclusion and accessibility for all students for co-curricular activities.

4.8. Extra-curricular Activities

4.8.1. The extra-curricular activities such as sports, drama and music must be open to students. The Faculty will work with and negotiate with relevant bodies within the University to review and revise applicable procedures, physical environments and financial allocations to guarantee inclusion and accessibility.

Examples:

Students with hearing impairment may be interested in participating in sports activities and students with physical disabilities may be interested in participating in drama.

4.9. Administrative Matters

4.9.1. All administrative procedures must be inclusive and accessible whether in terms of physical access, language, or quality of service.

Example:

Administrative notices must be provided in accessible formats. Notices must be issued in both local languages in keeping with the official language policy.

4.9.2. Hostel facilities must be provided on the basis of equality, dignity and inclusion. The Faculty is committed to meeting the reasonable needs of students with regard to accommodation.

Example:

Students with disabilities will be accommodated in hostels along with other students. They will not be segregated to rooms designated for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities will be assigned to the closest possible hostel.

4.9.3. The administrative staff will provide support, where reasonably possible, for students who use assistive devices.

Example:

Students who use laptop computers for academic work may require assistance with the device.

4.10. Facilities

- 4.10.1. The Faculty, through the Inclusivity Centre will strive to ensure that the Faculty is inclusive. Inclusivity will include universal design that accommodates disabilities and diversity and processes that are respectful of diversity among staff and students.

Example:

Students with disabilities will have access to the smart classroom that is adjacent to the Inclusivity Centre that has been built for their purpose, and the assistive washroom.

4.11. Inclusivity Needs of Staff

- 4.11.1. Academic, administrative, non-academic and any other member of the Faculty (such as contract staff) have the right to be treated equally and with dignity.
- 4.11.2. Any staff member with disabilities has a right to representation and consultation at the relevant decision-making bodies.

4.12. Focal Point

- 4.12.1. The Inclusivity Centre will be the focal point for any other matter relating to inclusion at the Faculty not specifically provided for in this policy.
- 4.12.2. The Inclusivity Centre will offer mentoring support to students with disabilities and any other student who experiences challenges with regard to inclusion at the Faculty.

4.13. Inclusivity Training

- 4.13.1. The Inclusivity Centre is responsible for training all staff and at the Faculty (academic, administrative, non-academic, security, janitorial and contract staff) on this policy.
- 4.13.2. The Centre may offer orientation, sensitisation or training programmes to students including incoming students.

4.14. Inclusivity Pledge

- 4.14.1. All staff and new students will be required by the Faculty to pledge to respect diversity in all their engagements at the Faculty. This statement will be proposed by the Director of the Centre for approval by the Faculty Board and may be reviewed periodically. The pledge may include:
- a) A commitment to respect the dignity and autonomy of persons with disabilities;
 - b) A commitment to non-violence and mutual respect for differences; and
 - c) A commitment to respect differences in society including differences based on gender, language, socio-economic status or sexual orientation.
- 4.14.2. Students will be required to make this pledge at their orientation programme after a session on inclusivity and an introduction to this policy.

5. Implementation

- 5.1.1. The following officers and bodies are assigned the responsibility of implementing this policy,
- a) Academic matters: The Dean and the Faculty Board, Heads of Departments, Academic Advisors, Academic staff
 - b) Co-curricular activities: The Dean and the Faculty Board, Heads of Departments, academic staff including student counsellors

- c) Extra-curricular activities: Senior Treasurers of student societies, student counsellors
- d) Administrative Matters: Senior Assistant Registrar of the Faculty
- e) Monitoring the overall implementation of the policy: Inclusivity Centre
- f) Providing training on the policy: Inclusivity Centre

6. Academic Advisors for Students with Disabilities

- 6.1. The Faculty in consultation with the relevant Head of Department (as the case may be) will appoint academic advisors for students with disabilities. The academic advisor will take responsibility for assisting the student to communicate her needs to the Department, the Inclusivity Centre and the Faculty for the purpose of participating in academic activities.
- 6.2. Academics are required to ensure that all teaching and learning takes place within an environment of mutual respect. Diversity and differences of any form should be tolerated on the basis of mutual respect. Such differences may include differences of opinion, diversity in terms of ethnicity or gender, language, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or any such other ground.
- 6.3. Academics are required to recognise and support equitable access to education. Equitable access would have to be determined on a case by case basis. It may involve ensuring physical access to a student with physical disabilities, reasonable accommodation for a student with learning disabilities, or respecting the language rights of a student.
- 6.4. Academic advisors report to the Faculty Board through the Inclusivity Centre and the Dean. The report shall report on inclusivity at the Faculty including the following:
 - a) On a needs basis to ensure that students with disabilities are guaranteed their right to equality;
 - b) On accommodations provided for teaching and learning and assessment; and
 - c) On specific aspects that require policy decisions by the Faculty.

7. Reporting

- 7.1. The Inclusivity Centre shall submit an annual report to the Faculty Board. The Centre may consult students and staff with disabilities or inclusivity needs in preparing this report. The report may include:
 - a) A summary of its activities;
 - b) Details of reasonable accommodations made in teaching and learning, assessment and any other activities;
 - c) Lessons learnt or best practices on inclusivity;
 - d) Challenges encountered; and
 - e) Recommendations for further improvement of the policy.

8. Funding

- 8.1. In addition to the funds allocated by the Welfare Branch of the University, the Faculty will allocate funds from its Development Fund to meet needs of students with disabilities. Furthermore, the Faculty may partner with others such as the Alumni Association of the University in supporting students to meet their needs.

9. Dissemination

- 9.1.1. This policy will be available in English and Sinhala (in accessible formats) on the webpage of the Centre/ Faculty.

10. Review

10.1. This policy must be reviewed periodically and updated by the Director of the Centre on the direction of the Faculty Board of the Faculty.

11. Version History

Adopted in

Revision 1

Revision 2