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AZERBAIJAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS (UNEC)

**EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND
INCLUSION POLICY**

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION POLICY

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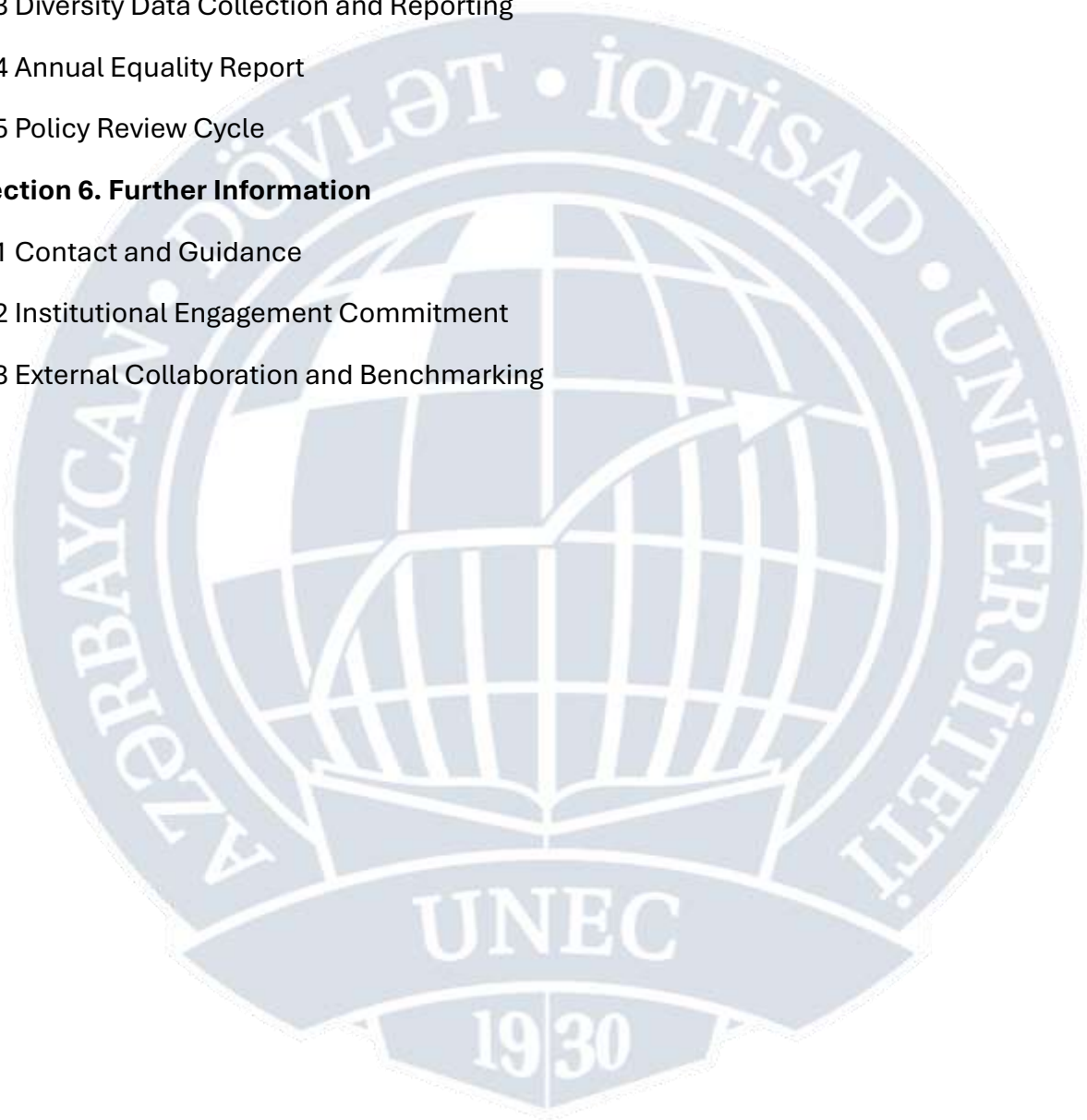
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Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy is to articulate UNEC's unwavering commitment to promoting and safeguarding equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for all members of the university community. This policy sets forth the framework to ensure that diversity is celebrated, inclusion is championed, and discrimination is strictly prohibited. It underscores UNEC's determination to foster a supportive, respectful, and open-minded culture that empowers individuals to achieve their full potential regardless of their background or identity.

1.2 Legal Framework

This policy is aligned with the Constitution of Azerbaijan, which enshrines the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination, ensuring that all citizens have equal access to education, employment, and opportunities. Moreover, it adheres to the relevant laws and regulations, including but not limited to the Anti-Discrimination Act and the Equal Opportunities Act, which prohibit discriminatory practices based on protected characteristics.

1.3 Ethical Foundation

At the core of this policy lies a strong ethical foundation that embraces diversity as a source of strength, knowledge, and creativity. UNEC recognizes that every individual, with their unique perspectives and experiences, contributes significantly to the enrichment of the academic community and the pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, this policy seeks to create an environment where individuals can engage in open dialogue, challenge assumptions, and broaden their horizons in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding.

1.4 Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles underpin this policy:

a) Equality: UNEC upholds the principle of equal treatment for all individuals, ensuring that no one faces discrimination, exclusion, or disadvantage based on their race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

b) Diversity: UNEC embraces and celebrates diversity in all its dimensions, encompassing differences in culture, background, experience, thought, and perspective. It recognizes the

richness that diversity brings to the university community, fostering a vibrant and inclusive ecosystem.

c) Inclusion: UNEC is committed to creating an inclusive environment where all members of the community feel welcomed, valued, and respected. Inclusion entails removing barriers, fostering belonging, and actively engaging in practices that support the success and well-being of all individuals.

d) Transparency: UNEC shall be transparent in its commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, providing clear guidelines, procedures, and mechanisms for reporting and addressing any concerns related to discriminatory incidents or behaviors.

e) Accountability: UNEC holds all individuals accountable for their actions, ensuring that any violations of this policy are addressed through appropriate disciplinary measures. Additionally, UNEC leadership is accountable for fostering an inclusive culture and driving initiatives that promote equality and diversity.

1.5 Protected Characteristics

UNEC recognizes and protects the rights of individuals regardless of the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender identity and gender reassignment
- Race, nationality or ethnic origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Socio-economic background
- Refugee, asylum seeker or displaced status

UNEC acknowledges that individuals may experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and are committed to addressing such intersectional inequalities.

Section 2. Scope

2.1 Inclusivity in Education

This policy is dedicated to ensuring inclusive throughout the educational journey of every individual at UNEC. It extends to admissions and recruitment processes, where UNEC is committed to fair and transparent practices, providing equal opportunities to all prospective students, regardless of their background or circumstances. Additionally, this policy encompasses the curriculum and teaching methodologies, with UNEC striving to incorporate diverse perspectives, histories, and experiences into the academic programs. By fostering an inclusive learning environment, UNEC aims to empower students to explore different worldviews and develop into open-minded global citizens.

2.2 Equality in Employment

UNEC's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion extends to its workforce. This policy applies to all faculty and staff members, ensuring that recruitment, hiring, promotions, and all employment-related decisions are free from discrimination and bias. UNEC promotes an inclusive and supportive workplace culture, fostering a climate of respect and understanding among employees. Measures are in place to provide equal opportunities for career growth, professional development, and a work environment that values diverse perspectives and contributions.

2.3 Student Support and Services

This policy embraces the principle of equal access to student support and services for all members of the university community. UNEC's Disability Center, as a key component of this policy, plays a crucial role in ensuring that students with disabilities receive necessary accommodation and support to facilitate their academic pursuits and participation in university life. UNEC recognizes the unique challenges some students may face and is committed to providing comprehensive resources to address their needs while ensuring an inclusive and accessible campus environment for all.

2.4 External Stakeholders and Partnerships

This policy also extends to UNEC's interactions with external stakeholders and partners. UNEC seeks to collaborate with organizations, institutions, and individuals who share the

values of equality, diversity, and inclusion. It is committed to promoting these principles in collaborations and partnerships that enrich the university's academic and social impact.

2.5 Accessibility and Inclusive Environment

UNEC is committed to ensuring physical, digital and academic accessibility for all members of its community. The University shall continuously work to remove barriers that limit participation and will implement universal design principles across learning environments, infrastructure and services.

2.6 Equality Impact Assessment

UNEC shall assess the potential equality impact of institutional policies, programs, procedures and decisions. These assessments aim to identify and mitigate potential disadvantages affecting individuals or groups with protected characteristics.

Section 3. Responsibilities and Commitment

3.1 UNEC Leadership

3.1.1 UNEC Leadership shall set the tone and create an inclusive culture by demonstrating a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. They shall serve as role models in upholding these principles in their actions and decisions, fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated and valued.

3.1.2 UNEC Leadership shall ensure that policies and procedures are developed, implemented, and reviewed to promote equal opportunities and eliminate any form of discrimination or bias within the university. They shall allocate adequate resources and support necessary initiatives aimed at advancing diversity and inclusion across all aspects of university life.

3.1.3 UNEC Leadership shall actively engage in open dialogue with the university community, including staff, faculty, and students, to address any concerns related to discrimination or harassment. They should create channels for feedback, ensuring that all voices are heard and respected.

3.2 Staff and Faculty

3.2.1 All staff and faculty members shall treat others with respect, dignity, and fairness, valuing diversity in all its forms. They should promote an inclusive environment that appreciates and respects differences while fostering collaboration and understanding among colleagues and students.

3.2.2 Staff and faculty shall refrain from engaging in any form of discrimination, harassment, or victimization. They shall adhere to UNEC's policies and procedures and actively contribute to maintaining a discrimination-free and inclusive workplace and learning environment.

3.2.3 Staff and faculty shall participate in relevant diversity and inclusion training programs provided by UNEC. These programs will help raise awareness, enhance cultural competency, and equip them with the necessary skills to foster inclusivity in their teaching, research, and administrative roles.

3.3 Students

3.3.1 All students shall treat fellow students, staff, and faculty with respect and consideration, regardless of their backgrounds, beliefs, or identities. They shall actively contribute to creating an inclusive and welcoming campus culture.

3.3.2 Students shall engage in inclusive practices and behaviors, valuing diversity in academic discussions, group projects, and extracurricular activities. They shall actively seek opportunities to learn from different perspectives and experiences, embracing the richness that diversity brings to their educational journey.

3.3.3 Students shall be proactive in reporting any incidents of discrimination or harassment they witness or experience, utilizing the appropriate channels and procedures as outlined in this policy. They shall cooperate with UNEC's efforts to address such incidents promptly and appropriately.

3.4 EDI Governance Structure

To ensure effective implementation of this policy, UNEC establishes an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion governance framework consisting of:

- EDI Committee
- Designated EDI Officer(s)
- Institutional Monitoring Units

The EDI Committee shall oversee implementation, review institutional data, recommend actions and report directly to university leadership.

3.5 Training and Capacity Building

All staff, faculty and relevant administrative personnel shall participate in mandatory periodic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training. Training shall aim to increase awareness, prevent discrimination, and enhance inclusive professional practices.

3.6 Reporting and Complaint Procedure

UNEC shall provide accessible, confidential and secure channels for reporting discrimination, harassment, or victimization. Reporting mechanisms may include:

- confidential reporting channels
- designated officers
- formal complaint procedures

All complaints shall be reviewed promptly, fairly and without risk of retaliation against the reporting individual.

Section 4. Sanctions

4.1 Policy Enforcement Commitment

UNEC takes any form of discrimination, harassment, or victimization seriously and is committed to enforcing the principles of this Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy. Any violation of this policy by members of the UNEC community, including but not limited to UNEC Leadership, staff, faculty, students, visitors, or contractors, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions.

4.2 Disciplinary Measures

The disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to:

4.2.1 Counseling and Education: UNEC may provide counseling and education to individuals found to have engaged in discriminatory behavior, raising awareness about the importance of diversity, inclusion, and the consequences of their actions.

4.2.2 Written Warning: A written warning may be issued to individuals who commit minor infractions or engage in behavior that goes against the principles of this policy. The warning will emphasize the need for compliance and adherence to UNEC's policies and values.

4.2.3 Suspension: In cases of more severe or repeated violations, UNEC may impose a temporary suspension, restricting the individual's access to certain university privileges and activities for a specified period.

4.2.4 Termination or Dismissal: Individuals, including staff, faculty, or students, found guilty of serious violations of this policy may face termination of employment or dismissal from UNEC.

4.2.5 Legal Consequences: If the violation of this policy also constitutes a violation of relevant laws or regulations, UNEC may take appropriate legal actions as permitted under the law.

4.3 Non-Retaliation Clause

No individual shall suffer retaliation, disadvantage or victimization for reporting discrimination, participating in an investigation, or supporting another person's complaint.

Section 5. Monitoring

5.1 Monitoring Framework

UNEC recognizes the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of this Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy. Monitoring mechanisms will be established to collect relevant data and analyze the progress made in promoting equality, celebrating diversity, and fostering inclusion throughout the university community.

5.2 Action Plans and Accountability

Based on the findings of monitoring and assessments, UNEC shall develop action plans to address areas requiring improvement in promoting equality and diversity. These action plans will outline specific strategies, goals, and timelines for implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives.

5.3 Diversity Data Collection and Reporting

UNEC shall collect and analyze anonymized institutional data related to equality, diversity and inclusion indicators. Findings should inform institutional strategies and action plans aimed at improving equity outcomes.

5.4 Annual Equality Report

The University shall publish periodic reports outlining progress, challenges and measurable outcomes related to equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives.

5.5 Policy Review Cycle

This policy shall be formally reviewed at least once every two years to ensure alignment with national legislation, international standards and institutional priorities.

Section 6. Further Information

6.1 Contact and Guidance

For additional information or inquiries related to the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy at UNEC, individuals may contact the Disciplinary Commission. Commission provides guidance, support, and resources to address concerns, promote understanding, and foster an inclusive campus culture.

6.2 Institutional Engagement Commitment

UNEC encourages all individuals to actively engage in the promotion of equality, diversity, and inclusion and to contribute to the ongoing efforts of the university in cultivating a welcoming and respectful environment for everyone.

6.3 External Collaboration and Benchmarking

UNEC shall collaborate with national and international organizations, universities and professional networks to exchange best practices and continuously improve its equality, diversity and inclusion performance.

