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## INTRODUCTION

The IHRI Equality Policy outlines what constitutes equality, the areas where IHRI shall ensure nondiscrimination and how IHRI will achieve the objectives set out in this policy. This policy will be read with the Institute's Collective Agreements and the staff and student code of conduct.

This policy document aligns with the respective Maltese legislation: The Equality for Men and Women Act, 2003 (Cap 456), the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Cap 413) and The Employment and Industrial Relations Act, 2002 (Cap 452). It is also aligned with various EU Directives and Regulations, including international documents (see background documents for a complete list). This Equality Policy is subject to the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta).

## PURPOSE

In collaboration with its employees, students, and stakeholders, IHRI commits to creating an inclusive environment for all. IHRI commits to ensuring compliance with the protection of fundamental human rights. In particular, Article 45 of the Constitution of Malta, which article states that *"no different treatment may be afforded to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded to persons of another such description."*

## OBJECTIVES

Through this policy, IHRI is committed to equality and inclusion for its employees and students. IHRI wants to ensure that the environment and education provided at IHRI are accessible to all and that each student and staff member is safe and comfortable.

## SCOPE

All Institute's staff members and students fall within the remit of this policy.

## Discrimination grounds

### 2.1 Sex /Gender

IHRI is committed to equality between men and women in all areas within the institute and shall not tolerate discrimination. IHRI is also committed to eliminating all occupational segregation based on gender stereotypes.

### 2.2 Race

Regarding the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, race includes race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. IHRI has a zero-tolerance policy towards racist behaviour. Our commitment is to ensure a safe environment for all employees and students, regardless of



their race and cultural background and are further committed to resisting and fighting hate crime and hate speech in this regard.

### 2.3 Language

The official IHRI language is English.

### 2.4 Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics

- IHRI has zero tolerance in terms of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. The institution commits to building a safe and inclusive environment for the LGBTIQ+ community.
- IHRI aims to foster an environment that is inclusive, safe and free from harassment and discrimination for all members of the school community, students and adults, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics.
- IHRI aims to promote the learning of human diversity that is inclusive of trans, gender variant and intersex students, thus promoting social awareness, acceptance and respect.
- IHRI ensures an environment and climate that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe for all students to further their successful learning development and well-being, including that of trans, gender variant and intersex persons.
- IHRI students, including trans, gender variant and intersex students, have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and to decide with whom, when and how much private information to share.

### 2.5 Age

IHRI fundamentally believes in the potential and worth of every age group. Therefore, age discrimination is forbidden, and participation of different age cohorts is encouraged.

### 2.6 Disability

IHRI fundamentally believes that employment and education are rights which should be available to all. IHRI works hand in hand with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) and the Students Support Services to ensure a safe environment that is free from discrimination to persons deemed to suffer from any physical or mental disadvantage.

### 2.7 Religion and Belief; Political or Personal Conviction

IHRI's commitment is to ensure a safe environment for all its employees and students, regardless of their beliefs or convictions. It is further committed to resisting and fighting hate crime and hate speech in this regard.

Malta is a democratic country, and political participation by employees or students, unless declared incompatible with the particular post, is encouraged. Our commitment is to ensure fair treatment of all employees and students regardless of their political opinions. However, political arguments that escalate to insults, attacks, and harassment will not be tolerated.



## Types of Discrimination

### 3.1 Direct discrimination

Where one person is treated less favourably than another and has been or would be treated in a comparable situation.

### 3.2 Indirect discrimination

Where a neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons (unless this provision is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary)

### 3.3 Harassment

Unwanted conduct takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. A victim of any form of harassment, including sexual harassment, may take informal or formal action against the alleged harasser.

## Updating and Communicating the Policy

The Quality Assurance and Planning Unit (QAPU) own this policy and is responsible for coordinating updates in liaison with the Research and Academic Council as needed. These offices are also responsible for facilitating the implementation of this policy.

It is to be ascertained that all IHRI employees and students are informed of the IHRI Equality Policy and its content. All employees and students should be made aware of the possibility of seeking assistance should they feel that discrimination has occurred.

IHRI, through all of its communications, shall ensure that all directives and circulars concerning equality are brought to the immediate attention of all IHRI employees and students.

## EMPLOYEES

In terms of Article 26 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act and Article 4 of the Equality for Men and Women Act (Cap. 456), it is unlawful for any person to discriminate, either directly or indirectly:

- in the arrangements made to determine who should be offered employment;
- in deciding who should be offered employment;
- in the terms and conditions on which the employment is offered, including pay, conditions of work and other benefits; and
- in determining who should be dismissed from employment.

### 5.1 Recruitment and Employment

IHRI ensures non-discriminatory practices in vacancies and vacancy advertisements, job descriptions and selection procedures. Moreover, selection boards, which are gender balanced, regulating the recruitment process, are trained to be well-versed in equality and inclusion legislation and ensure that the criteria



established for selection, application forms and interview questions only refer to what is essential for performing tasks relevant to the job.

#### A. Interviewing Boards

In determining eligibility and assessing candidates, the interviewing board should avoid any form of direct or indirect discriminatory treatment, as defined in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452 of the Laws of Malta) and Subsidiary Legislation (Equal Treatment in Employment Regulations - SL 452.95), as applicable from time to time, as well as the Equality for Men and Women Act (Cap. 456 of the Laws of Malta). The interviewing board shall ensure that every person is assessed according to their ability to perform a given job. It is discriminatory to determine a person's ability on the grounds of the person's gender and/or family responsibilities.

#### B. Gender-neutral vacancies, vacancy advertisements and job descriptions

Job vacancies/nomenclatures/job descriptions are gender-neutral. Nomenclatures are gender inclusive throughout. In the exceptional circumstance that an advertised vacancy necessitates a specific gender based on a genuine occupational requirement, this should be clearly outlined in the job description of the respective call for applications. The actual task/s that need to be performed by a person of a particular gender consequently include a justification of the gender eligibility restriction in terms of sub-article 2 (5) of the Equality for Men and Women Act (Cap. 456).

#### C. Gender-sensitive appointment procedures

IHRI will take the necessary steps to ensure that all genders are equally represented in its main structures in a fair manner that reflects its gender-sensitive approach in practice.

#### D. Persons with disability

IHRI is committed to staying at the forefront of applying inclusive policies at the workplace. IHRI seeks to enhance, as far as possible, the status of disabled employees and their opportunities for advancement. IHRI recognises that persons with a disability may, for various reasons, often face social obstacles which impede access to multiple areas. In this regard, IHRI is committed to doing all that is reasonably possible to implement the principles contained in the Equal Opportunities (Persons with a Disability) Act (Cap. 413) and the UN Standard Regulations of 1993 on Equal Opportunities for Persons with a Disability.

### 5.2 Conditions of Work

Persons employed within IHRI in the same grade or type of employment enjoy the same work conditions, including pay, benefits, family-friendly measures and conditions of work. It is ensured that the training offered by the organisation is gender-sensitive and available/ accessible to all.

In terms of LN 427/2002 entitled Part-time Employees Regulations, all temporary employees not engaged directly through IHRI, whether engaged on a part-time or full-time basis, are entitled, on a pro-rata basis, to vacation leave, sick leave, injury leave, jury leave and public holidays.



Temporary and part-time employees engaged directly with IHRI are entitled to all the benefits and conditions of work as other IHRI employees and are also obliged to adhere to all procedures and regulations stipulated in policy and procedure. Part-time employees engaged with IHRI are entitled to leave benefits on a pro-rata basis.

## Leadership and decision-making at IHRI

IHRI is committed to making considerable effort to achieve gender balance in leadership and decision-making. Measures may include, but are not limited to, family-friendly measures specifically targeted towards management roles and gender balance in interviewing boards, disciplinary boards, and decision-making bodies.

## Support

Support for Staff: The Faculty Hub is available to all employees. IHRI takes a proactive approach to helping its employees cope with further and higher education demands.

## Research

Research and Innovation activities at IHRI are intrinsically designed to be gender-inclusive and ensure equal access to all activities for all staff. The IHRI Research Framework provides equal opportunity and support to all staff across all institutes and domains of expertise to engage in research activities.

The research activities, including allocation, execution, and target studies, do not discriminate between academics on any basis related to race, class or gender, and all research activities are vetted through the IHRI Research Ethics Committee in this regard.

Furthermore, all research and innovation activities undertaken at IHRI are equally promoted through the organisation's primary public website, which provides open visibility to the various thematic research areas and academics engaged within. Content related to output is equally promoted irrespective of gender through a Research Database and Open-Science access to peer-reviewed studies published in journals.

Research hours are allocated to every lecturer after completing a form presented to the relevant Head of Centres. Approved research hours are deducted from a lecturer's lecturing hours. The allocation of research does not discriminate between lecturers on any basis related to race, class, or gender.

## Teaching Content

The Institute ensures that all teaching content and resources reflect our diverse population and a curriculum that encourages social inclusion and education about different profiles of people. All teaching content does not include stereotypes and is attentive to the other experiences of women and men.

Assessments take various forms, including writing and practical tasks where students perform tasks to show mastery of skills and knowledge. Learning outcomes and assessment criteria are designed to be as inclusive as possible. In cases where assessment criteria clash with the disability of particular students, the matter is



addressed through a MAP Session organised by Student Support, where different modes of assessment are explored.

Lecturers are encouraged to disseminate resources in digital formats to enable students with literacy difficulties, Dyslexia, visual impairment and other difficulties to use Text-To-Speech software.

The Institute adopts different modes of assessment focusing on academic skills. In the case of students with disabilities that limit their reading/writing abilities, other forms of assessment are explored to allow them to demonstrate their true potential while respecting the assessment criteria. In addition, access arrangements are provided to all students with disabilities registered with Student Services throughout their studies at the Institute. Such arrangements include but are not limited to readers, scribes, extra time, prompting, separate rooms, enlarged print, and supervised rest periods.

In the cyclical review of programmes, feedback is gathered from present and past students and staff responsible for carrying out the programme reviews.

## STUDENTS

The purpose of the Institute is the student community, which is made up of students from backgrounds that are diverse and unique to each student. IHRI's mission is to provide each of its students with academic education and a holistic learning experience, which will ultimately fully equip each student with the necessary knowledge and skills for a successful future in employment.

The Institute's purpose, as defined by Article 89(1) of the Education Act (Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta), is to, in general, ensure the existence of educational institutions accessible to all. This fundamental principle is also reflected in IHRI's Mission and Vision Statement:

*“The institute aims to develop innovative solutions to complex challenges across various professional fields through leading-edge practitioner research, evidence-based training, and online education. We empower practitioners and researchers to drive impactful change by cultivating a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment where they can develop and implement novel, evidence-based approaches. Committed to the highest standards of academic integrity, we prepare a new generation of practitioner-researchers equipped with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding necessary to address global challenges and advance their respective fields.”*

### Vision for Students

In virtue of this policy, IHRI is establishing its commitment to the Student Community regarding equity, equality, and inclusion to ensure that the education provided at IHRI is accessible. Furthermore, the Institute strives to provide students with the means to feel safe along their educational journey and, at the same time, experience growth and a sense of belonging to the IHRI community.

### Commitment

IHRI shall ensure that in collaboration with its student community as well as its stakeholders, an environment that is inclusive to all and across all levels is created. IHRI is committed to ensuring compliance with the protection of Fundamental Human Rights. Additionally, the staff and student code of conduct provides a summary of the functions and responsibilities of staff and students and defines the following areas:

- The rights and responsibilities of students



- The responsibilities of staff in the education and learning processes
- Student expectations of the education and assessment methods of the Institute
- Remedial process for any infringement of academic ethics

### Academic Management of Students

The Student admissions process is based solely on evaluating the student's academic performance. No other factors shall be considered when deciding whether or not a student is qualified to be admitted to IHRI. IHRI also considers—without prejudicing a student's entitlement to access IHRI—each student's learning needs to offer the required support towards holistic education.

Teaching, learning and assessment: Academic staff at IHRI shall seek to deliver material to students in a manner and language which is understood by the entire class. Assessments are to be delivered and corrected objectively, against the respective assessment criteria, based solely on student achievement towards the completion of learning outcomes specified for each course before students embark on a course of their own choice.

### Assistance for Students

Support for Students: The Student Support Services are available to all registered IHRI students without exception.

## IHRI COMMITMENT

IHRI is legally obliged to ensure its working and learning environment is safe, dignified, respectful, and free from discrimination. Every student, employee, and official Institute representative has the responsibility to refrain from discrimination in the Institute environment. Every student, employee, and official Institute representative has the right to work and learn in an environment free from discrimination.

IHRI's Equality Policy is also subject to the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta).

To achieve the objectives set out in this policy, IHRI shall have an Equality representative whose primary role shall be to:

- Keep up-to-date with local and European legislation and practices concerning Equality and Inclusion to ensure that the policy is continuously up-to-date with the latest legislation and practices
- Liaise with Student Services regarding equality matters
- Liaise with the Academic Council to ensure Equality Awareness among all employees and students at IHRI through formal, informal, and non-formal means.
- Make any recommendation that they deem relevant to the Academic Council

If the Academic Council receives any equality complaints, the Chair of the Council will forward the issue to the relevant departments. This will ensure a fair and transparent investigative process for this highly sensitive subject. IHRI is committed to ensuring the transparency and confidentiality of all the information we hold.



## PROCEDURES

### Equality related Matters

For any equality-related matters, Students and Staff are to write to the IHRI Equality Committee at the following address: [education@ihri.eu](mailto:education@ihri.eu)

The IHRI Equality Representative shall act as a point of entry for such matters and liaise with the respective departments accordingly. Student Support Services is committed to assisting all students in addressing their queries relating to this policy.

Regarding employees, the Co-founders are committed to assisting all employees in addressing their queries, including interpreting and implementing policies.

### Harassment Reporting

Students or employees who believe that they have been subjected to harassment have the right to file a report/complaint. The process for filing such reports can be found in the Student Hub.

Proven harassment constitutes serious misconduct, and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken per the staff and/or student code of conduct.

## REFERENCES

### National Documents

- Equality Policy – 18 June 2021
- Data Protection Act (Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta).
- Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452 of the Laws of Malta)
- Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Cap 413)
- Subsidiary Legislation (Equal Treatment in Employment Regulations - SL 452.95)
- Equality for Men and Women Act (Cap. 456 of the Laws of Malta)
- Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (Cap. 540 of the Laws of Malta)
- Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy
- Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools strategy
- Respect for All Framework (MEDE, 2014b).

### EU legislation

- Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services. (OJ L 373, 21.12.2004, p. 37–43.)



- Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast) (OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, pp. 23–36).

- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79–93.)

- Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and Council establishing a Recovery and Resilience Facility. (OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17–75.)

- All Council Conclusions on gender equality and other relevant subjects, including especially those cited below:

- Council Conclusions on Moving towards more inclusive labour markets (7017/15)
- Council Conclusions on Enhancing the Skills of Women and Men in the EU Labour Market (6889/17)
- Council Conclusions on Enhanced measures to reduce horizontal gender segregation in education and employment (15468/17)
- Council Conclusions on Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Key Policies and Measures (10349/19)
- Council Conclusions on the Economy of Wellbeing (13432/19)
- Council Conclusions on Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward: Taking Stock of 25 Years of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (14938/19)
- Council Conclusions on Enhancing Well-being at Work (8688/20)
- Council Conclusions on Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: Valuation and Distribution of Paid Work and Unpaid Care Work (13584/20)

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

### **United Nations**

- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment)

- The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

- Sustainable Development Goal (SGD) 5.4 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

### **Other Documents**

- Communication from the Commission of 26 April 2017: "An initiative to support work-life balance for working parents and carers" (COM (2017) 252 final)

- 2021 Report on equality between women and men in the European Union (6774/21)

- A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. 6678/20. (Commission reference: COM (2020) 152 final.)

- The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (6649/21 + ADD 1 + ADD 2)