



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

## **EQUITY POLICY**

<b>Policy Volume</b>	E: General Institutional Policies & Protocols
<b>Policy Chapter</b>	
<b>Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty</b>	Equity and Institutional Culture Committee/Equity and Institutional Culture Directorate.
<b>Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager</b>	Director: Equity and Institutional Culture
<b>Dates of First and Subsequent Council Approvals</b>	2003, 2021
<b>Revision History: Approved Reviews</b>	2001/2003/2021
<b>Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)</b>	Every 5 years
<b>Next Review Date</b>	2025

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## I. POLICY PARTICULARS

Policy Title	Equity Policy
Policy Statement	In its Vision and Mission Statement Rhodes University commits to being an institution that is “alive to its context” and an institution that is committed to social justice, academic excellence, academic freedom, institutional transformation and public accountability.” (Rhodes University Institutional Development Plan, 2018). Amongst the values listed are two which state that the University is striving to build “a just and equitable community and strives to foster the “realisation of equity and redress as per (the) Constitutional imperative”. (Rhodes University Institutional Development Plan, 2018). This policy is a broad articulation of this commitment.
Reason for Policy	The policy is an overarching policy that aims to give articulation to the public value of equity in the academic, the employment and the general institutional culture areas. It aims to draw together and create a bridge between other RU operational level policies that address issues of equity in these three areas of practice.
People affected by this Policy	All units of the University.
Who should read this Policy	All members of the University.
Website address/link for this Policy	<a href="http://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies/">www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies/</a>

## II. RELATED DOCUMENTS FORMS AND TOOLS

<b>Relevant Legislation</b>
Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Employment Equity Act 47 of 2013; Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997, Labour Relations Act, 1995; The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000.
<b>Related Policies</b>
Institutional Development Plan, Institutional Transformation Plan, Employment Equity Policy, Student and Staff Disability Policies, Human Resources Policies and protocols (such as Recruitment and Selection Policies, Policy and Procedures for the Personal Promotion and Academic Staff), Students’ Admission Policy, Teaching and Learning Policies including the Policy on Curriculum Development and Review, Policy on Eradicating Unfair Discrimination and Harassment, Sexual Offences Policy for Students, and the Visual Representation Policy.
<b>Forms and Tools</b>
Documents pertaining to procedures for implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation, to be developed and negotiated with stakeholders, following approval of this policy.

## III. POLICY DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
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Equity Policy

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Absolute barriers	The exclusion of a defined group of individuals from participating in development opportunities or applying for employment or promotion opportunities on the basis of any arbitrary demographic factor, such as race, ethnicity, class or gender. In the specific context of the transformation of the South African employment structure, the removal of absolute barriers means the removal of barriers that continue to result in the inequitable participation of designated groups of South African individuals in the opportunities offered by the society.
Academic arena	Practices associated with student access/enrolment, throughput, the teaching, learning and research environment and academic staff access and success.
Designated groups	Designated groups according to the Employment Equity Act as amended in 2013 include “black people, women and people with disabilities who are citizens of the Republic of South Africa by birth or descent or became citizens of the Republic of South Africa by naturalization before 27th April 1994 or after 26th April 1994 and who would have been entitled to acquire citizenship by naturalization prior to that date but who were precluded by apartheid policies”.
Employment arena	Practices associated with the employment, development, management and termination of staff as well as issues relating to the culture of the institution.
Employment practices	Policies and practices used by the institution to attract; select; train and develop; promote; demote, compensate discipline and dismiss staff; establish and define jobs; evaluate performance, transfer and determine the conditions of employment at the workplace. By employment practices is also meant the behavioural environment and the provision of facilities and opportunities.
Inequities	Unfair or unjust differentiation. In the case of South Africa unfair differentiation continues to be central to race, gender, disabilities, class ect constructions.
Institutional Culture	“Way things are done” within an organisation specifically the traditions, customs, values, and shared understandings that underpin the decisions taken, the practices engaged in and those practices that are rewarded and supported. The broad institutional culture includes Departmental and Divisional cultures which are the way things are done in Departments and Divisions.
Throughput	Success rates of students and whether or not students complete the degree/certificate programmes they have enrolled for within the regulation time.
Unfair discrimination	Unfair discrimination is when an individual is treated differently from individuals belonging to other socially significant categories of people and when this differential treatment results in the impairment of the individual’s dignity as a human being. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, 2000 states that “discrimination is regarded as unfair when it imposes burdens or withholds benefits or opportunities from any person on one of the prohibited grounds listed in the Act, namely: race, gender, sex, pregnancy, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth etc.”  The Act further states that it is not unfair discrimination when “measures are taken to advance or protect individuals or members of groups who have been disadvantaged through unfair discrimination.”

#### IV. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

<b>OVERVIEW</b>
1. The university recognises that inequities do exist within the University.
1. It recognises that these inequities contribute to a culture that is experienced by some staff and students as alienating.

2. It recognises the need for redress so that imbalances that developed as a result of colonial and apartheid structures and that persist to the present are rectified.
3. It recognises the distinction between the diversification of the university community and the transformation of the structures and culture of the university to result in a more socially just community.
4. It rejects all forms of unfair discrimination, prejudice and harassment, recognising these as hindering the integration of all people within the institution.
5. The university therefore is committed to fostering a culture which is experienced as inclusive and equitable by all staff and students. This includes removing any absolute barriers to the admission and success of students belonging to designated demographic groups as well as removing any absolute barriers to the recruitment, employment, promotion or development of staff belonging to designated demographic groups.
6. Entailed in this endeavour is a recognition that equity is an integral component of the future of the University. This in turn entails the articulation of an understanding of excellence that is not equated with skin colour, ethnic group, gender, class, able bodiedness and any other socially meaningful dimensions of differentiation, (as outlined in The 2000 Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act). It entails a recognition that the promotion of excellence does not logically result in inequitable outcomes for members of the institution.
7. The University also recognises that a committed and accountable leadership is necessary to the realisation of equity goals and to the change in the culture and dominant values of the institution.
8. The University also recognises that communication is critical to the pursuit of an equity agenda and in establishing an inclusive institutional culture. It is therefore committed to processes of communication where staff and students are consulted regarding decisions that impact on them.

## V. DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

<p><b>PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY</b></p> <p><b>DIRECTIVE 1.</b> The Institution aims to achieve the policy’s objectives in the Academic arena through:</p> <p>1. <b>Student access and success</b></p> <p>1.1.1. Outlining in its Institutional Development Plan and in its Transformation Plans processes that will result in the continuing changing of the demographic profile of its South African student body to more closely reflect that of the population of South Africa.</p> <p>1.1.2. Detailing in its Institutional Development Plan and Faculty Transformation Plans which will be based on the policy principles given above. The plans will detail strategies for improving the access and success rates for each student demographic group to result in equitable participation and outcomes across all groups.</p> <p>1.1.3. Monitoring access and success rates across different demographic groups as part of the monitoring of the implementation of Faculty Transformation Plans.</p> <p>1.1.4. Informed by the principles above, detailing in Faculty Transformation Plans how curriculum development, teaching and learning, language and research policies will be operationalised to reflect a recognition and understanding of the different socio-cultural contexts from which students from different population groups come.</p>
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1.1.5. Informed by the principles above, detailing in Faculty Transformation Plans strategies for changing faculty and departmental cultures to be experienced as more inclusive by students of all demographic groups.

## 2. **Academic staff recruitment and staff success**

1.2.1 Detailing in the Institution's Employment Equity Plan strategies and targets for the transformation of the academic staff profile.

1.2.2 Based on the principles given above, detailing in Faculty Transformation Plans strategies for providing support to staff within faculties that will result in equitable outcomes for staff across all demographic groups. These strategies will be aligned to the institution's Staff Development Plan and Policy.

1.2.3 Detailing in Faculty Transformation Plans how each faculty is going to participate in government and other projects which are designed to change the staff profile of South African Higher Education Institutions. These strategies will be aligned to the institution's forms of participation in such projects.

1.2.4 Informed by the principles above, detailing in Faculty Transformation Plans how curriculum development, teaching and learning, language and research policies will be operationalised to reflect a positive valuation of the diversity of academic staff and the consistent inclusion of members of designated groups.

1.2.5 Again, informed by the principles above, detailing in Faculty Transformation Plans strategies, for changing faculty and departmental cultures to be experienced as inclusive by staff of all demographic groups.

1.2.6 Detailing in Faculty Transformation plans procedures to be followed to address concerns about unfair discrimination and harassment raised by staff in the different departments of the faculties. These procedures will also be clearly aligned to the processes outlined in the Policy for the Eradication of Unfair Discrimination and Harassment.

**DIRECTIVE 2.** The Institution aims to promote Equity principles in the Employment arena through:

### 1. **Employment Equity Planning and Implementation**

2.1.1. Continuing to develop as required by the Employment Equity Act, an Employment Equity Plan. Amongst other components, the plan will outline recruitment, staff development and retention strategies that will result in a changing staff profile to reflect rectification of continuing imbalances in the staff structure and a change in the dominant values system.

2.1.2. Again as also required by the Employment Equity Act, continuing to monitor and report progress against the Employment Equity Plan to the Department of Labour.

2.1.3. Implementing a comprehensive staff development plan to support the Employment Equity Plan.

2.1.4. Supporting employment equity planning through the evaluation of the recruitment, staff development and retention processes.

2.1.5. Providing training to the institution's leadership and other relevant individuals in the principles underlying and in the implementation of Employment Equity Plans.

2.1.6. Keeping records of all relevant employment practices that are useful in the monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of employment equity initiatives. At a minimum, such records must include the data required by the Department of Labour for inclusion in the annual Employment Equity Report but may include additional records at the discretion of the Equity and Institutional Culture Committee.

## **2. Transparency and fairness in other employment systems and practices**

2.2.1. As informed by the Basic Conditions of Service and Labour Acts, developing transparent and fair systems of reward and recognition, transparent and fair grievance and disciplinary procedures and transparent and fair conditions of service policies.

2.2.2. Keeping qualitative and quantitative records that will assist in the monitoring of the application of these policies and procedures.

2.2.3. Undertaking an evaluation of the impact of the employment systems and procedures every four years as a means of promoting consistency in the application of policies and procedures.

## **3. Non-discriminatory divisional cultures**

2.3.1. Based on the policy principles stated above, detailing in Division Transformational Plans strategies for providing support to staff within Divisions that will result in equitable outcomes for staff across all demographic groups. These strategies will be aligned to the institution's Staff Development Plan and Policy.

2.3.2. Again, informed by the principles given above, detailing in Division Transformation Plans strategies for changing divisional cultures to be experienced as more inclusive by staff of all demographic groups.

2.3.3. Detailing in Division Transformation Plans procedures to be followed to address concerns about unfair discrimination and harassment raised by staff in the division. These procedures will be clearly aligned to the processes outlined in the Policy for the Eradication of Unfair Discrimination and Harassment.

### **DIRECTIVE 3. The Institution aims to promote Equity principles in the Broad Institutional Culture through:**

#### **1. Education and Awareness Raising**

3.1.1 Developing and implementing strategies for ensuring that all members of the university have a working knowledge of the various equity related policies, the Institutional Development Plan and the Institutional Transformation Plan and promoting an awareness that each member of the Institution has a responsibility to promote equity and transformation.

3.1.2 Articulating what is entailed in this responsibility in job profiles and in promotion criteria.

3.1.3 Implementing an awareness raising programme which will facilitate staff and students' engagement with equity and transformation issues.

## **2. Policy and Plans Development and Implementation**

3.2.1 Developing and reviewing policies and plans whose implementation is designed to promote equity at the operational level. These include policies and plans such as The Policy on the Eradication of Unfair Discrimination and Harassment, Disability and Language Policies, the Visual Culture Policy and Faculty and Division Transformation Plans.

3.2.2 Making such policies and plans easily accessible (language and physical access) to all members of the Institution.

3.2.3 Fully articulating in these plans and policies, responsibilities of members of the leadership structure and the mechanisms for ensuring that these responsibilities are met.

3.2.4 Consistently communicating progress made against Equity and Transformation plans to members of the institution.

## **3. Improving representativity in institutional decision-making**

3.3.1. Continually striving for diversity and representativity in the key decision-making bodies of the University and, recognizing that such diversity can enhance the decisions taken regarding the future of Rhodes University and that such representativity contributes to staff and students having a sense of community and ownership within the University.

3.3.2. Capacitating, as needed, all members of decision making bodies to enable them to participate effectively in the decision-making process.

3.3.3. Using tools such as minutes of meetings to improve transparency, accountability and openness in decision-making.

3.3.4. Ensuring the use of a participative management style, at all levels, in engagements with staff and students.

## **4. Conducting research to inform policy review and planning**

3.4.1. Conducting research to monitor the implementation of equity related policies and plans as part of an ongoing review and implementation process.

3.4.2. Conducting broad surveys such as staff and student surveys to gain an understanding of staff and students perceptions and experiences of the overall culture of the institution.

3.4.3. Using the knowledge gathered to further inform the design of Equity initiatives.

## **5. Communicating to staff and students**

3.5.1. Consulting students and staff on decisions that impact on them

- 3.5.2. Conducting ongoing communication to staff and students about progress made against existing Equity plans and about findings of equity related policies research.
- 3.5.3. Eliciting feedback from students and staff on Equity initiatives.
- 3.5.4. Adhering to the language policy of the institution in all communication.

**VI. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
<p>1. Equity and Institutional Culture Committee</p>	<p>The Equity and Institutional Culture Committee is responsible for;</p> <p>1.1. promoting the adoption of this policy by the institution and by all the institution’s governance committees. Amongst other effects, such adoption should be reflected in the documents, including policy documents, that will be produced by the governance committees,</p> <p>1.2. considering reports from the following entities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Employment Equity Committee</li> <li>b) Skills Development Committee</li> <li>c) Language Committee</li> <li>d) Disability Committee</li> <li>e) Visual Representation, Arts and Culture Committee</li> <li>f) Genact</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Director: Equity and Institutional Culture</li> <li>b) Manager: Anti-Harassment and Discrimination</li> </ul> <p>And through doing so enabling the development and implementation equity-related policies by the responsible divisions and committees,</p> <p>1.3. reviewing progress against the implementation of Institutional, Faculty and Divisional Transformation and Employment Equity Plans,</p> <p>1.4 delegating work that pertains to equity that needs to be done to the relevant committee, division or any other entity as applicable,</p> <p>1.5. recommending changes to the policies and plans as necessary.</p>
<p>2. Deans</p>	<p>The Deans and their respective Faculty Boards are responsible for;</p> <p>2.1. developing and implementing Faculty Transformation Plans along the principles and requirements detailed in this policy and reporting to the Equity and Institutional Culture Committee on the progress made,</p>



	<p>2.2. communicating progress on equity initiatives to and eliciting feedback from members of the faculty,</p> <p>2.3. aligning faculty policies to the principles of this policy.</p>
3. Heads of Divisions	<p>Heads of Divisions are responsible for;</p> <p>3.1. developing, implementing and reporting on Divisional Transformation Plans along the principles and requirements detailed in this policy and reporting to the Equity and Institutional Culture Committee on the progress made,</p> <p>3.2. communicating progress on equity initiatives to and eliciting feedback from staff in the divisions.</p>
4. Heads of Departments	<p>The Heads of Departments are responsible for ensuring the alignment of departmental policies to the principles stated in this policy.</p>
5. Human Resources Division	<p>The Human Resources Director is responsible for;</p> <p>5.1 driving the development, implementation, review of and reporting against the Equity Employment Plan,</p> <p>5.2 driving the development, implementation, review of and reporting against a staff development plan,</p> <p>5.3 providing training, as necessary, on the principles underpinning employment equity,</p> <p>5.4 in partnership with the Department and Division heads, articulating in job profiles, individual responsibility for the promotion of equity and transformation,</p> <p>5.5 keeping statistics and records that will enable the monitoring the implementation of equity related initiatives in the employment arena,</p> <p>5.6 continually reviewing, as necessary, policies, procedures and processes in the employment arena to ensure that they are fair and transparent and that they align with the country's labour laws,</p> <p>5.7 aligning all HR policies, including reward and recognition policies, to the principles stated in this policy.</p>
6. Equity and Institutional Culture Office	<p>The Equity and Institutional Culture Office is responsible for promoting the implementation of this policy broadly. This includes;</p> <p>6.1. developing and implementing an awareness raising programme to raise awareness on equity issues, on the various equity related policies and awareness of individual responsibility to promote equity and transformation,</p> <p>6.2. monitoring and evaluating the broad implementation of this policy through single issue research and institutional surveys,</p>

	<p>6.3. using knowledge gathered to further inform and influence the design of equity initiatives,</p> <p>6.4. recommending changes to the Equity related policies and plans as necessary,</p> <p>6.5. co-ordinating institution wide consultation on the policy.</p>
7. Registrar's Division	<p>The Registrar's Division is responsible for;</p> <p>7.1. promoting representativity in the institution's governance structures,</p> <p>7.2. ensuring that all members of governance structures are enabled to effectively contribute to the functioning of each structure.</p>
8. Communications and Advancement Division	<p>The Communications and Advancement Division is responsible for;</p> <p>8.1. communicating, with consistency, progress made against Equity related policies and plans to members of the institution,</p> <p>8.2. ensuring that the language policy is adhered to in the communication of such issues to all members of the institution.</p>
9. Institutional Research Planning and Quality Promotion Division	<p>The Institutional Research Planning and Quality Promotion Division is responsible for;</p> <p>9.1. ensuring the alignment of the Institutional Development Plan to the principles of equity articulated in this policy.</p> <p>9.2. monitoring the review of Equity-related policies.</p>

## VII. CONTACTS

Area of Concern	Division/Faculty/Department	Telephone	Email
Discrimination against person in Academic Employment and Institutional Arena	Manager: Inclusion.	0466038187	M.Busso@ru.ac.za
Inequity in policies, institutional processes and procedures.	Equity and Institutional Culture Directorate	0466037474	n.nhlapo@ru.ac.za

## VIII. POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE

Every five years the Director of Equity and Institutional Culture will facilitate a policy review process using findings of institutional research and collected feedback on the policy. The review draft will be submitted to the Equity and Institutional Culture Committee and the Institutional Forum for comment, input and approval before being submitted to Senate and Council.

