UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Policy

Advancing fair treatment, accessible learning and inclusive participation across the University and the wider community.

Policy Title	UMS EDI & Anti-Discrimination Policy	**Governing Division**	Legal Advisor's Office / Ecocampus
Target Audience	Staff, Students, Visitors & Public	**Policy Foundation**	UMS Constitution & Strategic Plan 2023–2027
Official Address	Jln UMS, 88400 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah	**Inquiry & Redress**	+60 88 320000 / Legal Advisor's Office

1. POLICY COMMITMENT

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) promotes a university culture founded on mutual respect, equity and inclusion. This Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Policy establishes institutional commitments to eliminate discrimination, harassment and unfair exclusion across all university programmes, activities, operations and extended community engagements.

The University actively safeguards individuals from unfair treatment and provides equitable opportunities irrespective ofrace, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status or nationality.

> **Statutory & Institutional Foundation:** This policy operates in alignment with the UMS Constitution, UMS Strategic Plan 2023–2027, the National Integrity Circular, UMS Quality Policy, and applicable Malaysian legislative frameworks and Ministry ofHigher Education (MOHE) policy directives.

2. OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives ofthis policy are to:

- Develop and sustain a collegiate culture that actively welcomes, values and harnesses diversity.
- Prevent all forms ofunlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- Strengthen institutional understanding and mainstreaming ofequality, diversity and inclusion across academic and non-academic functions.
- Ensure rigorous compliance with national legislation, statutory duties and international standards ofhigher education access.

3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION

This policy applies universally across two principal dimensions:

- **People:** All permanent, contract and temporary staff members; registered undergraduate and postgraduate students; service providers; contractors; vendors; and public visitors to university premises or events.
- **Institutional Activities:** Academic admissions, student recruitment, staffing and recruitment, performance evaluations, promotions, teaching and learning activities, research projects, student welfare, leadership development, and community outreach.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES & PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The implementation of this policy is governed by four core institutional tenets:

- **Equality:** Providing fair treatment and equitable opportunities by proactively recognising differentiated needs and dismantling systemic barriers.
- **Diversity:** Respecting, protecting and celebrating the distinct identities, traditions, cultural backgrounds and worldviews that enrich university life.
- **Inclusion:** Enabling full and meaningful participation through accessible physical infrastructure, universal digital design, inclusive curriculum design and responsive student/staff support services.
- **Anti-Discrimination:** Addressing and remediating all incidents of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying through transparent reporting, objective inquiry and disciplinary action.

The University explicitly acknowledges and protects individuals across the following protected characteristics:

Category	Institutional Scope & Commitment
Age	Protection against prejudice or unequal treatment across employment, professional growth and lifelong learning opportunities.
Gender & Reassignment	Equal participation, leadership advancement and safeguards against sex-based discrimination and harassment.
Disability	Comprehensive accessibility and reasonable adjustments across physical, sensory, intellectual and mental health conditions.
Race, Ethnicity & Origin	Respect for ethnic identity, indigenous heritage, national origin and fair representation in educational and staffing processes.
Religion or Belief	Freedom of religious conscience and reasonable facilitation of worship and faith-based practices without prejudice.
Marital & Civil Status	Fair consideration across hiring, benefits and education irrespective of civil or marital standing.
Pregnancy & Maternity	Protection against exclusion, adequate parental leave entitlements and academic/workplace accommodations.
Sexual Orientation	Protection against hostility, harassment, systemic disadvantage or victimisation.

5. INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO LIFELONG LEARNING & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

UMS guarantees that its public educational resources, lifelong learning initiatives and educational outreach programmes remain accessible to all individuals, regardless ofethnicity, religion, disability, immigration status or gender. This commitment explicitly extends to community members who are neither formally enrolled at nor employed by the University.

5.1 Scope ofActivities Covered

- **Public Educational Resources:** University library collections, public computing facilities, open online learning modules, open educational resources and public university lectures.
- **Public Educational Events:** University-wide seminars, scientific demonstrations, educational exhibitions, symposiums and open community learning workshops.
- **Vocational and Lifelong Learning:** Accredited short courses, professional continuing development training, micro-credentials, vocational programmes and community capacity-building initiatives.
- **Educational Outreach Beyond Campus:** Knowledge-transfer programmes, school lectures, community empowerment projects and university-sanctioned voluntary student-run initiatives in rural or marginalised areas.

5.2 Non-Discriminatory Participation and Admission

Organising faculties, research centres, institutes and administrative departments must ensure fair and fully transparent access. Promotional materials, enrollment criteria, candidate selection and event delivery shall not exclude individuals based on protected grounds. Activity prerequisites, safety requirements, venue limits or fees must be published in advance and administered impartially.

5.3 Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

Program organizers must conduct anticipatory barrier assessments to identify and mitigate physical, sensory, linguistic and digital limitations. Mandatory provisions include accessible physical venues, accessible educational materials (such as large print, closed captions or transcripts), and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. When structural barriers prevent standard participation, alternative formats must be provided.

5.4 Information Transparency & Participant Support

All publicly announced activities must explicitly detail registration procedures, syllabus details, costs, accessibility provisions, and the designated liaison officer for disability support. Prospective participants must be afforded adequate mechanisms to request accommodations prior to and during the event.

5.5 Unit Responsibility and Quality Review

Deans of faculties, directors ofinstitutes and heads ofacademic/administrative centres bear institutional accountability for complying with these standards. Organisers are required to review participant feedback and access records following each programme to eliminate recurring barriers.

6. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The UMS governance framework coordinates legal counsel, administrative implementation and formal disciplinary referrals. These functions operate within existing university executive authorities to embed accountability without creating redundant administrative overhead.

Governing Body / Unit	Core Governance & Operational Responsibilities
University Management	Provides overarching institutional leadership, strategy approval and resource allocation to support EDI initiatives and campus accessibility enhancements.
Legal Advisor's Office	Advises the Executive Committee and Senate on equity, human rights and statutory obligations; coordinates inclusive policy formulation; monitors campus equity metrics; evaluates formal grievances; and provides formal legal referral to disciplinary bodies.
Human Resource Division & Student Affairs Department (JHEP)	Collaborate on operationalising workplace equity and student inclusive support, managing anti-harassment safeguards, coordinating training modules, and fostering a positive campus social environment.
Academic & Administrative Units	Implement universal design in learning, conduct inclusive admissions and outreach, maintain barrier-free local facilities, and ensure unbiased local service delivery.
Staff & Student Disciplinary Committees	Adjudicate formal complaints referred by the Legal Advisor's Office; uphold due process, procedural fairness and natural justice; and issue proportionate disciplinary sanctions.
Staff and Students	Uphold standards ofmutual respect, avoid discriminatory or harassing behaviour, and promptly report witnessed or experienced incidents ofexclusion.

6.1 Mandate of the Legal Advisor's Office

The Legal Advisor's Office serves as the focal unit for equity governance, executing five core functions:

- **Institutional Advice:** Providing legal and ethical counsel to university leadership on equity, compliance and human rights obligations.
- **Policy Implementation:** Supporting departments in adapting local operating procedures to ensure inclusive practices and non-discrimination.
- **Statutory Compliance:** Monitoring university-wide alignment with federal employment, education and disability statutes.
- **Climate Review & Reporting:** Reviewing aggregated feedback, disaggregated demographic trends and institutional accessibility benchmarks.
- **Referral and Restorative Justice:** Recommending cases for formal disciplinary inquiry while facilitating restorative interventions, counselling referrals or mandatory retraining when appropriate.

7. IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES & COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

To institutionalise this policy across the campus ecosystem, UMS enforces four ongoing measures:

- **Institutional Monitoring:** Incorporating diversity and accessibility benchmarks into annual corporate planning, internal quality audits and departmental KPIs.
- **Capacity Building:** Conducting continuous professional development on unconscious bias, fair recruitment, disability etiquette, and inclusive pedagogical design.
- **Facilities & Digital Infrastructure:** Upgrading campus buildings, pathways, sanitation facilities and digital portals to conform with universal access standards.
- **Grievance Mechanism:** Maintaining accessible, confidential reporting pathways backed by non-retaliation protections.

Operational Checklist for Educational & Public Activity Organisers

Before launching university courses, public events or community programmes, designated event directors must verify the following checklist:

- [✓] Transparent eligibility criteria, course fees and registration procedures published publicly.
- [✓] Venue verified for step-free physical access, accessible washrooms and inclusive seating arrangements.
- [✓] Digital assets, slide presentations and handouts audited for readability, contrast and alternative text.
- [✓] Dedicated contact person and process identified for reasonable adjustment requests prior to commencement.
- [✓] Participant feedback mechanisms established to measure accessibility and record corrective actions.

8. REPORTING, GRIEVANCE AND REDRESS MECHANISM

Universiti Malaysia Sabah maintains a robust mechanism to receive, investigate and resolve reports of discrimination, harassment, exclusion or retaliation.

All reports submitted in good faith will be handled expeditiously, objectively and confidentially. Retaliation against any student, staff member or public participant who raises a concern or participates in an inquiry is strictly prohibited and constitutes an independent disciplinary offence.

> **How to Lodge an Inquiry or Report:**
> • *General Accessibility Inquiries:* Contact the organising faculty, centre or division directly using the event contact details.
> • *Formal Discrimination Grievances:* Formal concerns may be directed to the Legal Advisor's Office via the UMS Central Switchboard (+60 88 320000) or submitted through the university's official integrity and complaints portal.

9. NATIONAL LEGAL AND POLICY ALIGNMENT FRAMEWORK

This policy reflects Malaysia's constitutional tenets, statutory enactments, and Ministry of Higher Education national strategic blueprints. The following references establish the overarching national context for UMS institutional policies:

Statutory / Policy Instrument	Relevance to UMS Implementation
Federal Constitution of Malaysia — Article 8	Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the law, establishing the primary constitutional premise for institutional non-discrimination.
Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 (Act 685)	Mandates the removal of physical, educational and public facility barriers, supporting equal access to educational institutions for persons with disabilities.
Employment Act 1955 (Act 265), Section 69F	Empowers statutory inquiry into employment-related discrimination disputes within the defined scope of the Act.
National Policy on Women & Plan of Action	Provides federal guidance on gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment, leadership representation and the elimination of gender barriers.
Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education)	Frames the strategic drive toward widened access, equity, lifelong learning and quality higher education provision nationwide.
Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) Directives	Informs ongoing university guidelines regarding inclusive campus environments, student psychological health and equitable student admissions.

10. DOCUMENT ADMINISTRATION & PERIODIC REVIEW

This policy is administered under the authority of the Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Committee of Universiti Malaysia Sabah. The Legal Advisor's Office, in consultation with the Human Resource Division, Student Affairs Department and Ecocampus Management Centre, shall review this policy every three (3) years or as required by amendments to national legislation or university statutes.