

Equality Policy

University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Sri Lanka

01.Introduction

Equality is the state of being equal and it is now universally accepted that everyone should be treated equally to lead to the absence of discrimination. Equality policy of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (SJP), Sri Lanka, commits to promote equal opportunities for those who are involved within the university including students, academic and non-academic staff members. Thus SJP promotes a culture that actively values differences and recognises that individual differences and experiences can add valuable insights for the betterment of the university and enhance the way the faculties and departments work. The university will proactively handle discrimination, victimisation, harassment and bullying to ensure that every individual is treated equally in all activities/relations of the university and at all levels. The policy aligns with the gender mainstreaming initiatives in the Sri Lankan universities, university student charter and adheres to chapter III 12 (2) on fundamental rights of the constitution of Sri Lanka and the human rights charter of the United Nations.

02.Rationale

Equality policy of SJP applies to members of all levels of the university and seeks to ensure equality irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, language, union membership and political belief or any other grounds. SJP is committed to ensure dignity of its students and staff and to treat everyone equally with respect. This policy describes how the university is meeting the commitment of ensuring equality within its faculties and departments adhering to national and international initiatives. It includes information on how the university is complying with the commitments and guidance for the members of the university to ensure and promote equality. Thus unique qualities of individuals are recognised, respected and treated equally within the university. SJP recognises that victimisation, discrimination, bullying and harassment may be experienced in numerous ways including day to day interactions with colleagues, peers, students and academic and non-academic staff members and the university is committed to promote equality and challenge discrimination at all levels. This commitment will be reflected in day-to-day functioning of the university such as university level policies,

teaching, learning and research, administration and students' extracurricular activities. Equality policy of SJP aims at developing and sustaining a positive environment to prevent any individual from being affected, experiencing stress, illness or being absent from class or work.

03. Definition of Equality

Within this policy equality is defined as ensuring sameness among all members of the university with respect by breaking down barriers for equality and eliminating victimisation, discrimination, harassment and bullying.

04. Scope

Equality policy of SJP applies to members of all levels of the university. Members consists of students (both internal and external), academic staff members and non-academic staff members. Equality policy applies to university level policies, practices, procedures, norms and relations at class and work such as teaching, learning, research and creative work, support services, administration (including recruitment, promotion, training and performance appraisal of academic and non-academic staff members) and students' extracurricular activities.

05. Policy Objectives

SJP playing a significant role in higher education in the country seeks to promote equality within the wider society with the use of the equality policy. Following objectives will assist the university to ensure and promote equality in all the activities of the university at all levels.

- Treat everyone equally: treating the members the same, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, language, union membership and political belief or any other grounds.
- Value dignity of individuals: believing that each member deserves respect.
- Recognise and respect unique qualities of individuals: tolerance of individual differences and diversity with appreciation.
- Ensure that each member of the university has the opportunity to fulfil her/his potential without any barrier.

- Promote an environment that has no victimisation, discrimination, harassment and bullying: commitment to zero tolerance of inequality by adhering to practices that has no victimisation, discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- Voice any concerns on equality in the day- to-day working practices: be vigilant on daily happenings to understand instances or practices that create/recreate inequality and report it to the relevant authorities if possible with suggestions to ensure equality.

06.Implementation

The equality policy of SJP provides a clear framework for translating the university's intention of promoting equality into action. It outlines the objectives and commitment of members in ensuring, promoting and sustaining equality within the university. The university will not tolerate any activity, process, attitude or behaviour that can lead to discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment. An equality promotion officer who will ensure the implementation of the policy will be appointed by the university.

6.1 Equality Promotion Officer and the Team

Equality promotion officer is a senior academic staff member appointed to handle the issues relating to equality and s/he has the responsibility for the maintenance, regular review and updating of the policy. Her/his term in the position will be for one year. Apart from the equality promotion officer a ten member team representing the eight faculties and non-academic staff members will be appointed to facilitate the implementation of the policy. The team will consists of eight academic staff members(senior or junior) and two non-academic staff members (as observers) who will work as volunteers and the term for the team of the academic and non-academic staff members will be for one year. The equality promotion officer and team will address any concerns on equality/inequality that get surfaced within daily happenings and take necessary action/s to ensure equality. Any concern regarding equality can be communicated to the equality promotion officer either verbally or can be forwarded via e-mail with the use of the e-mail address given in the SJP website.

6.2 Awareness Building

Prior to implementation of the policy, the equality promotion officer will ensure that a sound awareness among its members about the equality policy is developed. Academic staff members of the university who are trained and qualified in equality issues will be used as

trainers. Within awareness building the resource persons will communicate the value of the policy and usefulness for everyone and encourage the members to commit to the objectives of the policy that are aimed at ensuring equality in all activities of the faculties, academic departments and administrative departments at all levels. This initial awareness building will be in the form of a training to ensure that all the members of the university are trained in ensuring equality so that the members can contribute to operate, maintain and develop the policy. The details of the policy such as its purpose, implementation and sustenance will be communicated through training to all members of the university prior to implementation and later will be made available in the university website. It will also be pasted in the main notice boards of the university, faculties and departments. Policy updates will be communicated to the university members without any delay via email soon after changes are done to the policy and the updated policy will be made available in the university website and the main notice boards. While committing to ensuring equality within day-to-day activities, any member of the university who is subject to harassment, bullying or discrimination is encouraged to refer to the policy and to make a complaint to the responsible authorities in the respective faculties and departments to take necessary action to ensure equality.

07. Monitoring and Evaluation

SJP understands that an effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the policy is essential to ensure the adherence to and sustenance of the policy. Evaluation will be based on the expected commitments of the members of SJP in ensuring, promoting and sustaining the objectives of the policy. Annual progress report on the policy implementation will be made available for the members of the SJP by the equality promotion officer. Equality objectives will be reviewed annually by the equality promotion officer and the team of the university and the equality policy will be evaluated and reviewed every three years or sooner should the need arise. This is done with the consultation of all representatives of the university including student representatives, academic and non-academic staff members. Proposed changes to the policy will be reviewed and incorporated and the updated policy will be made available to the members of the university by the equality officer.

