

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

STUDENT EQUITY POLICY

PREAMBLE

The Constitution of South Africa, adopted in 1996, recognises the need to heal the divisions of the past and, through the Bill of Rights, invokes the notion of redress for past inequities.

The White Paper on Higher Education (1997), the Higher Education Act (1997) and the National Plan on Higher Education (2001) require higher education institutions to address past inequities through various processes of redress and development and to address the country's high-level human resource needs.

The University of Cape Town's mission is to be flexible on access, active in redress and rigorous on success (UCT Mission Statement: 1996).

The University recognises its role in striving to end the racial fragmentation of the higher education system inherited from the past and to build a diverse student profile that predominantly reflects the demographics of South African society, while also reflecting the University's international profile.

The University is committed to transformation, and recognises the educational value of a diverse student and staff body.

The University recognises the constraints faced by a majority of school leavers associated with the schooling legacy in South Africa.

The University recognises the need for an institution-wide equity policy framework to guide each faculty as it determines its entrance requirements.

PRINCIPLES

Diversity – The University is committed to recruiting a diverse student community. The presence of a diverse range of experiences, needs and perspectives enriches the learning environment for all students. A diverse student community will enhance all students' skills of critical reasoning, teamwork and communication, and will produce graduates better able to contribute to a diverse and developing society.

Redress – The University recognises past inequities and will strive to achieve equity of access as well as equal opportunity for all students to succeed through appropriate empowerment measures. For the purposes of implementing the Student Equity Policy, the University will make use of designated groups as defined in South African employment equity legislation, namely Africans, Coloureds, Indians, women and persons with disabilities.

Non-racialism - The University aspires to be part of a non-racial, non-discriminatory, society and is committed to contributing to this objective through its practices and policies.

Transparency and fairness – The University will adopt fair and transparent procedures in its admissions, curriculum and assessment systems. The institutional admissions prospectus will

include detailed criteria for admission to programmes leading to specified qualifications, with an explanation of the admissions process. Once students have been admitted, the University will make known to students the range and nature of academic development and support services that are available.

Reliability and validity – The University’s admissions system will strive to use assessment methods that are reliable, valid and culturally unbiased. The admissions policy and procedures will specify details of the different methods of evaluation that are used in considering a candidate for admission to the University. Once admitted to the University, students’ academic progression will be evaluated using assessment methods as detailed in Senate’s Assessment Policy.

Equity of access and equity of outcomes – The University will strive to create fair opportunities for all potential students both to enter the education programmes that it offers and to succeed in them.

Integration – The University recognises that the student experience consists of a range of inter-related activities in which diverse student needs are respected. An integrated approach to teaching and learning, learner support, and learner development will be adopted to ensure equity of access and equity of outcomes.

STUDENT EQUITY POLICY FRAMEWORK

Enrolment Planning and equity targets

The University recognises that specific measures are required to ensure equity of access as well as equity of outcomes in redressing past inequity. For the purpose of this policy, the University will distinguish between different categories of students. To this end, the University will take account of the background of those applicants for admission who belong to the designated groups and who have been previously disadvantaged on the grounds of their population group, gender or disability, or a combination of these factors. It will endeavour to ensure that mature learners have equitable access, and it will strive to take account of varying degrees of disadvantage flowing from social class, rural situation, or secondary educational experience,

or a combination of these factors. Every reasonable effort will be made to recruit and admit to academic programmes of study suitable candidates from the designated groups, thus constructing a student body based on redress and diversity. To facilitate access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the University will use a variety of measures to assess potential to succeed and will set differential entrance requirements. The University will strive to avoid selection criteria and practices which constitute unfair discrimination against any category of learner.

Policy coherence

Consistent with the principles of equity, the University is committed to review on an ongoing basis, all its policies, structures and procedures to ensure alignment with the student equity policy. This will be done to identify practices, either informal or formal, which have an unfavourable effect on the admission, retention, development and throughput of members of the designated groups as well as to improve overall efficiency.

- Approved:
- Council – October 2004
- PC 09 2004 (item 1)

Promoting equity of outcomes

The University is committed to ensuring that all students can participate effectively in the process of teaching and learning leading to fair chances for success. This will require an understanding of learning needs and challenges faced by different kinds of students. The University is committed to providing, within the limits of available resources, comprehensive and integrated student development and support services

Developing Faculty Student Equity Plans

The Deans of Faculties are responsible for ensuring that a student equity plan has been developed for their faculty and that its implementation is appropriately monitored.

The Admissions Committee will monitor enrolment planning, the admissions process and student equity plans. The Student Development Services Committee will monitor the development and implementation of strategies designed to provide students with an integrated student experience that values diversity and promotes equity of outcomes.

The implementation and impact of the policy will be evaluated every three years and annual reports will be submitted to Council.