LEARNER EQUITY POLICY

OVERVIEW

Purpose	This policy governs the ideology behind the recruiting of learners at UCT Online High School.
Custodian	Registrar of UCT Online High School
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor of UCT
Version History	Version 1, Effective 21 July 2021

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of UCT Online High School is to minimise the large socioeconomic gap that exists within education in South Africa, including the quality of education received. Therefore, UCT Online High School ultimately aims to provide a more diverse group of individuals a better opportunity to be considered for tertiary education at a larger variety of institutions.

From a learner's perspective, the regulatory and administrative distinctions between primary, secondary, and tertiary education are arbitrary. From this learner-centred view, their education is a continuous arc, an arc where they have different educational needs at different times of their life, but ultimately, these offerings require a level of cohesion and integration that allows them to successfully articulate from one level to the next.

UCT Online High School has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information in our handbooks. However, we reserve the right, at any time, if circumstances dictate, to:

(i) make alterations or changes to any of the published details of the substance and opportunities on offer, or

(ii) add to or withdraw any of the provisions and opportunities on offer.

Parents / guardians and learners are given every assurance that changes will only be made as and when appropriate, and you will be fully informed as soon as possible.

2. PREAMBLE

The current reality is that the tertiary education sector inherits the many issues from primary and secondary education, with many learners (particularly learners from previously disadvantaged backgrounds) not being sufficiently prepared in their

secondary schooling for tertiary studies. This leads to low rates of university admission, and high undergraduate dropout rates. The throughput rate to tertiary education is currently very low: Of 100 learners that start school, approximately 50 - 60 will make it to matric, 40 - 50 will pass matric, and only 14 will qualify to go to university. Only six will get an undergraduate degree within six years. This disconnect causes major issues for the tertiary education sector, and the economy as a whole.

What if we reimagined the system?

What if we chose to break down the unnecessary silos between secondary and tertiary education, and provide a learner-centred education arc, where secondary schooling sets our learners up for success in their tertiary studies, and provides clear pathways and articulation into their tertiary studies.

It is still the case that the life chances of the average South African child are determined, not by their ability or the result of hard work and determination, but instead by their socio-economic conditions, their demographics, the province of their birth, and the wealth of their parents. These realities are so deterministic that before a child's seventh birthday one can predict with some precision whether they will inherit a life of chronic poverty and sustained unemployment, or a dignified life and meaningful work.

The sheer magnitude of these inequities is incredible. The top 200 high schools in the country have more learners achieving distinctions in mathematics or physical science (80%+) than the remaining 6 476 high schools combined. Put differently, 3% of South African high schools create more mathematics or physical science distinctions than the remaining 97% put together.

The majority of teachers (80%) lack the content knowledge and pedagogical skills to teach the subjects they are currently teaching. 79% of Grade 6 mathematics teachers cannot get 60% on a Grade 6 / 7-level maths test.

While throughput has improved at universities, only 22% of learners complete their three-year degree within three years. The determination, which has seen these learners battle all odds to make it to the first year, shows a hidden talent and resilience, which the country cannot afford to lose. Thus, measures are required to ensure that they succeed when they reach university level.

UCT Online High School will have a large social impact in bridging the differences in levels of education between various socioeconomic backgrounds. Through making the annual course fees affordable, based on a larger and more diverse market, and accessible to learners in any part of Africa, an opportunity is created to craft and execute a blueprint for scaling future-fit post-primary education to drive socioeconomic mobility throughout South Africa.

3. PRINCIPLES

One of the measures of success for transformation at UCT is to improve the diversity of the UCT learner profile, in terms of demographics, economic status, and disability. Through the UCT Online High School, UCT has the opportunity to significantly contribute to broadening access to previously disadvantaged individuals, and improving their tertiary education prospects.

UCT Online High School will promote transformation, diversity, and inclusion through policy, company values, and all operational activities. UCT Online High School is committed to the six broad areas of institutional cultural change, which is adopted by UCT, and described below:

3.1. Cultural understanding:
The online platform will provide a space for learners from a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, to work together. This is something that rarely

occurs in a traditional schooling framework, and it will promote a greater tolerance between the socioeconomic divide, and a better understanding across cultural and racial lines.

3.2. Learner access:

The low price point, and accessibility for learners from any corner of Africa to join the UCT Online High School, will allow access to a broader target market across the socioeconomic divide.

3.3. Discrimination, harassment, and violence:

The UCT Online High School Diversity and Transformation policy is focused on not only encouraging a safe environment for all stakeholders to report these offences, but to also deal with them, in accordance with the law endorsed by LabourNet.

3.4. Engaging with the community and developing community partnership:

Through the iBhodi Trust micro schools project, which is currently being run in collaboration with the Western Cape Education Department, UCT Online High School's engagement with communities and various stakeholders will ensure that quality education is provided to those who cannot afford the school fees.

3.5. Curriculum support:

The learner's experience a highly engaging, inclusive, and socially rich learning environment, which is supported by expert teachers and support coaches who have been trained in anti-racist pedagogy and inclusive classroom practices.

4. LEARNER ENROLMENT

UCT Online High School will aim to ensure that all learners have an equal opportunity to enrol, including learners from different social classes, socioeconomic backgrounds, as

well as their secondary educational backgrounds. An effort will be made to recruit learners from the outlined designated groups, and to admit these learners to build a learner body, including diversity and inclusion of all different socioeconomic backgrounds.

5. FAIR POLICY

Following the equity principles that UCT Online High School has outlined, UCT Online High School is committed to continuously review and follow all its policies and structures put in place to promote its Learner Equity Policy. This process will allow for efficient processes around learner admissions, retention, as well as development and throughput for members and designated target groups.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

UCT Online High School is committed to encourage that all learners and members participate effectively in the implementation of UCT Online High School's learner equity processes. An understanding of these processes will be required by all participants to ensure that all learners have a fair chance to succeed, as well as an understanding around learners who face different challenges. UCT Online High School will, with all available resources, encourage learner development and learner support at all times.