

DIVERSITY AND TRANSFORMATION POLICY



OVERVIEW

Purpose	This policy provides an overview of diversity and transformation at UCT Online High School community
Custodian	Registrar of UCT Online High School
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor of UCT
Version History	Version 1, Effective 21 July 2021



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1. Introduction

South Africa is one of the most diverse nations in the world. To enable a cohesive society we have one of the most progressive constitutions in the world that gives protection to the rights of every individual to be valued, respected, and not to experience any form of discrimination. As human beings we tend to stereotype women, black people, white people, those with rank, those with different sexual orientations, people with disabilities, or anyone who we perceive to be part of the so-called “out” groups. This way of thinking still influences how appointments and promotions in organisations are made, how leaders interact with subordinates, how various cultures interact in the workplace and their contributions to the overall organisation. The last influence – the contributions to the overall organisation by various cultures — we call the “organisational culture”.

World history shows that stereotyping and discrimination does not automatically disappear; an intervention is necessary. This means a transformation of heads and hearts (attitudes), behaviour, policies and procedures, and ensuring that organisations become a place where all can thrive. An effective diversity management strategy is necessary to catalyse the required intervention.

UCT Online High School needs to be cognisant that we live in a diverse society and that team members and customers are from diverse backgrounds. Thus, their abilities and needs are different. Their career paths, skills development, and performance in the workplace need to be considered with a “diversity” lens. The same idea is applied with customers, be it the learners or their parents.

This policy will journey through UCT Online High School’s understanding of how diversity issues impact team members at a personal level and their overall influence on the organisational culture. In doing so, it aims to equip team members with the skills and tools to harness the prosperity that diversity can bring to UCT Online High School.



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.

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. Diversity and transformation goals

- To humbly and courageously respect, nurture and value each team member within the UCT Online High School family.
- To inspire team members to embrace and celebrate diversity within the organisation and the nation as a whole, and to demonstrate evidence of that.
- To build an environment that fosters diversity and inclusion for team members and learners alike.
- To maintain proactive and sustained efforts to transform our organisation from operational and cultural perspectives.
- To regularly engage with team members through a variety of mechanisms, both formal and informal, to gain insight into their needs and ensure that they understand their roles in achieving UCT Online High School's Diversity and Transformation goals.
- To develop and demonstrate a more complete understanding of the South African environment in terms of the South African Constitution
- To develop and illustrate our knowledge of the human rights landscape which the South African Constitution enshrines, including the variety of belief systems and observances which exist.
- To challenge and eliminate all forms of discrimination.



- To demonstrate that grievance procedures are processes which allow for the successful management of conflicts which arise when human rights are not observed. To demonstrate our identity as members of the UCT Online High School family, and as contributing South Africans.
- To demonstrate an understanding of and engagement with the local and global issues which face South Africa and the world now, and which will face South Africa and the world over the next ten, twenty, thirty years, and how we can prepare ourselves for them.
- To create a culture that embraces diversity and inclusion as more than just a compliance exercise, but rather a key differentiator. We believe that when people have the freedom and expression to be themselves they perform better and integrate more effectively into teams, leading to decreased conflict, improved productivity and greater innovation in the workplace
- To continue to strive to build an inclusive culture that values diversity, freedom of expression, openness to learn and collaboration.

3. Transformation, diversity and inclusion in the workplace

3.1 UNDERSTANDING CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

It is interesting how certain words gain prominence in our lives. The word “diversity” is one such word. Ten years ago, it was a different story. But even today, although it has become part of the jargon, not everyone has a common understanding of its meaning.

Similarities and Differences

Diversity is not only about differences, but about the similarities between things as well.

If you were to look at a picture of all the various fruits found in South Africa, you would see a variety of different kinds of fruit. Usually when one asks people to define “diversity” they equate it to “difference”. Chambers Dictionary says that the



difference between things or people is the way in which they are unlike each other.

But are there only differences between the objects in the picture? What are some of the common elements or similarities between them?

- They are all fruit.
- They all taste sweet when ripe.
- We find them all in South Africa.

Culture is a word we use often, without having a clear idea of its meaning.

Is Culture....

- The way people behave?
- The way people dress?
- The food people eat?
- The religions people follow?

Culture covers all of these things, and more. The definition below will give you a better understanding of the term.

Culture is...

A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning.

Customs

Closely linked to culture are customs.

Customs are particular and established ways of behaving and acting. Many people confuse culture with race. In fact many people falling within the same race/group

may have very different cultures. Try to avoid making assumptions about a person's culture based only on their skin colour.

Cultural Exchange

A cultural exchange is a process where people share their experiences of their own culture and engage in learning about other cultures.

By engaging in a cultural exchange you will:

- Develop a deeper understanding of culture.
- Get to know and understand different cultural groups.
- Develop your own ability to value cultural differences and prevent cultural misunderstandings.

"Culture comprises elements of behaviour such as language, religion, values, standards and customs that are shared by a group of people. Culture is learned from childbirth. It is not inherited but acquired from the environment in which one grows up. In any one country there might be one or more main cultural groups and, within this, there could also be a number of subcultures.

For example, in South Africa there is an African culture within which different groups have their own sub-cultures or variations from the broad African culture. Culture includes the things people believe in and the way they do them."

3.2 LEADING IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE WORKPLACE

When issues of uniqueness, culture, religion, race, beliefs, gender, age, ability, generations, qualifications, and historical experience are added to the workplace picture, which they invariably are, then workplace conflict is a given.

These problems will be born of prejudice, jealousy, ignorance, and the suppression of individual and workplace community aspirations and ideas.

So how does UCT Online High School lead change in the workplace?

Some of the challenges are:

- "Rightness" in conflict - Judgements are made from our upbringing, our history, circumstances, and our religion, race, beliefs, and cultural alignment.
- The stresses in traditional "Workplace Diversity Management."
- Diversity of values - we all value different things in different ways.
- The varying interpretations of the key words used to define values and principles.
- The normal conflicts, gossiping, and backbiting that occur soon after people come together in groups and or teams.

Some of the solutions are:

- Develop an understanding and acceptance of diversity. In so doing, this will let the team experience harmony and teamwork in a transformational team-building environment.
- Develop a common understanding of who we are, why we are together and how relevant our "work" is to society, the organisation, to family, to community and of course to the individual.
- Develop a common name and a team-based mission.
- Meet face-to-face to clear past individual challenges.
- Develop a short list of positive and mutually understood and agreed upon values/behaviours that must be adhered to by all members of the team.
- Develop a list of negative and destructive behaviours/values that must be eliminated from the team's interactions.



- Get an agreement and sign a commitment.
- Commit to equality at the level of respect and include management and leadership.
- Put in place a peer-driven and managed meeting structure to manage all aspects of the agreement and behaviour of team members.
- Regularly rotate the chair and the scribe to prevent a power-base from forming.
- Ensure that the process is caring, motivational, and empowering while developing understanding and maintaining discipline.

The outcome through diversity training, team-building, and clearing conflict is a powerful peer-driven workplace management system led by the diverse team that it seeks to guide.

The results:

- Workplace diversity conflict is reduced through peer-agreement and management.
- Reduced management stress and wasted time spent in workplace conflict resolution.
- Far less expenditure on labour dispute mechanisms and labour lawyers.
- Workplace teams that are involved, professional, committed, and communicating.
- Better relationships with clients, family, and community.

Leaders who choose to lead their culturally diverse work-teams to great success will involve each and every team member in the day-to-day processes of workplace diversity management, and UCT Online High School encourages its leaders to lead in this fashion. It is time to lead and build diverse teams that are focussed and excited to be a part of UCT Online High School.

3.3 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

Organisational culture is the set of shared beliefs, values, and norms that influence the way team members think, feel, and behave. The primary methods of maintaining organisational culture is through the socialisation process by which individuals learn the values, expected behaviours, and social knowledge necessary to assume their roles in the organisation.

How important is it for a leader at UCT Online High School to understand the organisation's culture in order to bring about improved results? Every organisation has a culture that can have a significant influence on the attitudes and behaviours of its team members. The competencies and values of team members and leaders play a key role in determining the effectiveness and success of an organisation.

UCT Online High School's organisational culture should contain the following characteristics:

Observed behavioural regularities - When team members interact, they should use common language, terminology, and rituals and ceremonies related to deference and demeanour.

Norms - Standards of behaviour should evolve in work groups that are considered acceptable or typical for a group of people. The impact of work-group behaviour, sanctioned by group norms, should result in standards and yardsticks.

Dominant values - UCT Online High School expects its members to share its company values.

Philosophy - UCT Online High School's policies guide the organisation's beliefs about how team members and clients are to be treated.

Rules - Guidelines exist for operating and behaving at UCT Online High School.

None of these characteristics can, by themselves, represent the essence of UCT Online High School's organisational culture. However, the characteristics taken collectively

reflect and give meaning to the concept of organisational culture.

3.4 EQUITY AND EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

UCT Online High School is an equal opportunity employer. We don't tolerate discrimination against protected characteristics (race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth). We want all team members (including executives) to treat others with respect and professionalism. In practice, this means that we:

- Hire and promote people based on skills, experience, or potential and try to reduce bias in every process (e.g. through structured interviews.)
- Make accommodations to help people with disabilities move about safely on our premises and use our products, services, and equipment.
- Use inclusive, diversity-sensitive language in all official documents, signs, and job ads.
- Conduct diversity and communication training.

UCT Online High School is also committed, as a company, to achieving the aims and objectives as set out in the Employment Equity Act no. 55 of 1998 ("the Act").

The primary purpose of the Act is to achieve Employment Equity through:

- The elimination of unfair discrimination, and
- The implementation of affirmative action measures to empower and advance designated groups, those being Black people (previously classified as Coloured, African and Indian), women, and disabled people.

Unfair Discrimination

The Act does not give a definition of unfair discrimination. However it does prohibit



unfair discrimination on any of the grounds mentioned above. It goes on to say that it is not unfair discrimination to take affirmative action measures consistent with the purpose of the Act, and to distinguish, exclude or prefer any person based on the inherent requirements of the job. Whenever unfair discrimination is alleged by a team member the burden of proof rests with UCT Online High School to prove that the discrimination is fair.

Harassment

Harassment of a team member on any one or a combination of the grounds spelled out above is regarded as a form of unfair discrimination. UCT Online High School will also be held responsible if one team member harrasses another. UCT Online High School will have to be able to show that they took steps to prohibit the harassment of team members and that they brought it to the attention of all team members. Otherwise they can be held responsible for the harassment as well.

Suitably Qualified

The Act defines suitably qualified as any one of, or a combination of, a person's:

- Formal qualifications
- Prior learning
- Relevant experience
- Capacity to acquire, within a reasonable time, the ability to do the job.

As mentioned above, UCT Online High School feels strongly about these requirements and undertakes to hire and promote team members based on skills, experience, and potential and not merely based on formal qualification.



Affirmative Action and Designated Groups

Employment Equity Act Section 15(1):

"Affirmative action measures are measures designed to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce of a designated employer."

As such, UCT Online High School undertakes to:

- Identify and eliminate employment barriers, including unfair discrimination.
- Create diversity in the workplace based on equal dignity and respect of all people.
- Make "reasonable accommodation" for people from designated groups in order to ensure that they enjoy equal opportunities and are equitably represented in the workforce of a designated employer.

In order to achieve the undertakings above, UCT Online High School will strive to put the following affirmative action measures in place:

Recruitment, Selection, Placement, Appointments

- Activities identified as ensuring the Preferential Employment of Designated Persons.
- Transparent recruitment strategies such as appropriate and unbiased selection criteria and selection panels.
- Targeted advertising.
- Increasing the pool of available candidates through involvement in community and social upliftment programmes, involvement in learnerships and skills programmes, and marketing in disadvantaged communities.
- Appointment by recognising prior learning, relevant experience, and reasonable potential to achieve required performance standards.



Education, Training and Development

Activities to accelerate the advancement of designated persons (e.g. skills/competency assessment, mentorship/protégé schemes, learnerships, skills programmes, internships, on the job mentoring and coaching, accelerated training for new recruits etc.)

Retention of Designated Persons

Measures taken to identify reasons for turnover and means to prevent this (e.g. analysis of labour turnover through exit interviews, equitable benefits, integration into decision-making structures, healthy interactive communication and feedback strategies, retrenchments not only based on LIFO).

Promotions, Transfers and Demotions

UCT Online High School will institute special programmes for the upliftment and development of black, female, and disabled persons through:

- Affirmative action, in order to enable them to compete on an equal footing for promotion.
- Contemplating suitably qualified persons by means of recognising prior learning and relevant experience and not only qualifications.
- Ensuring advancement through performance evaluation, succession planning.
- Identification of black, female, and disabled staff members who are underutilised in terms of their qualifications and experience, skills and potential and correctly placing such persons within the organisation.
- Empowerment of women through Women and Leadership programmes.
- A conscious effort will be made to avoid all forms of tokenism and inappropriate retention in the case of underperformance.

Diversity Awareness and Transformation

- Diversity awareness training for all team members to sensitise team members with regards to the grounds of discrimination such as race, gender, disability, religion, age, and sexual orientation.
- The development of diversity management competencies for senior team members.
- Assessment and development of a diverse organisational culture that affirms diversity in the workplace and harnesses the potential of all team members.
This will be done through annual diversity audits and diversity interventions.

The Act also stipulates that employers with 150 and more employees have to submit a report on the implementation of their Equity Plans every year to the Department of Labour, and employers with less than 150 employees have to submit Equity plans to the Department of Labour every second year (Section 21). UCT Online High School undertakes to abide by this compliance requirement.

3.5 PROCUREMENT

UCT Online High School has a procurement policy that deals both with the practices of procurement at the company and the BBBEE component.

Procurement Practices

- 1) Procedures and processes must reflect a procurement system that is fair, equitable, transparent, competitive, cost effective, and provides a quality product.
- 2) UCT Online High School will take appropriate action against corrupt or unethical activities and acts of financial misconduct.
- 3) All transactions should be properly documented.
- 4) Where possible, UCT Online High School will purchase from local suppliers, rather than from overseas suppliers, in order to encourage local business development.



Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) procurement policy

- 1) Black economic empowerment is fundamental and is appropriately in place to facilitate and promote opportunities for previously disadvantaged South Africans and UCT Online High School will strive to do business with suitable BBBEE suppliers where possible.
- 2) Whenever there is a choice between suppliers of products or services of a similar price and quality, a BBBEE qualified supplier will be the first choice.
- 3) Whenever there is a choice between two or more BBBEE suppliers of a product or service of a similar quality, the supplier with the lowest price will be the first choice.
- 4) To be considered a BBBEE supplier, the supplier must be able to provide proof of BBBEE status. Where possible, this will be corroborated through a recognised rating body and must not be more than 18 months old.
- 5) The supplier is responsible for informing UCT Online High School as to any change in its BBBEE status.
- 6) Businesses misrepresenting their BBBEE status or not honouring commitments regarding subcontracting or joint ventures with BBBEE compliant businesses must be excluded from further business with UCT Online High School.