
Diversity & Inclusion Guideline

Purpose & Scope

This guideline sets out how the College will create a learning and working environment where **all students and staff—Omani and expatriate—are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect**, consistent with Omani law and national quality assurance standards. It applies to: governance bodies, academic and administrative staff, contractors, students, and visitors. It covers **admissions, teaching and learning, assessment, student life, research, employment, promotion, services, facilities, communication, and data handling**.

Legal & Regulatory Foundations

The College's D&I commitments are grounded in the following:

- **Basic Statute of the State (Royal Decree 6/2021)** – establishes equality before the law, reinforces the rights and duties of citizens, and emphasises the protection of rights, including those of women, youth, and persons with disabilities.
 - **Labour Law (Royal Decree 53/2023)** replaces RD 35/2003; it bans discriminatory dismissal based on protected grounds (e.g., gender, origin, language, religion, social status, disability, pregnancy, breastfeeding, union activities), incorporates Omanisation planning, regulates working hours and leave, and enhances worker protections (e.g., restrictions on passport retention).
 - **Penal Code (Royal Decree 7/2018)** – provides the criminal law framework; its provisions and commentary underline state protection of public order and the need for clear, lawful restrictions on conduct; relevant to policies on harassment, hate speech, and defamation.
 - **The Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL) (Royal Decree 6/2022) and Executive Regulations (MD 34/2024)** govern personal data processing, consent, individual rights, breach notifications, DPO/permits for sensitive data, and cross-border transfers; they are now actively enforced.
 - **Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Royal Decree 92/2025)** – modernised framework guaranteeing equal rights and prohibiting disability discrimination; mandates accessibility and inclusion measures across education, employment, services, and infrastructure.
 - **Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation & Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) – Institutional Standards (2024)** – national accreditation standards emphasise governance, student experience, equity of access/success, and robust policies and evidence on inclusion.
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Definitions (for guideline clarity)

- **Diversity:** The presence of differences among people in the College community (e.g., nationality, gender, disability, language, religion, socio-economic background, learning needs).
 - **Inclusion:** Proactive, consistent practices ensuring equitable access to opportunities, participation, and success for all students and staff.
 - **Harassment:** Unwanted behaviour (verbal, written, visual, physical, electronic) that infringes on dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment, judged objectively and in context. (Handled under internal HR/Student Codes and, where relevant, Omani law.)
 - **Reasonable Accommodation:** Necessary and appropriate modifications that do not impose a disproportionate burden to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities (learning, assessment, employment, facilities).
 - **Sensitive Personal Data:** Genetic, biometric, health, religious or similar data requiring heightened safeguards/permits under PDPL.
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Principles & Standards of Conduct

1. **Equal Opportunity & Non-Discrimination**
Decisions regarding admissions, assessments, employment, promotion, training, pay, and termination shall not be based on protected characteristics. Discriminatory termination and recruitment practices (e.g., adverts mentioning nationality, gender, religion) are forbidden.
2. **Respectful Campus Culture**
Zero tolerance for harassment, bullying, or hate speech. The College will define unacceptable conduct, reporting procedures, and appropriate sanctions; serious cases may be referred to authorities in accordance with Omani law.
3. **Accessibility & Disability Inclusion:** Provide **physical, digital, curricular, and assessment** accessibility; establish procedures for accommodation requests; and maintain a barrier removal plan aligned with the **2025 disability law**.
4. **Privacy & Dignity**
Collect and process personal data (e.g., demographic/EEDI datasets, disability disclosures) only with **lawful basis/consent, purpose limitation, minimality, and security**, and honour individual rights and breach notifications consistent with PDPL.
5. **Fair Work Practices**
Embed **non-discriminatory employment** practices, lawful working hours/leave, fair grievance handling, and compliance with rules on **passport retention and terminations**, in line with the 2023 Labour Law and guidance.
6. **Alignment with Omanisation & Talent Development**
Maintain and annually review an **Omanisation plan**, including development pathways for

Omani staff into leadership roles, while ensuring equitable treatment of expatriate colleagues.

Risk Identification, Assessment, Mitigation & Reporting Chain

1 Risk Categories & Indicators

- **Legal/Compliance Risks** (e.g., discriminatory adverts, arbitrary dismissals, PDPL breaches, failure to provide disability accommodations). Indicators: HR or student complaints increase; regulator inquiries; breach incidents.
- **Academic Equity Risks** (access, progression, and completion disparities by cohort; unfair assessment practices). Indicators: attainment gaps; high levels of deferral/withdrawal in specific groups; appeals.
- **Workplace Culture Risks** (harassment/retaliation; exclusion in committees/projects). Indicators: survey results; grievances; exit interviews.
- **Accessibility Risks** (non-compliant facilities, inaccessible e-learning/content; inadequate assistive tech). Indicators: unmet accommodation requests; complaints; audit findings under disability law.
- **Reputational/Accreditation Risks** (adverse press, social media incidents, accreditation findings, loss of student trust). Indicators: OAAAQA review outcomes; stakeholder feedback.

2 Risk Assessment Method

- Adopt a **college-wide D&I Risk Register** using a 5×5 **likelihood × impact** matrix and assign a risk owner per item (Dean/HR/Registrar/IT/Facilities). Review each semester and before OAAAQA cycles.

3 Mitigation Actions (Minimum Controls)

- **Guideline Controls:** Annual review of D&I, HR, Student Code, Assessment, and Accessibility policies against **Labour Law 2023**, **PDPL**, and **Disability Law 2025**; legal sign-off via Counsel.
- **Training:** Mandatory induction and biennial refresher on **D&I, anti-harassment, inclusive teaching, reasonable accommodation, and PDPL privacy** for staff; student orientation modules.
- **Inclusive Recruitment & Admissions:** Standardise non-discriminatory adverts, structured interviews, bias-aware selection, and admissions rubrics; HR/Admissions to spot-check compliance.
- **Accessible Learning & Facilities:** Adopt WCAG-aligned digital accessibility standards, captioning guidelines, assistive technologies, and building access audits with remediation timelines.

- **Data & Privacy:** Appoint/assign a **Data Protection Officer (PDPL)**; maintain data maps, DPIAs for sensitive processing (e.g., disability disclosures, EDI dashboards), breach register, and lawful retention schedules.
- **Early-Warning Dashboards:** Track admissions, progression, completion, assessment outcomes, and staff lifecycle KPIs disaggregated (where lawful) to identify equity gaps; publish summary to the Academic Board.

Reporting Chain (Lines of Accountability)

1. **Operational Ownership**
 - **HR Director** – staff D&I, recruitment, training, grievances, Labour Law compliance.
 - **Dean/Registrar** – academic inclusion, assessment equity, student appeals.
 - **Director of Student Services** – student conduct/harassment, disability services, accommodations.
 - **Chief Information/IT & DPO (PDPL)** – data governance, privacy notices, breaches, security controls.
 - **Facilities Director** – campus accessibility, safety compliance.
2. **Management Oversight – The guideline content forms an essential part of the college policies, which are overseen and reported on as necessary in the weekly SLT.**

In summary, MEC promotes internationalisation and a multicultural campus; our D&I guidelines reflect this environment while aligning with Omanisation and national quality standards.