

AZERBAIJAN STATE OIL AND
INDUSTRY UNIVERSITY



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY





Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University

Those charged with governance

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

October 2025

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1. POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) affirms its unwavering commitment to providing an equitable, inclusive, and respectful environment for all members of its community. ASOIU recognizes that diversity encompassing differences in gender, age, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic background, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics enriches academic and professional life, fosters innovation, and strengthens institutional excellence.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (hereinafter the “Policy”) establishes the principles through which ASOIU promotes equality of opportunity, prevents discrimination and harassment, and cultivates a culture of mutual respect and dignity. It applies to every aspect of ASOIU activity, including admission, teaching and learning, employment, research, community engagement, and partnership development.

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- articulate the ASOIU’s expectations and standards of conduct concerning equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- ensure that all decisions and practices are based on fairness, transparency, and merit;
- provide a framework for embedding inclusive approaches in academic, administrative, and support functions; and
- set out the legal and institutional foundation for ASOIU’s equality responsibilities.

LEGISLATION CONTEXT

This Policy is grounded in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on any grounds, and in relevant national legislation including the Labour Code, the Law on Education, and the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In developing and implementing this Policy, ASOIU is also guided by internationally recognised good practice standards in higher education and by the principles of fairness, accessibility, and human dignity reflected in instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Together, these frameworks affirm ASOIU’s responsibility to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster an inclusive university culture where every individual can reach their full potential.

ASOIU maintains a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. Any confirmed breach of this Policy shall result in appropriate corrective or disciplinary action, in accordance with university regulations and national law.

2. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Policy, the following terms are used with the meanings set out below. These definitions reflect the constitutional and legal framework of Azerbaijan and international higher-education good practice:

- **Equality** means providing fair and impartial treatment to all members of the ASOIU community. It ensures that everyone has equal access to opportunities, resources, and benefits without discrimination or preference.
- **Diversity** refers to the variety of characteristics and experiences that make individuals unique. This includes differences in gender, ethnicity, nationality, age, disability, religion or belief, language, sexual orientation, social or economic background, and cultural identity.
- **Inclusion** means creating an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and supported to participate fully in the academic and professional life of the ASOIU. Inclusion requires active efforts to remove barriers and ensure a sense of belonging for all.
- **Accessibility** refers to the design of physical spaces, digital systems, and educational processes that allow individuals, including those with disabilities, to use them independently and effectively. Accessibility is an essential condition for equal participation.
- **Bias** means a tendency, whether conscious or unconscious, to favour or disadvantage individuals or groups based on stereotypes or personal preferences. Bias can affect decisions in recruitment, assessment, and daily interactions.
- **Discrimination** is any unfair or prejudicial treatment of an individual or group based on a personal characteristic. It may be direct, where someone is treated less favourably because of that characteristic, or indirect, where a neutral policy or rule creates disproportionate disadvantage for certain groups.
- **Harassment** means unwanted behaviour related to a personal characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment.
- **Victimisation** occurs when an individual is treated unfairly or suffers negative consequences for raising a concern, making a complaint, or supporting another person regarding equality, diversity, or inclusion.

- **Protected characteristics** include gender, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, nationality, language, social origin, or any other status recognised under the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- **Reasonable adjustments** are practical measures introduced to remove or reduce disadvantages faced by individuals, particularly those with disabilities, so that they can participate fully in all aspects of university life.
- **Staff** refers to all individuals working within the ASOIU at all levels and grades, including officers, employees (whether permanent, fixed term or temporary), workers, trainees, seconded staff, agency staff, volunteers, interns or any other person working in any context within the institution.
- **Associated persons** means individuals or organisations who act on behalf of or in connection with the ASOIU, including contractors, consultants, visiting lecturers, volunteers, and representatives of partner institutions.
- **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)** means a systematic process used to evaluate whether a proposed or revised policy, procedure, or project could create unintended barriers or disadvantages for any group of people. The purpose of an EIA is to identify potential impacts on equality, propose actions to eliminate or reduce negative effects, and ensure that decisions are fair, inclusive, and consistent with the ASOIU's equality objectives.

3. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to all members of the ASOIU community, including staff, students, and associated persons who act on behalf of or in connection with the ASOIU. It applies to:

- all academic, administrative, and technical staff, whether employed on a permanent, temporary, or contractual basis;
- all students, including undergraduate, postgraduate, part-time, and visiting students;
- applicants for study or employment;
- contractors, suppliers, consultants, visiting lecturers, and any other individuals or organisations working with or representing the ASOIU.

Every individual who works or studies at ASOIU shares the responsibility to uphold the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion, and to treat others with dignity and respect. **Heads of institutions** have an additional duty to ensure that the principles of this Policy are implemented within their teams or departments.

The Policy applies to all ASOIU activities and environments, including:

- recruitment, admissions, selection, and assessment;
- teaching, learning, and research;
- professional development and promotion;
- access to facilities, resources, and services;
- participation in student or staff organisations, events, and governance structures;
- behaviour on campus and at all ASOIU-related events or digital platforms.

The Policy also extends to conduct occurring off-campus when it is connected to ASOIU functions, reputation, or members of the ASOIU community.

ASOIU expects its partners, contractors, and affiliated institutions to uphold equivalent principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion in their own operations.

4. GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective implementation of this Policy depends on the coordinated effort of all levels of the ASOIU. Clear distribution of responsibilities ensures accountability and consistency in promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion across ASOIU.

RECTOR

Has overall responsibility for ensuring that equality, diversity, and inclusion principles are embedded in ASOIU's strategy, governance, and decision-making. Approves this Policy and ensures consistent application across all institutional areas.

EDI OFFICE

Serves as the central coordination body for all equality, diversity, and inclusion matters. Reports directly to both Vice-Rectors and, when required, to the Rector. Its responsibilities include:

- providing advice, guidance, and support to staff, students, and associated persons on equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- coordinating awareness, training, and communication activities that promote an inclusive university culture;
- collecting and analysing equality-related data and monitoring progress;
- preparing periodic reports and recommendations for the Vice-Rectors and Rector;

- ensuring alignment between EDI objectives and other ASOIU policies, including those within Academic and General Affairs;
- proposing actions to address identified gaps and strengthen inclusion across all areas of university life.

VICE-RECTOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Oversees the integration of equality, diversity, and inclusion principles within all academic and research activities, ensuring inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

VICE-RECTOR FOR GENERAL AFFAIRS

Responsible for equality and inclusion across administrative, social, and operational functions of ASOIU. Ensures equitable access to facilities, welfare services, and support initiatives, working in coordination with the EDI Office.

HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS

Ensure local implementation of this Policy within their faculties or departments, promote awareness among staff and students, and report annually on equality and inclusion activities.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Integrates equality standards into recruitment, promotion, and performance management, and collaborates with the EDI Office on training and monitoring diversity data.

ALL STAFF, STUDENTS AND ASSOCIATED PERSONS

Share responsibility for maintaining a respectful and inclusive environment and for reporting any form of discrimination or harassment through the established channels.

5. COMMITMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

ASOIU is committed to creating and maintaining an environment in which equality, diversity, and inclusion are fundamental values guiding all areas of university life. These commitments apply to every member of the ASOIU community and to all aspects of academic, administrative, and social activity.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS

The ASOIU shall:

- promote a culture of respect, openness, and fairness in which all individuals are valued and treated with dignity;
- ensure that equality of opportunity is central to the ASOIU's strategic and operational decisions;
- prevent discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in all its forms and respond promptly to any incidents;
- take reasonable steps to remove barriers that limit participation by individuals or groups;
- ensure accessibility in physical, digital, and communication environments so that everyone can participate equally in academic and social life;
- conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) for new or significantly revised policies, procedures, and major projects to identify and eliminate potential barriers to equality and inclusion before approval;
- integrate equality, diversity, and inclusion considerations into planning, recruitment, teaching, research, and community engagement activities;
- ensure that all new staff and students complete mandatory induction training on equality, diversity, and inclusion;
- provide regular training and awareness programmes to build understanding of equality and inclusion among staff, students, and associated persons;
- encourage participation in diversity-awareness activities and recognise achievements that promote an inclusive university culture;
- recognise and value the diversity of cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds that enrich the ASOIU community.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To put these commitments into practice, the ASOIU aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Inclusive Governance:** ensure that equality and inclusion principles are considered in all major policy and decision-making processes.
2. **Equitable Access:** guarantee equal opportunities in recruitment, admission, promotion, and professional development for staff, students, and associated persons.
3. **Accessible Learning Environment:** provide physical, digital, and pedagogical environments that are inclusive of different learning needs and abilities.
4. **Respectful Conduct:** cultivate a climate of mutual respect and professionalism, free from discrimination, harassment, and bias.
5. **Capacity Building:** deliver training and development activities that strengthen awareness and practical skills in equality and inclusion.

6. **Data and Evaluation:** collect and review equality data to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement.
7. **Continuous Improvement:** incorporate feedback from staff and students into the ASOIU's equality and inclusion planning.

FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

ASOIU prohibits all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination, including but not limited to discrimination based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, language, sexual orientation, or social or economic background.

Unacceptable behaviours under this Policy include:

- **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.
- **Indirect discrimination:** applying a policy or rule that disadvantages certain groups without a justified reason.
- **Harassment:** engaging in unwanted behaviour related to a personal characteristic that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
- **Victimisation:** subjecting a person to adverse treatment for raising a concern or supporting another individual.
- **Bullying or intimidation:** persistent negative behaviour intended to undermine, humiliate, or isolate another person.

The ASOIU shall use **Equality Impact Assessments** and other monitoring tools to ensure that its policies, procedures, and practices remain fair, inclusive, and free from discrimination.

All members of the ASOIU community are expected to act in accordance with these principles and to contribute to the creation of an inclusive and supportive culture.

6. MONITORING, REPORTING AND COMPLAINT MECHANISMS

ASOIU is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment where all members of the ASOIU community can study and work free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. ASOIU recognises the importance of addressing any concerns promptly and fairly through clear and accessible procedures.

MONITORING

The EDI Office is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this Policy. Monitoring activities include:

- collecting, analysing, and evaluating data related to staff and student diversity, recruitment, progression, and outcomes;
- reviewing the results of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) conducted for new or revised policies and projects;
- identifying trends, risks, and areas requiring improvement;
- coordinating with the Human Resources, Academic Affairs, and General Affairs Departments to ensure that equality and inclusion objectives are being met.

REPORTING

The EDI Office shall prepare an Annual Equality and Inclusion Report summarising key data, activities, and findings.

This report shall be submitted to the Vice-Rectors and, where appropriate, to the Rector, for review and approval. The report shall include:

- statistical information on diversity among staff and students;
- outcomes of Equality Impact Assessments;
- summary of complaints and resolutions (presented in anonymised form);
- progress toward institutional objectives set out in this Policy;
- recommendations for improvement.

The findings may be shared, in summary form, with the wider ASOIU community to promote transparency and accountability.

RIGHT TO RAISE A CONCERN

Every staff member, student, or associated person has the right to raise a concern or lodge a complaint if they believe they have experienced or witnessed discrimination, harassment, bullying, or any other conduct that breaches this Policy.

Raising a concern will not result in any form of disadvantage or retaliation.

PRINCIPLES OF COMPLAINT HANDLING

The following principles apply to all stages of complaint handling and guide the ASOIU's approach to fairness and transparency. All complaints shall be handled according to the following principles:

- **Confidentiality:** all information shall be treated sensitively and shared only with those directly involved in resolving the issue.
- **Impartiality:** all cases shall be reviewed fairly and without bias by individuals not directly connected to the matter.
- **Timeliness:** complaints should be addressed as quickly as possible to prevent escalation.
- **Support:** both complainants and respondents may access guidance or counselling through the EDI Office or designated support services.
- **Protection from victimisation¹:** no individual shall suffer any adverse treatment for making or supporting a complaint in good faith.

REPORTING AND INITIAL SUPPORT

ASOIU encourages early communication and constructive resolution of concerns wherever possible. Staff, students, and associated persons are urged to seek advice or assistance promptly if they experience or observe conduct that may breach this Policy. The following steps outline how individuals can report issues and access initial support through appropriate university channels:

- Concerns or complaints may be raised with the EDI Office, the Human Resources Department, or the Head of Institution, depending on the nature of the issue.
- The EDI Office shall provide confidential advice on possible options, including informal resolution, mediation, or formal complaint submission.
- Where appropriate, issues may be resolved informally through open dialogue, with the consent of the parties involved.

FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

This subsection outlines the formal steps to be followed when a concern cannot be resolved informally.

If informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, the complainant may submit a formal complaint in writing.

¹ Principles of impartiality and victim-protection reflect UN Women's "Safe Universities Initiative" Framework (2021)

Formal complaints shall be handled in accordance with the ASOIU's internal procedures under the relevant regulations, such as the Dignity at Work and Study Procedure or the Internal Disciplinary Rules, depending on the case.

The EDI Office will coordinate with the responsible department to ensure that equality and inclusion principles are upheld throughout the process.

OUTCOMES AND SANCTIONS

If a complaint is upheld, appropriate corrective or disciplinary action shall be taken in accordance with the ASOIU's internal regulations and the Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Possible outcomes include formal warnings, training requirements, reassignment, or disciplinary measures up to termination or expulsion, depending on the severity of the case.

RECORD-KEEPING AND MONITORING

The EDI Office shall maintain anonymised records of all complaints and outcomes for monitoring purposes. These records shall be reviewed annually to identify recurring issues or systemic risks and to inform improvements to ASOIU policy and practice.

7. REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This Policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if significant legal, structural, or strategic changes occur.

The review is coordinated by the EDI Office in consultation with the Human Resources, Academic Affairs, and General Affairs Departments, and submitted to the Vice-Rectors and Rector for endorsement.

Regular review enables ASOIU to assess progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure compliance with national legislation and international good practice.

Each review cycle includes an Equality Impact Assessment to confirm that the Policy remains fair, effective, and consistent with ASOIU's equality and inclusion objectives.

Each review cycle includes structured consultation with student and staff representatives to ensure the Policy remains responsive to emerging needs and evolving institutional priorities.