



**Policy on Gender Equity
2025**

Approved by	
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Policy owner	Director: Office for Inclusivity & Change
Related policies	Employment Equity Policy Staff Leave Policy (PASS and ACADEMIC) Student Pregnancy Policy
Reviewed by	HR, USAC, UHRC, USETC, IF
Final delegated authority	DVC People, Culture and Society
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STRUCTURE OF THIS POLICY DOCUMENT

Although UCT is an encompassing environment for staff and students, the application of this Policy on Gender Equity varies somewhat for each group because of different contextual factors. Students are affected more by structural issues because many of them live in residences. Staff are affected more by issues of parity and in managing and providing services to staff with respect to the Policy, the University must comply with the requirements of national employment legislation and related external entities such as the South African Revenue Service (SARS).

For this reason, this policy document is comprised of four parts:

Part A introduces the Policy and addresses operational aspects that are common to all members of the University in the same way.

It outlines the Policy's objectives and application, provides definitions of key terms that are particular to the Policy, and explicates the larger institutional vision and intention that underpins the Policy.

The operational aspects that affect staff and students in the same way are the creation of an inclusive and enabling environment for gender affirmation and gender equity through academic and research practices, the management of risk associated with travel for gender diverse staff and students, physical infrastructure, and capacity building.

Part B covers aspects that are unique to students and aspects where the application of the aspects differs for students.

Part C covers aspects that are unique to staff and aspects where the application of the aspects differs for staff.

Part D addresses the administration of the Policy.

PART A: INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICY AND OPERATIONAL PRACTICES AFFECTING STAFF AND STUDENTS IN THE SAME WAY

1. OVERARCHING VISION AND FOUNDATIONS OF THE GENDER EQUITY POLICY

The University of Cape Town (UCT)'s Gender Equity Policy seeks to foster an enabling and inclusive environment that prioritises gender parity, gender equity and gender diversity. The Gender Equity Policy is influenced by national legislation, policy frameworks, and other related internal policies.¹

This Policy is grounded in the principle of intersectionality, recognising that experiences of gender are shaped by the interconnected influences of race, class, sexuality, disability, age, culture, and other social identities. Gender equity cannot be meaningfully advanced without acknowledging how these dimensions deepen or compound barriers to equal participation and inclusion. The University therefore commits to promoting gender parity, not only in representation, but also in influence, leadership, access to opportunities, and everyday campus life. In doing so, we affirm that gender diversity strengthens our intellectual community and enriches our institutional culture. Our actions, practices, and measures must therefore respond to the complex realities of people's lives, ensuring that equity is not only an ideal, but a lived experience for all members of the University.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 To create an enabling and inclusive environment at UCT through the provision of respect for self-determination and equity.
- 2.2 To foster an inclusive environment conducive to the advancement and wellbeing of all individuals, regardless of gender expression, gender roles, or caregiving duties.
- 2.3 To adhere to the Employment Equity principles that prevent unfair discrimination and uphold progressive gender parity.
- 2.4 To outline the recourse available should there be an infringement of the Policy.

3. POLICY APPLICATION

All members of the University share in the responsibility for adhering to and enforcing this Policy. The Policy applies to all members of UCT: all staff, students and third parties. Every person associated with UCT is entitled to enjoy the fundamental right to gender parity, gender equity, and human dignity².

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **Deadnaming:** this refers to the practice of knowingly referring to a transgendered or gender diverse person by a name they used prior to transitioning or that has been used previously to identify them, such as their birth name. Deadnaming in instances where an individual has

requested to be identified with a chosen name can constitute an intentional attempt to deny, mock or invalidate a person's gender identity, which is a harmful practice.

- 4.2 **Employee:** all staff at the University, including independent contractors, outsourced staff, sub-contractors, vendors, and third-party contractors who are employed by the University and who receive, or are entitled to receive any remuneration.³
- 4.3 **Gender:** refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behaviour that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviours that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.⁴
- 4.4 **Gendered:** reflecting the experiences, prejudices, or orientations of one sex more than the other.⁵ Relating to or intended for people of a particular gender⁶ as determined or limited by gender or characterised or determined by issues or factors of gender.⁷
- 4.5 **Gender affirmation:** a term used to describe the process of affirming one's gender identity. This can be done by hormone and/or surgical treatments (physical transition) as well as social and legal aspects. This is based on the right to gender self-determination.
- 4.6 **Gender analysis:** this is an analysis that examines the differences that lead to social and economic inequity for women and marginalised groups. It is concerned with the underlying causes of these inequities and aims to achieve positive change.⁸ This analysis can be applied to policy development and service delivery. In this way, conducting a gender analysis allows for the development of interventions that address gender inequalities and meet the different needs of all people.⁹
- 4.7 **Gender binary:** a classification system consisting of two genders: male and female. A concept or belief that there are only two genders: male and female.¹⁰
- 4.8 **Gender discrimination:** is any action that specifically denies opportunities, privileges, or rewards to a person (or a group) because of gender.¹¹ In the case of transgender and gender diverse individuals, this may include intentional and repeated deadnaming and misgendering in the form of hate speech.
- 4.9 **Gender diverse:** a person whose gender identity and/or gender expression is different from or more diverse than dominant social gender norms, which often rely on patriarchal and binary assumptions of gender roles and expression. This can include, but is not limited to, gender labels such as agender, genderfluid, or non-binary.
- 4.10 **Gender harassment:** refers to a broad range of verbal and nonverbal behaviours not aimed at sexual cooperation but that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes about members of one gender.¹² For transgender and gender diverse individuals, this may include repeated use of deadnaming and/or intentional misgendering and prevention of use of a bathroom facility. Gender harassment may give rise to sexist hostility and crude harassment.¹³

- 4.11 **Gender identity:** refers to “one’s sense of oneself as male, female, or transgender”.¹⁴ When one’s gender identity and biological sex are not congruent, the individual may identify as transsexual or as another transgender category.¹⁵
- 4.12 **Gender marker:** the marker (generally 'M' or 'F', but in some countries also 'X') that may appear on a person's identity documents (e.g., birth certificate, driver's license, passport, travel or work visas, etc.).
- 4.13 **Gender-responsive:** refers to an approach, policy, or practice that actively recognises, addresses, and seeks to transform gender-based inequalities rather than simply being “neutral”.
- 4.14 **Gender self-determination:** a model for gender recognition that enables individuals to change their legal gender based on self-declaration of their gender identity without any additional medical, psychosocial, relationship status, or other requirements or reports.
- 4.15 **Ideal worker:** the ideal worker stereotype is gendered masculine such that its attributes align with the male gender role stereotype. This gendering is important because of the social roles that men and women tend to hold (Acker, 1990)¹⁶.
- 4.16 **Invited guest:** refers to an external party who is invited/hosted by UCT staff and/or students.
- 4.17 **Misgender or Misgendering:** pertains to the practice of referring to an individual using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.
- 4.18 **Staff:** any permanent or temporary employee of UCT.
- 4.19 **Student:** a registered student of the University or a person who has agreed to be bound by the rules and policies of the University relating to students.¹⁷
- 4.20 **Third Parties:** a third party is a person or contractor who requires access to one or more UCT facilities for a limited period.
- 4.21 **The University:** refers to UCT.
- 4.22 **The Policy:** refers to the Gender Equity Policy and will be referred to as such within this document as the Policy.

5. CREATION OF AN INCLUSIVE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR GENDER AFFIRMATION AND GENDER EQUITY

5.1 ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH PRACTICES

The University should provide an academic and work environment that is gender affirming and equitable for all employees and students. Staff should utilise inclusive, non-discriminatory language and, where possible, neutral language that does not reinforce patriarchal norms. Teaching content could ideally include literature that reflects gender diversity in the academic curriculum to provide a holistic reflection of society. Lastly, the University shall remain cognisant

of the need for gender-responsive knowledge and the responsibility of staff to produce knowledge that informs societal change that impacts on marginalised populations.

5.2 TRAVEL AND RISK AUDIT

Travel to countries where gender diverse staff and students are likely to be persecuted is a risk to the individual and the University. Travel to such countries must be conducted in consultation with the University Risk Committee. If travel is approved by the University Risk Office, a travel plan that includes an evacuation strategy should be provided prior to departure. The University will provide emergency support and assistance to University staff or students who are travelling to such countries on university-related approved research, conferences and academic engagements.

5.3 PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure development at UCT will aspire to provide reasonable support for all gender-identities who have family responsibilities, including but not limited to transgender and gender diverse individuals. An enabling environment that supports the advancement of women and a person's special reproductive needs relating to pregnancy, childbirth, breast-feeding and childcare will be taken into consideration. This applies to all staff and students.

- 5.3.1 All persons who are breast-feeding should be allowed to have a minimum of 30 minutes three times per day for breast-feeding or expressing milk each working day for the first six months of the child's life. Mothers need a clean, safe, comfortable and private space in order to express milk or breast-feed, including a comfortable chair and access to access to a plug point and a fridge to store expressed-milk.
- 5.3.2 In 2016, UCT adopted a gender inclusive approach which ensures that all new buildings will have a gender-neutral bathroom on each floor. In historic buildings which are subject to the Heritage Act, retrofitting of bathrooms is not always possible. In these instances, at least one bathroom in the building must be clearly and visibly set aside and designated for gender diverse staff and students. All new buildings in UCT will have four bathrooms, i.e., disability, male, female and gender-neutral bathrooms.
- 5.3.3 Where possible, baby changing facilities are to be provided in bathrooms.

5.4 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- 5.4.1 The University Communications and Marketing Office in collaboration with the Human Resource Department Staff Wellness and Student Wellness will develop a

communication plan to raise awareness and effective implementation of family, breast-feeding, parental, or caregiving rights and informal support mechanisms.

- 5.4.2 To ensure that the principles of the Policy are known to the University community, induction and training programmes will be developed for staff and students by the relevant departments.
- 5.4.3 All induction training and orientation of staff and students will include education on fundamental rights, breast-feeding, line management training to enable family-friendly arrangements, gender discrimination, and UCT social justice policies using a gender self-determination approach. Continuous education in these areas will be promoted, and all staff and students are required to familiarise themselves with relevant policies.
- 5.4.4 HR and SWS should develop guidelines for staff and students to help reduce stigma and improve understanding and support of staff, pregnant students and student-parents.

PART B: STUDENTS AND GRADUATES

6 STUDENT-RELATED OPERATIONAL PROCESSES

6.1 Administrative Documentation

- 6.1.1 University documents require the use of the individual's name and gender marker as reflected on legal identity documents. However, provisions for "preferred name", title, and gender expression may also be reflected where specified by the individual and where legally possible.
- 6.1.2 Honorific titles should also include gender-diverse titles and will be provided as an option for all members of the University to use for identification and administrative purposes.
- 6.1.3 The University will make the necessary provisions for students who wish to change their gender identity on relevant documentation and online platforms, following admission or appointment.
- 6.1.4 University student registration (and other documentation, where applicable) will reflect the gender identity options of Female, Male, Transgender and/or Gender Diverse. This is to ensure inclusivity within University processes that require gender identity classification.
- 6.1.5 Student card pronoun change is possible. All new and current students are allowed to change their honorific titles on their student cards to ones which affirm their gender. For example, a student can change from Mr to Ms and reflect this choice on PeopleSoft. The students choosing to change their titles will be allowed to choose from Miss, Ms, Mrs, Mr, Mx (gender-neutral title pronounced as 'mix'), or the blank option, which indicates no title.
- 6.1.6 Current students may make these changes via the PeopleSoft system using this guide [here](#), and should they wish this choice to reflect on their student cards, an email

requesting this change can be sent to access.control@uct.ac.za. Their request will be attended to and a new card with the photo existing in the UCT system will be issued at no cost.

- 6.1.7 For current and returning students, the biographical details entered by students through the application portal are confirmed with the proof of identification during registration.
- 6.1.8 The Student Records Office will only update a legal name change in PeopleSoft if it matches the identity document provided by the South African Department: Home Affairs (or a similar authority).

6.2 Graduation Processes and Certificates

- 6.2.1 Graduation processes are to avoid deadnaming. Students and staff are to alert the Registrar (via graduation@uct.ac.za) of their request to be named during their graduation process using a name that is different from their legal name, their name used at registration or otherwise previously at least one month prior to graduation in order to ensure that the deadname is not used. Students and staff using this facility do so with the understanding that degrees will only reflect the legal names as per the identity documentation.
- 6.2.2 A graduate's certificate is issued with their official name as per identity (ID) or passport document issued by Home Affairs (or a similar authority) **at the time of graduation**.
- 6.2.3 For graduates requesting a certificate re-issue due to name changes, Student Records will review their request individually, based on proof from a Home Affairs or a similar authority issued identity or passport document indicating the new ID number and name.
- 6.2.4 The following procedures must be followed when changing names:
 - a. Before graduation, current students can request a name change by emailing reg-records@uct.ac.za with a copy of their new ID document or passport issued by Home Affairs (or a similar authority) containing the correct information.
 - b. Returning students who have changed their identity will have their new legally recognised name on academic records, but their old UCT student number will remain unchanged due to current system limitations.
 - c. Students can change their preferred name in PeopleSoft (using this guide [here](#)), which will be reflected in their email address, but their legal name will still appear on academic records. This preferred name change can be made while waiting for the new identity document required to update the legal name.
 - d. For **UCT graduates**, it is UCT's standard policy not to re-issue certificates to graduates who change their name(s) after they have graduated. The University is only able to reprint their degrees if they have a new name and identity number issued to them by Home Affairs (or a similar authority).

7 RESIDENCES

- 7.1 All housing and accommodation facilities are required to promote an inclusive and tolerant environment for all gender identities, including transgender and gender diverse identities.
- 7.2 All housing codes, policies and administrative processes should be amended to be inclusive and make provision for transgender and gender diverse students and staff.
- 7.3 Where possible, transgender and gender diverse students and staff should be allowed to self-nominate the form of residence they would be most comfortable to be placed in. If gender diverse students have elected a gendered facility or have been placed in a mixed gender facility, provisions should be made for either mixed gender bathrooms or binary bathrooms.
- 7.4 In instances where there are no facilities with private or gender-neutral bathroom facilities within gendered facilities and no available placement within non-gendered facilities, gender sensitisation training should be made mandatory for all residents, staff and security personnel of the facility.
- 7.5 Where possible and necessary, transfer to a mixed residence should be allowed and initiated upon request to the Director of Student Housing related to gender transition (legal, social and/or physical); otherwise, disclosure of transgender or gender diverse identity without any transition will be required.

8 SPORTS AND CULTURE

At UCT Sport, all clubs operate as open clubs, meaning that any student, regardless of their identity, is welcome to join any sport club. However, competitions held by federations often have strict eligibility rules that UCT is unable to ignore or change as they are subject to national processes. Cultural activities and groups should, as far as possible, be inclusive and not bar membership and participation of any gender identity, including transgender and gender diverse identities.

9 HEALTH AND WELLBEING - STUDENTS

In offering support with regard to this Policy, the University will be cognisant of the diversity of its student and staff community. For students, the University can provide primary healthcare, gender affirming psychological services, psychosocial peer support or referral to trusted non-governmental and community-based organisations.

- 9.1 As student parents prepare for, go on and return from parental leave, guidance and support for parental leave is provided by Student Wellness.
- 9.2 Students who become pregnant during their studies are subject to the same rules as students who are not pregnant. Pregnant students may be assisted with information

about the nearest maternity health care facility for antenatal, labour and postnatal care, and should be encouraged to book for consultation with a clinical social worker at Student Wellness early in their pregnancy for psychosocial support.

- 9.3 Any additional time off required for medical reasons must meet the requirements for incapacity as per the Student Wellness guidelines and be supported by a valid medical certificate. Time off is considered as leave of absence as per University guidelines for students.

10 HEALTH AND WELLBEING - STAFF

- 10.1.1 As parents prepare for, go on and return from parental leave, guidance and support for parental leave is provided for staff by Faculty or Department Human Resources Business Practitioners and line managers. Where both parents are UCT staff, they are given the flexibility to decide how the parental leave entitlement will be shared between them.
- 10.1.2 A permanent or T2 staff member is entitled to four months' parental leave with full pay if he, she or they are giving birth and/or are the primary caregiver or adoptive parent (formerly maternity leave).
- 10.1.3 Alternatively, a permanent or T2 staff member is entitled to five days' parenting partner leave with full pay if he, she or they are the legal guardian in either a case of adoption or birth (formerly paternity leave).
- 10.2 A person giving birth or primary adoptive parent on a T1 contract is entitled to four months' unpaid parental leave.
- 10.3 Ad hoc and paid-on-claim staff are not entitled to paid or unpaid parental leave. If the pregnancy and birth fall within the period of the ad hoc contract, the contract staff member and line manager should re-negotiate the contract.
- 10.4 Any additional time off required for medical reasons must meet the requirements for incapacity as per the HR guidelines and be supported by a valid medical certificate. Time off is considered as sick leave.
- 10.5 Where both parents are UCT staff members they must declare via affidavit that they are taking parental leave for the same child(ren), and must submit their leave applications together. Alternatively, the leave entitlement (parental or adoption, plus parenting partner leave) may be shared between the two parents, taking into account the legislative requirements. Leave periods of a shared leave entitlement may overlap or run concurrently.

11 FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

Family responsibility leave is available to UCT employees (staff) to ensure that they are able to care for children and/or family members.

12 CHILD CARE

The [UCT Creche](#) currently provides approved child care facilities.

PART C: STAFF

10. STAFF-RELATED OPERATIONAL PRACTICES

12.1 Recruitment and Selection

- 12.1.1 Employment Equity measures should be compliant with UCT's Employment Equity Policy.¹⁸
- 12.1.2 Recruitment and selection processes will prioritise equal opportunity and diversity by emphasising the University's commitment to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for individuals with diverse family structures and caregiving responsibilities.
- 12.1.3 Staff Recruitment will ensure fair equity processes are adhered to when prospective staff members are recruited for positions within the University.

12.2 Administrative Documentation for Staff

- 12.2.1 University documents require the use of the individual's name and gender marker as reflected on legal identity documents. However, provisions for "preferred name", title, and gender expression may also be reflected where specified by the individual and where legally possible.
- 12.2.2 Honorific titles should also include gender-diverse titles and will be provided as an option for all members of the University to use for identification and administrative purposes.

PART D: ADMINISTRATION OF THE GENDER EQUITY POLICY

13 POLICY VIOLATIONS

Persons who experience discrimination based on their gender can report incidents of discrimination to the OIC via UCT's Case reporting tool, <https://casereporting.uct.ac.za>, or they can report directly to their line manager, or their HR business partner, or the SRC.

Informal processes such as education, capacity building and restorative justice are available through the OIC. To activate informal processes, cases must be reported via the case reporting tool.

Formal processes are available via the UCT Disciplinary Process located in the HR Department for staff and can be accessed via the Human Resource Business Partner (HRBP). For students, the Student Disciplinary Tribunal is accessible via this portal <https://uctlegalservices.powerappsportals.com/>.

14 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A Gender Equity Policy Committee will be convened to monitor the implementation of this Policy. An annual report will be submitted to the Institutional Forum in the first week of December for inclusion in the Institutional Forum report to Council. The information will also form part of the annual UCT Transformation Report.

15 POLICY REVIEW

The Policy will be reviewed every three years.

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- ¹ See detailed list under Relevant Legislation, Policies and Resources.
- ² *Education White Paper 3* (NOTICE 1196 OF 1997) states that [t]he Ministry recognises that the barriers to access are complex and that the building of human resource capacity poses the dual challenges of equity and development. The problem is broader than the redress of the apartheid legacy. In the case of women, it reflects deeply embedded sexist ideologies that cut across race and class. An enabling environment is needed which overcomes the social constraints that impede the mobility of women. These include inadequate or absent childcare facilities and inadequate maternity benefits.
- ³ University of Cape Town: Human Resources 'Academics' Union Policy' available at http://hr.uct.ac.za/employee_relations/staff_bodies/AU/, accessed on 11 February 2019.
- ⁴ Non-binary.org. Non-binary gender. Retrieved at http://nonbinary.org/wiki/Nonbinary_gender
- ⁵ Merriam-Webster 'Definition of gendered' available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gendered>, accessed on 11 February 2019.
- ⁶ MacMillan Dictionary 'Gendered- definition and synonyms' available at <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/gendered>, accessed on 11 February 2019.
- ⁷ Collins English Dictionary 'Definition of gendered' available at <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/gendered>, accessed on 11 February 2019.
- ⁸ American Psychological Association 'The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients' available at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/guidelines.aspx?item=2>, accessed on 18-20 February 2011.
- ⁹ American Psychological Association 'The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients' available at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/guidelines.aspx?item=2>, accessed on 18-20 February 2011.
- ¹⁰ American Psychological Association 'The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients' available at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/guidelines.aspx?item=2>, accessed on 18-20 February 2011.
- ¹¹ USLegal 'Gender Discriminations Law and Legal Definition' available at <http://definitions.uslegal.com/g/gender-discriminations/>, accessed on 11 February 2019.
- ¹² Louise F. Fitzgerald, Michele J. Gelfand and Fritz Drasgow 'Measuring Sexual Harassment: Theoretical and Psychometric Advances' (1995) 17(4) *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 430.
- ¹³ Louise F. Fitzgerald, Michele J. Gelfand and Fritz Drasgow 'Measuring Sexual Harassment: Theoretical and Psychometric Advances' (1995) 17(4) *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 430.
- ¹⁴ American Psychological Association 'Transgender People, Gender Identity and Gender Expression' available at <http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/transgender.aspx>, accessed on 11 February 2019.
- ¹⁵ American Psychological Association 'The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients' available at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/guidelines.aspx?item=2>, accessed on 18-20 February 2011.
- ¹⁶ Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4(2), 139–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002>
- ¹⁷ University of Cape Town 'Sexual Harassment Policy' available at http://www.uct.ac.za/downloads/uct.ac.za/about/policies/sexual_harassment_policy.pdf, accessed on 01 March 2019
- ¹⁸ University of Cape Town 'University of Cape Town: Employment Equity Policy' available at https://www.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/328/about/policies/Policy_Employment_Equity_2006.pdf, accessed on 01 March 2019

