



Co-funded by  
the European Union



Breaking Barriers...  
Building Futures...



Erasmus+ ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE-STRAND-1 Project No. 101082909

---

## Erasmus+ ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE-STRAND-1 Project No. 101082909

**Fostering Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education to stimulate  
lifelong Sustainable Learning opportunities for HEIs in India**



Breaking Barriers...  
Building Futures...

### “InEq-SL”

### Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Policy

**Project Coordinator:**



**Sarvajani University, Surat, Gujarat, India**

**In association with Partner Institutions:**

1. Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena, Spain
2. Riga Technical University, Latvia
3. Charutar Vidhya Mandal University, India
4. Ganpat University, India
5. D. Y. Patil College of Engineering & Technology, India



Universidad  
Politécnica  
de Cartagena



Ganpat  
University  
॥ धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः ॥



D Y PATIL  
COLLEGE OF  
ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY  
(AN AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTE)  
KASABA ROAD, KOLHAPUR



Erasmus+ ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE-STRAND-1 Project No. 101082909

<b>Title</b>	<b>Fostering Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education to stimulate lifelong Sustainable Learning opportunities for HEIs in India</b>
<b>Acronym</b>	InEq-SL
<b>GA Number</b>	Project No. 101082909
<b>Topic</b>	Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Policy
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://eplus-ineqsl.com/">https://eplus-ineqsl.com/</a>





## 1. Introduction:

Project InEq-SL is short for “*Fostering Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education to stimulate lifelong Sustainable Learning opportunities for HEIs in India*”. While this clearly defines the precise motive behind this significant undertaking, i.e. inclusivity and equity in higher education to promote learning that is far-reaching, immune to barriers, and sustainable in the long run, the title also outlines the spirit of this exercise through one word – “*stimulate*”. And as a project categorized under the domain of Higher Education, this stimulation can only be achieved by the teaching-learning process at its core – which gets us to developing Inclusive and Equity Policy for the partner universities. Inclusive and equity-focused policies are essential for Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to ensure fair access, participation, and success for students from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds.

### Definitions:

- **Diversity:** Representation of varied identities including race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, but not limited to.
- **Equity:** Fair access to opportunities, addressing barriers so all individuals can succeed.
- **Inclusion:** Creation of environment where all community members feel respected, welcome, and able to fully participate.

### 1.1 The Need for Diversity, Inclusivity & Equity (DEI) Policy in Indian HEIs:

Diversity, Inclusivity and Equity focused policies are essential for Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to ensure that access, participation, and success in higher education are not determined by caste, gender, disability, region, language, religion, or socio-economic background. Despite expansion in enrolments, deep structural inequalities continue to shape who enters, persists, and thrives in higher education in India.

National higher education reforms emphasize equity, flexibility, and learner-centric approaches as core principles. Inclusive policies should ensure equitable admissions, targeted financial support, and outreach to underrepresented groups. They must also promote inclusive curricula, multilingual learning resources, and accessible teaching practices. Barrier-free infrastructure, assistive technologies, safe campuses, and strong grievance redressal mechanisms are equally important. Overall, embedding equity across governance, pedagogy, infrastructure, and student support is vital for making Indian HEIs engines of social mobility and national development.



## 1.2 Why do Diversity, Inclusivity & Equity Policies Matter?

### a. Persistent Social Inequalities

Students from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), minorities, persons with disabilities, and first-generation learners face systemic barriers-financial constraints, digital divides, language disadvantages, and social exclusion-within HEIs.

### b. Access v/s Success Gap

While reservation policies have improved access, equity policies must go further to ensure **retention, academic success, and well-being** through mentoring, academic support, and inclusive campus cultures.

### c. Diversity as an Academic Strength

Inclusive campuses promote multiple perspectives, critical thinking, innovation, and socially relevant research-strengthening the overall quality and relevance of higher education.

### d. Alignment with National Vision

National frameworks and regulators such as the **University Grants Commission** and the **Ministry of Education** emphasize equity, flexibility, and inclusion as core principles of reform, including curricular multilingualism, flexible pathways, and learner-centric approaches.

## 2. University Grants Commission – Equity Policy 2025:

The UGC's Draft Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2025, released in early 2025 following Supreme Court directives, aims to end discrimination (caste, religion, gender, etc.) in Indian higher education by mandating an Equality Opportunity Centre, Equity Squads, and a 24/7 Helpline in every institution, alongside proactive measures like awareness campaigns, to create a safe, inclusive learning environment for all students, though debates continue on the draft's specifics and effectiveness against subtle digital biases and existing systemic issues.

Key pointers of the policy as per UGC:

1. The Regulations apply to **all higher educational institutions in India** and came into force upon publication in the Official Gazette.



2. They clearly define key concepts such as **discrimination, equity, harassment, victimisation, unfavourable treatment, and ragging**, covering grounds like caste, creed, religion, language, ethnicity, gender, and disability.
3. Institutions are mandated to **safeguard student interests without prejudice** and actively eliminate discrimination and harassment through preventive, protective, and punitive measures.
4. Special emphasis is placed on protecting **Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)** students from discrimination in **admissions, fee demands, document retention, enrolment benefits, and academic treatment**.
5. The Regulations prohibit discriminatory practices in **classrooms, laboratories, libraries, hostels, sports facilities, cultural activities, and evaluation/examinations**.
6. Institutions must ensure **fair evaluation, timely declaration of results, and equal access to fellowships and financial support**.
7. Every institution is required to establish an **Equal Opportunity Cell** and appoint an **Anti-Discrimination Officer** (senior academic rank specified).
8. Institutions must create a **transparent complaint redressal mechanism**, decide complaints within **60 days**, and raise awareness about equality and constitutional protections.
9. Acts of discrimination or harassment attract **punishments proportionate to the offence**, applicable to students, teachers, and non-teaching staff through institutional procedures.
10. The Regulations provide a **right to appeal** against decisions of the Anti-Discrimination Officer within **90 days**, ensuring procedural fairness.

**In essence**, these Regulations form a comprehensive legal framework to promote inclusion, dignity, and equal opportunity for all students in Indian higher education.

The project aims to develop Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity policy for better implementation of project results and outcomes in Indian Partner universities. UGC's equity policy has laid a methodology for the report.

### 3. Objectives:

- The **Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy** is to set out the University's commitment to an inclusive and supportive environment for Students, Staff, Contractors, Consultants, Trainees, Retainers, Vendors, and Visitors that is free from discrimination, where all can participate, and everyone has the opportunity to explore their potential.



- Equally, the Policy sets out the University's expectations, where each member of the University community has a responsibility to adhere and uphold the Policy.
- To create a truly inclusive work environment, bringing self-awareness to leaders on diverse teams and foster a safe environment where everyone feels heard, respected, and valued.
- The University is committed to provide equal opportunity to all and attract a diverse and effective workforce with a wide range of abilities, experiences and skills based on the University's core values which are strongly aligned with society, humanity, and social justice.

#### 4. Scope:

This policy outlines the principles that support the University to embed equality, diversity and inclusion across all areas of its work. It enables staff, students and other relevant parties to understand their rights and responsibilities and to assist the University in promoting equity of opportunity, diversity and preventing discrimination. The policy assists the University in carrying out the duties towards staff and students.

### Principles

#### A) Fair Treatment

- No discrimination or harassment based on protected characteristics (e.g., gender, caste, disability, religion, sexual orientation, age).
- Policies should align with national and international human rights principles.

#### B) Equal Opportunity

- Ensure equal access to **hiring, promotions, admissions, scholarships, internships, mentoring, and leadership opportunities.**

#### C) Inclusive Environment

- Promote respect, dignity, and belonging across campus.
- Develop curriculums and programs that reflect diverse perspectives.

The University is committed to promoting equity, diversity and preventing discrimination for all. It acts to identify and address inequalities in respect of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We are also committed to equity of opportunity for students and staff who are experienced and/or from a background of socio- economic.



**The policy is relevant to all members of the University community, including:**

- All members of staff including those with full-time, part-time and contracts, honorary staff, and staff from other institutions or organizations on placement, or working on a visiting basis at all the institutions of the university.
- All students, including exchange and placement students and those applying to study in university.
- Visitors, including individuals using the University's premises.
- Individuals working or acting on the University's behalf, including suppliers of goods and services.

## 5. Guidelines of the Policy:

- a) The University aims to foster the development of an inclusive culture throughout the institution and overcome barriers to equity by building capability across its students, faculty and staff.
- b) The University shall listen to different communities with a learning mindset and help them build a world that is safer and more inclusive.
- c) The University shall prioritize equity, diversity, inclusion and form the foundation of the University's Strategic Plan at all levels.
- d) The University shall adopt flexible approaches to ensure that the voices of the stakeholders are considered appropriate.
- e) The University shall ensure that everyone has fair opportunity to grow and develop their skills and knowledge to ensure a diverse talent pipeline at all levels.
- f) The University shall provide a working and academic environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and is free from any form of inappropriate behavior. The employees shall be encouraged to give their best. **'Dignity at Work'** underwrites creating and sustaining a productive working environment for all staff members, where discrimination or harassment does not occur and is known to be unacceptable.
  - i. Similarly, students shall be treated with **'Dignity'** during the academic and/or administrative processes without any biased approach and irrespective of their age, race, religion or belief, gender, disability, socio-cultural inclination, economic status and sexual orientation.
- g) The University shall facilitate a conducive working pattern for all the employees and staff; at the same time expects all staff members to provide a conducive academic pattern to the students.



- h) Employment practices in the University shall be based on merit, qualifications, and competencies suitable to the given role; and not be influenced or affected by an applicant's or employee's gender, caste, religion, age (within statutory limits), marital status, nationality, ancestry, ethnicity, geographical origin, sexual orientation, disability, proximity to another employee, or any other trait protected by law.
- i) The University shall not tolerate any form of bias or discrimination against any employee or student, by virtue of any above indicated trait.
- j) Existing employees may provide references in recruitment; however, no candidate shall be given any preference as hiring decisions are solely based on merit.
- k) The University shall value everyone and be empathetic, fair, respectful, and inclusive. This is held for students and employees, participants in, or contributors to our work, irrespective of background, characteristics, or attributes.
- l) Any employee found to be involved in unlawful discrimination during the hiring, behavioral, academic or administrative process shall be liable to disciplinary action.
- m) Admission to the University is open for all students on a non-discriminatory basis regarding race, colour, national origin, creed, sex, ethnicity, behavior, age, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.
- n) Academic support and other financial resources such as potential scholarships for students/staff facing financial difficulties or lack of financial support from their families decided on a merit's basis.
- o) The University shall adopt inclusive academic practices like adoption of Universal Design for Learning principles, flexible modes of instruction and assessment, academic monitoring, sensitization of faculty members and provide holistic support system addressing academic and emotional needs of disadvantaged students.
- p) The University shall maintain barrier free physical infrastructure, digital platforms, clear signage and navigation aids, safe & inclusive facilities for all genders.

## 6. Responsibilities

### 6.1 All University students, staff, Contractors, and Vendors have equality-related responsibilities.

#### The University is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the University meets its legal obligations relating to inclusivity and equity.



- Ensuring that inclusivity and equity analysis is carried out on all senior level, proposed policies and decisions where appropriate.

**a. Dean/Directors are responsible for:**

- i. Ensuring that procedures relating to staff recruitment, selection, career development, discipline and grievance are carried out in accordance with the statutory duties to promote inclusivity and equity to eliminate discrimination.
- ii. Fostering a culture in which inclusivity, equity and diversity considerations are embedded into their work areas for employees and academic areas for the students.
- iii. Ensuring that staff and students are encouraged and enabled to reach their full potential.

**b. Office of the University is responsible for:**

- i. Supporting Deans/ Principals/ Directors in ensuring that procedures relating to staff recruitment, selection, career development, discipline and grievance are carried out in accordance with the statutory duties to promote equality and eliminate discrimination.
- ii. Supporting students to avail information about all the benefits offered by the institution/ university/ government, processes to avail the benefits and raise the grievances if needed, dealing with the grievances without any biased approach.
- iii. Regular and continued gender sensitization training for all the employees from time to time for updating policy and its awareness.
- iv. Conducting diversity audit and collecting disaggregated data on access retention and success.

**c. Students are responsible for:**

- i. Upholding the principles of this policy.
- ii. Contributing to a safe and inclusive environment that celebrates diversity.
- iii. Upholding and implementing the aims of this policy.
- iv. Promoting equality of opportunity.

Contributing to a safe and inclusive environment that celebrates diversity.

## **7. Breach of policy:**

The University shall take seriously any instances of non-adherence to the Policy by students, staff, contractors, or visitors. Any instances of non-adherence will be investigated with the intent of resolving matters. Where appropriate, such instances may be considered under the relevant disciplinary policy and procedures.



## 7.1 Complaint Procedure:

The University is committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for all students, faculty, staff, and visitors. This commitment is grounded in the university's core values and is integral to achieving academic excellence and personal growth. To ensure these values are upheld, the University has established a comprehensive complaint procedure to address any concerns or violations related to diversity, equality, and inclusion.

## 7.2 Scope:

The DEI complaint procedure applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It covers complaints related to discrimination, harassment, and any form of unfair treatment based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, or any other characteristic protected by law.

## 7.3 Complaint Procedure

### 7.3.1 Initial Steps and Informal Resolution:

- **Identification and Reporting:** Any member of the university community who experiences or witnesses' behavior that violates the DEI policy is encouraged to report the incident promptly. Reports can be made in person, via email, or through the university's online reporting system.
- **Informal Resolution:** In some cases, issues can be resolved informally. This may involve a mediated discussion between the parties involved, facilitated by a designated university official. Informal resolution aims to address the concern quickly and amicably, without the need for formal investigation.
- **Investigation:**
  - Appointment of an Investigator: If the complaint proceeds, an unbiased investigator will be appointed. This individual may be a member of the DEI office or an external expert, depending on the nature and complexity of the case.
  - Investigation Process: The investigator will conduct a thorough investigation, which includes interviewing the complainant, the respondent, and any witnesses. The investigator will also review relevant documents, emails, and other evidence.
  - Confidentiality: Throughout the process, confidentiality will be maintained to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation.



- **Findings and Resolution:**

Investigation Report: Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator will prepare a report outlining the findings and conclusions. This report will be submitted to the DEI office and relevant university authorities.

Decision and Actions: Based on the investigation report, the university will determine whether a violation of the DEI policy occurred. If so, appropriate corrective actions will be taken. These actions may include disciplinary measures, policy changes, or additional training and education.

Communication of Outcome: The complainant and the respondent will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and any actions taken. Both parties will have the opportunity to request a review of the decision if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

- **Appeals Process:**

Grounds for Appeal: Either party may appeal the decision on specific grounds, such as procedural errors, new evidence, or perceived bias in the investigation.

Appeal Submission: Appeals must be submitted in writing within ten business days of receiving the decision. The appeal should clearly state the grounds for the appeal and provide any supporting documentation.

Review of Appeal: An appeal review committee, independent of the initial investigation, will review the appeal. This committee will assess the merits of the appeal and determine whether the original decision should be upheld, modified, or overturned.

- **Support and Resources:**

Support Services: The University provides support services for individuals involved in the complaint process, including counselling, academic support, and advisory services. These services are available to both complainants and respondents.

Training and Education: Ongoing training and education programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion are offered to all university members to promote a respectful and inclusive campus culture.

**Conclusion:** The University's DEI complaint procedure is designed to ensure that all concerns related to diversity, equality, and inclusion are addressed promptly, fairly, and effectively. By adhering to this procedure, the university aims to uphold its commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.



## 8. Non-discriminatory admissions policy:

The university maintains a clear and transparent admissions policy that ensures equal opportunity for all applicants, irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background. The admissions process is designed to assess each applicant on their individual merits, focusing on academic qualifications, personal achievements, and potential, without bias or prejudice. Certain principles of the Policy are as:

**8.1 Equal Opportunity and Fair Treatment:** The admissions policy strictly adheres to principles of fairness, providing all applicants an equal chance based on their academic credentials and other relevant criteria. Selection criteria are uniformly applied to avoid any form of discrimination.

**8.2 Merit-Based Admissions:** Admissions decisions are primarily based on the academic and personal accomplishments of the candidates. The set system ensures that all applicants are evaluated objectively, with no favoritism shown towards any group, ensuring the process is merit-driven.

**8.3 Support for Diversity:** The University is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment. Therefore, while the admissions policy is non-discriminatory, it incorporates positive discrimination or affirmative action measures in some cases, which are designed to enhance the representation of historically underrepresented or disadvantaged groups, such as:

- Ethnic Minorities
- Low-Income Students
- Women
- LGBT+ Students
- Disabled Students
- Non-Traditional Students
- Newly Settled Refugee Students

These measures are part of a broader commitment to creating a balanced and equitable student body, acknowledging that certain groups may face structural barriers to higher education.

### 8.4 Positive Discrimination Policies:

University applies positive discrimination or affirmative action in admissions. These policies are designed to:

- a) Ensure increased access for underrepresented groups.
- b) Correct historical imbalances by offering additional support, scholarships, or reserved seats to those from disadvantaged backgrounds.



- c) Promote a diverse academic environment that enhances the learning experience for all students.
- **Rationale for Positive Discrimination:** The logic behind these positive measures is grounded in the belief that diversity in education enriches the academic community and helps break down barriers faced by marginalized groups. These policies are carefully designed to not disadvantage any group, but to create equal starting points for all applicants.
  - **Monitoring and Transparency:** To ensure compliance with non-discriminatory principles, the admissions process is regularly audited, and detailed records are maintained. Feedback from applicants and periodic reviews of admission outcomes help the university adjust its policies and ensure they remain fair and equitable for all. This approach emphasizes that while the university's policy is fundamentally non-discriminatory, any positive discrimination measures are logically explained and justified to enhance inclusivity and equity. The policy shall be reviewed and revised from time to time.

**9. Amendment of Policy:** The University reserves the right to amend, abrogate, modify, revise, or withdraw any or all clauses of this policy depending upon any exigency. Any deviations to the above points should be signed off by the committee of the Principal/ Dean/ Registrar/ Provost/ Vice Chancellor.

**10. Interpretation of Policy:** The Office of University is the final authority to any interpretation of this policy.