

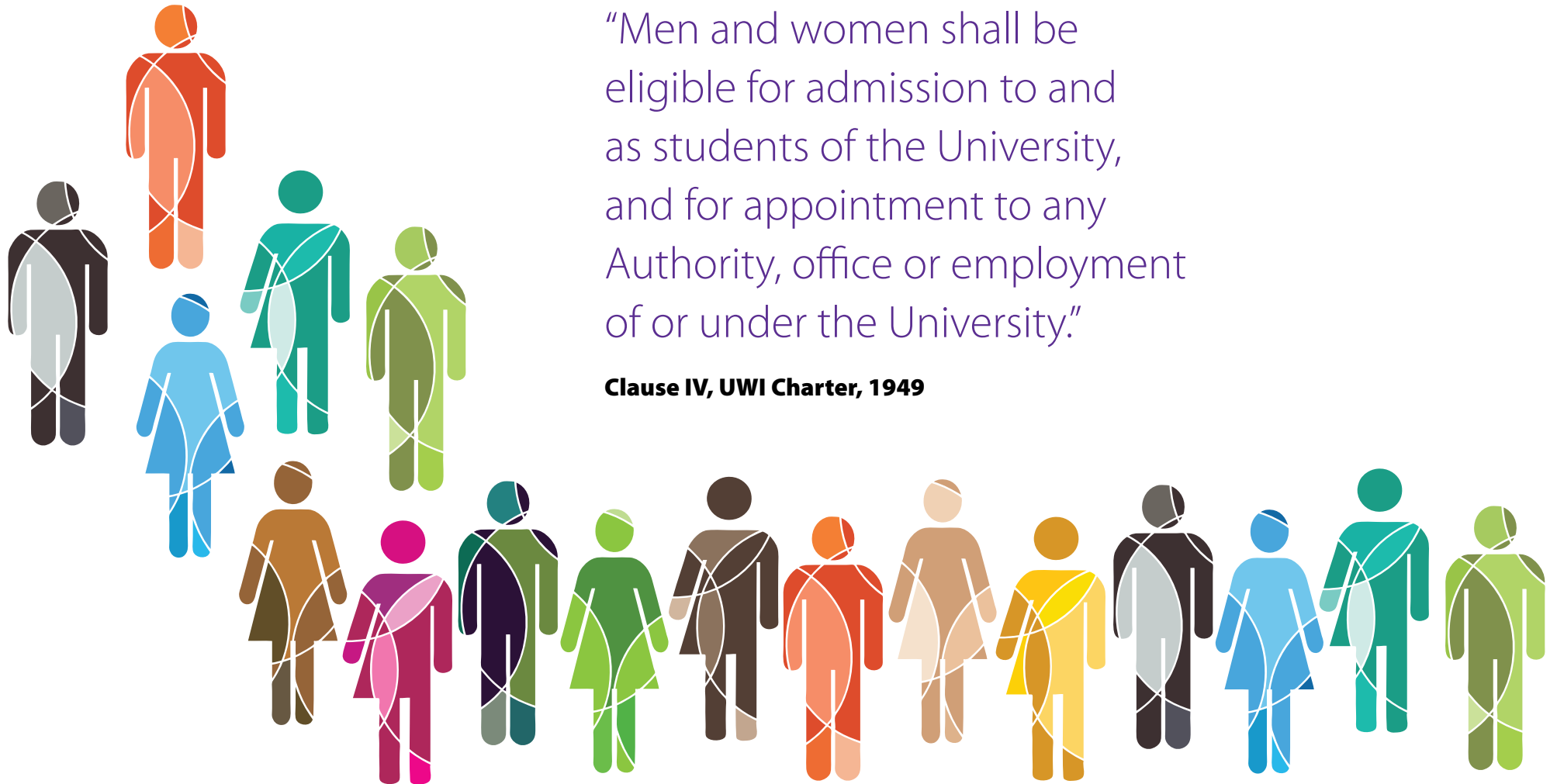


THE UNIVERSITY
OF THE
WEST INDIES

Gender Policy

*An Activist University
Promoting Gender Justice for All*





“Men and women shall be eligible for admission to and as students of the University, and for appointment to any Authority, office or employment of or under the University.”

Clause IV, UWI Charter, 1949

Introduction

According to Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, **“A university generally reflects the societal norms, and is indeed a microcosm of the society in which it exists. It is imperative, therefore, that at The UWI we make deliberate and transformative progress with regard to gender, gender diversity and social inclusion, not just honouring, but celebrating the human rights of all in our midst.”**

Gender mainstreaming, grounded in the principle of gender justice, is a necessary part of imagining and enacting new societal possibilities and finding fresh ways of thinking through the old challenges of social injustice. It must be reflected in the University’s structure, systems, policies and programmes.

The UWI’s commitment to gender mainstreaming, gender equality and gender justice is articulated in its Gender Policy (referred to as the Policy).

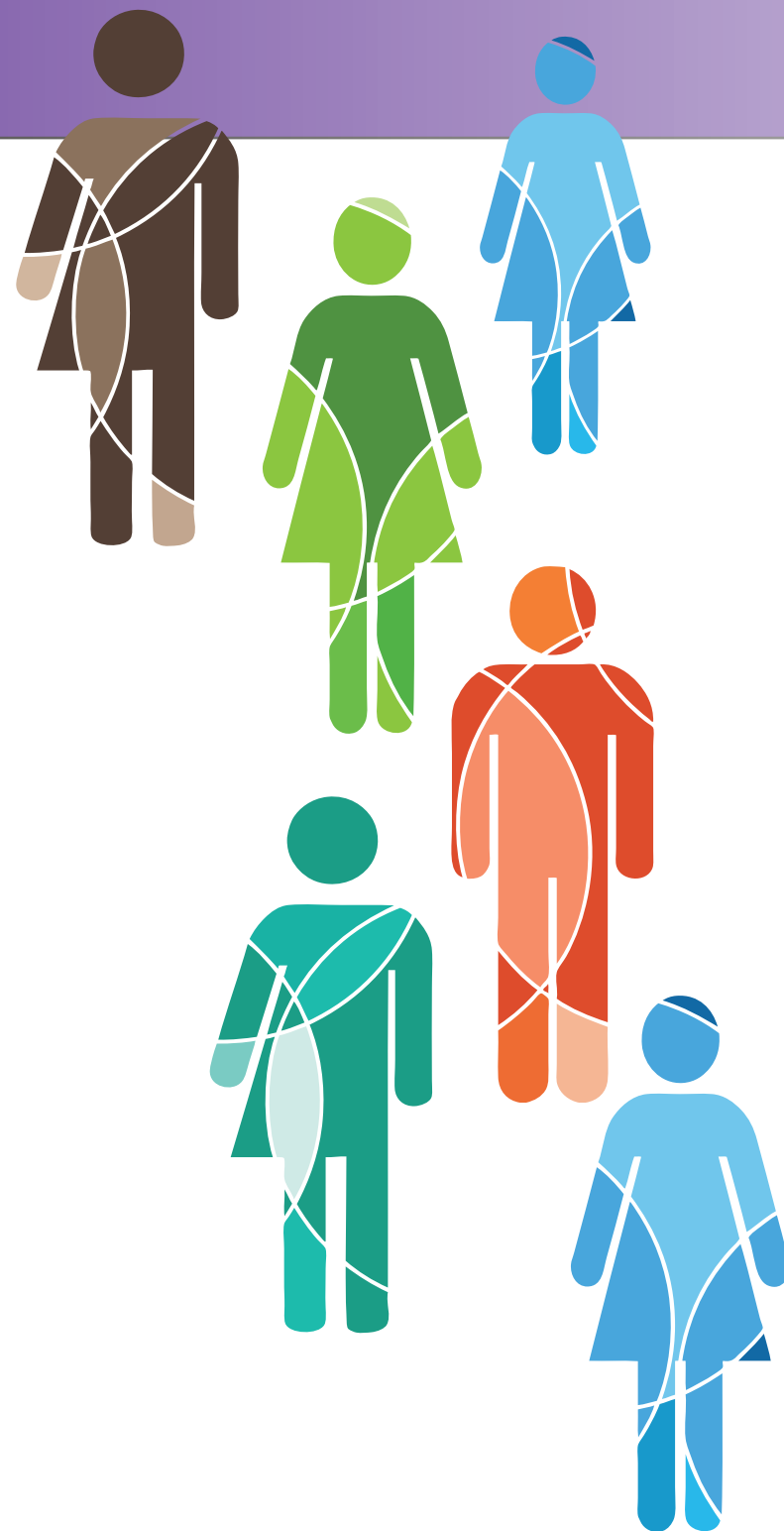
The Policy meets the mandate outlined in the 2012–2017 Strategic Plan “to develop a gender policy for The UWI to create a supportive environment for both men and women in all aspects of university life”. It was approved by the University Finance and General Purposes Committee on June 2, 2017, at Cave Hill, Barbados.

Gender: Always an Important Issue for The UWI

The UWI has historically concerned itself with issues of gender justice. In the Report of the West Indies Committee of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, (The Irvine Committee Report of June 1945), the founders of The UWI included the recommendation that the University College of the West Indies (the predecessor of The UWI) “should be open to women on precisely the same terms and conditions as are applicable to men. Similarly, no restriction should be imposed on grounds of race or creed...”

It was believed that with greater access to education, “the influence of women, valuable in itself and perhaps especially requisite for the solution of the difficult social problems of the West Indies, would make itself felt.”

In the 70 years since its establishment, The UWI has made commendable strides towards mainstreaming gender into its operations and procedures. The Centre for Gender and Development Studies, which emerged from the advocacy work of the University-wide Women’s Studies Groups, is now an independent inter-disciplinary institute. This is evidence that the University understands the necessity to challenge patriarchal systems that allow privileges to some but deny it to others.



Why a UWI Gender Policy?

As an *activist university*, The UWI is the first tertiary learning institution in the English-speaking Caribbean to develop and operationalise such a policy. The UWI expects that the Policy will place it ahead of its counterparts in engaging in advocacy and producing transformative policy for social change.

The development of the Policy will ensure that The UWI is

- operating within best practices for tertiary institutions, where justice is promoted and championed at all levels; and that all systems of governance, official documents, policies, procedures, curriculum development and pedagogy are gender-sensitive
- aligned to and compliant with international, regional and national protocols including to promote gender justice, which all Caribbean countries have ratified

Policy Context

The UWI Gender Policy was developed within the context of several international, regional and national frameworks, including the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979); and the CARICOM Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2003).

What is the purpose of the Policy?

The Policy is intended to help The UWI to ensure gender equity in all University practices, policies, procedures and programmes.

The UWI will develop and implement strategies to address existing and potential disparities, and to offer alternatives to practices that may reinforce gender prejudice, stereotyping, harassment, gender-based violence and discrimination.

This will positively impact the sustainability of the institution and its stakeholders; and ultimately benefit the Caribbean region and its diasporas.

The UWI Gender Policy



Vision

The UWI Gender Policy affirms for all the staff, students and other stakeholders of The University of the West Indies the fundamental principles of gender equality, gender diversity and non-discrimination based on gender and sexuality in all of the policies, programmes, practices and structures of the University and in its external relationships in the Caribbean region and beyond.

Mission

The UWI Gender Policy will support the integration of gender equality, gender diversity and non-discrimination in all structures and functions of The UWI's organisational environment, affording equal opportunities for staff, students and all other stakeholders irrespective of gender identity or diversity, sexual orientation and producing gender-sensitive graduates that are fully equipped to contribute to a just and equitable society throughout the Caribbean region and globally.

How The UWI Gender Policy Will Work?

The Policy

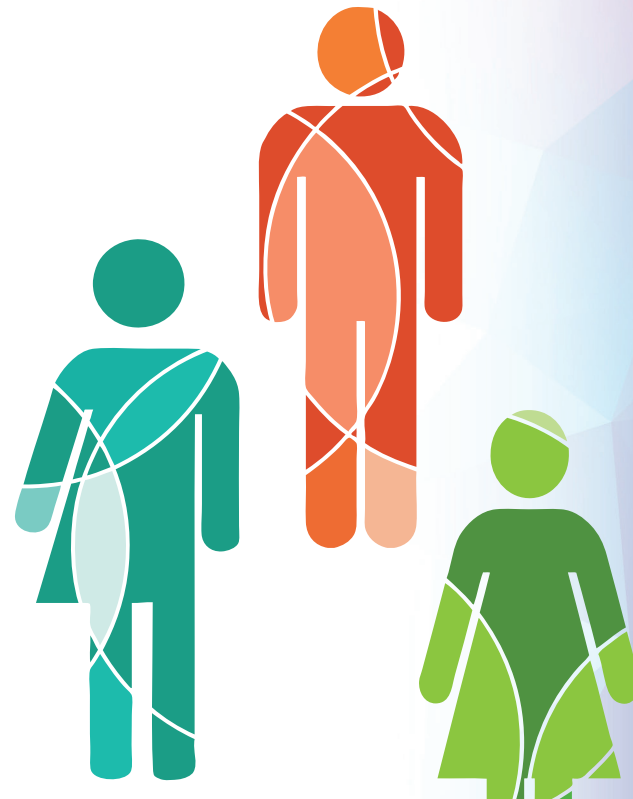
- articulates core principles
- proposes gender-related issues to be addressed
- identifies gender mainstreaming strategies, including advocacy, to produce graduates and engage staff who are socially conscious and committed to social justice

The Policy will inform changes required within the University's structures, policies, programmes and practices to promote and facilitate gender justice, and to address the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination.

This relates to internal and external stakeholders, including all students; employees; persons under independent service arrangements; persons who provide academic services to the University; contractual agreements; service arrangements; and interaction with members of the public.

Addressing Gender Imbalances

This is an opportune time for the Policy, as social issues and patriarchal concepts continue to threaten gender justice. For example, while women outnumber men in many areas within the University, including student enrolment and staffing, access to positions of executive leadership by women, whether in academia or administration, is still disproportionately low.



The UWI Gender Policy

The Policy will serve as a template for

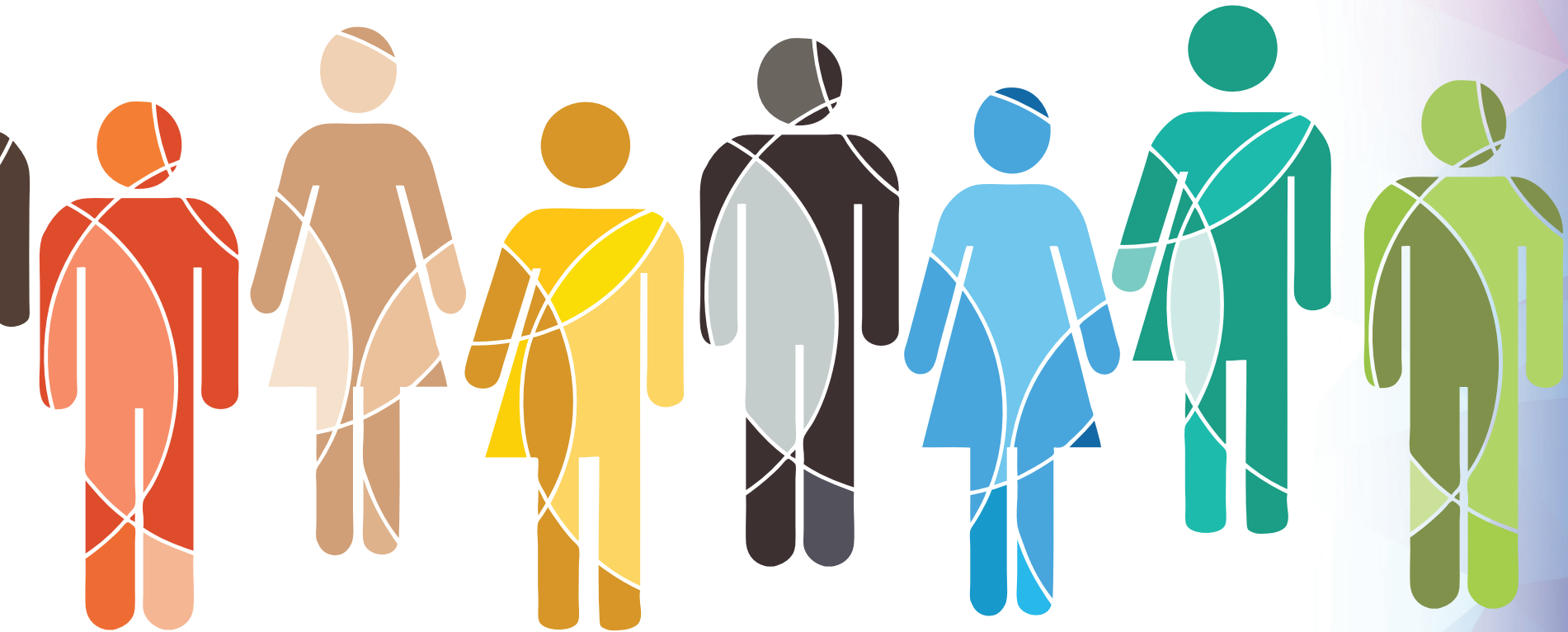
- promoting gender planning and mainstreaming, maintaining an awareness of gender as a key organising feature of the University's personal, social and institutional relations
- protecting human rights, guiding The UWI in recognising the rights and responsibilities of all persons, irrespective of categories of difference including but not limited to sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, ability/disability, religion, age, socio-economic status, nationality or place of origin
- helping The UWI to shape a culture of gender justice through the development and engagement of gender-aware citizens committed to promoting sustainable and inclusive development



Guiding Principles for the Policy

The Policy presents an opportunity to create a deeper gender consciousness among all the University's stakeholders. It must be supported by the following principles

- leadership and political will
- non-discrimination and an appreciation of diversity
- personal responsibility and accountability
- collaboration and partnership development



Strategic Objectives of the Policy

The strategic objectives outlined below have been identified as areas for intervention:

- **The curriculum:** To take the necessary steps to ensure that the University's curricula acknowledge and promote gender equality and gender justice
- **Student enrolment, retention and performance:** To examine and address underrepresentation of male and female students in programmes, particularly those linked to growing sectors of the economy or which are key to regional development
- **Human resource management:** To examine and address disparities in staff recruitment, training, promotion and recognition at all levels, across all categories of staff, with a focus on the recruitment, retention and promotion of qualified members of staff, irrespective of categories of difference including sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, ability/disability, religion, age, socio-economic status, nationality or place of origin
- **Participation, leadership and decision-making:** To facilitate and increase participation by women in positions of leadership and decision-making, towards more egalitarian and equitable arrangements
- **Organisational culture, custom and practice:** To identify and address systemic biases in organisational culture
- **Finance and resource management:** To mobilize human, technical and financial resources to complete gender mainstreaming activities
- **Staff and student well-being:** To commit to monitoring and investing in the well-being of all staff and students

- **Safe and secure environment:** To foster a secure environment where students and staff feel protected and safe from any form of violence resulting from their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or gender identity expression
- **Gender and the built environment:** To address gender-related issues that impact, or are impacted by, the University's living, working and learning environments
- **Research and development:** To encourage and support research and innovation that acknowledges, supports and promotes gender justice
- **Gender-aware marketing and communications:** To ensure that marketing and communications policies, programmes and materials are explicit in their support of gender justice
- **Creation of a Gender Task Force for each campus:** To establish on each campus a Gender Task Force that will report to the University's Gender Mainstreaming Committee on relevant issues
- **Language:** To examine and, where necessary, change any sexist language contained within ordinances, rules, regulations, policy documents and curricula



Implementation and Accountability

Responsibility for ensuring the implementation of The UWI Gender Policy rests with the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, through The UWI Gender Mainstreaming Committee (GMC).

The University Council will also have a key role to play in actively championing the Policy, advocating for the adherence of its mission and vision, and providing leadership consistent with best-practice principles of gender mainstreaming and gender justice.

The Gender Mainstreaming Committee, with expert advice from the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), will be established centrally and will be expected to

- champion gender justice across the University, and engage in University-wide activities intended to positively shape attitudes towards gender justice

- advocate for and drive the gender-mainstreaming processes of the Policy
- complete research in relation to issues of gender across the University
- develop terms of reference for the establishment of Campus Gender Action Plans in collaboration with respective campus registrars and gender task forces
- work with the Gender Task Force on each campus towards the implementation of the Policy
- receive and address complaints in relation to non-compliance

Composition of the Gender Mainstreaming Committee (GMC)

The GMC will be comprised of:

- a Chairperson, to be appointed by the Vice-Chancellor
- the University Registrar
- external experts, who will assume responsibilities for the development of the monitoring and evaluation framework for the Policy:
 - gender mainstreaming expert
 - monitoring and evaluation expert
 - heads of the Campus Gender Task Force, to be appointed by the respective campus registrars
 - one representative from the Guild of Students
 - one representative from the IGDS, appointed by the IGDS University Director

Roles and Responsibilities for Operationalisation

All staff, students and other stakeholders within the University, and all those associated with the University, have a responsibility to adhere to the Policy and to apply its tenets in their day-to-day activities and in all dealings with, or on behalf of the institution. These responsibilities are established in detail within the Plan.



Institutional and Legal Frameworks

The successful implementation of the Policy demands a collaborative approach across various offices with the University. The Policy will be operationalised through existing structures and frameworks at The UWI, as well as by way of new structures, created for the explicit purpose of meeting its objectives.

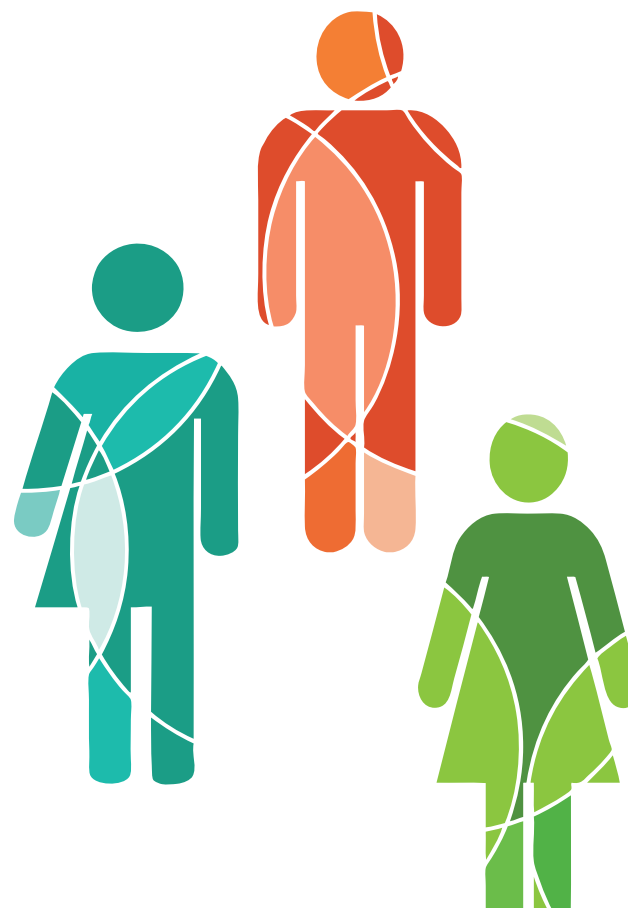
Monitoring and Evaluation

The Policy will be monitored and evaluated every three years by a monitoring and evaluation expert appointed by Vice-Chancellor. The Gender Mainstreaming Committee will monitor the progress of the Policy based on campus gender mainstreaming action plans.

Effective monitoring and evaluation of progress to gender equality and justice will depend on all staff, students and stakeholders approaching data collection, analysis and reporting with a focus on gender as a key organising feature of institutional and social relations.

A Beacon of Light

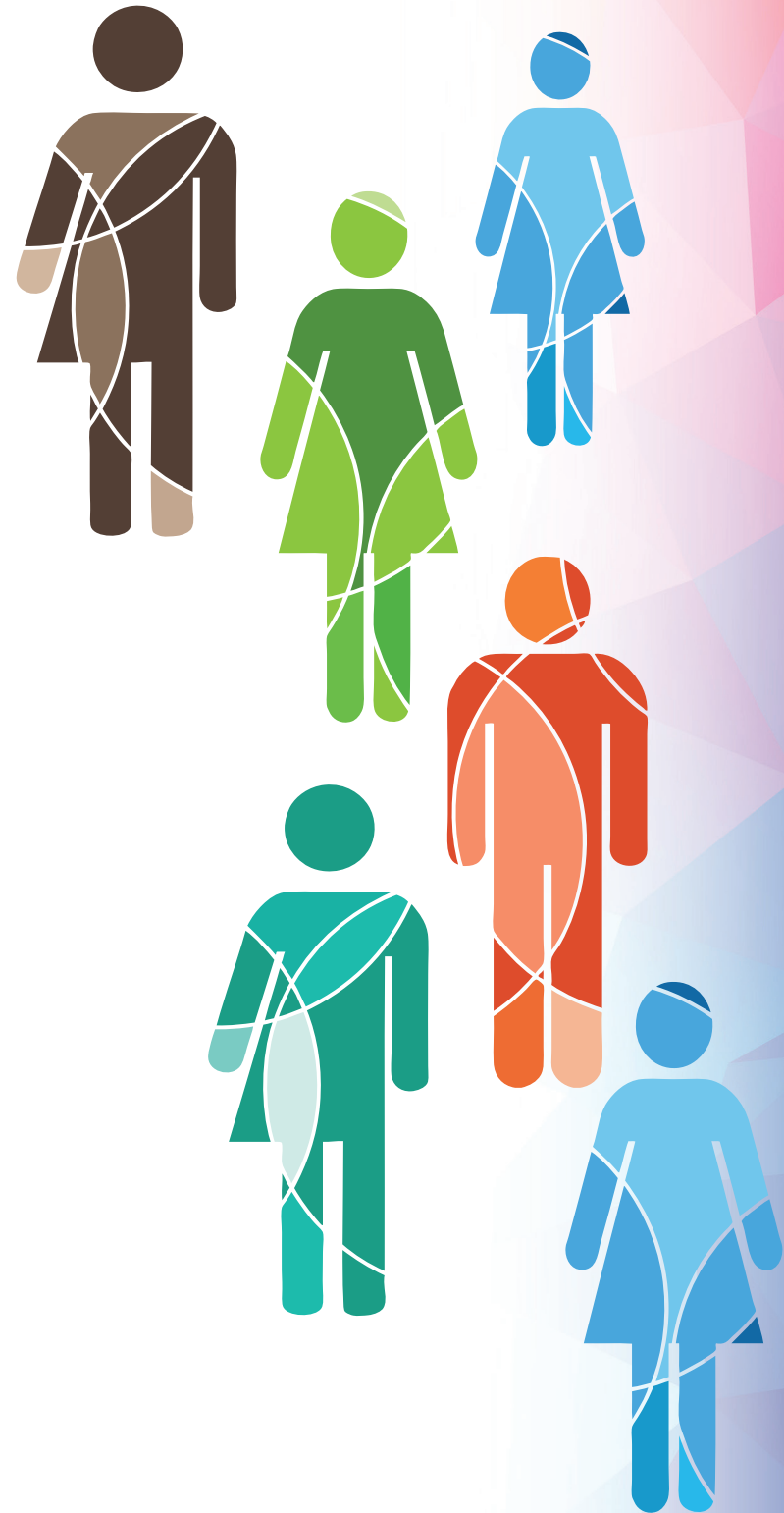
In introducing and implementing The UWI Gender Policy to staff, students, partners and other stakeholders, the University makes the commitment to be a beacon, lighting a path of progress in relation to gender issues throughout the Caribbean region.



Acknowledgments

The UWI is grateful to the IGDS for its stewardship and commitment to the delivery of this Policy. The draft UWI Gender Policy was completed by former Director of The UWI IGDS Regional Coordinating Office, Professor Verene A. Shepherd and a working group spearheaded by her. Current University Director at The UWI IGDS, Professor Opal Adisa will lead its implementation along with a Gender Mainstreaming Committee responsible for championing gender justice across The UWI, and leading the activities intended to positively shape attitudes towards gender justice.

Access the complete UWI Gender Policy at
www.uwi.edu/genderpolicy





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