CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY

EMPLOYMENT POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

1. PREAMBLE

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) recognises that equal opportunity and non-discrimination are fundamental conditions for maintaining a fair, inclusive, productive, and harmonious academic and work environment across all its campuses.

The University is committed to fostering an institutional community in which all employees and applicants for employment are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, ensuring that decisions regarding recruitment, placement, training, promotion, compensation, and general working conditions are based solely on individual merit, qualifications, performance, and operational requirements.

This Policy establishes the University's institutional commitment to preventing and eliminating all forms of unfair discrimination, workplace harassment, victimization, and bias within its employment structures.

The Policy is intended to operate consistently with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 42), the Labour Act, national human rights legislation, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, the University's enabling statutes, regulations, conditions of service, and applicable international labor standards.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- prohibit all forms of unfair discrimination in employment decisions across the University;
- guarantee equal opportunity in recruitment, hiring, placement, training, career development, promotion, and retention;
- protect employees and applicants from harassment, intimidation, victimization, or improper bias based on protected characteristics;
- provide reasonable accommodations for qualified employees and applicants with disabilities;
- ensure that personnel policies, administrative practices, and terms of service are applied consistently and equitably;
- establish accessible, transparent, and fair institutional mechanisms for investigating and resolving discrimination grievances; and
- promoter a culture of inclusivity, mutual respect, professional equity, and institutional excellence.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies across all campuses, faculties, directorates, research institutes, and operational units of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, and covers:

- all academic staff, including senior academic leaders, professors, lecturers, and research staff;
- administrative, technical, and professional staff across all cadres;
- junior staff, maintenance personnel, and support staff;
- temporary, part-time, seasonal, visiting, and contract employees;
- applicants for employment, trainees, interns, and external job candidates; and
- third-party contractors, vendors, and service providers operating within University properties where their employment interaction with the University community is concerned.

Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted as authorising unlawful conduct, academic misconduct, unprofessional performance, or violation of established University disciplinary regulations and statutory laws.

4. PRINCIPLES OF NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

4.1 Protection Against Unfair Discrimination

The University prohibits direct or indirect discrimination against any employee or applicant on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, race, state of origin, local government of origin, religion, belief, age, marital status, pregnancy, family status, disability, health status, or political affiliation.

4.2 Merit-Based Employment Decisions

All employment actions—including recruitment, shortlisting, selection, appointment, job assignment, performance evaluation, salary placement, promotion, tenure, and training opportunities—shall be conducted strictly on the basis of job-related qualifications, competence, experience, and documented performance.

4.3 Equal Opportunity for Senior and Junior Cadres

The principles of non-discrimination apply equally across all academic, administrative, and technical cadres. Junior staff and early-career personnel shall enjoy equal protection against improper bias, intimidation, or arbitrary administrative action in their career progression.

5. PROTECTION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The University shall actively ensure that qualified individuals with disabilities are afforded equal opportunity in recruitment, placement, and career advancement. Management shall make reasonable workplace accommodations—including physical accessibility enhancements, adaptive equipment, and flexible work adjustments—where such accommodations do not impose undue operational hardship on the University.

6. PREVENTION OF WORKPLACE HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

The University strictly prohibits workplace harassment, offensive conduct, or bullying linked to protected personal characteristics. Harassment includes unwelcome verbal, non-verbal, visual, or physical behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile, or humiliating work environment. Such conduct shall constitute serious misconduct subject to disciplinary action.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES AND SUPERVISORS

Members of the University community exercising supervisory or administrative authority shall:

a. act impartially, objectively, and professionally in all employment assessments and actions;

b. treat all colleagues, subordinates, and applicants with fairness and professional respect;

c. prevent discriminatory practices, bias, or favoritism within their respective units;

d. report observed or reported incidents of workplace discrimination through approved administrative channels; and

e. participate constructively in institutional anti-discrimination and equal opportunity initiatives.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

The University Management shall:

a. communicate its commitment to non-discrimination and equal opportunity across all campuses;

b. ensure that University recruitment, promotion, and staff welfare guidelines conform to this Policy;

c. provide accessible channels for reporting discrimination, harassment, and workplace bias;

d. conduct prompt, thorough, confidential, and impartial investigations into all complaints of discrimination;

e. implement appropriate corrective, remedial, or disciplinary measures where violations are substantiated; and

f. protect complainants, witnesses, and panel members from victimization or retaliation.

9. GRIEVANCE REDRESS AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

Any employee or applicant who believes they have been subjected to unfair discrimination, workplace harassment, or retaliation may lodge a formal complaint with the Vice-Chancellor or through the University's established grievance procedures.

Complaints shall be handled with due regard for confidentiality, natural justice, procedural fairness, and the statutory rights of all parties. Where an allegation concerns an administrative head or officer ordinarily responsible for handling complaints, an appropriate alternative reporting route shall be designated.

10. GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

The University shall designate an existing committee or establish an **Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Committee** to:

a. monitor the implementation and institutional effectiveness of this Policy;

b. review institutional data regarding recruitment, promotion, and workplace diversity trends;

c. examine systemic issues or administrative concerns relating to employment equity;

d. recommend policy refinements, awareness programs, and equity guidelines to Management; and

e. submit periodic reports on equal opportunity compliance to the Vice-Chancellor and Governing Council.

11. PUBLICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

This Policy shall be published on the official University website and intranet, and shall be communicated to all staff and newly recruited personnel. The University shall maintain an official policy record indicating approval authority, effective date, and review schedules.

12. REVIEW AND REVISION

This Policy shall be formally reviewed at least once every three years or earlier if required by changes in national law, judicial precedent, statutory regulations, or University governance directives. Each review shall be documented and approved through official channels.



Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, Fnipr

Vice Chancellor **Date:** 24/10/2026