

Gender Equality and Diversity Policy



POLICY # EAAS/2024/240259

Adopted by the Senate on July 15, 2024

European Academy of Advanced Studies (EAAS)

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1. Introduction

The European Academy of Advanced Studies (EAAS) is committed to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and equitable environment in which all individuals regardless of gender, background, or identity have equal opportunities to thrive. This Policy sets out EAAS's commitment to gender equality and diversity across all academic, professional, and operational aspects of the institution.

As a fully online higher education institution operating in Malta, EAAS upholds this commitment in accordance with the Constitution of Malta, the Equality for Men and Women Act (Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta), the Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Chapter 413), the applicable European equal-treatment framework, and the expectations of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) for inclusive and accessible education.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all students, applicants, faculty, staff, management, and stakeholders associated with EAAS. It covers recruitment, admissions, promotions, academic programmes, research activities, governance, and the institution's online learning environment and community culture.

3. Principles

EAAS adheres to the following principles:

- **Equal Opportunities:** providing fair access to education, employment, and leadership positions regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, or socio-economic background.
- **Non-Discrimination:** zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or bias based on gender, race, age, disability, gender identity, or any other protected characteristic.
- **Gender Balance:** promoting gender balance in faculty, leadership roles, and student admissions to ensure diverse and representative participation.
- **Inclusive Culture:** encouraging a respectful and supportive atmosphere that values differences and embeds inclusive practices in the virtual classroom.
- **Accessibility:** ensuring digital learning content and platforms are accessible to a diverse learner demographic, in line with recognised web accessibility standards (WCAG).
- **Work-Life Balance:** supporting flexible work and study arrangements that enable individuals to balance professional, academic, and personal responsibilities.

4. Implementation Strategies

EAAS implements the following strategies to uphold gender equality and diversity:

- **Recruitment & Admissions:** apply merit-based, open, and unbiased selection processes; use gender-neutral language and gender-balanced shortlists; convene diverse selection panels; and actively invite applications from underrepresented groups.
- **Training & Awareness:** conduct workshops, seminars, and sensitization programmes on diversity, gender equality, unconscious bias, and inclusive leadership, including bias awareness for hiring committees.
- **Mentorship & Support:** provide mentorship, scholarships, career guidance, and reasonable accommodations to support individuals from marginalised backgrounds and students with disabilities or special needs.
- **Accessible Online Learning:** deliver WCAG-compliant course sites with closed captions, alt-text, and screen-reader functionality, supported by accessibility evaluations and disability feedback within course validation.
- **Policies Against Harassment:** enforce strict anti-harassment and grievance-redress mechanisms, including an appeals process, to ensure a safe and respectful environment.
- **Monitoring & Reporting:** regularly review and report on diversity and gender-balance statistics and inclusion metrics to assess progress and drive continuous improvement.

5. Responsibilities

- **Institutional Leadership:** the Rector, Management Board, and Senate / Academic Council champion diversity and equality initiatives and provide the necessary resources.
- **Faculty & Staff:** responsible for embedding inclusive practices in teaching, research, and workplace culture.
- **Students:** expected to respect diversity and contribute to a positive and inclusive online community.
- **Equal Opportunities and Diversity Committee:** a dedicated body working with the Ethics Committee and the Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit responsible for overseeing implementation of this Policy, handling grievances, and recommending improvements.

6. Accountability and Compliance

EAAS ensures compliance with national and international equality and anti-discrimination law. Any violation of this Policy is addressed through appropriate disciplinary measures and corrective action. Individuals who consider that they have experienced discrimination may raise the matter internally through the grievance mechanism and have the right to lodge a complaint with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), Malta's national equality body.

7. Review and Continuous Improvement

This Policy is reviewed periodically to adapt to emerging challenges and best practice in gender equality and diversity, aligned with Malta's Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan and the institution's quality-assurance cycle. Feedback from students, staff, and stakeholders is considered in policy updates.

8. Conclusion

EAAS reaffirms its dedication to creating a diverse, inclusive, and equitable academic and professional environment. By fostering respect, fairness, and equal opportunities, the institution aims to empower individuals and contribute to a progressive society.