



Georgian American University

Gender Equality Plan

Georgian American University (GAU) has been committed to fostering a secure, healthy, respectful, attentive and tolerant environment since its establishment in 2005. The institution is dedicated to not only providing equal opportunities for all members of GAU's community and enhancing the quality and outcomes of its educational and research endeavors, but also improving the working and learning conditions for everyone.

Gender equality embodies universal and fundamental human rights, and it stands as an integral element of GAU's vision and commitment to being a leading educational institution. Both the mission statement of Georgian American University and its daily activities are firmly rooted in these fundamental values, which are widely recognized in the realm of Western democratic principles. GAU deeply believes in the inherent goodness of these values, incorporate them into the daily operations, and fervently uphold their preservation.

From the very foundation, GAU has invested significant efforts in advancing gender equality and equity within the organization. GAU has undertaken initiatives to enhance and increase female representation in high-ranking and leadership positions, to establish a flexible working environment, and to enforce a strict zero-tolerance policy against any form of gender-based discrimination or harassment. GAU now aspires to further strengthen its policies and action plans in favor of an equality-driven organizational reality, as well as in favor of an equal representation, recognition, remuneration, and value of employees irrespective of their gender or any other intersecting characteristics.

Towards this direction and in line with the relevant policies of the Georgian American University, a Gender Equality Plan has been developed with the following objectives:

1. To continue to strengthen gender equality policy by ensuring that gender dimension is integrated into University's strategic governance documents, establishing institutional gender equality structures, conducting data monitoring;
2. To continue to foster an inclusive, equality-driven organizational culture through University's internal and external communication as well as collaboration with social partners;
3. To ensure the continuation of an organizational culture that guarantees the socio-psychological well-being of its members, supports the work-life balance and actively prevents harassment and discrimination;
4. To continue the implementation of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies that promote gender-balanced and gender-neutral decision-making and leadership, facilitation of career progression, and ensuring transparent procedures in the recruitment and selection of candidates for academic positions.

5. To continue the integration and promotion of gender equality into teaching and research, improve career opportunities for women in research.

GAU further accompanies the creation of its Gender Equality Plan with its wide dissemination to all staff members and students, as well as with the establishment of a Gender Equality Committee assisting in the implementation, monitoring, and continuous update of the Plan.

The developed Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is aligned with relevant International and National (Georgia) directions and legal requirements. The alignment to the vision and the mission of the Georgian American University (from a gender and equality/equity related perspective) is also a major goal of GAU's strategic agenda.

1. The Georgian American University policy framework

The GEP of Georgian American University has been prepared and implemented in synergy and complementarity through key university documents and institutional policies that emphasize the need to ensure that all GAU staff and students enjoy equal opportunities regardless of gender, race, gender identity, political or religious affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status and / or other characteristics.

Notably, GAU was one of the first five institutions in Georgia who developed an Action Plan on women empowerment. The University does not have a stand-alone gender strategy, however a policy of equal treatment to employees and gender equality principles are included in a series of relevant regulations and initiatives which are constantly enriching and updating.

GAU was the first Georgian university, which initiated its **Code of Ethics and Conduct** in 2005, which applies to all individuals, including guests and participants in any activities associated with the University, mandating their adherence to the standards outlined in the Code. The Code is designed to advocate for equal rights and opportunities, and to uphold values of respect, anti-discrimination, and ethical behavior. It ensures that every member of the University community has the chance to engage fully and maximize their potential.

GAU Strategic Plan (most recent form 2021-2027) covers the values and principles that the university believes to ensure equal opportunities and gender equality:

- Fairness and Equality - GAU strives to create a non-discriminatory, equal opportunity environment for students, academics and staff to achieve their goals and use their full potential to fulfill the University mission and their own personal well-being. Decisions made by the University are procedurally and in terms of ensuring rights based on the legitimate interests of the parties.
- Diversity and Respect - Diversity creates an environment for the University community that is acceptable and comfortable to all, regardless of their individuality. Adhering to these values guarantees diverse and constructive discourse in the University space, which ultimately helps everyone to respect and realize their ideas and perspectives. Beyond diversity, on the other hand, collegial treatment, mutual respect, civilized, open and professional attitude in the process of activity, cooperation and decision-making are important in the activities of the University.

In order to ensure promoting fair, just, diverse and transparent hiring practices, the university developed the **Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy**, the principles of which are:

- Ensuring Equal Opportunities - means putting job candidates on an equal footing regardless of age, gender, ethnic, religious and racial affiliation, social background, political beliefs or other views;
- Fairness - implies the establishment of pre-defined fair, non-discriminatory selection criteria by the University;
- Diversity - means promoting the search and employment of people with differing and diverse experiences, nationalities and ethnicities, genders, social status, beliefs or values;
- Transparency - means clearly establishing the University's employment policy, relevant rules/procedures to ensure public access.

GAU is a **member of the Working Group on Women's Empowerment in Business Sector**, which was established in 2016 within the framework of the UN Global Compact of Georgia. The goals of the Working Group are:

- Promotion of a systemic approach of business towards encouraging Women's Empowerment at the workplace, in the market and in society;
- Creation of a platform for sharing experience and coordinating Women's Empowerment.

In 2018, GAU established an **Ombudsman's office** which is an internal resource focused on GAU's students, academic and administrative personnel. Main responsibilities of ombudsperson cover protection of students', lecturers' and other university personnel's rights from all forms of violence and harassment and facilitating the diversity of student life.

In more details and through this strategy, the University attempts to proactively advance equality and inclusive practices in the areas of student recruitment and admissions processes, in research activity and teaching, student and staff selection criteria for international mobility, within the campus environment and in the experiences offered to the academic and professional services and the student community.

2. Implementation of the GAU GEP

2.1 Dedicated resources:

Within the context of the GAU GEP, a Gender Equality Committee has been formed. The Committee is comprised by GAU HR, representatives of all (currently five) GAU Schools; a representative of each one of GAU's research centers; GAU Ombudsman, who is also the person allocated as a contact point for reporting instances of sexual and gender-based harassment.

In terms of tasks and responsibilities, the members of the Gender Equality Committee are responsible for:

- The collection of gender-disaggregated data and the carrying out of annual reporting based on indicators;
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the GEP;
- Organizing and coordinating the gender-oriented training and capacity-building of the institution;
- Having regular meetings (minimum once a year);
- Updating the GEP content (including action points, indicators etc.);

- Publishing relevant progress reports;
- Providing input to the GAU President, as well as to GAU's strategic plan.

2.2 Data collection and monitoring:

The main categories across which sex-/gender-disaggregated data have been and will continue to be collected are:

- Gender distribution among academic and non-academic staff;
- Gender distribution among students;
- Gender distribution on leadership/decision-making positions;
- Gender pay gap.

This list will be continuously updated, and relevant data will continue to be collected during the GEP implementation (annually) within the context of monitoring and evaluation. They are and will be reported annually.

2.3 Training

GAU is committed to organizing a series of training events and informative workshops, addressing both staff and students –depending on the content of the training/workshop– and engaging the whole organization. The list below illustrates the primary areas/topics on which the training will focus during the implementation of the GEP 2021-2027, while such relevant trainings will take place twice per year. The target areas and topics refer to:

- Induction to the content and implementation of the GEP
- Work-life balance
- Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- Female career progression (including recruitment and retention)
- Gender in research and teaching (including academic curricula)
- Sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

2.4 The GEP 2021-2027

The table below illustrates five objectives which assemble a set of relevant action points that have been set within the context of the GAU GEP. Next to each action point, monitoring indicators and target values are indicated. The action points will be continuously refined and updated in the long-term by the Gender Equality Committee

Gender Equality Plan for Georgian American University 2021-2027

Aim of activity	Action points	Target Group	Monitoring indicators	Persons and units responsible for implementation of GEP
<p>1. To continue to strengthen gender equality policy by ensuring that gender dimension is integrated into University's strategic governance documents, establishing institutional gender equality structures, conducting data monitoring;</p>	<p>Review and Update Strategic Documents, including Strategic Development Plan, University Mission Statement, other policies and regulations.</p> <p>Establish Gender Equality Structures to ensure equal opportunities, prevention of sexual harassment and implementation of anti-discrimination policies.</p> <p>Conduct a comprehensive gender audit to assess the current gender balance at GAU. Gather data on gender-related indicators, including student enrollment, faculty composition, leadership roles, research activities and results, gender pay gap, etc.</p>	<p>All employees and students</p>	<p>Prepared, revised and implemented documents.</p> <p>Continuous monitoring of the implementation of strategic documents.</p> <p>Established Gender Equality Structures, aiming at better coordination of equal opportunities related questions, prevention of sexual harassment and ensuring implementation of anti-discriminatory policies.</p> <p>Regular collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GAU Academic and Research Councils • President • Senior Vice President • Vice President of Education, Science and Quality Assurance • Ethics Commission • Disciplinary Commission • Appeals Commission • Schools and administrative Offices • Strategic Development Office • Ombudsman's Office
<p>2. To continue to foster an inclusive, equality-driven organizational culture through University's internal and</p>	<p>Communication strategy enhancement to emphasize gender equality in all internal and external communications, including official university publications, websites, and social media platforms.</p>	<p>All employees and students</p>	<p>Increased number of publications, events and campaigns in internal and external communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Communications Office • Students

<p>external communication as well as collaboration with social partners;</p>	<p>Organize academic, scientific and other events, seminars, and workshops that focus on gender equality and inclusion, both within the university and in collaboration with external partners.</p> <p>Promote gender balanced decision making and leadership within the University's community and in society in general.</p> <p>Strengthen the representation of women's leadership in mass media, internal and external communication by highlighting women's roles as leaders in management, decision-making, research and innovation.</p> <p>Strengthen the representation of women and men by shaping new role models in areas where the number and representation of women and men is low (e.g., STEM fields, social sciences, humanities, arts).</p> <p>Reinforce cooperation with national and international stakeholders and social partners in the areas of human rights, equal opportunities, diversity and gender equality.</p>	<p>General society</p>	<p>Increased number of trainings how to enhance communication.</p> <p>Improved gender balance in communication (e.g., increased visibility of experts and researchers of underrepresented gender within specific areas of science).</p> <p>Prepared and presented to the University's community the Guidelines for gender-balanced events, based on the principles of gender equality.</p> <p>Improved indicators of gender balance at the events.</p> <p>Sustained cooperation and the continual advancement of collaborative initiatives, projects, and events in partnership with social stakeholders and partners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic and administrative staff • International Relations Office
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<p>3. To ensure the continuation of an organizational culture that guarantees the socio-psychological well-being of its members, supports the work-life balance and actively prevents harassment and discrimination;</p>	<p>Develop and communicate policies that support work-life balance, including flexible working hours, remote work options, and parental leave.</p> <p>Ensure that university leadership is visibly committed to fostering a culture of well-being, inclusion, and equal opportunity.</p> <p>Conduct regular assessments of the well-being and satisfaction of community members through surveys and feedback mechanisms.</p> <p>Develop and enforce strict anti-harassment policies and procedures, including clear reporting mechanisms and consequences for violators.</p> <p>To organize training and awareness raising campaigns for the leaders, managers and administrative employees, focusing on reducing precarious working conditions, ensuring career and family balance, creating favorable environment for career growth.</p>	<p>All employees and students</p>	<p>Number of staff and faculty members utilizing flexible study and work arrangements, parental leave.</p> <p>Documentation of leadership's commitment through different statements and actions.</p> <p>Surveys assessing employee or student satisfaction with work-life balance policies.</p> <p>Number of reported harassment incidents and their resolution status.</p> <p>Attendance and participation rates in diversity and inclusion training programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President • Senior Vice President • Vice President of Education, Science and Quality Assurance • Ombudsman's Office • Human Resources Office • Schools and administrative Offices
<p>4. To continue the implementation of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies that promote gender-balanced and gender-neutral decision-making and leadership,</p>	<p>Ensuring gender balance in decision-making processes.</p> <p>Ensuring gender balance in leadership and senior academic and research career positions (professors, senior researchers).</p>	<p>All employees Potential employees</p>	<p>Reviewed and improved measures and procedures of transparent recruitment process.</p> <p>Reviewed and improved measures and procedures of transparent candidate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President • Senior Vice President • Vice President of Education, Science and Quality Assurance • Schools

<p>facilitation of career progression, and ensuring transparent procedures in the recruitment and selection of candidates for academic positions.</p>	<p>Establish clear and transparent recruitment and candidate selection procedures, with an emphasis on gender-neutral language and evaluation criteria.</p> <p>Conduct training and workshops for staff and faculty, to raise awareness about discrimination, bias, and harassment and to promote inclusive behavior.</p> <p>Raise awareness and enhance anti discriminatory principles.</p>		<p>selection for academic positions.</p> <p>Increased number of trainings about gender equality and anti-discriminatory policies as well as measures about ensuring gender balance in the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources Office • Research Development and Support Office • Legal Services Office • Marketing and Communications Office
<p>5. To continue the integration and promotion of gender equality into teaching and research, improve career opportunities for women in research.</p>	<p>Gender-responsive curriculum development in all the levels of studies (programs, subjects, topics of final theses).</p> <p>Provide training and workshops for faculty members to increase their awareness of gender issues and encourage the integration of gender-sensitive content into their teaching.</p> <p>Encourage diversity and gender balance in academic and research councils, to ensure fair evaluation and promotion of researchers.</p> <p>Aiming for gender balance, to encourage researchers to engage in research projects, prepare high-level scientific publications.</p>	<p>Students</p> <p>Lecturers</p> <p>Researchers</p>	<p>Renewed and/or developed new study subjects with integrated gender dimension.</p> <p>Increased number of trainings, consultations and meetings with academic staff to promote gender mainstreaming in teaching, ongoing projects and research.</p> <p>Increased number of project leaders of underrepresented gender.</p> <p>Increased number of high-quality publications.</p>	<p>President</p> <p>Senior Vice President</p> <p>Vice President of Education, Science and Quality Assurance</p> <p>Research Development and Support Office</p> <p>Academic and Research Councils</p> <p>Research institutes and research clusters</p> <p>Representatives of all the Committees of Doctoral Studies</p>

	<p>Implement the principles and tools of gender-sensitive supervision for doctoral students.</p> <p>Review and modify career advancement criteria to ensure they are equitable and do not disadvantage women in academic or research positions.</p> <p>Conduct regular assessments of gender equality in teaching, research, and career advancement, and use the findings to inform policy improvements.</p>		<p>Regularly performed analysis of gender-disaggregated data on scientific publications.</p> <p>Improved quality of dissertation supervision.</p> <p>Created career development measures for researchers of underrepresented gender.</p>	
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