KUMI UNIVERSITY

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SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY 2025 - 2029

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Official Approval

Confirmed on this day ……6th……..of ……February…… 2025……..

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His Lordship Justice Ajiji Alex Mackay
Chairperson
Kumi University Council

Signed on this day……7th……of ……February…… 20…25……

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Prof. Jong-In Hong
Vice Chancellor,
Kumi University

A Word from Chairman of University Council

Kumi University was established to address the socioeconomic challenges that were posed by war, cattle rustling and insurgency in the Teso sub region. I am happy that the University has surpassed numerous challenges including the COVID 19 pandemic and is in a position to acquire a Charter status.

The University Council is fully committed to provision of good quality, credible education and services as a world class higher education institution in Uganda and the region. We fully support the Government of Uganda's international commitments such as the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially goal # 4 to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"*. Uganda is also a signatory to the African Union's declaration for provision of quality education as a requisite for achievement of the Africa Vision 2063.

Uganda's vision 2040 commits government to provide education as a human right. The privatization and liberalization policies have widened access to quality education by enlisting the participation of private actors like Kumi University. Good quality, accessible and affordable education has also been consistently underscored by the National Development Plans (NDPs, I - IV). The University remains compliant with the regulatory functions of the NCHE as well as the 2008 Education Act for the delivery of a high level quality and affordable education service, and; guidelines for professional and ethical conduct of our personnel.

As a Christian founded, private Higher Education Institution, Kumi University seeks to contribute to these national aspirations and yet remain relevant to the needs of local communities in the Teso sub region. These policies are a welcome step for ensuring that admissions, teaching and learning processes, assessments, research, and stakeholder engagements are well aligned with the NCHE regulations, standards and guidelines. The University Council remains committed to providing all the support required to facilitate professional best practices in the University.

For God and my Country

His Lordship Ajiji Alex Mackay
Chairman, Kumi University Council

Foreword by the Vice-Chancellor

Dear Students, Staff, and Stakeholders of Kumi University, At Kumi University, we firmly believe that our students are the heart of our institution and the foundation of our vision for the future. With this unwavering commitment, we place student welfare and support services at the forefront of our policies and practices. The academic journey is both transformative and challenging. It requires not only intellectual rigor but also every student's emotional resilience and personal development. Recognizing this, we have established a comprehensive framework to ensure that every individual in our student community feels supported, valued, and empowered to achieve their fullest potential. Our student welfare policies are designed to:

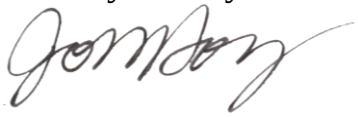
1. **Foster Academic and Personal Growth**
   Through robust mentorship programs, academic advisory services, and skill development initiatives, we aim to provide a nurturing environment that facilitates both scholarly achievements and holistic development.

2. **Promote a Positive University Culture**
   We are committed to creating a campus environment grounded in inclusivity, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging. By encouraging active participation in extracurricular activities, student governance, and cross-cultural engagements, we seek to enrich your university experience.

3. **Ensure the Well-being of the Student Community**
   Your health and well-being remain our top priority. Our policies focus on providing accessible health services, mental health support, and safety measures to ensure that every student can thrive in a secure and supportive environment.

We encourage all members of our community to embrace these values and actively contribute to developing a positive, collaborative, and inclusive culture. Your feedback is invaluable in shaping our policies, and I urge you to share your experiences and ideas as we strive to enhance the Kumi University experience. Together, we can uphold our shared commitment to excellence, compassion, and innovation. Let us continue to work hand in hand to create an institution where every student is empowered to succeed and every voice is heard.

Thank you for your dedication and partnership in this shared mission.



Prof. Jong-In Hong
Vice Chancellor

University Vision, Mission and Philosophy

Vision

To be a world-class hub for holistic, quality higher education and transformative research, designed to empower individuals and uplift communities.

Mission

To deliver holistic, community-focused education that inspires transformation, nurtures talent, and positively impacts individuals and society.

Motto

Godliness and Excellence for servanthood

Philosophy

"The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom."

Core Values

- Integrity: Upholding honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct in all we do.
- Community: Fostering strong, collaborative relationships that drive collective growth.
- Inclusion: Embracing every individual’s unique perspective and potential.
- Respect: Valuing the dignity and contributions of all people.
- Diversity: Celebrating differences as a source of strength and innovation.
- Equity: Ensuring fairness and opportunities for all to thrive.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Globally, people with special needs continue to face significant challenges in accessing education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services. The University aligns its policies with international frameworks such as the UNCRPD, the Salamanca Statement, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are upheld in an inclusive academic setting.

The Banjul Charter, the African Agenda 2063, and relevant national laws all guide our commitment to an accessible, inclusive society, and Kumi University is dedicated to actively contributing to these efforts.

1.2 Situation Analysis

Kumi University has seen an increase in students with special needs, though challenges remain. Limited infrastructure, budget constraints, and lack of awareness are barriers to fully supporting this group. The university has made progress in providing physical support (e.g., accessible buildings, transport, and assistive devices) but still faces issues such as non-disclosure of special needs, stigmatization, and insufficient resources.

1.3 Rationale

The University recognizes its moral and legal duty to assist persons with special needs and believes it is imperative to have a coherent framework to guide rights, duties, and actions toward an inclusive academic and work environment. This policy outlines our vision and action plan to address challenges and promote a truly inclusive institution.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The Policy seeks to:

i. Expand the scope of protection to include all members of the University community (staff, students, visitors).

ii. Establish clear roles and responsibilities for all members of the University in supporting persons with special needs.

iii. Enhance resource mobilization to address the challenges faced by persons with special needs.

iv. Promote mutual respect, dignity, and equality among all members of the University community.

v. Foster a conducive environment for learning and working, free of discrimination and stigmatization.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This Policy applies to all academic and administrative activities, services, and events at the University. It extends to students, staff, visitors, and service providers within the University.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The policy is grounded in the following principles:

i. Inclusivity and Participation: Ensuring all individuals have equal access and opportunities to participate.

ii. Accessibility: Ensuring that physical, informational, and communicative barriers are removed.

iii. Dignity and Autonomy: Upholding the inherent dignity and independence of all individuals with special needs.

iv. No Discrimination: Creating an environment free from harassment or exclusion.

v. Equity and Equality: Offering tailored support that meets diverse needs, ensuring fairness and opportunity for all.

PART II: POLICY ISSUES, STATEMENTS, AND STRATEGIES

2.1 Enrolment, Recruitment, and Retention

2.1.1 Issue: Persons with special needs face significant barriers to entering and staying in higher education institutions. At Kumi University, the enrolment and retention of students with special needs remains low, and similar challenges exist in hiring staff with disabilities.

2.1.2 Statement: The University shall establish an accessible, supportive, and inclusive environment to enhance the enrolment, recruitment, and retention of students and staff with special needs.

2.1.3 Strategies

i. Develop clear guidelines for the recruitment and hiring of staff with special needs, ensuring reasonable accommodations are made.

ii. Implement targeted outreach and support programs for students with special needs during the admission and registration process.

iii. Provide financial support, assistive technology, and mentorship programs to help retain students and staff with special needs.

iv. Offer preferential enrolment and recruitment for qualified applicants with special needs.

2.2 Learning and Working Environment

2.2.1 Issue: An accessible, supportive, and secure environment is essential for students and staff with special needs to thrive academically and professionally. Although the University has made strides, there is still work to be done to ensure complete inclusivity across all spaces and activities.

2.2.2 Statement: The University will create and continually improve a learning and working environment that is physically, socially, and psychologically inclusive for persons with special needs.

2.2.3 Strategies

i. Retrofit existing infrastructure to meet universal design standards for accessibility.

ii. Establish clear procedures for ensuring that learning spaces, workspaces, and transport are accessible to everyone.

iii. Provide ongoing training for staff and students on inclusivity and support for persons with special needs.

iv. Prioritize the needs of persons with special needs in planning for new buildings, renovations, and resource allocations.

2.3 Research and Consultancy

2.3.1 Issue: Inclusive research and consultancy practices require accommodations to ensure that persons with special needs can fully participate. The University has made some efforts in this area but has yet to ensure equal opportunities in research, proposal writing, and accessing funding.

2.3.2 Statement: The University shall actively work to remove barriers for persons with special needs in engaging in research and consultancy activities.

2.3.3 Strategies

i. Introduce funding opportunities and mechanisms that prioritize research proposals from persons with special needs.

ii. Offer training in research and consultancy proposal development and execution for students and staff with special needs.

iii. Actively encourage the participation of people with special needs in research and consultancy initiatives across all disciplines.

2.3.3 Strategies for Research and Consultancy Involvement
The University will:

i. Implement preferential provisions for qualified research proposals submitted by individuals with special needs.
ii. Develop capacity-building programs to train individuals with special needs in research and consultancy proposal writing, as well as project execution.
iii. Actively encourage the participation of individuals with special needs in research and consultancy opportunities.
iv. Ensure that information on research and consultancy calls is easily accessible to individuals with special needs.
v. Establish mechanisms to provide financial incentives for research and consultancy projects led by individuals with special needs.

2.4 Guidance and Counselling

2.4.1 Issue

Guidance and counselling services are essential within any university community, addressing a wide range of social, economic, political, and cultural challenges. Students with special needs, in particular, often face unique issues such as stigmatization, self-esteem challenges, and psychological trauma. These require tailored guidance and counselling services, with appropriate expertise and facilities. Currently, the University's Guidance and Counselling Policy primarily addresses general student needs and lacks specificity for persons with special needs. The policy also does not recognize the needs of University staff and others with special needs.

2.4.2 Statement

The University shall enhance its guidance and counselling services to ensure they are inclusive of persons with special needs.

2.4.3 Strategies

The University will:

i. Strengthen the department responsible for guidance and counselling to better serve individuals with special needs.
ii. Introduce and enforce provisions specifically focused on guidance and counselling for persons with special needs.
iii. Regularly review and update guidance and counselling frameworks to address contemporary issues affecting individuals with special needs.
iv. Build the capacity of the University community to better identify and address special needs.
v. Facilitate advisory services that specifically support persons with special needs.

2.5 Disclosure and Confidentiality

2.5.1Issue

Personal information regarding individuals with special needs must be treated with the utmost care and confidentiality. The disclosure of special needs may be a sensitive process, and individuals may be reluctant to share their needs due to concerns over privacy. While the University has a Students Disability Policy in place, it only addresses students and does not consider all members of the University community, such as staff or visitors. Additionally, the mechanisms for handling and sharing sensitive information related to special needs are underdeveloped, and there is fear among individuals with special needs about disclosing their information.

2.5.2Statement

The University shall strengthen its mechanisms for receiving, handling, and sharing information concerning individuals with special needs, ensuring that all privacy and confidentiality concerns are addressed.

2.5.3 Strategies

The University will:

i. Implement clear guidelines for handling information related to individuals with special needs.
ii. Enforce sanctions against individuals who fail to comply with these guidelines.
iii. Build capacity across the University community on best practices for disclosure and confidentiality.
iv. Encourage students, staff, and other members of the University community to disclose their special needs in a safe and supportive environment.

2.6 Stigmatization and Discrimination

2.6.1 Issue

While the University has made significant strides in sensitizing the community about stigmatization, it remains a persistent issue, compounded by discrimination. Though these issues are recognized in the University's Students Disciplinary Rules, more specific mechanisms must be established to effectively combat and prevent stigmatization and discrimination.

2.6.2 Statement

The University shall implement stronger measures to prevent and address stigmatization and discrimination within its community.

2.6.3 Strategies

The University will:

i. Organize regular sensitization workshops and training on non-stigmatization and anti-discrimination practices.
ii. Foster a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination and stigma for students and employees with special needs.
iii. Take strict action against any individuals found to be engaging in stigmatization or discrimination.

PART III: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

3.1 Implementation

This Policy shall be implemented by all University organs, staff, students, service providers, visitors, and any other individuals within the University premises, including staff and students' dependents.

3.2 Overall Responsibility for Implementation

The office responsible for special needs will oversee the implementation of this Policy and operate under the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Planning, Finance, and Administration. Responsibilities include:

i. Translating the Policy's goals and strategies into actionable programs.
ii. Developing and implementing strategic action plans responsive to special needs.
iii. Coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the Policy's implementation.
iv. Facilitating capacity-building and awareness programs on special needs.
v. Collaborating with various University units to ensure that special needs are adequately funded and addressed.
vi. Engaging with stakeholders to support the implementation of the Policy.

3.3 Roles of Faculties, Directorates, Institutes, and Departments

These bodies are responsible for ensuring that the Policy is implemented in all core University functions, particularly in teaching, research, and consultancy. They shall establish mechanisms for detecting and addressing concerns related to special needs.

3.4 University Staff

University staff are accountable for ensuring compliance with the Policy in their respective roles. Specifically, they shall:

i. Ensure special needs sensitivity in content preparation, delivery, and assessment.
ii. Encourage individuals with special needs to build self-esteem and confidence.
iii. Serve as guides for identifying and addressing special needs concerns.

iv. Be held accountable for non-compliance with the Policy.

3.5 Students and Other Stakeholders

Students and other stakeholders must comply with the Policy, helping to identify special needs and disclose them to relevant authorities. They should also uphold the principles guiding the Policy's implementation.

PART IV: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will be an ongoing activity, conducted under the oversight of the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Planning, Finance, and Administration. The University Management will ensure strict compliance and promptly address any non-compliance.

4.2 Conflict of Interest

Members of decision-making organs must avoid conflicts of interest when dealing with special needs issues. Those with a conflict must declare it and refrain from participating in related decision-making processes.

PART V: POLICY GUIDELINES

5.1 Purpose

These guidelines outline specific procedures for implementing the Special Needs Policy and should be read alongside the Policy.

5.2 Implementation Principles

The Policy will be implemented based on the principles of:

i. Fair and preferential treatment
ii. Confidentiality

iii. Respect
iv. Privacy
v. Dignity and equality
vi. Inclusivity and participation

5.3 Special Needs Disclosure and Identification

Special needs can be identified through self-disclosure or by others, such as family, staff, or authorized authorities. Disclosure may occur in the following ways:

i. Declaration during the admission/enrollment process
ii. Informal declaration during formal or informal interactions
iii. Reporting to the designated University department
iv. Other methods as deemed appropriate by the individual disclosing the information

5.4 Handling Special Needs

The University will document all information related to special needs, ensuring that privacy is respected. The University will maintain a confidential register and respond promptly to cases based on the documented information. Regular follow-up procedures will be instituted to ensure timely and effective responses.

5.5 Capacity Building and Awareness Creation

The University shall facilitate ongoing training and awareness programs on special needs, collaborating with other entities to address emerging issues. All training and awareness activities shall be documented for accountability.

5.6 Offences and Penalties

Any member of the University community found to contravene the provisions of this Policy will be subject to disciplinary action by the relevant authorities.

6.0. Policy Review

This policy shall undergo a review every three years or sooner if necessary, to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Specific circumstances that may trigger a review include:

1. **Conflict with other policies:** Ensuring alignment and consistency within the University's regulatory framework.
2. **Need for amendments:** Addressing changes that enhance service delivery or adapt to evolving institutional needs.
3. **Other identified reasons:** As determined by the University Administration or the Public Relations and Communications Committee to better serve the institution's goals.
4. Regular reviews will ensure the policy remains robust, responsive, and reflective of KUMU's mission and aspirations.