Equity, Access, Student Success, and Inclusion Policy

Supporting Inclusive Higher Education and Reducing Multidimensional Poverty

1. Purpose

The Maldives National University (MNU) recognises that education is one of the most effective means of reducing multidimensional poverty and improving the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

MNU is committed to ensuring equitable access to higher education, supporting students experiencing social or economic disadvantages, promoting lifelong learning, strengthening student success and graduate outcomes, and contributing to national development through teaching, research, innovation, community engagement, and partnerships. As the national university, MNU recognises its responsibility to provide educational opportunities across all regions of the Maldives and to support social mobility, community resilience, and sustainable national development. This Policy establishes the University's commitment to reducing barriers to participation and success in higher education and aligns institutional practices with the Maldives Multidimensional Poverty Index (MMPI), national development priorities, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to:

2.1. all prospective students

2.2. all enrolled students

2.3. all staff

2.4. external partners engaged in programmes supporting equitable access and student success.

3. Policy Statement

MNU believes that poverty extends beyond income and includes limitations in educational opportunity, health, housing, employment, digital access, wellbeing and social participation.

The University therefore adopts a holistic approach that seeks to:

3.1. remove barriers to higher education

3.2. support students experiencing disadvantage

3.3. improve graduate employability

3.4. strengthen community resilience

3.5. contribute to evidence-based national development.

4. Guiding Principles

MNU is committed to:

4.1. Equity

Providing fair opportunities for all students regardless of their background.

4.2. Inclusion

Creating an environment where all students feel welcomed, respected and supported.

4.3. Lifelong Learning

Recognising learning as a lifelong process that contributes to individual and national development.

4.4. Community Engagement

Working collaboratively with communities to improve wellbeing across the Maldives.

4.5. Partnership

Collaborating with government, industry, NGOs and international organisations.

4.6. Sustainability

Supporting national development through the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.7. National Responsibility

Recognising MNU's role as the national university in expanding educational opportunity, reducing regional disparities, supporting island communities, and contributing to inclusive national development.

5. Strategic Commitments

5.1. Equitable Access to Higher Education

MNU will:

5.1.1. provide alternative admission pathways

5.1.2. support flexible learning opportunities

5.1.3. expand access across the atolls

5.1.4. collaborate with government to improve participation in higher education

5.1.5. implement initiatives supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5.2. Student Financial Support

MNU recognises that financial hardship may affect student participation and success.

The University will provide, subject to available resources:

5.2.1. scholarships

5.2.2. bursaries

5.2.3. emergency assistance

5.2.4. accommodation support

5.2.5. subsidised housing

5.2.6. affordable campus facilities

5.2.7. referral to external financial assistance schemes.

5.2.8. flexible fee payment arrangements

5.2.9. student employment and work-study opportunities where feasible

5.3. Student Wellbeing

MNU will promote student wellbeing by providing:

5.3.1. counselling

5.3.2. disability support

5.3.3. wellbeing programmes

5.3.4. learning support

5.3.5. peer mentoring

5.3.6. career development

5.3.7. financial guidance

5.3.8. crisis support.

5.3.9. academic advising and student success coaching

5.4. Food Security

The University recognises food security as an important contributor to student wellbeing.

MNU will work with:

5.4.1. campus food providers

5.4.2. government

5.4.3. partners

to improve access to affordable nutritious food for students.

5.5. Community Engagement

MNU will encourage students and staff to contribute to community development through:

5.5.1. volunteering

5.5.2. service learning

5.5.3. outreach programmes

5.5.4. community education

5.5.5. health promotion

5.5.6. environmental initiatives

5.5.7. leadership programmes

5.5.8. community-based research and knowledge sharing

5.6. Graduate Employability

MNU will prepare graduates to contribute meaningfully to society through:

5.6.1. internships

5.6.2. industry partnerships

5.6.3. leadership programmes

5.6.4. volunteering

5.6.5. career development

5.6.6. entrepreneurship

5.6.7. graduate employability initiatives.
5.6.8. industry-informed curriculum development
5.6.9. graduate tracking and career support
5.6.10. support for social entrepreneurship and community leadership

5.7. Research and Innovation

MNU will encourage research addressing:

5.7.1. multidimensional poverty
5.7.2. inequality
5.7.3. education
5.7.4. health
5.7.5. livelihoods
5.7.6. climate resilience
5.7.7. community wellbeing
5.7.8. digital inclusion
5.7.9. sustainable development.
5.7.10. blue economy and sustainable island development
5.7.11. food security and nutrition
5.7.12. disaster resilience and adaptation
5.7.13. cultural preservation and social inclusion

5.8. Partnerships

MNU will collaborate with all stakeholders to address national development priorities.

6. Alignment with the Maldives Multidimensional Poverty Index

MNU recognises the Maldives Multidimensional Poverty Index as an important national framework for understanding deprivation beyond income.

The University will seek to contribute to improving outcomes through:

MMPI Dimension	MNU Contribution
Education	Equitable access, pathways, lifelong learning
Employment	Graduate employability, internships, entrepreneurship
Health	Student wellbeing, health promotion
Living Standards	Accommodation, financial support, safe drinking water
Digital Access	Online learning, digital literacy
Social Participation	Leadership, volunteering, student engagement

The mapping of MNU contributions to MMPI dimensions will be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with the most current national framework

7. Sustainable Development Goals

This Policy contributes primarily to:

7.1. SDG 1 No Poverty
7.2. SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing
7.3. SDG 4 Quality Education
7.4. SDG 5 Gender Equality
7.5. SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth
7.6. SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities
7.7. SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities
7.8. SDG 13 Climate Action
7.9. SDG 14 Life below Water
7.10. SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1. Senate

Approves the Policy.

8.2. Vice Chancellor

Provides institutional leadership.

8.3. Deputy Vice Chancellors

Support implementation.

8.4. Faculties

Embed equitable and inclusive practices within teaching, learning, student support, research, and community engagement activities.

8.5. Student Support

Student Support will:

8.5.1. coordinate student equity initiatives

8.5.2. oversee student financial assistance

9. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this Policy will be monitored through indicators such as:

9.1. participation of disadvantaged students
9.2. retention and completion rates
9.3. scholarships awarded
9.4. student wellbeing utilisation
9.5. graduate employment outcomes
9.6. community engagement activities
9.7. volunteering participation
9.8. Graduate Impact Award participation
9.9. contributions to the SDGs
9.10. contributions supporting national MMPI priorities.
9.11. participation rates by region and demographic group
9.12. student retention and progression rates
9.13. student satisfaction and sense of belonging
9.14. utilisation of student support services
9.15. graduate destination and employability outcomes

Academic Senate Approval Date: 27th September 2026