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Makerere University / UVRI Centre of Excellence  
in Infection and Immunity  
Research and Training

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POSITION PAPER

### Version 1

Effective Date: 13<sup>th</sup> August 2019

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Elliott', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Professor Alison Elliott  
Programme Director

## **MUII Diversity & Inclusion Statement**

MUII values all individuals from different cultures, perspectives and experiences. We strive to identify and foster potential for excellence, and to recruit and work with the best candidate for each position or fellowship, regardless of their age, sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, social or economic standing, political opinion or disability.

Since inception, MUII has been implementing a number of strategies to promote inclusion and prevent discrimination, such as setting up an internship for People with Disabilities (PwDs), giving the candidates with disabilities equal opportunity to apply for job openings, giving maternity leave to our female fellows to allow them graduate and others. This Position Paper has been developed to support our efforts to have all our recruits and applicants, members, trainees, fellows and staff protected against any form of discrimination or disadvantage.

# About MUII

## MUII objectives

**Our goal** as the Makerere University – UVRI Centre of Excellence for Infection and Immunity research and training (MUII) is to drive Africa-relevant Infection and Immunity (I&I) science in Uganda by bringing together scientists from the foremost health research institute (the Uganda Virus Research Institute, UVRI), and foremost university (Makerere), with their world-class, external collaborators, to support excellence in I&I research and training.

**Our “Vision 2040”** is Africa leading advances in Infection and Immunity research, with transformative impact on African health.

**Our specific aims** align with DELTAS Africa’s strategy [shown in square brackets]. MUII aims, as set out in our proposal, are as follows.

### **Aim 1. To promote Africa-relevant I&I scientific excellence [*Scientific Quality*].**

Transitioning from the MUII training programme, the MUII Centre of Excellence will comprise senior Ugandan I&I scientists and young, emerging leaders, their research groups, trainees, and international collaborators: a mutually-supportive platform for world-class Africa-relevant science and training.

### **Aim 2. To provide career training for African I&I research leaders [*Research Training*]**

Strategies include

- Career-pathway fellowships: Uganda-based, with international collaboration and co-supervision
- Focus on bioinformatics: ring-fenced bioinformatics fellowships and project grants; short courses integrated with partner-network opportunities
- Focus on emerging & re-emerging infectious diseases: ring-fenced PhD opportunities at College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Biosecurity (COVAB)
- Improved efficiency and quality in I&I Masters training: coordination of courses across Makerere colleges; expert input from Uganda partners, and video-conferencing from Cambridge
- Professional development and citizenship: mentored leadership experience; curriculum of workshops
- Planning for sustainability and succession

### **Aim 3. To utilise and enhance the UVRI-Makerere I&I research environment [*Management & Environment*]:**

- Drive research in new laboratories developed during phase 1 (MUII-1), in new COVAB Biosecurity laboratories, in the MRC-funded Uganda Medical Informatics Centre
- Strengthen research support at lead institution, UVRI

### **Aim 4. Engage in outreach [*Citizenship*]:**

Develop communication skills; raise public awareness, network scientists and trainees, share resources and research findings, interact with policy makers, promote research implementation.

# Equality and Diversity

## 1. Purpose

This Position Paper sets out MUII's approach to inclusion and diversity of our recruits and applicants, members, trainees, fellows and staff. MUII values all individuals with different cultures, perspectives and experiences. We strive to identify and foster potential for excellence, and to recruit and work with the best candidate for each position or fellowship, regardless of their age, sex, race, colour, cultural, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, social or economic standing, political opinion, religious or social background, while considering those with disabilities.

## 2. Inclusion and diversity

We believe that inclusion refers to availing equal opportunity and access to all recruits, trainees, members and staff while eliminating discrimination based on sexual, religious and social cultural differences. We aim to be proactive to eliminate barriers that might disadvantage certain categories of people who otherwise are well-qualified people, or have strong potential for excellence, wherever possible. We as well welcome and appreciate diversity in our fellows and staff. This helps to value every one's effort to the programme as each individual brings their unique perspective to problem solving.

## 3. Scope

The rights and obligations set out in this Position Paper apply equally to all our members, trainees, fellows, staff, and our partners

## 4. MUII commitment

Our inclusion and diversity Position Paper focuses on six aspects of diversity and inclusion as listed below:

- Gender
- pregnancy, maternity and paternity
- race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality and national origin)
- physical disability
- religion and or belief
- age
- political affiliation

## **5. When does this Position Paper apply?**

### **a) Recruitment**

We strive to eliminate discrimination and achieve inclusion in our recruitment and selection processes. We shall not discriminate against applicants based on their minority community, gender, marital or civil partnership status, religion or belief, political opinion, race or ethnicity, or disability. Where age restrictions apply, for example in the selection of fast-track Masters Fellows strategically intended for people at the start of their career, these will be clearly specified and explained. To achieve this, all advertisements for MUII or placements will reflect our commitment to equality through the following indicative statements: “MUII is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. We welcome applications from all sections of the community including candidates with disabilities.”

We strive to have gender balance in our selection and interview panels and to include a PwD on the panels when interviewing a candidate with a disability.

Our focus is on excellence. In general, selection committees are asked to identify the “best candidate” for a particular position or opportunity. However, in doing so, they are expected to

- Be cognisant of the possibility of unconscious bias. Panel members may wish to undertake an unconscious bias test such as that available at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
- Take account of delayed career progression due to circumstances such as maternity or paternity leave, or other career breaks or delays (fellowship application forms allow documentation of this)
- Balance evidence of strong potential against formal qualifications
- Where candidates “tie” on other considerations, give preference to the minority based on gender or other aspects of diversity relevant to the particular position or opportunity

MUII offers a number of short-term training activities throughout the year. Applications for these trainings are open to all fellows and some to the public. We do encourage applications from all relevant stakeholders.

### **b) Training**

For people with disabilities we have established a special internship programme to give them opportunity to gain work experience. To enable disabled friendly working environment, we continuously improve physical accessibility and procure assistive technology, as need arises. As well, we encourage PwDs to apply for our open positions, as noted above.

### **c) Family leave**

All our female fellows and staff are eligible to paid maternity leave for 60 working days following

the birth or adoption of a child (or children, in case of twins or other multiple births). Fellowships for women are extended with 60 working days' additional stipend to allow them to complete their programmes. We as well extend paternity leave of 15 working days to our male fellows and staff. These days can be taken at any time within three months of the birth or adoption of their child (or children).

Fellows and staff may also apply for compassionate leave when required for care and attention to their dependents. Ten working days can be taken as compassionate leave per year. Longer periods can be considered, if needed, in consultation with the Centre Manager and Director.

#### **d) Child care for infants during travel**

Fellows or staff with young children may require additional support during travel for meetings and conferences. Specifically, women who are breast-feeding may wish to travel with their child and an additional family member or attendant, or to arrange child care at their destination. MUII will provide additional funds to support this for up to one week. Applications should be made in writing to the Centre Manager. Applications for support for longer periods, or alternative circumstances, can also be made and will be considered by the Centre Manager and Director, subject to the availability of funds.

#### **e) Promotion**

Any staff promotion within MUII is based on outstanding performance. This is assessed through annual appraisals with staff supervisors and promotions are done based on the appraisal reports. We discourage any promotions based on age, sex, race or any other form of discrimination.

### **6. Zero tolerance on discrimination**

MUII applicants, staff, members or trainees who have concerns about discrimination within the programme are requested to report and discuss this with the Centre Manager or Director. Their concerns will be managed confidentially and relevant action will be taken to manage any complaint.

Members, staff and trainees who experience discrimination outside the MUII programme are invited to seek support, for example through the MUII mentorship programme.

### **7. Communication**

This inclusion and diversity Position Paper will be discussed and shared with all current staff and fellows.

All our newly appointed fellows and staff will be made aware of the Position Paper at the time of their induction.

A copy of the inclusion and diversity Position Paper will be made accessible to all members via the web and intranet sites and on our shared hard drive.

## **8. Monitoring and Evaluation**

MUII collects data on gender balance in the programme recruitment and training. Where possible, we shall as well collect data on other aspects of diversity listed above (section 4) to enable us to identify any discrimination tendencies as early as they arise.

## **9. Review**

The MUII Centre manager in consultation with the Director will have this Position Paper reviewed at least once every two years and communicate any changes made.