Employee Representation, Freedom of Association and Consultation Policy

1. Purpose

To recognise employees' freedom of association, provide a fair channel for consultation on common workplace concerns and establish a lawful process for considering any future request for employee representation.

2. Scope

This policy applies to teaching, non-teaching and administrative employees, including regular, probationary, temporary, part-time and fixed-term employees, subject to applicable law.

3. Definitions

- **Employee association / trade union:** A body formed by employees in accordance with applicable law to represent or advance their lawful employment-related interests.
- **Employee consultation:** A structured process through which employees or their representatives may raise common workplace matters and provide views to the University.
- **Collective bargaining:** Negotiation between an employer and a qualifying representative body on matters within the scope of applicable law.

4. Policy Statement

VISTAS recognises employees' right to freedom of association in accordance with applicable law. As at the preparation of this policy, the University does not have a formally recognised staff trade union or employee association. This statement records the present institutional position and does not imply that a union or collective bargaining arrangement currently exists. VISTAS shall not discriminate against or retaliate against an employee for lawful association-related activity. In the absence of a recognised employee association, the University may facilitate consultation through appropriate institutional channels.

5. Policy Principles and Commitments

- Employees may form or join lawful trade unions or employee associations in accordance with applicable law.
- The University shall not compel employees to join or refrain from joining an association, and shall not discriminate or retaliate against employees for lawful association-related activity.
- The present absence of a staff union or association shall not be represented as a waiver of employees' rights to freedom of association.
- VISTAS may facilitate employee consultation through HR meetings, staff forums, written representations or another mechanism approved by the Competent Authority.
- Consultation channels shall be accessible to employees across teaching, non-teaching and administrative functions, as practicable.

- Where a lawful request for recognition or representation is received, the University shall consider it in accordance with applicable law and a documented procedure.
- Collective bargaining shall be undertaken only where a qualifying representative body exists and where bargaining is applicable under the law. The University shall not claim that collective bargaining has occurred unless supported by records.
- Consultation shall not replace statutory grievance procedures or individual employee rights.

6. Implementation Procedure

1. Employees may submit a request for consultation or raise a common workplace matter through Human Resources or a channel notified by the University.
2. Human Resources shall acknowledge a written request within five working days, where practicable, and identify the appropriate consultation route.
3. Where employees seek formal recognition or representation, Human Resources shall refer the request to the Competent Authority and verify relevant legal and procedural requirements.
4. The Competent Authority shall communicate its decision or next procedural step in writing, with reasons where required by law or University procedure.
5. Where an employee consultation meeting is convened, Human Resources shall record the agenda, attendance, issues raised, agreed actions and follow-up dates.
6. Matters that concern individual pay, employment rights or grievances shall be routed through Policy 08 or the applicable statutory procedure.
7. If a qualifying representative body is established in future, any negotiation or collective bargaining shall be conducted only in accordance with applicable law and documented authority.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Human Resources	Receive requests, coordinate consultation, maintain records and advise on applicable procedures.
Employees	Use consultation channels responsibly and respect lawful procedures.
Heads of Schools / Departments	Facilitate appropriate employee communication and refer common concerns to HR.
Competent Authority	Consider recognition-related matters and oversee the institutional consultation framework.

8. Records and Supporting Evidence

- This approved policy and evidence of communication to employees
- Current institutional statement on the existence or absence of a recognised union / association
- Employee consultation requests, meeting notices, minutes and action records
- Any future recognition request, verification and decision records
- Collective bargaining records only if a qualifying process takes place

9. Review and Amendment

This policy shall be reviewed at least once every three years, or earlier if applicable law, University structures, identified risks or implementation reviews require amendment. The review date and approved amendments shall be recorded.

Created / Revised on: _____

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Signature / Seal: _____