

# Inclusion policy HOGENT University of Applied Sciences and Arts

December 15th, 2022

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## Foreword

This inclusion policy emerged from the Inclusion working group - a multidisciplinary team with representatives throughout different departments, research centres, managements, services and students - based on the input gathered from internal experts and representatives from different stakeholders. The diversity policy and preparations of the previous group working around diversity were tested against the current realities, evolutions and expectations. The inclusion policy also provides an answer to the recommendations formulated in the assessment report as part of the institutional review. This inclusion policy was presented to different entities/stakeholders, and is up-to-date.

## Reading Guide

The most essential points in the **transition to an inclusive college university**, and therefore deserve the most attention, are in bold. Important concepts mentioned in the inclusion policy are *in italics* and are included in the glossary.

This inclusion policy refers to every student, every employee and every partner of HOGENT university of Applied sciences and Arts. We should all realise this policy together, because together we form HOGENT, and together, we are HOGENT. With that in mind, this policy text is written from a 'we' perspective and we vary between the words 'we' and 'HOGENT'.

The inclusion policy must be read within existing HOGENT policy frameworks, measures and applicable Belgian, European and international legislation.

# 1 Vision statement

## 1.1 Introduction

This vision statement indicates why HOGENT chooses inclusion. This vision starts from 3 key concepts:

- **Diversity within diversity**
- **Equality and equal chances**
- **Inclusion**

The vision statement declares what these core concepts mean for HOGENT.

## 1.2 What? Why?

**Diversity within diversity** is a reality. Our society consists of (more and more) people who differ from each other in many possible ways, visible and invisible. HOGENT sees these (in)visible **differences as an enrichment** and as a challenge to handle these inclusively, both for HOGENT and for our society. Therefore, it wants to aim for recognition, connection and appreciation of these differences in its inclusion policy. Diversity exceeds student population and concerns all sections and activities of HOGENT. HOGENT chooses for a broad approach to diversity and has attention for all forms of diversity in its policies. **We want the same diversity at HOGENT as we find in our society.** HOGENT wants to be a catalyst for diversity and inclusion, for both their own institution as for our society.

Yet some differences and their intertwined nature impede a meaningful pathway in higher education. Identifying and naming the causes is essential, to be aware of obstacles or privileges experienced by certain individuals and/or groups, and to make invisible norms and blind spots visible. It is **HOGENT's task** to eliminate as much of these obstacles because every person is equal and deserves equal chances. HOGENT pursues this task with recognition and appreciation of the differences - and with awareness of the complexity of diversity within diversity.

HOGENT wants to be an **inclusive college university where everybody feels at home**. This means that everybody can be themselves, feel involved (or can be involved) and has a voice that truly counts in the HOGENT dialogue. **HOGENT is a place where every student and employee feels safe, respected and represented.** This also means that HOGENT is no place for transgressive behaviour. HOGENT has the responsibility to engage in conversations, to connect, to incite consciousness, and to sensitize. We take a proactive approach to polarization or conflict and we actively work on a safe environment in which these challenges can be solved, because connection, dialogue and understanding are key to inclusion. A safe environment stimulates participation, co-creation, innovation and encourages the critical, creative and open society that HOGENT strives for.

It is **our societal responsibility** to build **inclusive campuses** and to invest in *diversity-sensitive* and *diversity-active* professional development in education, research, services and the practice of arts. Not only do we want to be *diversity-sensitive* and *–active* ourselves, we also want to train **professionals who stand by these values**. In doing so, we encourage growth and change needed for a society in which diversity and inclusion are the norm. HOGENT exploits talents, creates chances and contributes to *social mobility*.

## 2 Ambitions

### 2.1 Introduction

We can derive 5 important different ambitions from our vision. We link these ambitions to our core values (as proposed by the SD4 working group in HOGENT's 2017-2022 strategic plan): engaged - headstrong - people-oriented - passionate - inspiring

### 2.2 Diversity and inclusion is an assignment for all of us(Engaged)

Achieving inclusion is **an assignment for all of us**: students, employees, managers and operators. It is a task across all study programmes, research centres, offices and services. This task is not optional and keeps us all – **individually and collectively – responsible**. This means that we do not shift our responsibility onto monitoring systems, diversity working groups or a couple of committed colleagues and students. It requires everybody's **active engagement**.

First and foremost, **ambassadors** are needed in every department, every curriculum centre, every research centre, every service, every management and every body of discussion. An equal participation and integration of underrepresented students and staff is a basic requirement. The engagement will only grow by aligning our decretal assignments more closely with reality, interests and needs of a diverse society with particular attention to disadvantaged groups. This applies for every other activity, every process and every policy implemented within our university of applied Sciences and Arts.

Investing in development of **diversity related competencies** among students and staff is also an important factor. By embedding diversity and inclusion in the selection and evaluation criteria for staff and leadership, and in the learning outcomes for students, we are held accountable for the choices we make — individually and collectively.

### 2.3 HOGENT = a place where you can be bold and brave(Headstrong)

HOGENT strongly upholds respect and tolerance towards other opinions and perspectives, but does not keep these silent. For the institution, active pluralism means the possibility to speak, critical reflection and making open communication as easy and explicit as possible. Within HOGENT, we want to **name and challenge inequalities and privileges**. We strive to create the physical and mental space to express resistance, to listen to each other and to clear the way. We address inequality, polarization and conflict **proactively** through a diversity and inclusion policy that applies to students and employees. This policy is embedded in every level - from governance to the organizational culture - and in every HOGENT activity inside the borders of existing legal provisions and HOGENT's internal policies on transgressive behaviour and scientific evidence and integrity.

this implies that HOGENT is a '**brave space**', a **sincere, bold and brave place where everybody feels - both literally and figuratively - safe to enter a conversation, to share, to learn and to grow**, with mutual respect. A place where every subject is handled respectfully, where everybody is responsible for their intentions and consequences for their words and deeds. A place where every member of HOGENT is challenged by being presented choices.



A 'bold and brave place' cannot be imposed from the top down - it requires **commitment and involvement from every student and employee**. What HOGENT CAN do is **critically observe already existing learning- and working environments** and implement the necessary changes to initiate a structural, dynamic and continuous transformation process. HOGENT provides trained personnel, who pick up signals and are the so-called 'feelers' of the organization, to help support a 'bold and brave space'.

## 2.4 Chances for everybody (People-oriented)

Everybody has the right to **equal chances to realise their talents and potential**. HOGENT recognises that diversity and equal chances are essential for social justice, but we also recognise that not every (potential) member of HOGENT has, or is given equal opportunities. HOGENT is advocate for these underrepresented voices and is a proponent of social mobility. It does not see these inequalities as unchangeable, nor as inevitable.

To raise the chances of **a meaningful process for 'everybody'**, we want to gain a better insight in the needs and demands of different disadvantaged groups and possible subordination mechanisms. This includes that HOGENT wants to involve the voices of underrepresented people as experts in its education, research, processes, monitoring,...

HOGENT deliberately opts for a two-pronged policy when it comes to activities and processes. On the one hand, we want to align our study programmes, services, facilities, campuses and buildings **to a bigger group of users** with different needs and requirements, which results in less need for customisation (see '*design for all*'-principle). On the other hand, we strongly believe in equality that does not erase differences. We will continuously **commit to talent development and differentiated support** where needed (and possible).

By doing so, HOGENT creates an accessible and inclusive learn- and work environment, that responds as full as possible to the needs, and that keeps in mind the possibilities and differences of every member of HOGENT without lowering any standards.

## 2.5 Catalyst for change (Passionate)

HOGENT aims to accelerate the evolution to a broad and sustainable society. Every member of HOGENT contributes to this by **initiating change** — no matter how small — within their own domain, that corrects inequalities, generates opportunities and helps shaping new generations flexible and resilient. For this, diversity within diversity is the norm. **Working diversity-sensitive** and **citizenship** are key. At HOGENT, everyone contributes — through small but meaningful actions — to equal opportunities, appreciation of diversity and a more inclusive society.

HOGENT invests in **diverse-sensitive professional development** on all levels, across all sections and within our four statutory missions. We train our professionals to be **diverse-sensitive** themselves. Working *Diverse-sensitive* requires an open, respectful, close and inviting basic attitude, cooperation and dialogue. Moreover, we operate from a power-/talent-based view of people, rather than a problem focussed one. A multilateral, multilingual and intercultural reality demands broader frames of reference, supplies of multiple perspectives and development of specific competences. Working *Diverse-sensitive* is not possible without a critical attitude towards already existing differences in power and subordination mechanisms. *Multiperspectivity* gives us the chance to break free from our own perspective and our own moral compass.

Someone who chooses for HOGENT, becomes part of a community based on the equality of every member and shared responsibility towards other members of the society to which they belong.

## 2.6 Ambassador for inclusion *(Inspiring)*

As a social actor, HOGENT is **ambassador** in promoting an inclusive society through education, research, services and the practice of arts. HOGENT focusses on talents and differentiation. It creates a climate in which **diversity and multiple perspectives lead to a creative and innovative working and learning environment**. We want to inspire others with our good case studies.

A role model contains addressing stereotypes, power positions, subordination mechanisms and all forms of discrimination. It also contains creating possibilities for debates and that we can acknowledge that this is a continuous learning process, where we can make mistakes and learn from them. We want to share these **experiences**.

We hope to promote inclusion in a professional, but also in a personal and social context, by **permanently focusing on acquiring knowledge, skills and talents** related to diversity and inclusion.

HOGENT stands out **by fixating on each individual's talent and striving for maximum potential, social and professional development in a context of life-long development**.

## 3 Goals

### 3.1 Introduction

The objectives were formulated on two levels: strategical subgoals (SSGs) and operational goals (OGs). These objectives fit in the goals set out in the Strategic plan of 2023-2028. The objectives, outlined in sections 3.2 and 3.3 already provide an insight into the key priorities which HOGENT aims to emphasize in its inclusion policy.

### 3.2 Strategic Subgoals (SSGs)

SSO1 – HOGENT provides internal and external support and engagement regarding to diversity, equal opportunities and inclusion.

SSO2 – HOGENT embeds diversity, equal opportunities and inclusion throughout its operations.

SSO3 – HOGENT creates a bold and brave space where it is possible to act *diverse-active*

### 3.3 Operational Goals (OGs)

*Under SSO1*

OG1.1 – HOGENT sensitizes students, employees, directors and external stakeholders

OG1.2 – HOGENT communicates *Diverse- sensitively*

OG1.3 – HOGENT communicates concrete engagements and actions towards local and international environment.

*Under SSO2*

OG2.1 – HOGENT ensures broad physical, digital, financial and functional accessibility of HOGENT.

OG2.1 – HOGENT organises both quantitative and qualitative monitoring of diversity, equal opportunities and inclusion and evaluates and adjusts where necessary.

*Under SSO3*

OG3.1 – HOGENT creates a space where every dialogue and proactive action is possible

OG 3.2 – HOGENT educates students to become *diverse-active*.

OG 3.3 – HOGENT is working on making their personnel *diverse-active* professionals.

## ATTACHMENT 1 – GLOSSARY

P5.

**Diverse-sensitive:** to have attention and respect for diversity and to be sensible to know when differences are relevant and when they are not.

**Diverse- active:** to handle differences the right way when it is relevant.

**Social mobility:** alterations in the social position of people or groups which involve important changes in the social environment and living circumstances of those involved.

P6.

**Brave space:** a space where people actively participate and where dialogue is encouraged as complement on a safe space, where, in the first case, people must feel safe enough to actively participate and enter a conversation.

P7.

**Design-for-all-principle:** the design of products and surroundings in order to be as useful as possible for everybody (no matter their age or physical characteristics such as length, visual and auditive capacities or mobility), without the need for adaptation or personalization.

P8.

**Multiperspectivity:** entails the ability to let go of one's personal perspective, look at things through different approaches and empathise with the perspective of those with whom one interacts.

## ATTACHMENT 2 – HOGENT- policy frameworks

- **Principles** (BC/B/2021/PEOR/103898)
- **About gender equality in management and leadership positions:**
  - o Special Decree of the 13th of July 2012 concerning the administrative organisation and functioning of certain public university colleges, in particular article 13, third paragraph (Governing Body) and article 31, §4 (Board of Governors)
  - o Organisational regulations (IO/B/2020/BEAA/87112):
    - o Supervisory board: article 6, §3 (administrative constituency), article 7, §2 (staff constituency) and article 8, §2 (student constituency);
    - o Executive board: article 26.
- **Gender equality in recruitment and career possibilities:**
  - o Recruitment: (<https://www.hogent.be/dit-is-hogent/werken-aan-hogent/>)
  - o New regulations on recruitment and selection of dean, head of degree programme, research centre coordinator, teamcoordinator (BC/B/2020/PEOR/87886, BC/B/2020/PEOR/90111, BC/B/2022/PEOR/119672)
  - o New regulations on recruitment and selection of teaching staff (BC/B/2021/PEOR/104664). The gender requirement in the regulation on recruitment and selection of support staff was extended in terms of diversity (Art. 24)
- **Policy around transgressive behaviour:**
  - o Policy framework on transgressive behaviour, approved by the executive council on 13 may 2022 (BC/B/2022/BEAA/117866)
  - o Framework on transgressive behaviour of KASK conservatory, approved by the executive council on 12 march 2021 (BC/B/2021/BEAA/100310) and revised framework 'what to do in case of transgressive behaviour?' for students and staff of KASK conservatory (BC/B/2022/BEAA/123598).
  - o Provisions in employment regulations (confidant of HOGENT: procedure for staff (BC/2015/PEOR/16428)).
  - o confidential advisor of HOGENT (B/BC/2007/AB/0071):
    - All HOGENT staff members can contact the confidential advisor, but so can employees from external organisations who believe they have been subjected to violence, bullying or unwanted sexual behaviour at work by a member of HOGENT can appeal to the confidential advisor.
    - The confidential advisor operates within the legal framework and collaborates with the prevention advisor for psychosocial aspects from the external prevention service Cohezio
    - The confidential advisor works anonym, independent and confidential without any consequences for one's situation at work.