

# The Open University of Kenya

## Student's Handbook



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# **Student's Handbook**

# **VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF KENYA**

## **Vision**

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The innovative university for inclusive prosperity.

## **Mission**

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To provide affordable, flexible, quality learning experiences which enable individual acquisition of knowledge, skills and values in students' chosen fields of study; nurture talents and create opportunities for innovative practices shaping learners into researchers, leaders, entrepreneurs and global citizens.

## **Philosophy**

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The Open University of Kenya is established to provide education to all, building on prior learning. Education is continuous and every person has a right to education. We are committed to make it accessible to all who need it regardless of where they are. The Open University of Kenya breaks down boundaries and barriers to learning in all their forms. We use technology to mitigate the effects of geographical, economic and social barriers. We subscribe to the philosophy that quality education makes human beings equal.

## Core Values

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The University will operate on the following core values:

- a) Excellence
- b) Inclusivity
- c) Innovation
- d) Integrity

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## PERSONAL DETAILS

This Student's Handbook belongs to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Course: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### DISCLAIMER:

This Student's Handbook was prepared with available information at the time of publication. However, The Open University of Kenya (OUK) reserves the right to amend, without notice or obligation, any information and statement in it as deemed necessary.

## FOREWORD

Today, we are living in the fourth industrial revolution era where everything revolves around technology. Design and delivery of education has also been challenged to a great extent with a greater percentage of citizens embracing technology and leveraging on it to deliver education and training. Governments across the globe are striving to create a paradigm shift in education and training by optimising the use of technology to deliver and assess the curriculum.

The global demands require citizens to be equipped with the necessary skills and competencies so as to be able to drive a knowledge-based economy effectively by using appropriate technology-based tools, systems and platforms. These demands coupled with the need to have the 21st Century skills further justify the need to use technology at all levels of education and training.

Use of technology is envisaged to lead to improved quality, increased access and equity in education and training. Students who go through technology enabled learning acquire knowledge, skills, values and desired attitudes which eventually culminate into individuals with a high Human Capital Index (HCI).

The overarching goal of OUK is to increase access to university education by leveraging on ICT. This University seeks to give the world enormous op-

portunities to acquire higher education without restriction of time or space and this will to a great extent promote life-long learning.

I kindly request all students to peruse this handbook in order to acquaint themselves with the services and activities on offer and policies that inform them. It contains rules and regulations that will guide your conduct as a student. Your adherence to these regulations, your full participation in academic and non-academic activities, your respect for order and sustained pursuit of our core values will constitute your definite roadmap to success.

Welcome to The Open University of Kenya (OUK) and enjoy your studentship.

Prof. Elijah OMWENGA

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## **Vice chancellor**

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### 3.1 Introduction

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This handbook is an important document which all students should read to familiarize themselves with the operations, policies and statutes of the Open University. It gives vital information about the University, on academic matters, as well as guidelines on student activities and conduct during the period of study.

This student handbook is intended to provide you with resourceful information about your studies at OUK and supportive services available. This handbook has been prepared to inform you of the purposes, practices, and procedures designed to make your studies a successful experience. The handbook serves as a quick guide to important things such as programme outline, library services, admission, registration, and graduation. It also contains policies related to ethical considerations, code of conduct and campus services.

### 3.2 Governance of The Open University of Kenya

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The University is headed by the Chancellor who advises the University Council on matters considered necessary for the betterment of the University.

The Chancellor of the University is appointed by the Head of as provided for in the University Charter and in line with the Universities Act , just like for all other public Universities in Kenya.

The Chancellor confers degrees and awards diplomas and certificates. The University has a Council which is headed by a chairperson. The chairperson chairs the University Council's meetings. One of the functions of the University Council is to ensure that the University has a proper and functional management structure. It also monitors and evaluates the implementation of strategies, policies, management criteria and plans of the University in line with the relevant laws and regulations.

The Chief Executive Officer of the University is the Vice-Chancellor (VC). The VC is responsible for the day to day running of the University. He is both the academic and administrative head of the University and ensures in this regard that all operations and meetings run smoothly, including chairing the University Senate which is charged with oversight over all academic matters. He or she is the custodian of all University articles of administration. The VC participates in reviewing academic programs, budgets, and policies, and improving upon them. He or she is also responsible for building networks with other academics and institutions, ensuring standards are maintained among other responsibilities.

The VC is assisted in the running of the University by Deputy Vice- Chancellors, Registrars, Finance Officer, the University Librarian, heads of learner support centres, Director of Student Affairs among others. All these officers and their offices work together to make sure your stay at OUK is fruitful, memorable and enjoyable.

### 3.3 Mode of Learning

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The OUK offers its courses through blended learning. This provides students with more flexibility in their learning experience. Fully online learning

has been proven to be a valuable tool for delivering education, and offers a level of flexibility and convenience that traditional face-to-face instruction cannot match. OUK students benefit from the blended approach to a great extent.

A blended learning approach allows students to access course materials and activities online. This would allow for a more personalised learning experience where students can choose the mode of instruction that works best for them. However, it is worth noting that assessment at times may require individual student's physical presence.

### 3.4 Media of Instruction

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The main media of instruction shall be the following:

- 1. Online course materials:** The University uses various digital media, such as videos, podcasts, and e-books, to deliver course content and make it easily accessible to students.
- 2. Interactive learning platforms:** a Virtual Learning Environment facilitates communication and collaboration among students and instructors and provide access to course materials and assessments.
- 3. Web conferencing:** the University uses web conferencing tools to conduct live, interactive lectures, discussions, and virtual support.
- 4. Social media:** Social media platforms connect students and instructors, facilitate creation of study groups and sharing of resources.
- 5. Virtual reality and simulations:** The University uses virtual reality and simulations to provide students with immersive and interactive learning experiences, particularly in STEM learning areas.
- 6. Virtual Labs:** the University uses online simulations and virtual labs to provide students with hands-on experiences in STEM learning areas.

7. **Open University Mobile App:** the University has made provision mobile apps that give students access to course materials, assessments, and other resources on their mobile devices.
8. **Radio and Television:** The University will explore KICD's experience with the use of Radio and Television in setting up a streaming media to provide lectures and educational content.
9. **Print materials:** Providing students with print resources, as necessary, such as textbooks or workbooks, that have been digitised and can be accessed offline will be made available to students as needed.

**NOTE:** Students are strongly advised to have access to a computing device which can give them the best user experience while utilising the listed media used by the University to deliver the curriculum.

## Digital Library Services

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The OUK library is fully automated and it has a wide range of digital resources including e-books, e-journals, and databases. The University has subscribed to several databases with the most current publications. In addition to this, the library has several computer stations, study spaces and limitless internet access.

To enhance provision of learning resources, OUK has established linkages with other digital libraries and this has led to increased provision and access to digital learning resources.

## 3.5 Academic Programmes Offered by OUK

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The Open University of Kenya will offer the following programmes for the conferment of degrees and award of diplomas.

## **Undergraduate Degree Programmes**

1. Bachelor of Data Science
2. Bachelor of Science in Cyber Security and Digital Forensics
3. Bachelor of Technology Education
4. Bachelor of Science in Business and Entrepreneurship
5. Bachelor of Economics and Statistics
6. Bachelor of Science in Agri-Technology and Food Systems

## **Postgraduate Diploma**

1. Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership and Accountability
2. Postgraduate Diploma in Learning Design and Technology

## **Common courses**

The Open University of Kenya offers the following common courses:

1. Global citizenship
2. Ethics and Social Cohesion
3. Climate Change
4. Basic Research
5. Philosophy
6. Psychology

## 3.6 Online Registration

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The University operates an information management system that will assist you to register for your courses, make fees payments, and entry of course units online.

## 3.7 Inter/Intra School Transfers

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The University will make a provision for first-year students who may wish to apply for inter or intra school transfers to apply for the same using some designed forms which will be availed through the University's website. A brief window will be provided at the beginning of the first study period for these transfers to be applied for. Students will be notified about the outcome of their applications through the respective deans of schools involved.

## 3.8 Mode fees of payments

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All payments are to be made through deposits in the University accounts provided. Fees shall be set from time to time by the University, subject to the provisions of Section 45(1)(b) of the Universities Act 2012, based on the power vested in the Council under the Charter after considering the recommendation of the Senate. Every person invited for admission as a student for a degree, diploma, certificate or other award of the University shall pay to the University such registration fees and such other fees as the council may determine from time to time.

## 3.9 University Examinations

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Students are highly encouraged to observe integrity during all university assessment activities. Cases of cheating and impersonation will be punish-

able by law and can lead to discontinuation.

### **3.10 Social Media**

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The University has established social media platforms to ease communication and to encourage inquiries pertinent matters concerning the University. These platforms include Facebook, Twitter among others. Students are highly encouraged to use these tools in a positive manner while avoiding abuse or misuse of the internet. Responsible use of the stated platforms cannot be overemphasised.

### **3.11 Student Clubs and Societies**

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Students are highly encouraged to join at least one club or society. These non-formal learning forums help in holistic growth of an individual. As a student, identify a club or society guided by your passion and ability. This will ensure that learning is extended beyond four walls of the lecture halls. Appropriate technological tools will be used to conduct national, regional and global interactions among students.

### **3.12 Students' Leadership**

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The student leadership election shall be governed by the provisions of Section 41 of the Universities Act 2012.

A student Association shall be governed by a student's committee comprising of:

- I. Chairperson

- II.** Vice Chairperson who shall be of opposite gender with the Chairperson
- III.** Treasurer
- IV.** Secretary General who shall be the secretary to the Students Council; and
- V.** Three other members to represent special interests of students

The University shall facilitate annual elections of the student council. Section 41 of the Universities Act requires that those elections are to be conducted based on an electoral college and that the results must ensure that the Council.

- I.** Reflect national diversity; and
- II.** Have not more than two thirds of its members being of the same gender

For purposes of conducting the election of the members of the Student Council, the student's association shall constitute itself into electoral colleges, with each electoral college electing three representatives from amongst persons who are not candidates for Council elections and ensuring that not more than two third of the electors from every electoral college are from the same gender.

### **3.13 Ethical Considerations**

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#### **Policy on Plagiarism**

Students are expected to demonstrate academic honesty in their studies. The policy require students to acknowledge sources of learning materials

for their presentations, responses, and in particular, if you found ideas on the internet, you need to acknowledge what is yours and what came from others.

Failure to do so may result in denial of credit.

### **Research Ethics**

Any student or teaching faculty designing a research in any way that involves human beings as research subject is required to seek approval from OUK Academic Board. It is only when a student receives a written, documented permission from the OUK Academic Board that the applicant can proceed with the portion of their research that involve human subjects.

## **3.14 Student Code of Conduct**

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards required of students of OUK. The Code is designed to explain to students their obligations, responsibilities and convey principles to enhance the overall learning experience.

### **Coverage**

A student Code of Conduct cannot encompass all possible situations. Where direction is required beyond the provision of this Code, it must be sought from an appropriate office and referenced against existing and applicable OUK procedure(s).

### **Breaches**

Students may be subject to disciplinary action through OUK Policy - Student Misconduct Policy, which for serious breaches may involve;

- permanent expulsion from OUK

- in cases of suspected criminal activity, may involve referral of the matter to the relevant law enforcement authority(s).

## References & Legal Framework

- Constitution of Kenya 2010
- The Code of Conduct has been developed reflective of the requirements and obligations of OUK students under the law such as the University Act.

## 3.15 Principles of Practice

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These Principles reflect the attributes required of all students towards OUK's learning experience.

### The Code

**Respect in Learning:** Appreciation of the diversity of ideas and opinions in pursuit of learning. Create environment respectful of learning participants, contributions and outcomes.

**Accountability in Learning:** Observation of all reasonable expectations and directions within and for the learning experience. Recognition, anticipation and acceptance of the consequences of your actions and the decisions you make. Usage of all learning facilities, resources and services appropriately and with consideration for others.

**Equity in Learning:** Demonstration of dignity, respect and courtesy to all students, staff and visitors. Encouragement of an environment free from intimidation, bullying, harassment or discrimination of any kind.

## UNDERPINNING STANDARDS

## Expected Behaviour

The following standards of behaviour are requirements for all students towards and must be reflected at all times:

- follow all regulations and requirements of OUK
- respect staff and fellow students;
- ensure the safety, comfort and freedom of others;
- demonstrate honest, responsible, courteous and ethical behaviour;
- submit work truthfully and attribute ownership appropriately;
- use all equipment and resources safely, appropriately and legitimately;
- maintain consistent punctuality;
- provide honest and accurate information in all matters and upon request;
- follow all occupational health and safety requirements.

## Unacceptable behaviour

The following standards of behaviour are unacceptable:

- displaying aggressive, disruptive, disrespectful or ill mannered behaviour or unwanted interaction towards others;
- inappropriately interfering with, or causing willful or negligent damage to the learning environment or website;

- inappropriate use of IT software and hardware including email, website and mobile phones;
- copying other's work and submitting without acknowledging true ownership;
- attending under the influence, or in possession, of alcohol, drugs or any prohibited substance

## 3.16 Student's Online Behaviour

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### Netiquette and digital citizenship

Online learning can expose one to numerous dangers or cyber threats. These dangers include cyber threats, cyberbullying, identity theft, online fraud, exposure to inappropriate content, internet and device addiction, online sexual exploitation among others. Students are encouraged to observe netiquette while learning online. Always exhibit good online mannerisms to create a conducive online learning environment. Using unkind words on others, spreading harmful stories about others, making fun of others, harassing and threatening other online users is not tolerated in any of the university's learning environments. As a student, you can also conduct yourself in a manner that deters bullies from invading your space. Students are highly encouraged to make or accept friend requests from people they are familiar with. It is also wise to ignore mean messages coming from potential bullies. Finally, it will be advisable to stay away from online fights at all costs, this will save you a lot of embarrassment, time, and energy.

### Rules guiding students' conduct in online learning environments

Students will be expected to conduct themselves with decorum in any of the university learning environments. Any form of bullying will not be tolerated. In case of class sessions conducted through online meetings, always remember to observe the following rules:

1. Arrive early in the meeting room
2. Put on professional attire
3. Test your connection, screen, and equipment before start of the meeting
4. Always mute yourself unless you are talking
5. Keep your hands off the keyboard
6. Give your full attention during the session
7. Do not interrupt others when they are talking

## 3.17 Harassment /Bullying Policy

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### Introduction

This policy sets out OUK's position in regard to expected standards of behaviour in regard to respecting other students, staff, lecturers and public

### Harassment

Harassment/Bullying means unwelcome comments or unreasonable behaviour directed toward a student, or employees that is offensive, demeaning, intimidating or creates a risk to health and safety. The following types of behaviour, where repeated or occurring as part of a pattern would be considered harassment or bullying:

- name calling, abuse or use of threats, slurs, degrading jokes including swearing or shouting
- use of visual means such as displaying intimidating or demeaning pictures, cartoons, posters etc

- writing offensive, intimidating or threatening letters, emails etc
- psychological harassment
- deliberately withholding information vital for effective work performance
- threats or behaviour that causes a person to believe they are in danger of being physically attacked to inflict punishment, loss, injury or pain. Threats may be made by innuendo or suggestion as well as by express language, gestures or display and exhibition of dangerous weapons.

Harassment is a verbal or physical conduct that shows hostility or aversion which has the effect of unreasonably interfering with a student or employee's work performance, creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, or otherwise adversely affects one's performance.

Harassment or bullying is prohibited, both in the learning environment or workplace and off the premises, including in the field and at community events or social activities conducted or sponsored by OUK.

### **3.18 STUDENT'S WELFARE**

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#### **Needy and Vulnerable Students**

The Office of the Director of Student Affairs caters for needy and learners with special needs. This directorate identifies and assists, or recommends for assistance students who are socio- economically vulnerable. This is done after authenticating the condition of need through mechanisms established by the University. While we welcome such students to come and share with us their conditions, there is necessarily no guarantee of doing everything needed by them. The Director recommends loan and where necessary bursary for eligible students from the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) and any other possible funders such as Foundations, the Ministry of Education and Constituency Development Funds (CDFs). The Director

works closely in liaison with the Financial Aid Office in assisting many students in need.

In addition to this, students with special needs are catered for fully in terms of their academic needs. Appropriate software speech and adapted learning materials are availed to these learners depending on their need.

## **Resource Centre and Services for Students with Special Needs**

The Open University of Kenya admits students with special needs for degree programmes. Qualified students with physical, visual, hearing and speech impairments are included in this category. Assessment reports are required from the learners with disabilities at the time of registration to help in establishing their level of need. These learners receive various levels of support at the Directorate of Student Affairs. Students with disabilities get different types of services from the Directorate of students' affairs depending on their type of need. These include:

1. Orientation of the visually impaired students to the University's learning management system among other learning resources
2. Advising students living with disabilities on where computing devices with Braille features can be procured from
3. Liaising with the University digital library and the Kenya Society for the Blind to coordinate tapping of existing resources and delivery of services for learners with visual impairment.

## **Guidance and Counselling Services**

The Open University of Kenya has established a system through which students can access guidance and counselling services virtually. These services are offered using technology since the learners are in different geographical locations. The counsellors set up virtual sessions with their clients upon disclosure of the issues and challenges they are facing. To achieve

students' holistic wellness, the virtual guidance and counselling centre will focus on multiple dimensions of wellness and activities that will empower students to strive for balance and wellness in life including mental, psychological, physical, intellectual as well as spiritual wellbeing.

## Mentorship

Student mentorship is highly valued at OUK. It entails assisting students to grow by tapping into the knowledge and experience of other successful people who stand in to become their mentors. It is the best way to accelerate your development as a student.

At the university, different schools assign students mentors who inform them at the start of the academic year on how a university works, where they can find the information they need, and give them advice about studying and living in a new learning environment. The mentors assigned to you will also guide you on the courses to take and the careers which best suit you as a student. Finally, your mentors will also guide you on how to conduct your studies while at the university.

As a student, it is important to note that mentoring is a protected relationship which supports learning and experimentation and it will help you to develop to your full potential. Your mentors are people of integrity, trustworthy and true confidants.

## 3.19 Important Contacts

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 [info@ouk.ac.ke](mailto:info@ouk.ac.ke)

 <https://ouk.ac.ke>

## A Declaration Form for Students

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I \_\_\_\_\_ of Registration Number \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby declare that I have read and understood the University rules and regulations and I choose to adhere to them at all times.