

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

HIV/AIDS POLICY



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The following policies cover HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) infection and AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Disease Syndrome).

PREAMBLE

Anecdotal reports suggest that the HIV/AIDS epidemic has had major effects on tertiary education institutions especially in African countries south of the Sahara desert. The institutions are also challenged by the impact of the epidemic at country, regional and global level. Makerere University like many universities elsewhere has a very high concentration of young people who are a very valuable national resource and yet are extremely vulnerable to HIV acquisition. The institution has also a very high concentration of well trained personnel that the country can ill-afford to lose through ill health and premature death. Therefore the need of an HIV/AIDS policy for an institution like Makerere University cannot be over emphasized in guiding and streamlining HIV/AIDS related issues.

PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING HIV/AIDS POLICY

1. Non-discrimination

The University recognizes that there is no documented evidence that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus is spread through ordinary contact between persons and therefore concern or fear of HIV transmission from one person to another through ordinary contact is NOT a reason to exclude persons who are carriers of the HIV or have AIDS from campus and academic or social activities.

2. Standard procedures

The fact that there is no current evidence that HIV infection can be transmitted by casual contact suggests that the standard procedures concerning protection of students, staff and researchers in University laboratories, instruction in classrooms, sanitation standards in student housing and in food service operations, and medical practice in University Health Services adequately address the majority of concerns that may occur.

3. Rule of exceptions

If situations arise in which existing policies and procedures do not apply or in which it is necessary to make a case-by-case decision, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Finance and Administration), Human Resources Manager and Dean of Students shall consult with the Director of University Health Services, the University Legal Officer, and any other relevant staff member/party to review the matter and provide a recommendation of action.

4. Gender mainstreaming

The University recognizes the centrality of gender issues in the fight against HIV/AIDS and will mainstream gender considerations in all aspects of this Policy.

1.0 POLICIES PERTAINING TO STUDENTS

The University policies involving students shall include:

1.1 Admissions

Consideration of the existence of HIV infection shall not be part of the admission criteria for prospective students.

1.2 Medical examination for students

- i) There will be no requirement for new students to undertake mandatory HIV related medical examination except on clinical grounds and as determined by a health care provider. However, under general university dispensation, new students will be required to undertake basic and routine medical examination when they report to the University.
- ii) Continuing students may undergo HIV related medical examination on clinical grounds and as determined by a health care provider.

1.3 Access to facilities

Students with HIV infection shall have full access to educational facilities, student assemblies, residential halls, dining areas, swimming pools, restaurants, rest rooms, recreation, entertainment or other common areas.

1.4 Attendance

- i) Students with HIV infection shall be allowed normal classroom attendance, or other student employment opportunities, and participation in co-curricular activities (e.g. social, cultural, and athletic events) without restriction as long as they are physically and mentally able.
- ii) If the programme load of a student with HIV infection must be modified or reduced for medical reasons, existing guidelines pertaining to reduced course loads shall be followed.
- iii) Students, who experience anxiety about the risk of infection and refuse to attend class or other functions because of the presence of a fellow student or an instructor who is HIV-infected, or perceived to be infected, shall receive counseling as to current medical information related to the risk of exposure to HIV infection through routine contact.

1.5 Education

- i) Through Student Health Services and academic units, educational programs about HIV infection will be provided to students on an ongoing basis. Current information in the form of programs pamphlets, audiovisual aids, etc will be made easily accessible to the student population. This is further outlined in section 5.0.

1.6 Financial or other aid

University policies relating to financial or any other aid apply equally to all students attending the University irrespective of their HIV status.

1.7 Food services

- i) Students with HIV infection shall have full access to all residence dining halls, rented housing dining rooms, private contracted food facilities, fraternity and sorority dining rooms, and University regulated cash operated restaurants, outlets, stores, and catered events without restriction.
- ii) Students may however ONLY be excluded on the basis of not holding membership in the applicable organization or being active participants in the sponsoring organization.

1.8 Non-discrimination

- i) Discrimination based on the actual or assumed disabling effects of HIV infection is prohibited. The University condemns all occurrences of emotional and/or physical abuse as intolerable and will respond to them quickly and effectively.
- ii) Exclusion may be acceptable if the HIV infected student is a risk to others in pursuance of a particular activity e.g. a medical practitioner could pose a risk to his/her patients while performing invasive procedures.

1.9 Disabling condition

Students with HIV/AIDS may be considered as having disabling conditions. Students with HIV/AIDS seeking assistance shall receive appropriate assistance.

1.10 University approved/regulated housing

- i) In an effort to serve the needs of HIV-infected students, decisions about housing for students with HIV infection will be made on a case-by-case basis.
- ii) There may be, in some circumstances, reasonable concern for the health of students with immune deficiencies when those students might be exposed to certain contagious diseases (e.g. to measles or chicken pox) in a close living situation.
- iii) University administrators and health officers may recommend/require that a student with HIV infection seek special housing arrangements for safety precautions.

1.11 Safety precautions

- i) Makerere University will take the necessary steps to insure the safety of individuals who may be at risk of exposure to body fluids, blood or blood products.
- ii) In order to prevent student exposure to HIV during electives, internships or other curricular activities at collaborating/patterning institutions, the

University will liaise with collaborating institutions in assurance of safety of students within the limits of those institutions existing framework.

1.12 Off-campus study programs

Students participating in off campus study programs shall be informed of health risks particularly in regard to the blood supply and medical practice or other related care and support activities that may increase their risk of exposure to HIV. Students who have to travel abroad shall also be informed of HIV test requirements to obtain visas to visit certain countries.

1.13 HIV testing

- i) There is no current justification for mandatory HIV diagnostic testing, and the University will not require it for participation in any activity. However, when other institutions, agencies, or governments require testing for participation, enrollment, or travel, diagnostic testing will be made available by University Health Services or a referral center.
- ii) There is no current medical justification for mandatory HIV diagnostic testing for enrollment to study at the University. No individual may be tested for presence of HIV without the informed written consent of that individual except if mentally incapacitated.

2.0 POLICIES PERTAINING TO UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES

Makerere University is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe work environment for all employees, as well as providing support for individual employees who may face HIV related illnesses.

Unless stated otherwise, the following policies apply to University employees.

2.1 Work place safety

The University is desirous to provide and to have a safe work environment for all employees.

2.2 Employment

Makerere University accepts otherwise qualified individuals presenting themselves for employment, irrespective of their HIV status. Although a medical examination will be required of all new employees prior to assumption of duties such shall not include HIV testing.

2.3 Employment of affected persons

The University will not refuse to hire or promote, and will not bar or discharge from employment or otherwise discriminate against, any individual because that person is HIV-infected, or perceived to be infected, so long as the individual can, with reasonable accommodation, perform the duties of the position or unless the individual poses a significant risk of substantial harm to other individuals or

employees or the public, that can not be eliminated or reduced by reasonable precautions.

Further, the University will not subject an employee so infected to job conditions, discipline, standards of performance, or other requirements which differ from those applied to applicants or employees not so infected, except as a means of accommodation for a disabling condition which may exist.

2.4 Employee refusal to work

- i) Employees who experience anxiety about the risk of infection and who refuse to work with a co-worker, student, or member of the public who is HIV-infected, or perceived to be infected, shall receive counseling as to current medical information related to the risk of exposure to HIV infection through routine contact in the work place.
- ii) Continued unreasonable refusal to work with an HIV-infected person could make an employee subject to disciplinary sanctions consistent with applicable provisions of Uganda laws and regulations, applicable collective bargaining agreements, and applicable University / administrative rules.

2.5 HIV testing

- i) There is no current justification for mandatory HIV diagnostic testing, and the University will not require it for participation in any activity. However, when other institutions, agencies, or governments require testing for participation, enrollment, or travel, diagnostic testing will be made available by University Health Services or a referral center.
- ii) There is no current medical justification for mandatory HIV diagnostic testing for employment at the University. No individual may be tested for presence of HIV without the informed written consent of that individual except if mentally incapacitated.

2.6 Employee benefits

With regard to employee benefits programs, the University will treat HIV-related illnesses the same as other life-threatening illnesses.

3.0 POLICIES PERTAINING TO HIV PREVENTION

Although Uganda has made significant progress in the prevention of HIV/AIDS the country as a whole is still vulnerable to the persistent epidemic. There is need for aggressive policies and programmes that promote prevention efforts. The University will persistently pursue pro-active prevention efforts that are in-line with the overall national policies and guidelines. These will include but are not limited to provision of HIV prevention information, education and communication (IEC), promotion of the ABC strategy, emphasizing abstinence, safe sex and use of condoms, and avoiding unsteady partnerships. In addition, infrastructure for easy

access to HIV testing and counseling services within the University will be enhanced and maintained coupled with promotion of students and staff HIV/AIDS prevention clubs.

Programs that lead to prevention of parental transmission of HIV for example through safe transfusions, use of safe syringes and needles, avoiding use and abuse of intravenous drugs will be established. Other approaches to HIV prevention like prevention of mother to child transmission and treatment of those infected by use of anti-retrovirals will be promoted.

Other policies which are beneficial to promoting HIV/AIDS prevention like gender mainstreaming policy, sexual harassment policy and any other that may be considered appropriate will be developed or strengthened and enforced. The above measures are intended to create a safe environment that is conducive for prevention of acquisition and transmission of HIV.

4.0 POLICIES PERTAINING TO HEALTH SERVICES

Medical information and public health policy regarding HIV/AIDS are rapidly evolving. The policies of Makerere University Health Services are to keep abreast of all relevant information about the epidemic and put it to maximum use for the benefit of students and staff, within the limits that resources allow. This will be accomplished by:

4.1 Safe medical practices

University Health Services seek to ensure that no person contracts infectious diseases during medical procedures. Stringent universal precautions for the prevention of HIV and related infections through infected body fluid or instruments contaminated by such fluid shall be maintained. These procedures will be under continuous review by the health staff.

4.2 Management of exposure to HIV infection

Post-exposure prophylaxis for those who get accidentally exposed to the virus for example through needle stick injuries or rape will be provided by University through the University Health Services or appropriate referral services.

4.3 Counseling and other appropriate services

- i) Counseling of the students shall be coordinated by University Health System and other appropriate designated services.
- ii) Counseling about safe sex practices, needle precautions, and prenatal transmission is provided by the Health and Counseling Services. The staff makes itself available, as much as possible at campus lectures, talks at living or

other campus groups, through the campus media and for campus outreach programs such as HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

4.4 HIV testing services

Confidential, inexpensive diagnostic testing for HIV will be offered to students by University Health Services.

Priority is given to persons with a significant risk, by history, of having been infected by HIV. No tests will be given without informed consent, and results cannot be released to third parties without the specific and express prior authorization of the patient unless otherwise required by law.

4.5 Provision for HIV care

- i) As with all other illnesses, the goal of University Health Services will be to assist the HIV infected persons to remain active and be able to perform as normally as possible.
- ii) Continuing education, treatment, and emotional support to students and staff found to be infected with HIV will be provided. Information that may preserve the health of the patient and prevent transmission of the disease will be provided to the patient and follow up will be encouraged. University Health Services staff will participate up to its capacity, with appropriate referrals to specialists or other centers in the care of those students and staff who become ill with HIV/AIDS.

4.6 Confidentiality

- i) Confidentiality of medical conditions shall be maintained. Students' and University employees' medical records hold confidential information and, as such, may not be released without the individual's written permission except as otherwise provided by law.
- ii) There is no medical necessity to advise students, faculty, or other staff of the presence of students who have HIV infection.
- iii) The University encourages its employees and students with serious infectious illnesses such as HIV infection to inform their department heads or administrators so that reasonable accommodation to their conditions can be planned and implemented. Such self-disclosure is entirely voluntary, and the information disclosed may not be released without written authorization unless otherwise required by law.

4.7 Referral

University will partner with institutions, programs and projects that will provide care to those who are infected.

5.0 POLICIES PERTAINING TO UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Care

- i) Makerere University will make the best efforts within the limits of available resources and existing University health care policies to provide staff and students affected with HIV/AIDS with the necessary care and refer HIV/AIDS infected staff, their families and students to suitable treatment sites as appropriate, where additional treatment is required, which is not provided by the University.
- ii) The University shall offer appropriate counseling and basic health care and maintenance to all staff members and students who are on the different University campuses. The level of care offered by the Makerere University shall be determined by budgetary considerations, and the reality of the sustainability of such care interventions. The University will pursue initiatives to demonstrate the highest possible standard of care.

5.2 Research

- i) Makerere University is committed to undertaking extensive empirical and operational public health, biomedical and social science research on HIV/AIDS.
- ii) Policies, plans and guidelines will be developed which support and promote co-ordination of HIV/AIDS research underway while creating mechanisms, which encourage more research to be undertaken by staff and students at the University.
- iii) Efforts to develop and sustain meaningful collaborations and partnerships with communities other institutions and public and private sector will be encouraged and nurtured.

5.3 Education and outreach

- i) The University shall actively support instruction that mainstreams HIV/AIDS education in the University curricula, services and activities.
- ii) The University shall support the distribution of training materials and make available of training sessions and knowledgeable speakers.
- iii) Recognizing the regular turnover of students and employees. The University will offer programs and conduct mailings at regular intervals.

5.4 Leadership

Makerere University will play a leadership role in fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic and mitigating its impact on the University itself and the wider society in Uganda in controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Leadership skills will be developed in areas related to prevention, care and treatment, legal and human rights aspects and other areas relevant to the epidemic.

5.5 Community involvement/advocacy

The University recognizes that the struggle against HIV/AIDS is not restricted to the University campuses and employees or students, but that wider community involvement and participation is required to control the spread of the disease and mitigate its impact.

Makerere University, a leading institution in the community, must accordingly establish community partnerships and outreach programmes for creating HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention.

The University will also coordinate its efforts with NGO's, tertiary education institutions, community organizations and the public and private sector.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.1 Implementation

- i) The Vice-Chancellor shall designate an office(s) that will coordinate implementation of this policy.
- ii) The University will raise financial resources on an ongoing basis so as to support the implementation of this policy through grants, donations and internally generated funds.

6.2 Monitoring and evaluation

There is need for the University to put in place a monitoring and evaluation system so as to assess the trends in the University's performance in different aspects relevant to this policy e.g.

- i) Impact of HIV on student and staff
- ii) Progress in University HIV prevention, care and treatment programs
- iii) HIV/AIDS curricular activities
- iv) HIV/AIDS research
- v) HIV related outreach programmes
- vi) Funding related to HIV/AIDS programmes and activities