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DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms and definitions are provided.

Abstinence: Refraining from sexual intercourse.

Affected persons: Persons whose lives are impacted by HIV/AIDS.

AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome which results from advance stages of HIV infection, and is characterized by opportunistic infections or HIV-related cancers, or both.

Anti-Retroviral Therapy: Drugs used in the treatment of HIV infection.

Discrimination: Any distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment.

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus, a virus that damages the human immune system.

Opportunistic infections: Illnesses that afflict people due to weak immune systems.

Pandemic: An epidemic occurring in many regions and countries.

PLHIV: People Living with HIV.

Prevalence (rate): The number of persons with a particular condition in a given population.

Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI): Virus or bacteria transmitted through sexual intercourse.

Stigmatisation: The act of describing or considering somebody in a way that unfairly suggests that he/she is bad or does not deserve respect.

Vulnerability: The quality or state of being susceptible to HIV/AIDS.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

HIV/AIDS was first identified in Ghana in 1986 with an infection rate of 1.5%. Since then, the infection and prevalence rates keep increasing and decreasing across regional and district levels in the country. Currently, it appears a good number of Ghanaians are aware of HIV/AIDS and its modes of transmission, but the fear and stigmatisation of HIV/AIDS positive people remain high.

The main purpose of University education is to train high caliber and skilled manpower needed for the growth and development of the country. There is therefore the need for a healthy productive workforce for the educational sector.

The menace of HIV/AIDS leads to declining productivity, increasing health care bills, increasing labour cost and increasing staff absenteeism among others. Additionally, people living with HIV/AIDS and those affected by it are often stigmatised and discriminated against. The Bolgatanga Technical University as a tertiary educational institution is required to put measures in place to address the HIV/AIDS issues in the University. This calls for an institutional policy to safeguard HIV/AIDS related stigmatisation and discrimination for effective workforce.

This policy takes inspiration from the following sources:

- i. The Ghana National HIV and AIDS, STI Policy (2013).
- ii. The International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) Code of Practice on HIV and AIDS and the World of Work (2003).

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework within which the University can respond adequately to HIV/AIDS pandemic-related issues. In that regard, the policy shall deal with the following specifics:

- i. promote HIV/AIDS responsible behaviour among students and staff to prevent its spread, and provide people living with HIV/AIDS with protection from discrimination and stigmatisation in the University.
- ii. ensure active participation of students and staff in preventive activities by creating awareness in the University community through access to information, care and support services.
- iii. integrate HIV/AIDS programmes into teaching, research and community service.

1.2 Approaches to Achieving Objectives

1.2.1 Objective 1: Promoting HIV/AIDS responsible behaviour among students and staff, and providing PLHIV with protection from discrimination and stigmatisation in the University community.

Approach(es):

- i. Disseminate information on HIV /AIDS in the University through; Documentaries, Seminars, Posters, Workshops, Stickers, Demonstrations, Brochure, Discussions and Drama through Social Media, Radio, TV, among others.
- ii. Educate the University community to live responsible and safe sexual lives e.g. reducing the number of sexual partners.

1.2.2 Objective 2: Ensuring active participation of students and staff in preventive activities by creating awareness in the University community through access to information, care and support services.

Approach(es):

- i. Create information dissemination procedure to make the University community aware of protective devices (i.e. condoms), and encourage them to use these protective devices in order to prevent the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- ii. Train HIV/AIDS Peer educators among students and staff to facilitate the education on HIV/AIDS within the University community.
- iii. Provide counselling support for students and staff affected and infected with HIV/AIDS.
- iv. Organise voluntary testing and counselling (VTC) services.
- vi. Create awareness of support services available within the region and the country.
- viii. Provide referral services for students and staff.

1.2.3 Objective 3: Integrating HIV/AIDS programmes into Teaching, Research and Community service

Approach(es):

Finding innovative ways of integrating HIV/AIDS education into various academic programmes in the University. To do this, Institutes, Faculties, Schools, Departments and Sections/Units will be encouraged to develop research projects related to HIV/AIDS.

1.3 Scope of the Policy

This policy shall apply to all students and employees of Bolgatanga Technical University.

1.4 Underlying Assumptions of the Policy

The policy is guided by the following underlying assumptions:

- i. HIV/AIDS is a global health problem affecting the development of countries and requires collective effort at all levels to minimise its impact on humanity.
- ii. That the human rights and dignity of all people irrespective of their HIV status should be respected.
- iii. That information and behavioural change are bases for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS.
- iv. That a supportive working environment will enhance the response to HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support.

SECTION TWO: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The policy shall be guided by the following principles:

- i. Bolgatanga Technical University recognises HIV/AIDS as a health issue at the workplace and should be treated like any other serious health condition.
- ii. HIV infection is preventable. Prevention can be achieved through the provision of information, education and attitudinal change.
- iii. There shall not be any discrimination against staff and students on the basis of real or perceived HIV/AIDS status.
- iv. The institution recognises gender dimension of HIV/AIDS.

- v. The University community would be proactive in order to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS.
- vi. The HIV/AIDS status of staff and students shall be confidential.

SECTION THREE: RIGHTS OF STAFF AND STUDENTS INFECTED AND AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS

3.1 STAFF

No staff of the University shall be required to undergo an HIV test, or disclose his or her HIV/AIDS status for any benefit, contract or recruitment. Thus, the University shall not use HIV/AIDS status to deny an employment contract or refuse a renewal of contract. Therefore:

- i. HIV/AIDS status shall not be used as a requirement in human resource recruitment and development.
- ii. HIV/AIDS status shall not reflect on the personal files of staff.
- iii. HIV/AIDS status of staff shall not be disclosed without the express consent of the staff except specially required by local and/or national regulations.
- iv. The University shall not condone the stigmatisation of people living with HIV/AIDS.
- v. The University shall provide a working environment that minimises occupational exposure to HIV/AIDS.

3.2 STUDENTS

- i. No prospective student of the University shall be required to undergo an HIV test, or disclose his or her HIV/AIDS status as a requirement for gaining admission.
- ii. No student of the University shall be required to undergo an HIV test or disclose his or her HIV/AIDS status as a requirement to maintain his or her studentship.

- iii. The University shall not discriminate against students living with HIV/AIDS.
- iv. The University shall endeavour to provide a conducive teaching and learning environment that minimises exposure to HIV/AIDS.
- v. A student's HIV/AIDS status shall remain confidential except specially required by local and/or national regulations.
- vi. Students have a right to a supportive and safe environment in which people living with HIV/AIDS are accepted and not stigmatised.

SECTION FOUR: RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF AND STUDENTS INFECTED AND AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS

- i. It is the responsibility of the individual to protect herself/ himself against infection.
- ii. Students and staff living with HIV/AIDS have a special obligation to ensure that they behave responsibly in order not to pose any threat of infection to any other person.
- iii. Staff and students have the responsibility not to discriminate against and/or stigmatise members living with HIV/AIDS.
- iv. Unless medically justified, no student may use HIV/AIDS as a reason for failing to attend lectures, perform work, complete assignments, or write examinations.
- v. Staff and students shall in their everyday speech be careful to avoid casting of insinuations or using stereotyped language that may offend infected and affected persons living with HIV/AIDS.

SECTION FIVE: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY

The University shall provide:

- i. protective clothes (gloves, boots, overalls, masks, screen filters, etc) for staff who require them in their day-to-day activities.
- ii. bin bags for use, especially in workshops and laboratories where possible.
- iii. assistance to staff to acquire their own laboratory/workshop tools where possible to avoid sharing.

SECTION SIX: INTEGRATION OF HIV/AIDS INTO TEACHING, RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES

6.1 Teaching

The University shall encourage and support efforts by Faculty/Institutes/Schools to incorporate aspects of HIV/AIDS and human rights issues into the curricula, where possible.

6.2 Research

The University shall encourage HIV/AIDS related research to inform its policy on teaching and community service.

6.3 Community Service

The University shall:

- i. collaborate with relevant stakeholders in research on HIV/AIDS.
- ii. train HIV peer educators and counsellors in order to bring about behavioural change in the community.
- iii. participate and support in community HIV/AIDS programmes.

- iv. share best practices, skills and where possible, resources with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) towards the prevention and management of HIV/AIDs.

SEVEN: PREVENTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR HIV/AIDS AWARENESS

The University has a duty to educate and inform its students and staff about HIV/AIDS. Appropriate information on all aspects of prevention and care will be made accessible to students and staff through; symposia, stickers, brochures, film shows, drama and literary competitions.

In addition to teaching and research, the University shall adopt the following strategies to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS on campus:

- i. advocate abstinence
- ii. encourage responsible sexual behavior
- iii. advise being faithful to one's partner
- iv. demonstrate with dummies the effective use of condom
- v. provide sex education
- vi. distribute literature on HIV/AIDS
- vii. train HIV/AIDS peer educators and counsellors
- viii. encourage the use of anti-retroviral therapy when infected
- ix. enforce the University's policy on sexual harassment.

7.1 Testing

The University shall encourage individuals to undergo voluntary HIV/AIDS testing as much as possible.

7.2 Counselling, Care and Support

- i. Students and staff shall have access to confidential counselling service on campus.
- ii. Peer counsellors and support groups shall be available for students and staff affected and infected with HIV/AIDS.

SECTION EIGHT: POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The overall responsibility for implementing the HIV and AIDS Policy lies with the Management of the University. This shall include the following officers:

The Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Director of Finance, Deans of Faculties/Schools, Dean of Students, Chairpersons of the Staff Unions, Hall Tutors, Heads of Department/Unit, Directors of Institutes, Counsellors, Students' Representative Council (SRC), Medical Officer, Focal Person.

The University Health Services Committee (Schedule B.13 of the University's Statutes) shall handle all matters relating to HIV/AIDS. To this end, the University shall:

- i. establish an appropriate budget line for the implementation of this policy.
- ii. provide a strategic work plan to guide the implementation of this policy.
- iii. subject this policy to regular review and appraisal to reflect good practices.