

Business and Technology University

(BTU, Georgia)

The Gender Equality Plan

2021-2023

1. Introduction

Business and Technology University is committed to gender equality as a critical component of fairness, inclusiveness and academic excellence. The university strives to create a diverse environment that enhances creativity, collaboration, and equal access to opportunities for all. The university ensures that education, training and promotion procedures are gender-responsive and the professional environment supports fair treatment.

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) of BTU is a policy document covering the next three years (2021-2023) with which the University aims to implement actions and initiatives to prevent gender inequalities and to enhance diversity within higher education institution – administration, education programs and skills enhancement projects. The current Gender Equality Plan is fully in line with the UN Women's Empowerment Principles and is structured around the principles.

BTU aims to empower and strengthen the new generation with the right skills, create opportunities and raise the spirit of cooperation, with particular attention on gender equality. The university creates a gender responsive learning and work environment, where people are treated with dignity, have equal rights, equal opportunities and have the right environment to realize their potential.

At BTU, we are dedicated to empowering the next generation by equipping them with the skills necessary in today's world. Central to our mission is the creation of a **gender-responsive learning and working environment** that upholds **dignity, ensures equal rights, and provides equitable opportunities for all individuals**. We place significant emphasis on fostering cooperation and actively promoting gender equality throughout our institution. By cultivating such an environment, we enable and encourage every member of our community to **gain skills, confidence and network** and realize their full potential. Through these efforts, BTU aims to contribute to a more inclusive, fair and equitable society.

The present GEP is a **tool to set the right objectives, design activities and monitor the progress** towards the gender equality plan. The plan is the result of a participatory process – discussions among university administration, academic staff and UN agencies relevant representatives.

In addition to the Women empowerment principles, the current GEP acknowledges and reflects the criteria of the EU's Research and Innovation Framework Programme - **Horizon Europe** in the following manner:

- ✓ **This GEP is a formal and widely accessible document**, published on the university website and communicated both - within the university staff and to the wider society.
- ✓ **The GEP is closely related to the university's Code of ethics and anti-discrimination regulations.**
- ✓ Dedicated resources and methodologies are in place. They are subject to update and regular monitoring. In addition, digital tools and communication channels enable the smooth application of resources.
- ✓ BTU's relevant team regularly collects data to monitor the implementation, gaps and progress of the GEP.
- ✓ BTU delivers relevant training and capacity building activities on Gender equality and unconscious gender biases to administrative staff, academic personnel and students. These trainings take place on

a regular basis. The programs are carefully tailored to address the needs of the university community, **ensuring that all members stay up to date** with best practices and **inclusive approaches**. The training sessions are conducted on a regular basis, creating a learning culture that encourages inclusion, innovation and collaboration.

- ✓ BTU has two rigid monitoring and evaluation systems in place: local, Georgian communication and dissemination system – **E-Documents** (that assists communication with the state agencies and the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia) and **Trello collaborative tool**.
- ✓ The university delivers top quality and a wide range of women empowerment programs. BTU's initiatives are unique, focused on women's skills enhancement, their economic empowerment and achievement of their full potential.
- ✓ The university has established services to support studying and working with care responsibilities including counseling, training and awareness-raising.

UN WEPs seven Principles that guide the current GEP

- **Principle 1:** Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality
- **Principle 2:** Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination
- **Principle 3:** Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers
- **Principle 4:** Promote education, training and professional development for women
- **Principle 5:** Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women
- **Principle 6:** Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
- **Principle 7:** Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality

2. Institutional Context - Gender equality within the University Structure towards creative and supportive academic culture

BTU is the dynamic, fast-growing higher education institution in Georgia that puts particular efforts in producing high quality and innovative knowledge, empowering students and academic staff with new technologies and developing collaborative ties with universities worldwide in order to deliver IMPACT. The University seeks to offer its students unique learning experiences, develop their leadership and entrepreneurial skills, and motivate and empower them to become a highly competitive workforce in local and international markets. BTU adopts a comprehensive approach to internationalization, integrating international standards and activities into all university activities, including teaching, research, modernization of services, and the development and implementation of relevant policies, initiatives, and projects. The university boasts partnerships with over **86 leading international higher education institutions**, associations, and organizations, including MIT, Harvard, EUA, NCURA, and ENRICH GLOBAL, which underscores BTU's remarkable success in a short period.

Besides the regular university activities, BTU strongly focuses on increasing **digital skills among LOCAL** communities, granting access to new knowledge and IT skills to those, who would otherwise be unable to gain digital capacities.

Management structures of BTU include the Rector, Academic Council, Chancellor and Administrative Departments: Development and International Relations Office, Career Development Center, Entrepreneurship Center, Learning Process Management Office, Research Center, Quality Assurance Service. The university is strongly focused on two major areas of study: Business Administration and Technologies and delivers education at three levels: **BA, MA and PhD**. In addition to the core faculty and staff, BTU has a pool of mentors, instructors, practitioners and alumni in various fields of ICT, that presents a special opportunity of designing and successfully implementing digital literacy and community building initiatives.

Rector of the university serves as a **focal point** for Gender Equality issues across the university. Her responsibilities involve **leadership and advocacy**, providing clear information and guidance about gender equality. The Rector ensures that the university implements gender equality policies, GEP and prevents **gender-based discrimination**, unfair resource allocation. As a key advocate for gender equality, BTU's rector, strives to ensure that the university is a place where everyone can develop themselves and reach their full potential, where everyone is guaranteed fair and equitable treatment.

BTU has dedicated HR capacity on both a central and faculty level to support and contribute toward Gender Equality practices within the university. The university funds regular training sessions for the HR personnel to raise their awareness and equip them with the right tools. In addition, efforts are made to address the ongoing high levels of workload.

Gender equality Officers are operating as part of the Human Resources Office. They participate in GEP preparation, implementation and monitoring. The officers conduct comprehensive analysis of gender differences in career paths, potential threats of anti-discrimination and other relevant aspects.

The HR Office has developed a confidential and anonymous reporting system to disclose alleged cases of harassment. This system enables informal intervention, protects the identity of the reporter. The Office and Gender equality officers have straightforward procedures for effective **review** of complaints and cases.

Gender equality related functions and roles are disseminated among:

- BTU's rector
- BTU's Academic board
- HR Department
- Dean's Office
- Personnel selection and evaluation committees
- Gender scholars and experts on gender equality

BTU's Gender Equality and Inclusion Activities are accumulated across the following areas:



Policy making
Regulations and practices
formal documents



Awareness raising, capacity
building and trainings



Data collection and analysis,
Gender-proofing recruitment
and allocation of resources



Women Empowerment
Programs of Tech and AI

3. Barriers and Enablers in the Pursuit of Gender Equality

Despite the progress achieved over recent decades in the context of creating equal opportunities in the workforce, women are underrepresented in the tech job market - As Eurostat reports, women make up only 17% of all employees in STEM. Only 5% of leadership positions in tech are held by women. BTU strategizes the encouragement and enhancement of the technology ecosystem in Georgia. It mobilizes particular efforts to increase women's role within the ecosystem through various programs and academic activities.

BTU's strong commitment to **women's empowerment** started in 2019 with the establishment of the Coding School, and continued in 2021 with the launch of its flagship project, "500 Women in Tech." The project was selected among the winning initiatives under the category '[Future-proof Education Initiative of the Year](#)' of [Emerging Europe Summit](#) and award. In this context, **Grace Hopper Award** is also noteworthy that was given to the women empowerment project for its innovative approach and delivered impact.

Other value-driven and impactful endeavors - the Coding School for 1,500 Women, Women mentorship and empowerment programmes. Through these accomplished and ongoing projects, BTU has built a community of visionary, committed women dedicated to learning, experimenting, and making meaningful contributions to their societies. To date, BTU's various initiatives have empowered over 5,000 women in the fields of ICT, innovative technologies, and entrepreneurship.

4. Synergy with the Research and Innovation Framework Program – Horizon Europe

In response to the five minimum areas identified by the European Commission, the university identifies activities and actions to promote an open and inclusive organizational culture. BTU's approach to Gender equality is embedded in various organizational areas, including work-life balance, recruitment, leadership, and measures against gender-based violence. By adhering to these principles, not only BTU aligns itself with Horizon Europe's gender equality criteria but also strengthens its institutional culture and leadership in gender equality.

Participation of the private sector in skills empowerment programs should increase – more internship positions, training and practical placements should be offered by SMEs. The university should increase efforts to address more business representatives on board.

Principle and Area	BTU's response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TU's Commitment to Work-Life Balance, Gender Equality, and Anti-Discrimination 	<p>Through different measures, the university ensures that all staff members are supported properly and have the right environment to develop their career and keep up with the personal responsibilities as well. BTU ensures that the institution has respectful organizational culture and enables a good work-life balance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having parental leave policies and information campaign in place - Opportunities for flexible hours and remote work are provided to accommodate diverse needs. - The university has established family-friendly services for both students and staff, offering support in managing care responsibilities. This includes counseling, training, and awareness-raising initiatives. - BTU regularly monitors and manages workloads through staff meetings, leadership discussions, and digital tools like Trello and E-documents. - A system is in place to regularly assess and improve maternity and paternity leave policies. - Workshops and brainstorming sessions are conducted to address the ongoing high levels of workload. - TU promotes equal opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds, enhancing workplace inclusivity. - Leveraging digital tools and technologies, BTU continuously improves the quality of its work environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender balance in leadership and decision-making 	<p>BTU is committed to gender balance, particularly in leadership roles. One of the board's priorities is to increase the representation of female academics in leadership and faculty positions, promoting diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender equality in recruitment and career progression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Discrimination Policy in Recruitment and Hiring in place - policy that governs the recruitment and hiring process and ensures that all candidates are evaluated based on their qualifications, skills, and experience, without regard to factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, religion, or sexual orientation. • BTU's Anti-discrimination council in place - A dedicated council oversees the implementation and compliance with anti-discriminatory measures. • Prohibition of Discriminatory Questions During Interviews: all interviews adhere to strict anti-discriminatory guidelines, with no

	<p>questions allowed that could be perceived as discriminatory., interviewers are not allowed to ask questions that could be perceived as discriminatory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacancy text has been modified and a special passage on equal treatment principles has been added.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTU provides equal opportunities of education, skills development, professional development and career advancement. Regular surveys assess the needs of the staff, and targeted skills development initiatives are offered accordingly. Special attention is given to increasing the participation of girls in Tech programs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The university’s Code of Ethics has a special section with the emphasis on anti-discrimination. • Anti-discriminatory sections as part of Code of Ethics were approved on September 17, 2018. The document covers academic staff, students, and administrative staff. • Evaluation and assessment mechanism in place to audit the equal salary policy at the university • BTU has Zero Tolerance policy which supports anyone who has experienced or witnessed sexual harassment, discrimination or violence. • Reporting mechanism in place - Anyone can make a zero-tolerance report via phone or online. BTU has an online reporting tool in place. An e-mail is also functioning: antidiscrimination@btu.edu.ge

5. BTU GEP Action Plan 2021-2023

The university has elaborated a robust reporting mechanism for each of the WEPs and items of the GEP, which includes identification of goals under each principle and brief description of each activity related to the goal.

Goal	Activities	Indicator	Timeline
P			
Principle I: Establish High-level Corporate Leadership for Gender Equality			
Demonstrating support towards gender equality and women empowerment principles both within BTU's structure and in formal documents	1.1. Integrating Gender Equality and Inclusion dimension within university structure	Gender equality focus person and relevant officers within the structure. Number of dedicated gender equality positions created by December 2021.	2021
	1.2. Organizing introductory and discussion meetings with the BTU staff members to increase their awareness on planned agenda and co-creating ideas on further actions endorsing women empowerment	Number of meetings conducted annually (target: 2) Percentage of staff attending each meeting (target: 80%) Post-meeting survey results showing increased awareness (target: 70% reporting improved understanding)	July 2021
	1.3 Preparing and elaborating statements to support women empowerment principles, publishing the statements on BTU's official website	WEPs link on the BTU website: 1. Strategic document in place 2. Report by the end of September	Sept. 2021
	1.3. Considering/ reflecting women empowerment in the university development strategy	Relevant statement in the development strategy of the university	Dec. 2021
	1.4. Integrating and enhancing Gender-responsive attitude and university vision in the formal documents of BTU	Considering/ reflecting women empowerment in the university development strategy Relevant statement in the development strategy of the university	2021 – 2022

Principle 2: Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination			
Eliminating discrimination in the workplace and creating an environment, which ensures respect and equal work conditions.	2.1. Providing information to the university staff members, including male employees, about parental leave entitlement and conditions.	Number of Information sessions conducted, regulatory documents disseminated Percentage of staff who have received parental leave information	October 2021 Also repeated action
	2.2. Defining work-life balance strategies (such as flexible work schedule, remote work, additional break time for parents)	Number of interviewed employees (data on male and female employees to be provided separately), needs assessment report (indicating gender specific needs, if applicable)	October 2021
	2.3. In collaboration with civil society organizations and external experts, delivering training to BTU staff members about gender equality and unconscious gender biases . Highlighting important aspects of discrimination and how to fight discrimination with tools and mechanisms available at BTU	Percentage of staff who have completed gender equality training (target: 100% within 12 months)	October 2021 Repeated in 2022
	2.5. Creating Family-friendly working conditions for students and staff, services to support studying and working with care responsibilities including counseling, training and awareness-raising	- Number of awareness-raising events about family-friendly policies conducted annually - Percentage of staff and students who have attended training on work-life balance - Level of awareness of family-friendly policies (measured through annual surveys, target: 90% awareness)	December 2022
Principle 3: Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers			
	3.1. Providing information on policy and complaint mechanisms to students,	Percentage of staff and students who have received information on policies and	

Creating safe and violence-free university environment for students, academic and administrative staff	academic and administrative staff of the university	complaint mechanisms (target: 100%) Number of accessible channels for disseminating this information Annual survey results showing awareness of policies and mechanisms (target: 90% awareness)	October 2022
	3.2. Displaying visual material preventing discrimination and intolerance at the university	Number of locations with anti-discrimination visual materials displayed	October 2021 - October 2022
Principle 4: Promote education, training and professional development for women			
Ensuring equal opportunities for professional development, qualification increase and career advancement	4.1. in the event of personnel training needs review, considering different priorities of men and women while planning professional development activities.	Consideration of employees training needs Gender balance in participation rates for professional development activities	2021- 2023
Creating Equal Educational Opportunities, encouraging women engagement in non-traditional fields	4.2. Increasing number of girls enrolled in IT programs, arranging information sessions and other communication activities in order to encourage girls' participation.	Key messages and relevant material prepared. Number of outreach activities targeting potential female IT students annually	2021- 2023
	4.3. Supporting women professional development in ICT	Coding School for Women launched, functioning and engaging students! Number of participants. Post-program survey measuring career impact	2021- 2023
Principle 6: Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy			
Promoting women's empowerment in community through university initiatives implemented in	6.1 Delivering ICT training in regions of Georgia. Target audience: pupils. With participation of ICT students and in collaboration with non-governmental organizations.	Number of ICT training sessions delivered in regions annually	Ongoing

collaboration with stakeholders		Number of engaged participants	
	6.1 Highlighting female role models as part of the university events (such as public lectures, discussion sessions, etc).	Percentage of university events featuring female role models	2021- 2023
	6.1 Informing Students about Mobile Application “112 Georgia”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of students who have received information about the app 	2021- 2023
	6.1. helpdesk and a protocol for addressing incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of channels used to disseminate information 	
Principle 7: Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality			
Ensuring transparency of progress measurement and impact of women empowerment focused activities.	7.1. Integrating women’s empowerment related topics in BTU’s quarter and annual newsletter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of women's empowerment topics featured in each newsletter. Annual increase in coverage of women's empowerment topics 	2021- 2023
	7.2. Enhancing reporting capacities of university employees	percentage of employees trained in gender-responsive reporting annually	2021- 2023

6. Evaluation Indicators in place

#	<i>Indicators and evaluation tools</i>
1	Increased participation/enrollment of girls and women in education programs on BA, MA and PhD levels (20-30%)
2	Increased participation of women and girl beneficiaries in BTU's projects and skills enhancement initiatives (10-20%)
3	Annual reporting on transparency procedures in place, quarterly progress reports generated
4	Identifying and partnering with at least 5 local or international institutions/ teams that aim to support women empowerment programs, gender equality and inclusion in cooperation with BTU
5	At least 2 workshops and trainings per year with particular focus on (dedicated to) women empowerment, gender equality and inclusion.
6	Analysis of BTU's Awareness raising campaign and documentation, their alignment with GEP and WEPs