

KUMASI TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY



WORKPLACE HIV/AIDS POLICY

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PART 1

1.0 Introduction

The main purpose of University education is to train high caliber and skilled manpower needed for the country. For this reason, the health needs of its products must be ensured. It is therefore, the responsibility of the authorities of Kumasi Technical University (KSTU) to respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The impact of HIV/AIDS is seen through declining productivity, increasing health care bills and increasing labour cost due to increasing staff absenteeism among others. Additionally, the issue of HIV/AIDS is creating unwarranted stigmatisation and discrimination aimed at workers and people living with, and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

1.1 Overview of HIV/AIDS

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus which acts by weakening the immune system making the body susceptible to and unable to recover from opportunistic infections. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) on the other hand is a disease caused by HIV.

AIDS was first identified in Ghana in 1986 with an infection rate of 1.5%. By 2003, the infection rate had shot up to 3.6%. It went down to 3.1% in 2004. It dropped further down to 2.7% in 2005 (Health Sentinel Survey-HSS). However, in 2006 the prevalence rate shot up again to 3.2% (HSS) but it dropped down to 1.9% in 2007. It dropped further to 1.7% in 2008 and shot up to 1.9% in 2009.

The infection rate, nevertheless, has stabilised over the last five years, with latest figures indicating that a lowly 1.37% of the population was infected with the virus in 2012, but shot up to 1.47 in 2014.

Excerpts from the 2014 HSS revealed that nationwide, 2.0% of adults (women and men age 15-49) were HIV-positive. 2.3% of the urban population was HIV-positive compared to 1.7% among the rural population. Infection rates were higher in women than in men nationwide and in both urban and rural areas.

The provision of antiretroviral therapy (ART) to persons living with HIV and AIDS (PLHIV) was introduced in Ghana in 2003 and it is now available in all districts of the country.

Although, there is a widespread knowledge of HIV and modes of transmission with awareness of AIDS estimated at greater than 95%, fear and stigmatisation of HIV-positive people remain high. The populace is at risk of further HIV spread for a variety of reasons. These include engaging in transactional sex, marriage and gender relations that disadvantage women and make them vulnerable to HIV, inaccurate perceptions of personal risk, and stigma and discrimination toward people living with HIV and AIDS.

1.2 Need for HIV Workplace Policy

Even though statistically, HIV/AIDS has not made any direct impact on Kumasi Technical University, the Institution still has a duty to develop a work place policy as a step to forestall the probability of infections. In a study by Anarfi and Awusabo-Asare (2001) to ascertain the HIV and AIDS situation in tertiary institutions in Ghana, they found out that although all the heads of the tertiary institutions studied do realize the seriousness of the HIV and AIDS pandemic nationwide, none of them could specifically indicate the situation in their institutions because they did not have any records. Recognizing the implication of a full-blown HIV infection and considering the escalating nature of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the country, all tertiary institutions deem it necessary to maintain a healthy

working force and student body. The University therefore, has a duty to educate and inform its members about HIV and AIDS and put in place necessary preventive and supportive structures.

A case for Kumasi Technical University is that it needs an HIV and AIDS Workplace policy because its students and staff population are within the 15-49 age group; the age range with the highest infection rate in most countries. As a tertiary institution, students are considered as independent adults whose activities are not seriously restricted. Yet, as a population confined to a limited space, the Institution offers ideal conditions for sexual networking which is the main conduct for the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV. The liberal atmosphere on campus means that some students may be enjoying independence from the watchful eyes of their parents for the first time in their lives, thus indulging in risky behaviors.

There are several risk factors for acquiring the HIV/AIDS infection. These may include

- i. Sexual transmission
- ii. Blood transmission
- iii. The use of infected razor blades.

Students and employees may be predisposed to acquiring the infection. The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework within which the University can respond adequately to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

1.3 The Policy Frame work

The policy derives its sources from:

- i. The National HIV and AIDS Workplace Policy (2012).
- ii. The International Labour Organization's (ILO's) Code of Practice on HIV and AIDS and the World of Work (2003).

1.4 Scope of the Policy

This policy shall apply to all employees and Students of Kumasi Technical University.

1.5 Underlying Assumptions of the Policy

The policy is guided by the following underlying assumptions:

- i. HIV and AIDS is developmental problem affecting the whole country and requiring collective effort at all levels
- ii. That the human rights and dignity of all people irrespective of their HIV status should be respected.
- iii. That information and behavior change are basis for the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS.
- iv. That a supportive working environment will enhance the response to HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support.

PART 2

2.0 Guiding Principles

The policy shall be guided by the following principles:

- i. Kumasi Technical University recognizes HIV and AIDS as a workplace issue and should be treated like any other serious illness conditions in the workplace.
- ii. HIV infection is preventable. Prevention can be achieved through provision of information, education and attitudinal change.
- iii. There shall not be any discrimination against workers and students on the basis of real or perceived HIV and AIDS status.
- iv. The institution recognizes gender dimension of HIV and AIDS.
- v. The University environment should be healthy and safe in order to prevent the transmission of HIV and AIDS.
- vi. Kumasi Technical University's policy takes cognizance of the link among employers, employees, their representatives, students and other members of the University community.
- vii. The institution shall not enforce the screening of applicant's for jobs or studentship on any programme.
- viii. HIV status of Workers and students shall be confidential.
- ix. Students with HIV and AIDS related illness shall not be withdrawn as long as they remain medically fit.

Persons within the University community with HIV& AIDS should be entitled to affordable health care services.

2.1 Aims

The aims of the policy are to:

- i. Create awareness
- ii. Prevent new infections
- iii. Create congenial relationships

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the policy are to:

- i. Promote HIV and AIDS responsible behaviour among students and staff to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS.
- 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 and AIDS programmes into Teaching, Research and Community service.
- iv. Provide PLHIV with protection from discrimination and stigmatisation in the workplace.
- v. Help to access care, support and counseling for those infected and affected.

2.3 Approaches to Achieving Objectives

2.3.1 Objective 1

Promoting HIV/AIDS responsible behaviour among students and providing PLHIV with protection from discrimination and stigmatisation in the place.

Approach(es):

Disseminate information on HIV /AIDS in the workplace through:

- Documentaries
- Posters
- Stickers
- Brochure
- Drama
- Social Media
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Demonstrations
- Discussions
- Interviews

2.3.2 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 which are available for prevention of the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, e.g. condom use.

- ii. Train HIV and AIDS Peer educators among staff and students to facilitate the education on HIV and AIDS in the University community.
- iii. Provide support for students and staff affected and infected with HIV and AIDS.
- iv. Create a centre where staff and students could have access to confidential counselling services on campus.
- v. Organize voluntary testing and counseling (VTC) services during HIV and AIDS day celebration.
- vi. Distribute posters, flyers and leaflets on HIV and AIDS.
- vii. Create awareness of support services available in Ghana and within the region.
- viii. Provide referral services for students and staff, and advice on nutritional care for students and staff.

2.3.3 Objective 3

Integrating HIV and AIDS programmes into Teaching, Research and Community service

Approach(es):

Finding innovative ways of integrating HIV and AIDS education into various academic programmes in the University. Institutes, Faculties, Schools, Departments and Sections shall develop research projects related to HIV and AIDS. Such research shall be considered for funding and integration.

2.3.4 Objective 4

Provide PLHIV with protection from discrimination and stigmatization in the workplace.

Approach(es):

- Documentaries
- Posters
- Stickers
- Brochure
- Drama
- Social Media
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Demonstrations
- Discussions
- Interviews

2.3.5 Objective 5

Ensuring access care, support and counselling for those infected and affected.

- i. Empower people living with HIV and AIDS or those not affected.
- ii. Educate the University community to reduce the number of sexual partners.
- iii. Encourage voluntary testing and. counselling
- iv. Advocate for the correct and consistent use of condom and to prevent HIV acquisition or transmission.
- v. Empower staff and especially students to respect women's right and avoid sexual violence among others.
- vi. Put out accurate information and educate people about HIV transmission.
- vii. Encourage self-disclosure of one's HIV Status.

PART 3

Rights and Responsibilities of Staff and Students Infected and Affected by HIV and AIDS.

3.0 Rights of staff

No employee of the University shall be required to undergo an HIV test, or disclose his or her HIV and AIDS status. The University acknowledges that HIV status is not on its own an indication of ill-fitness for employment. Thus, the University shall not use HIV and AIDS status to deny an employment contract or refuse a renewal of contract or offer of admission. Therefore:

- i. HIV and AIDS status shall not be used as a requirement in human resource development, including promotion and training.
- ii. HIV and AIDS status shall not be reflected on the personal files of employees.
- iii. HIV and AIDS status of an employee shall not be disclosed without the expressed consent of the employee concerned.
- iv. Though the University practices nondiscrimination in respect of its employees' HIV and AIDS status, it recognizes that the practices of parties external to the University (Insurance, Financial institutions, pension schemes) are not entirely within its control.
- v. The probability of persons living with HIV and AIDS notwithstanding, employees of the University have the right to supportive and safe working environment without the infected and affected being stigmatised.

- vi. It is and shall be the right of employees to know of possible occupational hazards associated with working with persons living with HIV and AIDS.
- vii. It shall be a duty of the University to provide a working environment that shall minimize occupational exposure to HIV and AIDS.
- viii. Where applicable, education on the use of decent clothing and encourage the use of condoms.

3.1 Rights of students

- i. No prospective student of the University shall be required to undergo an HIV test, or disclose his or her HIV and AIDS status as a requirement for admission.
- ii. No student of the University shall be required to undergo an HIV test or disclose his or her HIV and AIDS status.
- iii. The University shall not use HIV and AIDS status in considering the granting of loans, bursaries and scholarships.
- iv. The University shall not use HIV and AIDS status as a pre – requisite for the allocation of students’ hostels.
- v. The University shall Endeavour to provide a learning environment in which the occupational exposure to HIV and AIDS is minimized.
- vi. Studentship shall not be terminated on grounds of HIV and AIDS status.
- vii. A student’s HIV status shall remain confidential.

Students have a right to a supportive and safe environment in which persons with HIV and AIDS are accepted and not stigmatised.

3.2 Responsibilities of staff and students

It is the responsibility of the individual to protect herself/ himself against infection. Students and staff living with HIV and AIDS have a special obligation to ensure that they behave in such a way as to pose no threat of infection to any other person.

The onus lies on every individuals to treat and cover all wounds and also to use appropriate protective clothing whilst at work.

Staff and students have the responsibility not to discriminate against and stigmatise members of the University community living with HIV and AIDS.

Unless medically justified, no student may use HIV and AIDS as a reason for failing to perform work, complete assignments, or write examinations.

All 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.

3.3 Responsibilities of the Institution

The University shall provide:

- i. Protective clothes (gloves, boots, overalls, masks, screen filters etc) for staff who require them in their day today work.
- ii. Bin bags for use, especially in the toilets.
- iii. Assistance to staff to acquire their own laboratory/ workshop tools and avoid sharing where possible.

PART 4

Integration of HIV/AIDS into Teaching, Research and Community Service Activities.

4.0 Teaching

- iv. The University shall encourage and support efforts by Faculty/Institutes/Schools to incorporate aspects of HIV and AIDS and human rights issues in to all curricula where possible.
- v. The University shall provide Curriculum on HIV and AIDS for all students. The curriculum shall include historical, epidemiological, health, legal and prevention/home based care aspects of HIV and AIDS for staff. Once such course will focus on HIV and AIDS in the workplace, including protection, performance, management, and legal issues.

4.1 Research

The University shall provide leadership on HIV and AIDS through research. It shall use research to inform its policy, teaching, community service and Endeavour to influence development related to the treatment and care of HIV& AIDS victims.

4.2 Community Service

The University shall commit itself to:

- i. Collaborate with the community in research on HIV and AIDS.

- ii. Training HIV Peer educators and Counsellors in order to bring about behavioral change in the community.
- iii. Full community participation in the HIV and AIDS programme and good flow of support between the University and various communities and community structures.
- iv. Share her experiences of best practice and where practicable, its skills and resources with Non-Governmental Organizations (N G O's) and Community Based Organization (CBOS).

4.3 Prevention and Support Services for HIV and AIDS Awareness

The University has a duty to educate and inform its members about HIV and AIDS. Appropriate information on all aspects of prevention and care will be made accessible to staff and students through:

- Film shows
- Brochures
- Stickers
- Symposia
- Drama
- Literary competitions

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

- i. Encourage responsible sexual behaviour
- ii. Advice abstinence
- iii. Advice being faithful to one's partner
- iv. Demonstrate with dummies the effective use of condom

- v. Hold discussions on sex
- vi. Distribute literature on HIV and AIDS
- vii. Train HIV and AIDS Peer educators and Counsellors
- viii. Increase awareness about sexually transmitted disease (STIDs)
- ix. Enforce University's policy on sexual harassment.

4.4 Testing

The University shall encourage individuals to undergo testing as much as possible.

4.5 Counselling, Care and Support

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

PART 5

5.0 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 groups.

- Vice-Chancellor
- Pro Vice-Chancellor
- Deans of Faculties/Schools
- Directors of Institutes
- Dean of Students
- Focal Person
- Chairpersons of the workers unions
- Heads of Department/Unit
- Counsellors
- Students Representative Council (SRC)
- Medical Officer
- Director of Finance

The University shall appoint an Implementation Committee whose chairman shall be the HIV and AIDS Focal Person.

The Committee shall report directly to the Vice-Chancellor. It shall comprise of:

- i. Representatives of the workers unions
- ii. Students' Representatives
- iii. Counsellor

5.1 The Committee's functions shall include:

- i. Disseminating and coordinating the HIV and AIDS policy throughout the University.

- ii. Organizing regular consultative meetings with the University community about matters relating to HIV and AIDS.
- iii. Establishing and implementing a system of policy monitoring and evaluation.
- iv. Collaborating with the community and other tertiary institutions and stakeholders.
- v. The University shall establish an appropriate budget line for the implementation of this policy. A strategic work plan shall guide the implementation of this policy.
- vi. This policy shall be subjected to regular review and appraisal to reflect good practices.
- vii. To facilitate the implementation of this policy , there shall be the need for:
- viii. A fully furnished office
- ix. Budgetary allocation
- x. Computer and printer

Glossary

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy

“HIV” refers to the human immunodeficiency virus, a virus that damages the human immune system. Infection can be prevented by appropriate measures;

“AIDS” refers to the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome which results from advanced stages of HIV infection, and is characterised by opportunistic infections or HIV-related cancers, or both;

“Persons living with HIV” means persons infected with HIV;

“Stigmatization” means the social mark, when associated with a person, usually causes marginalisation or presents an obstacle to the full enjoyment of social life by the person infected or affected by HIV.

“Discrimination” means any distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation;

“Affected persons” means persons whose lives are changed by HIV or AIDS owing to the broader impact of the pandemic;

“Vulnerability” means the unequal opportunities, social exclusion, unemployment or precarious employment, resulting from the social, cultural, political and economic factors that make a person more susceptible to HIV infection and to developing AIDS;

“Worker” refers to persons working under any form or arrangement in the University.

“Anti – Retroviral Therapy” refers to drugs used in the treatment of HIV infection. They work against HIV infection itself by slowing down the reproduction of HIV in the body but are not a cure.

“Abstinence” refers to refraining from sexual intercourse

“Opportunity infections” refers to illness that afflict people with weak immune systems, as occur with HIV. Common opportunistic infections in people with HIV and AIDS include tuberculosis, fungal infections, viral infections and lymphoma.

“Pandemic” refers to an epidemic occurring in many regions and countries

“Prevalence” (prevalence rate) refers to the number of persons with a particular condition in a given population.

“Sexually Transmission Infection (STI)” refers to virus or bacteria transmitted between sexual partners. Common STI s includes Chlamydia, Gonorrhea and Syphilis.