



National Council for Higher Education

Ensuring Quality for Excellence

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List of Acronyms

NCHE: National Council for Higher Education

ICT : Information and Communications Technology

IT: Information Technology

PCs : Personal Computers

PDA: Personal Digital Assistants

PDF : Portable Document Format

PPDA : Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Asset Authority

SLA : Service Level Agreement

SPAM : Self-Propelled Automatic Mail

UPS : Uninterrupted Power Supply

SMS: Short Messaging Service

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

IUCEA: The Inter-University Council for East Africa

HEI: Higher Education Institution

PWDs: People with Disabilities

IoT: Internet of Things

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) ICT Policy articulates the principles, standards, and procedures that will guide the effective, sustainable, and secure use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at NCHE. The policy is designed to strengthen the Council's regulatory functions while supporting institutional operations in teaching, learning, research, and administration across the higher education sector.

This framework ensures that ICT use within NCHE is consistent with national development goals, quality assurance standards, and international best practices in higher education ICT governance. It also provides direction for adopting innovative, inclusive, and sustainable technologies that drive efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in service delivery.

The policy assumes a basic familiarity with ICT and Internet terminologies. It summarizes key aspects of ICT issues and serves as a ready reference guide for decision-making, system development, and implementation.

Alignment with Strategic Objectives and Stakeholders

The policy is closely aligned with NCHE's Strategic Objective on ICT:

To strengthen digital transformation within NCHE and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for regulation and management,

It is also informed by the visions of key national and regional stakeholders:

- i. Ministry of Education and Sports – *Quality Education for All.*
- ii. Ministry of ICT and National Guidance – *A knowledge-based and productive society driven by ICT and National Ideology.*
- iii. Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) – *An exemplary common Higher Education Area for a prosperous and sustainable East African Community by 2030.*

Policy Application

The guidelines outlined herein apply to all NCHE ICT infrastructure. They provide best practices for the management, operation, usage, and maintenance of ICT systems by ICT personnel, administrators, and end-users.

Policy Review Cycle

To ensure continued relevance and responsiveness to technological changes, this ICT Policy shall be formally reviewed every three (2.5) years. Interim reviews may be conducted earlier if necessitated by significant technological, regulatory, or organizational changes.

2. ICT GOVERNANCE

2.1 Policy Objective

The goal is to establish a strong ICT governance framework that aligns with NCHE's mandate of regulating higher education. ICT is positioned as a key enabler for quality assurance, accreditation, and oversight, while also supporting stakeholder engagement and alignment with national ICT priorities. The focus is on creating a resilient and future-proof ICT environment.

2.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to adopting structured ICT governance practices that:

- i. Align ICT decisions with institutional goals.
- ii. Ensure accountability and manage ICT risks.
- iii. Treat ICT as a driver of efficiency, transparency, and innovation rather than just a support tool.
- iv. Embed compliance with national legislation and international best practices.
- v. Foster a culture of responsible ICT use and continuous improvement.

2.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Development and enforcement of ICT policies, standards, and procedures.
- ii. Risk management, compliance, and regulatory oversight.
- iii. Performance monitoring and reporting on ICT initiatives.
- iv. Decision-making structures (committees, roles, and responsibilities)

3. DATA COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 Policy Objective

The policy aims to guarantee secure, reliable, and efficient communication across NCHE's internal and external networks. This supports NCHE's regulatory role in higher education, ensuring ICT systems underpin quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and alignment with national ICT priorities.

3.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Implement and manage robust data communication systems.
- ii. Ensure smooth information flow while protecting confidentiality and integrity.
- iii. Embed security and efficiency principles in both daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iv. Comply with national legislation and international best practices.
- v. Promote responsible ICT use, transparency, and continuous improvement.

3.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Network infrastructure (LAN, WAN, Wi-Fi, VPN).
- ii. Protocols, standards, and bandwidth management.
- iii. Secure data transmission, encryption, and access control.
- iv. Monitoring, troubleshooting, and optimization of network performance.
- v. Disaster recovery and business continuity for communication channels.

4. INFORMATION AND DATA SECURITY

4.1 Policy Objective

The aim is to protect NCHE's information assets from unauthorized access, misuse, or breaches. This aligns with NCHE's mandate in regulating higher education and its vision of building a resilient ICT environment that strengthens governance, stakeholder trust, and national ICT priorities.

4.2 Policy Statement

- i. Enforcing robust security controls, including encryption, access restrictions, and regular audits.
- ii. Embedding data security into both day-to-day operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iii. Treating ICT as a strategic enabler of efficiency, transparency, and innovation.
- iv. Complying with national legislation and international best practices.
- v. Cultivating a culture of responsible ICT use and continuous improvement.

This demonstrates accountability to stakeholders, universities, students, government, and the public by protecting sensitive and critical information.

4.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Data Protection; Secure storage, access, transmission, and disposal.
- ii. System Security; Applications, databases, encryption, patching, and monitoring.
- iii. Network Security; Firewalls, VPNs, threat detection, disaster recovery.
- iv. Identity & Access; Authentication, role-based access, MFA, password policies.
- v. Policy & Compliance; Security standards, audits, regulatory alignment.
- vi. Awareness & Training; Staff education on threats, safe practices, and compliance.

5. EMAIL USE AND SECURITY

5.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to ensure secure, responsible, and professional use of NCHE's official email systems. As email is a primary channel for both internal and external communication, the policy protects the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information critical to NCHE's regulatory mandate.

5.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Enforcing strong technical and policy controls to prevent misuse, unauthorized access, phishing, spam, and data leakage.
- ii. Ensuring all official communication is conducted exclusively through NCHE provided email accounts for professional use only.
- iii. Prohibiting the use of personal email accounts for official business.
- iv. Applying password management rules, encryption (where appropriate), and continuous monitoring of email activities to mitigate risks.

This ensures that email systems remain secure, reliable, and aligned with NCHE's standards of accountability and professionalism.

5.3 Scope of the Policy

The scope covers measures to:

- i. Safeguard NCHE's reputation and trustworthiness.
- ii. Protect the integrity and confidentiality of regulatory communication.
- iii. Prevent fraud, misinformation, and vulnerabilities from email-based threats.
- iv. Support effective interaction with universities, government agencies, and other stakeholders.

6. CYBERSECURITY

6.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to defend NCHE's ICT infrastructure against cyber threats and vulnerabilities. This is essential to NCHE's role in higher education regulation, ensuring ICT remains strategically aligned with its mandate of quality assurance, accreditation, and oversight. It also reflects NCHE's long-term vision of a resilient and secure ICT environment that enables effective governance and stakeholder confidence.

6.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Implementing preventive, detective, and responsive measures to protect ICT systems and data.
- ii. Embedding cybersecurity into daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iii. Viewing ICT not just as support, but as a driver of innovation, transparency, and efficiency.
- iv. Ensuring compliance with national laws and international best practices.
- v. Fostering a culture of responsible ICT use and continuous improvement.

6.3 Scope of the Policy

The scope focuses on securing critical ICT systems, including:

- i. Accreditation platforms.
- ii. Staff email systems.
- iii. Regulatory databases.

7. SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT AND ACQUISITION

7.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to ensure NCHE develops or acquires software that is secure, cost-effective, and functionally aligned with its regulatory mandate. This reinforces NCHE's long-term vision of building a resilient ICT environment that supports quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and alignment with national ICT priorities.

7.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Using standardized procedures for software development, procurement, testing, and deployment.
- ii. Ensuring source code ownership where appropriate to maintain control and avoid vendor lock-in.
- iii. Embedding secure and efficient software practices into both daily operations and long-term planning.
- iv. Treating ICT as a strategic driver of efficiency, transparency, and innovation.
- v. Maintaining compliance with national legislation and international best practices.
- vi. Promoting a culture of responsible ICT use and continuous improvement.

7.3 Scope of the Policy

The scope ensures that NCHE's core systems such as accreditation portals, reporting platforms, and academic databases are:

- i. User-centered, meeting the functional needs of staff and stakeholders.
- ii. Scalable, supporting long-term digital transformation.
- iii. Secure, mitigating risks like data breaches or inefficiencies.
- iv. Controlled, through source code ownership that prevents vendor dependency.

8. ICT SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

8.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to provide consistent, effective, and reliable ICT services across NCHE operations. This is central to NCHE's mandate in higher education regulation, ensuring ICT supports quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and alignment with national ICT priorities. The vision is to create a resilient ICT environment that drives efficiency and stakeholder trust.

8.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Applying ICT service management frameworks (e.g., ITIL) for structured service delivery.
- ii. Strengthening incident management, problem resolution, and performance monitoring.
- iii. Embedding service management into daily operations and long-term ICT strategy.
- iv. Treating ICT as a driver of transparency, accountability, and innovation.
- v. Ensuring compliance with national legislation and international best practices.
- vi. Building a culture of responsible ICT use and continuous improvement.

8.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Infrastructure; Servers, networks, storage, backups, disaster recovery.
- ii. Applications; Installation, maintenance, patching, enterprise systems.
- iii. Security; Policy enforcement, threat monitoring, incident response.
- iv. Asset Management; Procurement, tracking, lifecycle, license compliance

9. ICT SKILLS CAPACITY BUILDING

9.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to enhance ICT literacy and technical capacity among NCHE staff and stakeholders. This directly supports NCHE's mandate in higher education regulation by ensuring ICT is effectively leveraged for quality assurance, accreditation, and oversight. The vision is to build a resilient ICT-driven regulatory environment that fosters good governance and aligns with national ICT priorities.

9.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Providing continuous ICT training, workshops, and certification programs.
- ii. Strengthening staff and stakeholder technical competencies.
- iii. Embedding ICT skills development into daily operations and long-term planning.
- iv. Treating ICT as a driver of innovation, efficiency, and transparency.
- v. Complying with national and international best practices in capacity building.
- vi. Promoting a culture of responsible ICT use and lifelong learning.

9.3 Scope of the Policy

The scope focuses on equipping staff with the skills to effectively use and manage ICT tools, thereby supporting NCHE's transformation into a technology-driven regulator.

Key aspects include:

- i. Digital Literacy
- ii. Technical Proficiency
- iii. Professional Development
- iv. Infrastructure & Access

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10. INTEGRATION OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

10.1 Policy Objective

To responsibly adopt Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain, and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies to improve efficiency, transparency, trust, and innovation in NCHE's operations. This objective aligns with NCHE's regulatory mandate in higher education, ensuring ICT is positioned as a strategic enabler of quality assurance, accreditation, and oversight, while supporting national ICT priorities.

10.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. AI: Exploring, piloting, and deploying AI to enable automation, advanced analytics, and data-driven decision-making.
- ii. Blockchain: Implementing blockchain systems to ensure credential security, authenticity, and global recognition of qualifications.
- iii. IoT: Leveraging IoT solutions for smart data collection, monitoring, and real-time insights across ICT infrastructure, ensuring improved operational efficiency.
- iv. Embedding these technologies into both daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- v. Ensuring compliance with national legislation and international best practices.
- vi. Fostering a culture of responsible, ethical, and secure adoption of emerging technologies.

10.3 Scope of the Policy

The scope highlights the integration of these technologies to strengthen NCHE's regulatory functions:

- i. AI Applications: Enhance accreditation processes, compliance monitoring, institutional analytics, and predictive insights.
- ii. Blockchain Applications: Guarantee the authenticity of academic credentials, reduce fraud, and build trust through verifiable records.
- iii. IoT Applications: Improve ICT service management by enabling real-time monitoring of infrastructure, data flow, and performance tracking to minimize risks and downtime.

11. TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS

11.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to provide reliable, cost-effective, and integrated communication platforms for NCHE. This supports NCHE's regulatory mandate by ensuring ICT is strategically positioned to enhance quality assurance, accreditation, and oversight while building a resilient environment for governance and stakeholder engagement.

11.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Implementing unified communication systems that integrate voice, video, and messaging services.
- ii. Embedding these systems into daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iii. Treating ICT as a driver of efficiency, transparency, and innovation, not just a support function.
- iv. Ensuring compliance with national regulations and international best practices.
- v. Promoting a culture of responsible, secure, and effective ICT use.

11.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. The scope ensures that NCHE can collaborate effectively with institutions and partners through integrated communications. Key aspects include:
- ii. Telecom Services; Voice (landline, VoIP, mobile), call routing, voicemail, PBX, and cost monitoring.
- iii. Unified Communications; Integrated voice, video, messaging, conferencing, and collaboration tools.
- iv. Infrastructure; Networks, bandwidth, QoS, redundancy, and disaster recovery.
- v. Security & Compliance; Protection against fraud/misuse, regulatory compliance, and data privacy.

12. ICT PROCUREMENT

12.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to ensure transparency, efficiency, and value for money in acquiring ICT goods and services. This supports NCHE's regulatory mandate by strategically positioning

ICT to strengthen quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and alignment with national ICT priorities.

12.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Following national procurement regulations and NCHE’s internal guidelines in ICT acquisitions.
- ii. Ensuring ICT procurement is cost-effective, transparent, and accountable.
- iii. Treating ICT procurement as a strategic enabler of efficiency, innovation, and transparency.
- iv. Embedding structured procurement practices into both daily operations and long-term planning.
- v. Complying with national legislation and international best practices.
- vi. Fostering a culture of responsible, standardized, and ethical ICT use.

12.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Planning & Strategy; Needs assessment, budgeting, vendor evaluation.
- ii. Acquisition; Hardware, software, infrastructure, and ICT services.
- iii. Vendor & Contract Management; Negotiation, SLAs, performance tracking.
- iv. Lifecycle Management; Standardization, asset tracking, sustainable disposal.
- v. Governance; Compliance, transparency, ethical practices, and risk management.
- vi. Exclusions: Non-ICT procurement, personal devices, and unauthorized purchases

13. SOCIAL MEDIA

13.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to manage NCHE’s reputation and information dissemination on digital platforms. This supports NCHE’s regulatory mandate by ensuring ICT is strategically positioned to advance quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and stakeholder engagement, while fostering alignment with national ICT priorities.

13.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Regulating the official use of social media to ensure communication is accurate, professional, and aligned with NCHE's mandate.
- ii. Embedding responsible use of digital platforms into daily operations and long-term communication planning.
- iii. Recognizing ICT and social media as drivers of transparency, efficiency, and innovation.
- iv. Ensuring compliance with national legislation and international best practices.
- v. Promoting a culture of accountability, professionalism, and continuous improvement in digital communications.
- vi.

13.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Official use of organizational social media accounts for outreach, marketing, and information sharing.
- ii. Guidelines for staff when representing the organization online.
- iii. Security of accounts, including access control and monitoring.
- iv. Compliance with laws, data protection, and organizational policies.
- v. Crisis management and response procedures for social media incidents

14. SOFTWARE LICENSING AND OWNERSHIP

14.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to ensure compliance with licensing requirements for all NCHE software. This supports NCHE's mandate in higher education regulation by safeguarding its ICT environment, ensuring ICT is strategically aligned with quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and national ICT priorities.

14.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Using only legally licensed software, avoiding unauthorized or pirated tools.
- ii. Maintaining clear ownership and usage rights for all software assets.
- iii. Embedding software compliance into daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iv. Recognizing ICT as a driver of efficiency, transparency, and innovation.

- v. Ensuring compliance with national legislation and international best practices.
- vi. Promoting a culture of responsible, secure, and sustainable ICT use.

14.3 Scope of the Policy

The scope ensures NCHE is protected from legal liabilities, financial penalties, and operational risks linked to unlicensed software. Key aspects include:

- i. Licensing; Tracking, renewal, and compliance with license terms.
- ii. Ownership; Defining organizational rights for purchased or developed software.
- iii. Procurement & Deployment; Standardized purchasing, deployment, and vendor management.
- iv. Security & Compliance; Preventing unauthorized software use, ensuring copyright and regulatory adherence.
- v. Training; Staff awareness on proper and compliant software use

15. INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND DATA WAREHOUSING

15.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to establish secure, reliable, and scalable information systems and data warehouses that support NCHE operations. This aligns with NCHE's mandate in higher education regulation, ensuring ICT is strategically positioned to enhance quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and alignment with national ICT priorities.

15.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Designing and maintaining data warehouses and information systems that guarantee data accuracy, accessibility, and scalability.
- ii. Embedding information system governance into daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iii. Treating ICT systems as strategic enablers of efficiency, transparency, and innovation.
- iv. Ensuring compliance with national legislation and international best practices.
- v. Promoting a culture of responsible ICT use, data-driven decision-making, and continuous improvement.

14.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Information Systems; Acquisition, integration, maintenance, and user support for enterprise applications.
- ii. Data Warehousing; Centralized data storage, ETL processes, backup, and disaster recovery.
- iii. Governance & Security; Data quality, consistency, access control, compliance.
- iv. Business Intelligence; Reporting, dashboards, analytics, and decision support.
- v. Lifecycle Management; Upgrades, scalability, and archiving legacy systems

16. SPECIAL NEEDS ICT USAGE

16.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to promote inclusivity and accessibility in the use of ICT at NCHE. This ensures that ICT systems support the participation of all stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, while reinforcing NCHE's regulatory role in higher education and alignment with national ICT priorities.

16.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Providing ICT solutions and services that cater to persons with special needs.
- ii. Embedding accessibility principles into daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iii. Recognizing ICT as a driver of inclusivity, efficiency, and innovation.
- iv. Complying with national legislation and international accessibility standards.
- v. Fostering a culture of responsibility, inclusivity, and continuous improvement in ICT use.

This demonstrates NCHE's accountability to universities, students, government, and the public by ensuring equitable access to its services.

16.3 Scope of the Policy

The scope ensures that NCHE's ICT systems and services comply with accessibility standards to enable equal participation by staff, students, and stakeholders with disabilities.

Key aspects include:

- i. Equity & Inclusion
- ii. Assistive & Adaptive Technologies
- iii. Capacity Building & Teacher Training
- iv. Infrastructure & Resources
- v. Curriculum & Content
- vi. Monitoring & Policy Enforcement

17. BORROWING AND USE OF ICT EQUIPMENT

17.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to ensure responsible management of ICT assets loaned to staff or partners. This supports NCHE's regulatory mandate by safeguarding resources that enable quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and alignment with national ICT priorities.

17.2 Policy Statement

- i. Borrowing; Request/approval process, documentation, and return conditions.
- ii. Usage; Proper handling, work-related use only, restrictions on personal/illegal use.
- iii. Borrower Responsibilities; Accountability for loss/damage, reporting issues, timely return.
- iv. ICT Department Roles; Inventory tracking, inspections, servicing, enforcement.
- v. Security & Compliance; Data protection, no unauthorized software changes, policy adherence

17.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Borrowing Procedures; Equipment is issued through an approved request and documentation process, with clear conditions for return.
- ii. Usage; Devices are used responsibly, solely for official, academic, or work-related purposes, and handled with care.
- iii. Responsibilities; Borrowers are accountable for any loss, theft, or damage, must report faults promptly, and return items on time in good condition.
- iv. ICT Department Role; The ICT team maintains inventory, inspects and services equipment, and enforces borrowing policies.
- v. Security & Compliance; Data security is protected, unauthorized software installations are prohibited, and all use must align with ICT policies.

18. ICT HELPDESK AND SUPPORT

18.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to ensure efficient and timely ICT support for NCHE staff and stakeholders. This aligns with NCHE's regulatory mandate by minimizing ICT-related

disruptions and enabling ICT to strategically support quality assurance, accreditation, and oversight functions.

18.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Operating a centralized helpdesk to manage ICT issues and service requests.
- ii. Embedding structured support mechanisms into both daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iii. Recognizing ICT support as a driver of efficiency, transparency, and innovation.
- iv. Ensuring compliance with national regulations and international best practices in ICT service delivery.
- v. Fostering a culture of responsible ICT use, accountability, and continuous improvement.

18.3 Scope of the Policy

The scope covers all ICT-related issues and requests, ensuring:

- i. Logging, tracking, and resolution of issues in an efficient and transparent manner.
- ii. Minimized service disruptions, improving productivity and regulatory processes.
- iii. Enhanced communication and feedback between users and ICT support staff.

19. GREEN ICT AND SUSTAINABILITY

19.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to minimize NCHE's ICT environmental impact by adopting sustainable practices. This supports NCHE's higher education regulatory mandate while reinforcing its vision of a resilient ICT environment that balances governance, efficiency, and alignment with both national and global sustainability goals.

19.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Implementing eco-friendly ICT practices, including energy-efficient systems and responsible e-waste management.
- ii. Embedding sustainability principles into daily ICT operations and long-term planning.
- iii. Viewing ICT as a driver of innovation, transparency, and sustainability, not just a support tool.
- iv. Ensuring compliance with national environmental regulations and international best practices.

- v. Fostering a culture of responsible ICT use, environmental stewardship, and continuous improvement.

19.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Energy efficiency (low-power devices, shutdown policies, virtualization).
- ii. Sustainable procurement (eco-certified equipment, responsible vendors).
- iii. E-waste management (reuse, recycling, certified disposal).
- iv. Digital efficiency (paperless workflows, remote collaboration).
- v. Awareness and training (educating staff on eco-friendly practices)

20. CLOUD COMPUTING AND DATA SOVEREIGNTY

20.1 Policy Objective

The objective is to leverage cloud computing for efficiency and scalability while ensuring compliance with data sovereignty laws. This supports NCHE's mandate in higher education regulation by strategically positioning ICT to enhance quality assurance, accreditation, oversight, and alignment with national ICT priorities.

20.2 Policy Statement

NCHE commits to:

- i. Adopting cloud services with clear provisions for data residency, security, and legal compliance.
- ii. Embedding cloud adoption into daily operations and long-term ICT planning.
- iii. Treating cloud computing as a driver of efficiency, innovation, and transparency.
- iv. Ensuring compliance with national legislation and international best practices.
- v. Promoting a culture of responsible cloud use, security, and continuous improvement.

20.3 Scope of the Policy

- i. Cloud service deployment (IaaS, PaaS, SaaS) and vendor management.
- ii. Data storage, processing, and transfer in line with sovereignty laws.
- iii. Security controls, encryption, and access management in cloud environments.
- iv. Compliance with contractual, regulatory, and organizational policies.
- v. Backup, disaster recovery, and business continuity in cloud platforms

21. APPENDICES

Detailed policy with detailed principles and guidelines