

The Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies (IAGAS) was established in August 1970 and was charged with the responsibility of promoting and conducting original researches in the field of African prehistory and history; musicology and dance; traditional and modern arts crafts; religion and other belief systems.

The origin of the Institute dates back to 1966 when a Cultural Division was established in the Institute for Development Studies of the then University College, Nairobi. The Cultural Division embarked on its first research programmes in January 1967 following the appointment of its first two Research Fellows. With the inauguration of the University of Nairobi in July 1970, the Cultural Division was transformed into an Institute and given statutes governing its work. The statutes provide for a Board Chaired by the Director, and consisting of Research Fellows and, in addition, representatives from other university departments and institutes, two government ministries, the British Institute in Eastern Africa, and the National Museums.

The Director's Office at the National Museums of Kenya Compound

The Institute moved to its present location behind the National Museum in 1971. In 1979, the Institute was allocated a studio, a large room and store in the basement of the Education Building at the Main Campus. These rooms are used for Musicology and Material Culture. In addition, the Institute has been allocated physical facilities at Chiromo Campus in order to accommodate its material culture artifacts.

The Institutes' internal organization, Staff recruitment and academic activities have over the years and particularly after 1986, been guided by Anthropology as the core discipline.

In the recent past (1999), the Institute got additional mandate from the University of Nairobi Senate to mount courses in Gender and Development (both at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels) and Postgraduate Diploma in Museum Collections. This was a response to the growing demand for the above disciplines in developmental undertakings.

As originally constituted, IAGAS was supposed to be a research Institute in the model of other research Institutes in the University. Over time, teaching has continued to become a core component of the Institute.