

## **UGC and AICTE Guidelines for Women harassment at Workplace**

Women harassment refers to any unwelcome or offensive behavior, verbal or physical, directed towards women based on their gender. It involves actions that intimidate, degrade, or violate the rights of women, causing them to feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or violated. Women harassment can occur in various settings, such as the workplace, educational institutions, public spaces, or online platforms. Women harassment at the workplace can occur in various forms, and it is important to recognize and address each type. Here are some common types of women harassment that can be experienced in the workplace:

- **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. It can include comments, jokes, gestures, unwelcome touching, sexual innuendos, displaying explicit materials, or any other behavior that creates a hostile or offensive work environment.
- **Verbal Harassment:** Verbal harassment refers to the use of derogatory, offensive, or demeaning language towards a woman in the workplace. It may include insults, slurs, offensive jokes, name-calling, or threats that undermine her dignity and create a hostile environment.
- **Physical Harassment:** Physical harassment involves unwanted physical contact or actions that are intended to harm, intimidate, or make a woman uncomfortable. It can include touching, pinching, groping, assault, or any other form of non-consensual physical contact.
- **Psychological or Emotional Harassment:** Psychological or emotional harassment, also known as emotional abuse, involves persistent patterns of behavior that inflict mental or emotional harm on a woman. It can include constant criticism, humiliation, intimidation, threats, manipulation, or isolation, which can adversely affect her well-being and performance at work.
- **Cyber Harassment:** With the rise of technology, cyber harassment has become a significant concern. It involves the use of electronic communication channels to harass, threaten, or intimidate a woman. This can include sending explicit or threatening messages, spreading rumors, sharing private information without consent, online stalking, or any other form of harassment carried out through digital means.
- **Discriminatory Harassment:** Discriminatory harassment occurs when a woman is targeted based on her gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or any other

protected characteristic. It can include unfair treatment, exclusion, differential work assignments, or creating a hostile environment based on these factors.

- **Retaliation:** Retaliation is a form of harassment that occurs when a woman faces adverse actions or treatment as a result of reporting harassment or participating in investigations. It can include negative performance reviews, demotion, denial of opportunities, or any other action aimed at punishing or discouraging her for seeking help.

It is important to note that these types of harassment can intersect and overlap, and an individual may experience multiple forms simultaneously. Creating awareness, implementing preventive measures, and fostering a culture of respect and equality are essential in preventing and addressing all forms of women harassment at the workplace.

### **UGC and AICTE Guidelines for prevention of Women Harassment**

The University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) have issued guidelines for Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in India regarding the prevention and redressal of women harassment. Here are the key provisions of the guidelines:

#### **UGC Guidelines for HEIs:**

- **Sexual Harassment Prevention:** HEIs are required to establish a cell or committee, such as the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) or Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassment (GSCASH), to address complaints of sexual harassment. The composition, functions, and procedures of the committee should comply with the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- **Awareness Programs:** HEIs are encouraged to conduct regular awareness programs and sensitization sessions to educate students, faculty, and staff about sexual harassment prevention, gender equality, and the complaint filing process. Training sessions and workshops on gender sensitization should also be organized.
- **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** HEIs should establish a transparent and effective grievance redressal mechanism to address complaints of sexual harassment promptly and fairly. The mechanism should ensure the confidentiality of complainants and provide a supportive environment for reporting and resolution.

- **Display of Guidelines:** HEIs must prominently display the UGC guidelines, the Supreme Court's Vishaka Guidelines, and other relevant information related to the prevention of sexual harassment. This helps create awareness and informs the campus community about the policies and procedures in place.

### **AICTE Guidelines for HEIs:**

**Mandatory Anti-Sexual Harassment Cell:** AICTE mandates the establishment of an Anti-Sexual Harassment Cell in every technical institution. The cell should consist of representatives from faculty, staff, students, and external members. It should address complaints of sexual harassment, conduct inquiries, and recommend appropriate action.

- **Sensitization Programs:** AICTE emphasizes the importance of organizing sensitization programs on gender equality, prevention of sexual harassment, and the legal provisions related to women's rights. These programs should be conducted at regular intervals for students, faculty, staff, and management.
- **Mandatory Disciplinary Action:** AICTE directs institutions to take strict disciplinary action against those found guilty of sexual harassment. The guidelines provide a range of actions that can be taken, including warnings, fines, suspension, termination, or legal action as per the severity of the offense.
- **Collaboration with Local Authorities:** AICTE advises institutions to establish collaborative mechanisms with local authorities, such as police stations and hospitals, to provide assistance and support to victims of sexual harassment.

Both UGC and AICTE guidelines aim to create a safe and inclusive environment in HEIs by preventing and addressing women harassment. Institutions are expected to adhere to these guidelines, establish the required committees, conduct awareness programs, and ensure timely and fair redressal of complaints to maintain a harassment-free campus.

### **Prevention of Women Harassment at Workplace**

To avoid women harassment at the workplace, both employers and employees can take proactive steps. Here are some practical measures that can help in preventing women harassment:

- **Establish a Zero-Tolerance Policy:** Create a clear and comprehensive policy against harassment in the workplace, including sexual harassment. Clearly communicate

that any form of harassment will not be tolerated and outline the consequences for violators.

- **Promote a Culture of Respect:** Foster a workplace culture that promotes respect, inclusion, and gender equality. Encourage open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect among all employees.
- **Provide Training and Awareness Programs:** Conduct regular training sessions to educate employees about what constitutes harassment, its impact, and the importance of maintaining a harassment-free workplace. Raise awareness about reporting procedures and encourage employees to intervene and support victims.
- **Encourage Reporting:** Create a safe and confidential reporting mechanism for employees to report incidents of harassment. Ensure that employees are aware of this mechanism and feel comfortable coming forward without fear of retaliation.
- **Respond Promptly and Fairly:** Establish a robust system for addressing harassment complaints. Take all complaints seriously, investigate them promptly and impartially, and take appropriate action based on the findings. Ensure confidentiality and provide regular updates to the complainant.
- **Support Victims:** Offer support services to victims of harassment, such as counseling, legal aid, or access to employee assistance programs. Ensure that victims have the necessary resources and support to cope with the incident.
- **Empower Bystanders:** Encourage employees to be active bystanders and intervene when they witness harassment or suspect it is taking place. Provide guidance on how to safely and effectively intervene and support the victim.
- **Lead by Example:** Leadership should set the tone by modeling respectful behavior, promoting a positive work environment, and addressing any incidents of harassment swiftly and fairly. Implement policies and practices that promote gender equality and ensure equal opportunities for all.
- **Regularly Evaluate and Improve Policies:** Periodically review and update anti-harassment policies and procedures to align with changing laws, regulations, and best practices. Seek feedback from employees and make necessary improvements to ensure the effectiveness of prevention measures.
- **Foster a Supportive Work Environment:** Create a workplace environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their concerns and seeking support.

Encourage open dialogue, diversity, and inclusion to create a supportive and respectful atmosphere.

Remember, preventing women harassment requires ongoing commitment and efforts from all stakeholders. By taking these preventive measures, organizations can contribute to creating a safer and more inclusive workplace for everyone.

### **Various Act**

The UGC and AICTE guidelines for prevention of sexual harassment are based on the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, commonly known as the POSH Act. The POSH Act is a comprehensive legislation in India that provides a framework for preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. It is important to note that the act applies to all workplaces, whether in the public or private sector, and includes formal and informal settings, such as offices, factories, institutions, shops, and online platforms. It mandates the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs), defines sexual harassment, and outlines the procedure for filing complaints and conducting investigations.

In addition to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, other laws and provisions under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), such as Section 354 (assault or criminal force on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), Section 509 (word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman), and Section 354A (sexual harassment and punishment for sexual harassment), also address aspects of women harassment.