



Sexual Harassment Prevention Committee

# Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Complaint Resolution Policy

## Table of Contents

Important Terms .....	3
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Objectives.....	4
3. Definition.....	5
4. Forms of Sexual Harassment.....	6
4.1. Physical Conduct .....	6
4.2. Verbal Conduct.....	6
4.3. Non-verbal Conduct .....	6
4.4. Internet Harassment .....	6
5. Conducts Not Considered as Sexual Harassment .....	7
6. Policy Framework.....	7
6.1. Prevention .....	7
6.2. Reporting of Complaints .....	8
6.3. Complaint Committee.....	9
6.3. Disciplinary Measures .....	9
6.4. Support Services for the Victims.....	10
7. For Whom the Policy is Applicable.....	11
8. Conclusion.....	11

## Important Terms

**Abuse of Authority:** Misusing power or position to control or pressure someone.

**Binding Guidelines:** Rules that must be followed, not optional.

**BNWLA vs. Bangladesh (2009):** A court case that established rules against sexual harassment in Bangladesh.

**CEDAW:** An international agreement to eliminate discrimination against women.

**Coercion:** Forcing someone to do something against their will.

**Confidentiality:** Keeping information private and not sharing it without permission.

**Consent:** Clear and willing agreement to something.

**Convener:** The person who leads or heads the committee.

**Cyber Harassment:** Harassment using the internet or digital platforms.

**Defamatory Comments:** False statements that damage someone's reputation.

**Electronic Sabotage:** Damaging someone's digital system.

**Hostile Environment:** A situation where someone feels unsafe, uncomfortable, or threatened.

**ILO Guidelines:** International rules for fair and safe working conditions.

**Impartiality:** Being neutral and not taking sides.

**Impersonation:** Pretending to be someone else online.

**Power Imbalance:** A situation where one person has more power (e.g., teacher vs. student).

**Preventive Measures:** Steps taken to stop something from happening in the first place.

**Prima Facie:** At first glance; when there seems to be enough evidence to proceed with a case.

**Probation:** A trial period where someone's behavior is monitored.

**Remedial Measures:** Actions taken to fix or correct a problem.

**Sexually Determined Behavior:** Actions or words related to sexual intention or meaning.

**Sexual Advances:** Attempts to start a sexual or romantic interaction.

**Sexually Colored Remarks:** Comments with hidden or obvious sexual meaning.

**Termination / Dismissal:** Ending someone's job.

**Undue Influence:** Pressuring someone in a subtle but unfair way.

## 1. Introduction

Green University of Bangladesh is committed to ensuring a safe, dignified, and inclusive academic and working environment for all members of its community. Sexual harassment is recognized as a violation of fundamental human rights, equality, and dignity, and is strictly prohibited within the University. To ensure a safe environment, Green University of Bangladesh has established a **Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee (2015)** in accordance with the directives of the Hon'ble High Court Division of Bangladesh (2009). The Committee serves as the designated body responsible for receiving complaints, conducting inquiries, ensuring due process, and recommending appropriate actions. It functions with impartiality, confidentiality, and sensitivity, and plays a central role in promoting a safe and respectful environment within the University.

In light of evolving legal, institutional, and social understandings of sexual harassment, as well as the need for a more comprehensive and preventive approach, the University has undertaken a revision of its existing framework. The renaming of the Committee as the **Sexual Harassment Prevention Committee** reflects a shift from a primarily complaint-driven mechanism to a more holistic model that emphasizes prevention, awareness, protection, and timely redress. This policy renewal incorporates updated practices, broader definitions of harassment—including digital and off-campus contexts—and strengthened support and response mechanisms, in alignment with current legal standards and institutional best practices.

This **Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Complaint Resolution Policy** have been developed to prevent and address incidents of sexual harassment within the University. It aims to promote awareness, establish clear standards of behavior, and ensure that any complaint is handled with sensitivity, fairness, and confidentiality.

This is formulated in accordance with the directives of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh in the landmark judgment of *Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) vs. Bangladesh (2009)*, which established binding guidelines for all workplaces and educational institutions in the absence of specific legislation. The policy is also aligned with the expectations and monitoring framework of the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh, which requires all universities to establish functional sexual harassment prevention committees and ensure effective implementation of preventive and remedial measures across campuses. By implementing this policy, Green University of Bangladesh seeks to create a campus culture where everyone feels safe, valued, and empowered to pursue their academic and professional goals without fear of harassment or discrimination.

## 2. Objectives

The **Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Complaint Resolution Policy** at Green University of Bangladesh aims to establish a safe, respectful, and equitable environment for all members of

the University community. In alignment with national legal frameworks and institutional responsibilities, the policy seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To create awareness on sexual harassment and its consequences on the campus (GUB).
- ii. To provide a fair, transparent, and time-bound procedure for the investigation and resolution of complaints.
- iii. To uphold the institutional values of Green University by fostering a culture of mutual respect and professional dignity.

### 3. Definition

Sexual harassment is any kind of sex-related mental, emotional or physical abuse of an individual; student, teacher, officer or other employee of the university. It may be perpetrated by any individual, regardless of gender, and the victim may likewise be of any gender

High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh has tried to define the term ‘sexual harassment’ in the following manner: Sexual Harassment includes a) unwelcome sexually determined behavior b) attempts to establish sexual relation by use of administrative power or position c) sexually colored verbal representation and expecting sexual favors d) sexually colored remark or showing pornography e) Indecent gesture including teasing through abusive language, stalking and jokes f) insult through letters, telephone, mobile phones etc. g) taking still or video photographs j) preventing participation in sports, cultural organization and academic activities (*MS Salma Ali v Bangladesh*, 29 BLD (HCD) 2009, 415).

It is further aligned with international human rights standards, including the Convention on the **Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** and relevant guidelines of the International Labour Organization, which recognize sexual harassment as a form of discrimination and affirm that such conduct can occur irrespective of gender, and in both same-sex and opposite-sex contexts.

Thus, sexual harassment may be defined as unwanted, unwelcome and inappropriate conduct or behavior of a sexual nature perceived as harassment by the receiver. Any unwanted and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and any inappropriate sexual conduct may also be regarded as sexual harassment. Sometimes what one person perceives as sexual harassment may not be so considered by another person. However, the defining characteristics of the term is that the behavior is offensive to and unwanted by the recipient and would be regarded as sexual harassment by any person of ordinary prudence.

## 4. Forms of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment may be committed in any of the following forms:

### 4.1. Physical Conduct

- i. Physical violence;
- ii. Physical contact, e.g., unwelcome touching, patting, stroking, grabbing, pinching and hugging;
- iii. Blocking someone's path with the purpose of making a sexual advance.

### 4.2. Verbal Conduct

- i. Comments on a woman's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- ii. Sexual comments, stories and jokes;
- iii. Sexual advances (explicit or implicit);
- iv. Repeated unwelcome social invitations;
- v. Insults based on the sex of the worker;
- vi. Telling lies or spreading rumors about a person's personal or sex life.

### 4.3. Non-verbal Conduct

- i. Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material;
- ii. Sexually suggestive gestures;
- iii. Staring, stalking, whistling, etc.

### 4.4. Internet Harassment

- i. Sending unsolicited and/or threatening e-mail;
- ii. Encouraging others to send the victim unsolicited and/or threatening e-mail or to overwhelm the victim with e-mail messages;
- iii. Sending viruses by e-mail (electronic sabotage);
- iv. Spreading rumors;
- v. Making defamatory comments about the victim in public discussion areas;
- vi. Sending negative messages directly to the victim;
- vii. Impersonating the victim online by sending an inflammatory, controversial or enticing message which causes others to respond negatively to the victim;
- viii. Harassing the victim during a live chat;
- ix. Leaving abusive messages on Web site guest books;
- x. Sending the victim pornography or other graphic material that is knowingly offensive;

- xi. Creating a Web page or writing an entry on a blog that depicts the victim in negative ways.

## 5. Conducts Not Considered as Sexual Harassment

The following actions, when carried out in a respectful, appropriate, and professional manner, shall not ordinarily be considered sexual harassment:

- i. Consensual interactions, relationships, or communications between adults, provided that such consent is freely given and there is no element of coercion, undue influence, or abuse of authority
- ii. Normal academic, administrative, or supervisory actions, including constructive criticism, performance evaluation, grading, or disciplinary measures, conducted in a fair and professional manner
- iii. Non-sexual social interactions or courteous behavior that are appropriate to the context and not unwelcome or offensive
- iv. Legitimate academic discussions, teaching materials, research activities, or debates that involve sexual or gender-related topics, where presented in an appropriate educational or professional context
- v. Casual compliments or remarks that are respectful, non-sexual in nature, and not repeated after being unwelcome
- vi. Accidental or incidental contact that is not intended to be sexual in nature and is not repeated after objection

*N.B. Any conduct listed above may be considered sexual harassment if it becomes unwelcome, persistent, coercive, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment, or if there exists a power imbalance that undermines genuine consent.*

## 6. Policy Framework

Green University of Bangladesh is committed to addressing all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse with due diligence, through comprehensive measures encompassing prevention, reporting, response, and continuous learning across all levels of the institution.

### 6.1. Prevention

Preventing sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse is a priority of Green University of Bangladesh. The following measures shall be implemented:

- i. Orientation on the policy for all new students and employees at the commencement of their studies or employment;

- ii. Annual refresher training for all students and employees;
- iii. Ongoing education and awareness programs on sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse;
- iv. Circulation and display of a summarized version of the policy at relevant locations across the University, along with orientation for researchers to ensure appropriate conduct during community engagement;
- v. Organization of awareness campaigns and implementation of other proactive preventive initiatives.

## **6.2. Reporting of Complaints**

Any individual who is subjected to sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse is encouraged, where possible, to inform the alleged harasser that such conduct is unwelcome and unacceptable. However, Green University of Bangladesh recognizes that such incidents may occur within unequal power relationships, and it may not always be feasible for the complainant to do so.

A complaint should preferably be lodged as soon as possible following the incident, ideally within 30 days. Complaints may be submitted by survivors, peers, or witnesses through the following channels:

Complaints may be lodged immediately through:

- i. Complains may be submitted through the complaint box
- ii. Complaints may be made 24/7 via designated helpline numbers to the convenor of the committee
- iii. Complains may be submitted to the chairman of the department
- iv. Complaints may be submitted directly to the *Sexual Harassment Prevention Committee* via official email addresses (to be provided by Green University of Bangladesh)

***N.B.*** All complaints shall be forwarded to the *Sexual Harassment Prevention Committee* within 24 hours of receipt. Upon receiving a complaint, the *Committee* shall assess the matter and, where necessary, consult relevant departments or initiate a formal inquiry in accordance with established procedures.

### **6.3. Complaint Committee**

The Green University of Bangladesh shall establish a Complaint Committee to address and redress all forms of sexual harassment and abuse in a fair, impartial, and confidential manner. The Committee shall consist of at least five (05) members:

#### **6.3.1. Convener**

A senior female faculty nominated by the Board of Trustees of the university.

#### **6.3.2. Members**

- i. A senior female faculty member nominated by the Syndicate.
- ii. A student counselor or psychiatrist nominated by the Vice Chancellor.
- iii. An eminent person (may be external), nominated by the Academic Council.
- iv. The Registrar, serving as Member Secretary.
- v. Invited guests from the departments (FSE, FBS, FASS and LAW), appointed on a rotational or case-specific basis.
- vi. External legal or social welfare experts with experience in gender issues, child protection, or workplace ethics, nominated by the Vice Chancellor or Syndicate.

*N.B. The majority of members shall be women. And. at least one member may be from outside the University, preferably with experience in gender issues and sexual abuse.*

#### **6.3.3. Functions of the Complaint Committee**

The Sexual Harassment Prevention Committee shall perform the following functions:

- i. Receive all complaints related to sexual harassment. A complainant may submit a complaint to the Convener or any member of the Committee in writing or verbally;
- ii. Conduct a preliminary assessment of the complaint and, where satisfied that a prima facie case exists, initiate an inquiry;
- iii. If appropriate, meet with the complainant and the accused separately or jointly to explore possibilities of resolution in a fair and appropriate manner;
- iv. Conduct a full-scale formal inquiry in cases involving serious allegations of sexual harassment;
- v. Ensure that all proceedings are conducted with confidentiality, fairness, and due process.

### **6.3. Disciplinary Measures**

Green University of Bangladesh shall take appropriate disciplinary action in response to proven cases of sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse. The nature of the action shall depend on the severity and circumstances of the incident.

### **6.3.1. For Students**

#### **Minor Offences:**

- i. Written warning
- ii. Mandatory counselling
- iii. Formal apology, where appropriate
- iv. Placement on probation for a specified period
- v. Restriction from participation in university activities
- vi. Withheld waiver or other facilities

#### **Major Offences:**

- i. Suspension from the University
- ii. Expulsion from the University
- iii. Recording of misconduct in the academic file, where applicable

### **6.3.2. For Faculty Members and Staff**

#### **Minor Offences:**

- i. Letter of warning
- ii. Written apology
- iii. Deduction of salary or withholding of increments
- iv. Mandatory training on professional conduct

#### **Major Offences:**

- i. Suspension from duty
- ii. Termination of employment

### **6.4. Support Services for the Victims**

The University shall ensure access to the following support services:

- i. Provision of necessary medical assistance following an incident
- ii. Assistance in accessing legal services where intervention by state authorities is required
- iii. Provision of counselling services to address emotional and psychological well-being

## 7. For Whom the Policy is Applicable

This policy shall apply to all individuals associated with Green University of Bangladesh, including but not limited to:

- i. All employees/students of the university who are sexually harassed by any other employee/students.
- ii. An employee/student of the university who sexually harasses, exploits anyone involved in any Green University of Bangladesh activities (i.e. students, volunteers connected with Green University of Bangladesh in any way).
- iii. An employee/student of Green University of Bangladesh who sexually harasses anybody from another institution related with Green University of Bangladesh or indirect staff who are hired as service providers.
- iv. Indirect staff who are hired by contractors or service providers who sexually harass Green University of Bangladesh employees/staff.

## 8. Conclusion

Green University of Bangladesh reaffirms its commitment to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all members of its community. This policy reflects the University's zero-tolerance stance toward sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, and its dedication to upholding dignity, equality, and justice.

The effective implementation of this policy requires the active participation and cooperation of all students, faculty, staff, and associated individuals. The University shall continue to strengthen its preventive measures, response mechanisms, and institutional practices through regular review and continuous improvement. By implementing to this policy, Green University of Bangladesh aims to foster a culture of accountability, mutual respect, and safety, ensuring that all individuals can pursue their academic and professional activities free from fear, discrimination, or harassment.