



## **Anti-Assault, Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy**

### **Introduction**

The Open University of Mauritius (hereafter referred to as either OU or University) is committed to cultivating and maintaining learning and working environments that are supportive of its primary educational mission and free from assault, bullying, and all forms of harassment.

In fact, the University has a duty to foster an on-campus, off-campus and online environment in which learners, members of staff, part-time tutors, and those associated with University activities may work and study effectively.

### **Aim of the Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to prevent and redress situations involving all forms of assault, bullying, and harassment and related forms of prohibited conduct at OU by

- Setting community expectations regarding such acts;
- Describing what conduct is prohibited; and
- Explaining how the University will respond to reports of prohibited conduct.

### **Policy Statement**

The University prohibits, and will respond equitably to, all forms of severely unwelcome conduct among its full-time employees, part-time tutors, stakeholders, and learners who are also responsible for ensuring that individuals do not suffer from assault, bullying, and all forms of harassment including sexual and racial harassment.

### **Application of the Policy**

OU is committed to

- initiating prescribed action(s), like enquiries, on becoming aware that incidents involving alleged assault, bullying, and all forms of harassment including sexual and racial harassment have taken place;
- taking disciplinary actions, such as formal warnings, suspension, transfer, expulsion, dismissal, or termination of registration, against those found

guilty of assault, bullying, and all forms of harassment including sexual and racial harassment. The University reserves the right to report such persons to the police, if required;

- taking disciplinary actions, such as formal warnings, suspension, transfer, expulsion, dismissal or termination of registration, against those found to make false allegations of assault, bullying, and all forms of harassment including sexual and racial harassment against any of its staff or student, that are unwarranted, made in bad faith and with malicious intent;
- condemning the following on all its premises:
  - Any comments which imply that gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, caste, or ethnic or national origins, religious or other belief impair the individual's ability to perform satisfactorily;
  - All unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct;
  - All physical attacks;
  - Circulation or displays of offensive, suggestive or degrading materials (such as pictures, graffiti or objects) in the teaching, learning, living or working environment;
  - Compromising invitations or gifts;
  - Derogatory or belittling remarks in front of others regarding appearance, work or personal attributes;
  - Insulting remarks based on the grounds of personal appearance or personal circumstances;
  - Verbal abuse, threats or intrusive questioning;
  - Offensive, suggestive or derogatory remarks, gestures, mockery, taunts, pranks, jokes, insults or ridicule: in person, on the telephone, by emails or on social networking sites;
  - Insulting supervising and senior officers;
  - Insulting tutors and academics;
  - Insults, name-calling and offensive language and gestures
  - Inappropriate jokes including racist, sexist, homophobic, or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender;
  - Intimidating, coercive or threatening actions and behaviour;
  - Ridicule for cultural differences such as appearance, dress, diet, religion or ethnic background;
  - Sending of unwanted messages via email and social networking sites;
  - Requests or demands for sexual favours;
  - Unwarranted or invalid criticism and criticism which lacks the necessary constructive support to help the recipient improve their performance;

- Use of language which would be deemed to be offensive to others in a face-to-face or online setting; and
- Using an individual's known disability to demoralise them.

### **Procedure for Reporting and Handling a Case of Harassment**

Any staff member or student or person dealing with OU may report a case of harassment against its staff or students by writing to the Director-General with supporting evidence, if available.

If the case is against a full-time/part-time staff, the Director-General shall request the Human Resource Unit to conduct an enquiry following receipt of the complaint/report. The report shall be submitted to the Human Resource Committee which shall make a recommendation on the findings of the enquiry as well as actions to be taken.

The Board shall make a decision on the actions to be taken. The Human Resource Unit shall implement the decision of the Board.

If the case is against a student, the matter will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

The University reserves the right to report any person found guilty of harassment or found guilty of making false allegations of harassment against its staff or student, to the police.

### **Updating the Policy**

Requirements, conditions, provisions, criteria and practices will be reviewed regularly in the light of monitoring exercises and revised if they cease to help OU to achieve the objectives of this policy.

The policy will be updated as and when the need arises and in the light of emerging challenges.

Any amendment to the policy shall be submitted to the Board for approval.

The Board of the Open University of Mauritius reserves the right to make the appropriate amendments to this Anti-Assault, Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy after consultation with the stakeholders.

## **Implementation of the Policy**

The Director-General and the Registrar will ensure the implementation of this Anti-Assault, Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy across all Divisions. This policy will be disseminated among all staff members and students by email. All staff and students shall be responsible for familiarising themselves with the policy and will be required to abide by same.

The Human Resource Unit shall report on any case of harassment/bullying or assault involving full-time staff to the Human Resource Committee.

The Academic Affairs Division shall report on any case of harassment/bullying/assault involving students to the Academic Council.

Heads of Sections shall be required to also ensure that their respective staff have taken cognisance of the policy.

This policy shall be posted on the OU website and linked to the OU e-Learn platform.

***Approved by the Board of the Open University of Mauritius on 23<sup>d</sup> November 2022 for implementation as from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.***