



**The University of Port Harcourt**  
**Choba, Nigeria**

# Sexual

## Harassment Policy



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**The University of Port Harcourt**

**Choba, Nigeria**

# **Sexual Harassment Policy**

**YOUTH FRIENDLY CENTRE**

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# SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

Concepts, Processes and Procedures, Operational Structure,  
Sanctions and Remedies

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# University of Port Harcourt

## BRIEF INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE

**E**stablished in 1975 as a College of the University of Lagos, the University of Port Harcourt is one of the *avant-garde* (new, experimental and innovative) tertiary institutions with a mandate to empower the Niger Delta region and the country academically. The University gained full autonomous status in 1977 on the premises of an emergent Trade School outside Choba Community as its temporary site, close to its future Permanent Site known as the University Park.

**Unique UniPort**, as the Institution is popularly known by its many graduates and stakeholders was accredited by the National Universities Commission (NUC), on a campus status with growing academic, residential, social and cultural facilities to support a growing community of Scholars and administrators.

A five-star teaching hospital serves the University's top-rated College of Health Sciences and caters to the health needs of a large populace drawn from the South-South and South- East regions of the country

The University which offers the best in conventional liberal, equal-opportunity education in the arts, engineering, social sciences and science, is located about 18 kilometres, northwest of the central business district of the bustling Garden City of Port Harcourt, Nigeria's second largest seaport and the hub of the lucrative petroleum and gas industry.

The University is uniquely located in-between the souther-most part of the West African tropical rain forest, and the northern fringes of wetlands, swamps, rivers and mangrove forests that make the Niger Delta a special tourist attraction. The University is surrounded by rural agrarian and artisanal communities that have been positively impacted by its presence in the area. The University also runs effective extension services through its specialised research institutes and centres that have encouraged economic growth and social life in its catchment areas and beyond.

The University expects that the relationship between staff and students shall at all times be professional in nature.

**Unique UniPort** welcomes students and visitors to the bustling city of Port Harcourt, the capital of Nigeria's hydrocarbon industry and indeed the Niger Delta region.

## **PREAMBLE**

Sexual harassment such as unwelcome sexual advances, subtle approaches or outright demand for sexual favours, and other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, are common forms of violence that can cause enduring physical and psychological harm to the victims. Both women and men are targets of such unsolicited sexual advances; although women and girls are the primary targets of unconscionable sexual predators who exploit their vulnerable feminine nature to satisfy their sadistic pleasure. The University of Port Harcourt has zero tolerance for unsolicited sexual advances by either male or female staff and students and is in the forefront of efforts aimed at stamping out this distasteful practice of sexual harassment on-and-off campus.

This Policy document has been formulated and presented to the University community to aid the University in its determined bid to prevent, report and levy appropriate sanctions against staff and students, including other campus residents who engage in sexual harassment or assault in all its grotesque manifestations. The University of Port Harcourt is totally committed to providing a conducive learning environment in which staff and students are at liberty to search for knowledge in an atmosphere that is free of sexual harassment or other forms of molestation by male or female predators. Sexual harassment is a serious misconduct and improper behaviour which may lead to summary dismissal of staff/expulsion of students involved.

Sexual harassment may take the form of victimisation, simulating a hostile environment that interferes with another's performance at work or study or alleged peddling of influences or attempts to influence a person's educational or employment circumstances through coercion or attempting to force a less-powerful person to engage in non-consensual sexual act; i.e an alleged perpetrator influences or attempts to influence; the admission of a student into the University; or to University residences; or the access of a student/staff to training, organisational or funding opportunities; or interferes in grading or evaluation; by coercing or attempting to coerce a student/staff to engage in sexual acts against his or her will. The University will not tolerate sexual harassment.

This Policy is in line with global best practice in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Higher Education Institutions. It aims to prevent, report and respond to sexual assault and sexual harassment in the entire University without exception. It covers staff, students, contract or casual staff engaged by the University, including contractors, consultants and visiting scholars, etc.

## Sexual Harassment Policy

**STEERING COMMITTEE** The Steering Committee is the body charged with the responsibility of administering the Sexual Harassment Policy in the University of Port Harcourt. The Steering Committee draws membership from within and outside the University to ensure the credibility and proper monitoring of its activities.

The Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee include, but not limited to:

- (a) Creating awareness on issues of Sexual Harassment in the University and its environs
- (b) Mobilising relevant stakeholders to identify with and support the campaign
- (c) Reaching out to public-spirited individuals and organisations that would add value to the activities of the Steering Committee
- (d) Sensitising staff and students of the University, especially vulnerable female students on the need to report unsolicited sexual advances to the Steering Committee
- (e) Investigating and identifying victims of sexual harassment and recommending suspects to the relevant organs of the University for appropriate sanctions
- (f) Opening Hotlines and other channels of communication that would encourage victims to report cases of sexual harassment to the Steering Committee
- (g) Holding seminars, workshops and conferences to fine-tune strategies for the effective stakeholder engagement on issues of sexual harassment in and around the University
- (h) Submitting comprehensive periodic Status Report on its activities to the Vice Chancellor

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. The Role of Managers	Steering Committee Membership.
2. Communication	Chairman ; Steering Committee
3. Education and Training	International Federation of Women Lawyers
4. Third Parties	FIDA
5. The Role of the Reporting Office	Medical Women 's Association of Nigeria
6. Sexual Harassment Advisors	MWAN
7. Advisory Panel	Dean, Students Affairs Department
8. Response to a Complaint	University of Port Harcourt Foundation
9. Informal Procedures	Member of the University Governing Council
10. Formal Procedures	Head of Counselling Unit
11. Final Formal procedures	Public Relations Officer of the University
12. Penalties	Chief Security Officer of the University



# 1 DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 **Sexual harassment** is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that violates the rights of a person; male or female. In determining whether the unsolicited conduct constitutes sexual harassment, we must consider the following factors:
- (a) The conduct was made as a pre-condition of an individual's educational or career progress, living environment, employment, or participation in legitimate University activities.
  - (b) The acceptance or refusal to yield to unsolicited sexual advance used as the basis or factor in making decisions that may affect the victim's education, employment, living environment, or participation in legitimate University activities.
  - (c) The conduct impacts the individual's academic or employment performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for that individual's work, education, living environment, or participation in the legitimate University community.
- 1.2 **'Alleged perpetrator'** means a person alleged to have committed an act of sexual harassment or violence;
- 1.3 **'Complainant'** means a person against whom an act of sexual harassment has been committed as defined in this Policy; a victim who lodges a complaint against the perpetrator of an act of sexual harassment
- 1.4 **'Desk Officer'** means a person assigned to present the University's case in formal internal disciplinary proceedings, who may also be the person assigned to investigate suspected cases of sexual harassment
- 1.5 **'Quality Assurance and Quality Control/SERVICOM Unit'** means the complaints and redress unit of the University
- 1.6 **'Confidentiality'** means ensuring that information is accessible only to those authorised to have access to it
- 1.7 **'Employee disciplinary procedure'** means the disciplinary procedure that applies to all categories of staff and students, and others named above (Such as Senior Staff Disciplinary Committee, Junior Staff Disciplinary Committee and Students Disciplinary & Related Matters Committee)
- 1.8 **'Employee'** means anybody statutorily engaged as an employee by the University of Port Harcourt

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- 1.9 **'Manager'** means any employee of the University with managerial, supervisory or warden's responsibilities. For the avoidance of doubt, 'Manager' in this context refers to a Professor, Senior Lecturer, Director, Deputy Registrar, right down the line of statutory responsibility, who should all report all cases of sexual harassment to the Reporting Office for prompt action
- 1.10 **'RO'** means the Reporting Office, (known as the steering committee) which is a standing committee set up by the Vice Chancellor
- 1.11 **'Unique Student handbook'** means the booklet that contains the rules and regulations on the conduct of students which is given to new students at the beginning of each new session
- 1.12 **'Security Unit'** means the Security Unit of the University of Port Harcourt
- 1.13 **'NP'** means Nigeria Police
- 1.14 **Unwelcome sexual conduct** includes physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct/behaviour. Such conduct/behaviour may be direct or indirect through phones and android devices or images designed to either entice or compel the granting of sexual favour(s).
- 1.14.1 **Unwelcome physical conduct** ranges from touching to sexual assault or rape, to even posting explicit pornographic materials to a complainant
- 1.14.2 **Unwelcome verbal or non-verbal conduct** includes insinuations or vaguely-worded suggestions of a sexual nature, sexual advances, sexual threats, sexual comments, sex-related jokes/insults, inappropriate enquiries about a person's sex life, graphic or explicit comments about a person's body, whistling of a sexual nature and the exchange of sexually explicit material by electronic means or otherwise aimed at enticing a person to engage in amorous relations.
- 1.14.3 **Unwelcome non-verbal conduct** includes gestures, indecent exposure and the display or delivery of sexually explicit images by electronic or other means.
- 1.15 **Consensual Sexual or Romantic Relationships between Staff and Students.** The University frowns at sexual and romantic relationships between staff and students which may involve conflict of interest between the parties and their obligations to the University. Conflict of interest is presumed but not exclusive to all instances when staff of the University is in a position to

grade, score, mark, evaluate, or supervise a student (whether part-time or full-time) or allocate opportunities to a student such as access to accommodation and participation in legitimate University activities. Where an exemption is sought for such a relationship, the exemption process may involve the concerned parties being interviewed and counselled as appropriate. In all cases where an exemption is sought, it shall be the duty of the University to take appropriate steps to address the risk of conflict of interests inherent in such relationship.

- 1.16 '**SHA**' means Sexual Harassment Adviser;
- 1.17 '**Student**' means a registered student of the University.
- 1.18 '**University**' means the University of Port Harcourt.

## 2. THE ROLE OF MANAGERS

2.1. Every manager shall take all reasonable steps to create and uphold a setting that is free of sexual harassment. In this regard, Managers should:

- (a) Exhibit leadership by learning, knowing and understanding the terms of this Policy, and assume responsibility for implementing the Policy;
- (b) Attend training and educational sessions on this Policy as offered by the **RO**
- (c) Communicate the Policy to all employees, students and third parties in their respective areas of responsibility;
- (d) Ensure that all new students, staff, and third parties are informed about the Policy and given the opportunity to discuss its implications.

2.2 Every Manager shall take the appropriate action when instances of sexual harassment occur and act as per the reporting and disciplinary processes laid down in this Policy. In this regard, managers are to:

- (a) Treat all complaints with utmost confidentiality and promptness
- (b) Treat all concerned with utmost dignity and respect
- (b) Refer all complaints to the **RO**
- (c) Report to the **RO** when conduct in breach of this Policy is observed, and no complaint is lodged,
- (d) Take steps as appropriate; in consultation with the **RO** to prevent sexual harassment from occurring.

## 3. COMMUNICATION

3.1 The University shall take all necessary steps to communicate this Policy to all students, employees, and third parties on a regular basis: at the yearly orientation programmes for First Year students, statutory Students' Union meetings, University Congregation meetings, and hold widely publicised seminars, workshops, conferences and other

## Sexual Harassment Policy

consultative processes in and outside the University from time to time in concert with the Reporting Office. Printed copies of this Policy shall be given or sold to all staff and students to raise awareness on the need to prevent and report ALL cases of sexual harassment, assault or rape to the Steering Committee for immediate action against the perpetrators.

- 3.2 The University shall make this Policy available on its Website and other relevant platforms to bring it to the attention of all stakeholders—especially staff and students of the University of Port Harcourt.
- 3.3 The Vice Chancellor shall ensure that 3.1 and 3.2 are activated
- 3.4 The Provost of the College of Health Sciences and Deans of Faculties shall:
  - (a) Communicate regularly by oral and written means the seriousness of the issue and the existence of this Policy to students, employees and third parties within their College/Faculties;
  - (b) Communicate regularly with Heads of Departments (HODs) and all other Managers/stakeholders in the Faculty concerning their responsibilities in the effective implementation of this Policy.
- 3.5 The Dean of Student Affairs (**DSA**) shall:
  - (a) Communicate by written and oral means the existence of this Policy and its serious application to students, staff, and third parties within the offices and campus residences of this University;
  - (b) Communicate the contents of this Policy in writing and via meetings to the Students' Union and other recognised student associations on campus.
- 3.6 The **RO** shall:
  - (a) Provide the Information, Publications and Public Relations IPPR Unit with information that would enable the University of Port Harcourt and its environs to be regularly informed about the implementation processes of this Policy
  - (b) Send regular e-mail to all employees, students and third parties at least once a session to give information about this Policy
  - (c) Report annually to the Vice-Chancellor the status and successful implementation of this Policy.

## OMBUD PERSON

- 3.7 The Reporting Office shall also comprise an Ombudsperson who shall act impartially to provide free services to victims of sexual harassment and accused persons. The Ombudsperson shall investigate complaints that have not been adequately handled in the course of addressing complaints against suspects. The Ombudsperson shall step in to re-evaluate issues that are deemed not to have been handled to the satisfaction of both the complainant and accused person to ensure transparency and fairness to all parties. The Ombudsperson shall serve the role of checks and balances in the interest of all parties concerned.

## 4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- 4.1 Regular continuing education and training are imperative to ensure that students, employees and third parties are conversant with the contents of this Policy in order to prevent workplace sexual harassment and enhance the implementation of this Policy. The Education and Training programmes shall encourage students, employees and third parties to respond, report and aid in preventing sexual harassment in all its manifestations.
- 4.2 Within six months of the adoption of this Policy, all staff of the **RO** shall be trained appropriately.
- 4.3 Within four months of the formal adoption of this Policy, the **RO** shall appoint and train SHAs. This training shall be repeated for new SHAs and new members of staff of the **RO** within the first four months of each new calendar year.
- 4.4 All **SHAs** shall attend update training sessions at least on an annual basis.
- 4.5 Within six months of the adoption of this Policy, the **RO** shall present workshops on this Policy for the Principal Officers of the University, heads of academic departments, staff of the Quality Assurance and Quality Control/SERVICOM Unit and Campus Security Unit. Staff representative bodies and the Students' Union Executive shall nominate representatives to attend workshops offered by the **RO**. The **RO** shall repeat the programme workshops, at least, once a year. The **RO** shall integrate this Policy into staff induction and student orientation programmes.

## 5 THIRD PARTIES

No Visitors, Consultants or Sundry Elements shall be deemed to be ignorant of the Sexual Harassment Policy in the University of Port Harcourt; and any infringement on the provisions of this Policy by any person shall be summarily prosecuted by the University through appropriate government

agencies with a view to levying appropriate sanctions.

It is intended that this and related policies should be upheld and respected by all who work at, or visit, the University or who take part in the University's activities. Visitors to the University must abide by the rules and regulate their conduct in all their engagement with the university.

## 6 THE ROLE OF THE REPORTING OFFICE

- 6.1 The **RO** shall provide comprehensive sexual harassment response for the University through a Focal Officer, Assistant Focal Officer, Desk Officer and other support staff. This response shall include the provision of supportive and protective measures for all complainants, whether or not disciplinary proceedings are instituted against the suspects.
- 6.2 Supportive measures may include, but not limited to:
- (a) Crisis counseling;
  - (b) Emergency medical services, para-legal advice and other relevant services that would ameliorate the hurt
  - (c) Initiate measures to mitigate the impact of sexual harassment or the reporting thereof upon receiving a complaint.
- 6.3 Protective measures may include, but not limited to:
- (a) Non-contact orders, where appropriate
  - (b) Change of residence for the affected student(s) by the Student Affairs Department, where applicable
  - (c) Change of academic classes and academic concessions, where appropriate
  - (d) Special leave (staff) or temporary withdrawal from study (students), where applicable
- 6.4 While the primary aim of this Policy is to assist complainants who allege sexual harassment or assault, an alleged perpetrator may at any stage approach the **RO** for advice on the application and interpretation of this Policy. In such instances the **RO** shall:
- (a) Provide alleged perpetrator with a copy of this Policy and the University's disciplinary rules
  - (b) Advise the alleged perpetrator on his or her rights to obtain legal representation and availability of other counseling services
  - (c) Advise the alleged perpetrator that the University may choose to follow its disciplinary rules even when the complainant does not wish to do so
  - (d) Explain to the alleged perpetrator the protective measures available to the complainant.

## 7. SEXUAL HARASSMENT ADVISORS

7.1 The **RO** shall appoint and train SHAs, drawn from employees of the University

7.2 A **SHA** shall have the following responsibilities:

- (a) To receive complaints of sexual harassment from the **RO**
- (b) In consultation with the Desk Officer, to assist, support, consult and liaise with complainants, alleged perpetrators and those initiating complaints of sexual harassment;
- (c) To provide reports and records to the **RO** on all referred cases
- (d) To represent the best interests of a complainant, or alleged perpetrator in formal communications with the **RO** where such representation is required
- (e) To liaise with the Desk Officer with regards to the responsibilities that may arise from disciplinary hearings
- (f) To support the educational work of the **RO** where practicable and reasonable.

7.3 The **SHAs** should, as a group, be diverse in terms of gender, qualifications and background

7.4 While a complainant will be entitled to ask for another **SHA** to be assigned to his or her case; every effort should be made to ensure that the same **SHA** deals with a particular case all through.

7.5 The **RO** shall:

- (a) Provide general support and guidance to the **SHAs**
- (b) Monitor cases;
- (c) Ensure that the **SHAs** are suitably trained

## 8 ADVISORY PANEL

8.1 For any report of sexual harassment made under this Policy, or in general; the **RO** may appoint an Advisory Panel to assist the **RO** with information, suggestions and expertise

8.2 An Advisory Panel may consist of the following persons: (a) The **SHA** representing a complainant or victim

(b) The Desk Officer assigned to the complainant or victim

(c) A nominee of the Dean of Student Affairs, if the complainant or alleged perpetrator is a student;

(d) A nominee of the Vice Chancellor, if the complainant or alleged perpetrator is a staff member

- (e) A person, not necessarily a staff member of the University, with expert knowledge in the field.

## **9 RESPONSE TO A COMPLAINT**

- 9.1 Complaints of sexual harassment must be brought to the attention of the **RO** as soon as is reasonably possible.
- 9.2 If a complaint is brought to the attention of a Manager, the Manager shall notify the **RO**.
- 9.3 Sexual harassment shall be brought to the attention of the **RO** by the complainant or any other person that witnessed the incidence of sexual harassment and/or any person that the complainant disclosed such incident to, and or any person that has sufficient information about the incident. However, if the incident is of a serious nature, the complainant shall be encouraged to inform the **RO** in person.
- 9.4 Any complaint of sexual harassment will be recorded in writing by the **RO** and will be assigned to a Desk Officer, who shall manage the complaint.
- 9.5 The **RO** shall also assign an appropriate and available **SHA** to promptly investigate the case and report back for further action.
- 9.6 The steps to be taken by the Desk Officer on receipt of a complaint should include but not limited to, the following:
  - (a) Advise the complainant that there are formal and informal procedures which can be followed
  - (b) Explain the formal and informal procedures to the c