Anti-Harassment Policy for Faculty , Staff and Students

1. Purpose

To prevent harassment, intimidation, bullying and hostile conduct affecting staff and students and to provide accessible, fair and appropriate reporting, support and redressal mechanisms.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all teaching, non-teaching and administrative staff; students; research scholars; applicants; interns; visitors; contractors and other persons participating in University activities or entering University premises. It applies to conduct on campus, in hostels, during University events, fieldwork, internships, official travel, online learning platforms and other University-related physical or digital settings.

3. Definitions

- **Harassment:** Unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, non-verbal, physical, written or digital, that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment, or interfering with participation or work, as assessed under applicable law and University rules.
- **Bullying:** Repeated or serious unreasonable conduct, including intimidation, humiliation, threats, exclusion or misuse of authority, that may cause harm or create a hostile environment.
- **Victimisation / retaliation:** Adverse treatment of a person because they made a complaint in good faith, supported another person, participated in an inquiry or exercised a right under this policy.
- **Statutory sexual harassment process:** The procedure prescribed under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and applicable rules, administered by the duly constituted Internal Committee.

4. Policy Statement

VISTAS maintains a zero-tolerance approach to harassment, bullying, intimidation, victimisation and retaliation. Every member of the University community is entitled to a safe environment in which dignity and respect are protected. Complaints shall be directed to the appropriate statutory or institutional mechanism, and this policy shall not dilute, replace or interfere with procedures mandated by law, including the POSH Act, 2013.

5. Policy Principles and Commitments

- Harassment, bullying, intimidation, stalking, threatening conduct, humiliating treatment and online abuse are prohibited, subject to applicable law and University rules.
- Sexual harassment complaints covered by the POSH Act, 2013 shall be handled by the duly constituted Internal Committee in accordance with the Act and Rules.
- Complaints involving students, staff or other members of the University shall be routed to the competent statutory or institutional mechanism according to the nature of the allegation and applicable jurisdiction.

- Reporting channels shall be communicated clearly and made accessible to staff and students.
- Complaints shall be handled with fairness, impartiality, confidentiality and respect for the rights of all parties.
- No person shall be threatened, disadvantaged or retaliated against for making a complaint in good faith or participating in an inquiry.
- Interim support or protective measures may be considered by the competent authority where appropriate, without prejudging the outcome.
- Awareness and sensitisation programmes shall be conducted periodically for staff and students on respectful conduct, prevention of harassment, reporting channels and available support.
- Where a violation is established, proportionate action shall be taken under applicable law, statutory procedures and University rules.
- Anonymous information may be considered for risk assessment or preventive action where appropriate, but formal inquiry and action shall follow the requirements of the applicable procedure.

6. Implementation Procedure

1. A person experiencing or witnessing harassment may report the matter through the published channel to Human Resources, Student Affairs, the Grievance Officer or the appropriate statutory / institutional committee.
2. The receiving office shall assess the nature of the concern and refer it promptly to the mechanism having jurisdiction. Sexual harassment complaints covered by the POSH Act shall be referred to the Internal Committee.
3. The competent mechanism shall acknowledge and process the complaint in accordance with the applicable law, rules and University procedure. Statutory timelines shall prevail wherever prescribed.
4. Where appropriate and within its authority, the competent office may recommend interim measures to protect safety, prevent contact or reduce further harm, without prejudging the complaint.
5. The inquiry or review shall provide the parties a fair opportunity to present relevant information and respond, consistent with the applicable procedure.
6. Findings and recommendations shall be communicated to the competent authority for action in accordance with law and University rules.
7. Records shall be maintained securely, with access restricted. Confidentiality requirements under the POSH Act and other applicable laws shall be strictly observed.
8. Anonymised trend information may be reviewed periodically to improve prevention, awareness and institutional response, without disclosing identities or confidential inquiry material.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Human Resources Department	Communicate staff reporting channels, coordinate employment-related matters and support implementation of approved actions.
Student Affairs / Student Welfare Office	Communicate student reporting channels, provide appropriate student support and coordinate referrals.

Internal Committee	Receive and address sexual harassment complaints within its statutory mandate under the POSH Act, 2013.
Other competent committees / Grievance Officer	Handle matters within their approved terms of reference and refer matters outside their jurisdiction.
Heads of Schools / Departments	Promote respectful conduct, promptly refer concerns and implement authorised measures.
All staff and students	Maintain respectful conduct, refrain from harassment and cooperate with authorised processes.
Competent Authority	Ensure that appropriate mechanisms are constituted, adequately supported and functioning in accordance with law.

8. Records and Supporting Evidence

- Approved anti-harassment policy and evidence of communication to staff and students
- Orders constituting the Internal Committee and other relevant committees
- Published reporting channels and referral procedures
- Awareness, orientation and sensitisation programme records
- Confidential complaint and inquiry records maintained by the competent body, with access controls
- Anonymised annual implementation and prevention report, where legally permissible
- Corrective-action and policy-review records

9. Review and Amendment

This policy shall be reviewed at least once every three years, or earlier if applicable law, University structures, identified risks or implementation reviews require amendment. The review date, approved amendments and responsible authority shall be recorded.

Created / Revised on: _____

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Signature / Seal: _____