

AZERBAIJAN STATE OIL AND  
INDUSTRY UNIVERSITY



## ANTI-HARRASMENT AND ANTI- DISCRIMINATION





Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University

Those charged with governance

Sustainability Committee

**Anti-harassment and discrimination policy**

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An official copy of this policy can be obtained upon request.

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## Section 1

### 1.1. Policy Statement

Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) is dedicated to cultivating a work and learning environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and bias. The university values diversity, equity, and inclusion, and is committed to upholding a culture of mutual respect, where all members of the academic community feel safe, supported, and empowered to thrive.

#### **Prohibited Conduct:**

Harassment and discrimination refer to unjust or prejudicial treatment based on protected characteristics, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital or parental status, disability, or genetic information.

Prohibited conduct under this policy includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal, physical, or visual harassment
- Abuse of authority or position
- Religious discrimination or intolerance
- Exploitation or coercion
- Unwelcome sexual advances, comments, or behavior
- Any form of mistreatment that undermines the dignity or well-being of an individual

ASOIU is actively enhancing its alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by embedding principles of equity, justice, and inclusion into its institutional framework.

Key areas of focus include:

- **SDG 5 – Gender Equality:** Strengthening initiatives that promote the equal participation of women in leadership roles and implementing robust protections against gender-based violence.
- **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Reinforcing workplace safety standards and adopting a zero-tolerance policy toward all forms of discrimination and harassment.
- **SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities:** Ensuring inclusive policies and protections for vulnerable groups, including individuals with disabilities and members of minority communities.
- **SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** Enhancing transparency in complaint reporting and investigation procedures to foster trust in institutional accountability and

governance.

### **Complaint Process:**

ASOIU has implemented a clear and accessible process for reporting and addressing concerns related to harassment and discrimination. All members of the university community are strongly encouraged to report any incidents promptly, ensuring that appropriate action can be taken to uphold a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment.

### **Resources and Support:**

ASOIU offers a range of resources and support services for individuals who have experienced or witnessed harassment or discrimination, ensuring they have access to the guidance, care, and assistance they need.

### **Non-Retaliation:**

ASOIU strictly prohibits any form of retaliation against individuals who report or file complaints related to harassment or discrimination. Retaliatory actions will be treated as serious violations of university policy and addressed accordingly.

## **Equal Opportunity:**

ASOIU is firmly committed to ensuring equal opportunity for all members of its academic community. This policy seeks to promote a work and learning environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and other forms of inappropriate conduct, while fostering a culture of respect, inclusivity, and mutual dignity.

Harassment, bullying, discrimination, and victimization can significantly impact an individual's well-being, morale, and professional or academic performance, as well as the broader institutional climate. ASOIU acknowledges its legal and ethical obligation to protect its staff, students, and affiliates. The university maintains a zero-tolerance policy toward such behaviors, whether they occur on campus or in settings connected to the university.

All reports of harassment, bullying, or victimization will be treated with the utmost seriousness, investigated thoroughly and promptly, and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## **Preventing and Addressing Harassment:**

ASOIU is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free from harassment, bullying, and victimization. This policy sets forth the procedures for preventing such behavior, responding effectively to reported incidents, and ensuring that appropriate support is available to individuals who have been affected. Through this framework, ASOIU seeks to promote a culture of respect, safety, and accountability across the university community.

## **Line Manager Responsibilities:**

Line managers play a vital role in cultivating and maintaining a positive and respectful work environment. They are responsible for ensuring that all team members are aware of this policy and fully understand its principles and expectations. Furthermore, line managers are entrusted with promptly addressing any reports or observations of harassment, bullying, or victimization within their teams, and are expected to take appropriate action in accordance with university procedures.

## **Equal Opportunity Framework:**

ASOIU is committed to upholding equal opportunity for all staff members. This policy provides a clear framework to ensure a transparent and equitable work environment, free from any form of

discrimination. Line managers and supervisors are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the policy and to consistently uphold its principles in their daily responsibilities.

Through the implementation of this policy, ASOIU reaffirms its dedication to fostering a respectful, inclusive, and supportive workplace for all members of the university community.

## 1.2. Policy purpose

Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) is committed to protecting all employees from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. The university will ensure that all members of the university community are informed of these policies and that any violations are addressed promptly and appropriately.

Employees with questions or concerns regarding these policies are encouraged to contact the Manager of the Office of Legal Affairs and Policy or a member of the Personnel Practices Committee for guidance.

These policies must not be misused to justify the exclusion or segregation of individuals from workplace conversations, events, or social activities based on gender or other protected characteristics. Avoiding harassment must not become a pretext for discriminatory practices. ASOIU's rules explicitly prohibit discrimination based on gender and other protected characteristics with regard to terms, conditions, privileges, and benefits of employment or academic participation.

The university's anti-harassment, discrimination, and retaliation policies are intended to complement—not replace—existing university regulations, reinforcing ASOIU's broader commitment to equity, respect, and inclusion.

## 1.3. Definitions

ASOIU is committed to ensuring a work and learning environment where all individuals—regardless of gender—are free from harassment, intimidation, or hostility. Legally, harassment is defined as any unwelcome behavior that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. It is essential to understand that an individual can experience harassment even if the inappropriate behavior is not directly targeted at them.

Harassment may be expressed through various forms of communication—written, verbal, nonverbal, or electronic. It can consist of a single incident or repeated actions. Whether intentional or not, harassment is always unacceptable. This policy applies to all forms of harassment, and all members of the ASOIU community are expected to uphold these standards.

Examples of Unacceptable Behavior Include:

Sexual Harassment:

Includes inappropriate physical contact (e.g., invading personal space, unwanted touching), serious



assault, sexually suggestive comments or jokes, intrusive questions about someone's private life, unwelcome sexual advances, pressure for sexual favors, and the sharing or display of pornographic or sexually explicit material.

#### Racial Harassment:

Encompasses offensive jokes, gestures, or remarks related to an individual's race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality. It may involve exclusion based on racial identity, ridicule of cultural practices or attire, or the distribution of racially offensive material.

#### Disability Harassment:

Includes mocking, ignoring, or marginalizing individuals based on actual or perceived disabilities. Offensive remarks, jokes, or stereotypes about a person's condition, capabilities, or appearance also fall under this category.

#### Religious Harassment:

Refers to mocking or disparaging comments, jokes, or behaviors targeting an individual's religious beliefs, clothing, symbols, or practices.

#### Gender Reassignment Harassment:

Involves name-calling, jokes, exclusion, misgendering, humiliation, or unequal treatment of individuals undergoing or who have undergone gender reassignment.

#### Age-Based Harassment:

Encompasses derogatory comments, jokes, or treatment based on an individual's age, including stereotyping or unjust assumptions regarding capabilities or relevance.

#### Bullying

Bullying refers to the misuse of power through persistent, hostile behavior that undermines an individual personally or professionally. It may include threatening, insulting, abusive, or intimidating actions that erode the recipient's self-confidence, lower self-esteem, or result in social isolation. Common forms of bullying include:

- Repeated shouting or verbal abuse
- Sarcasm or derogatory remarks
- Persistent criticism without constructive feedback
- Undermining someone's work or contribution
- Cyberbullying through emails, messages, or social media

Such conduct, whether overt or subtle, is strictly prohibited at ASOIU and will be addressed in accordance with the university's disciplinary procedures.

### Victimization

ASOIU prohibits all forms of victimization. This includes retaliating against individuals who:

- Have filed or plan to file a formal complaint
- Have participated in or provided evidence for an investigation
- Have expressed concerns in good faith regarding inappropriate conduct

Victimization may also extend to former staff members, such as refusing references or professional support due to their involvement in a complaint or investigation. ASOIU is committed to protecting the rights of individuals engaging in these processes.

### Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as the unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals based on certain protected characteristics. At ASOIU, discrimination is prohibited on the grounds of:

- Race or color
- National origin or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Gender or gender identity
- Age
- Marital or parental status
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Genetic information or other protected attributes

ASOIU is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where every member of the university community is treated with fairness and respect. The university actively enforces policies to prevent discrimination, promote equality, and respond promptly to any reported violations.

### 1.4. Current situation

## Current Framework for Addressing Harassment and Discrimination at ASOIU

Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) has established comprehensive mechanisms to address and prevent harassment and discrimination. The following practices are currently in place:

### ➤ Reporting Mechanisms

Direct communication with the Rector: Students may report any form of misconduct, including harassment and discrimination, directly to the Rector via the university's website.

Reporting to designated units: Misconduct can be reported in person or in writing to the appropriate university units responsible for addressing such concerns.

Digital reporting tools: ASOIU is implementing user-friendly digital platforms (e.g., anonymous online portals or chatbots) to simplify and encourage reporting of harassment and discrimination.

### ➤ Institutional Oversight and Enforcement

Ethics Code: The Scientific Council has endorsed an Ethics Code for Academicians and Employees, which defines harassment and discrimination as serious violations.

Disciplinary Committee: This body audits violations of the Ethics Code, conducts investigations, and imposes appropriate disciplinary actions or preventive measures. These rulings are enforceable and mandatory.

Appeal Commission: During examination periods, an Appeal Commission is formed to address and resolve student grievances.

### ➤ Training and Awareness

Educational workshops: ASOIU regularly provides harassment and discrimination training through lectures, seminars, and workshops to increase awareness among students and staff.

Monitoring and evaluation: Monthly student surveys are conducted to gauge the campus climate. Results inform the implementation of preventive measures.

### ➤ Independent Oversight

External reviews: The university performs regular internal audits and engages external experts to evaluate the effectiveness of current policies.

Independent monitoring: Independent monitoring mechanisms involving external professionals help

ensure fair, transparent, and unbiased investigations.

### Investigative Procedures and Disciplinary Action

**Timely response:** Allegations of harassment and discrimination are investigated promptly and thoroughly. If substantiated, appropriate actions are taken, and relevant authorities are informed.

**Proactive investigations:** The university reserves the right to investigate any incident of suspected harassment or discrimination, even in the absence of a formal complaint.

**Consequences for violations:** Violations may result in serious disciplinary actions, including student expulsion or employee termination.

**Protection for employees:** Employees who experience harassment or discrimination are encouraged to report incidents without delay.

#### ➤ Zero Tolerance for Discriminatory Conduct

ASOIU strictly prohibits discriminatory behavior based on any of the following grounds, whether or not such acts are considered illegal under local law:

- Age
- Color
- Gender or gender identity
- Disability
- Height or weight
- Marital status
- National origin
- Political beliefs
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion

These principles form the foundation of ASOIU's commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and

respectful academic and work environment.

### 1.5. Legal base

The Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy (AHAD) at Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) is grounded in national legislation, including laws, decrees, and orders issued by the President and Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan. These include:

- The Law on Social Services
- The Law on Gender Equality
- The Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence
- Other relevant legal frameworks of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The AHAD Policy is designed to uphold the principles of dignity, equality, and respect for all individuals within the university community. It ensures protection against harassment and discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital or parental status, disability, or genetic information.

## Section 2

### 2.1. Responsibilities

#### **Commitment to a Respectful Workplace:**

Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) is committed to cultivating a workplace environment free from harassment, discrimination, and victimization. The university upholds its legal and ethical obligation to ensure equal treatment for all staff members, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity, disability, or age.

#### **Integration into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):**

- Integrate anti-discrimination and harassment prevention efforts into the university's wider sustainability and ethical responsibility framework.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity by embedding these values into educational programs, research activities, and institutional practices.

#### **Protection from External Sources:**

This policy also applies to interactions with contractors and service providers. If a staff member experiences inappropriate behavior from any such individual, they should report the incident to the manager responsible for overseeing the contractor's work. The manager will coordinate with the appropriate university department to address the concern. Contractors or service providers found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, which could include termination of their contract and removal from university premises.

#### **Managerial Responsibilities:**

This policy also applies to interactions with contractors and service providers. If a staff member experiences inappropriate behavior from any such individual, they should report the incident to the manager responsible for overseeing the contractor's work. The manager will coordinate with the appropriate university department to address the concern. Contractors or service providers found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, which could include termination of their contract and removal from university premises.

#### **Staff Responsibilities:**

All staff members are expected to:

- Comply with and actively promote the principles outlined in this policy.
- Treat all colleagues, students, clients, and visitors with dignity and respect, regardless of their background or personal characteristics.
- Avoid any behavior that could be perceived as offensive, harassing, or discriminatory.
- Speak out against and report incidents of harassment, bullying, or victimization.
- Offer support to colleagues who may be experiencing mistreatment or discrimination.

**Reporting Procedure:**

Staff members who experience or witness harassment, discrimination, or victimization are encouraged to report the incident to their manager or supervisor. Prompt reporting enables the university to take timely and appropriate action to address the situation effectively.

**Creating a Safe and Inclusive Environment:**

By working together, ASOIU leadership and staff can foster a safe, inclusive, and respectful work environment where every individual is valued and empowered to thrive.

**2.2. Objectives of the AHAD Policy are as follows:**

- Preventing discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital status, disability, or genetic information.
- Fostering an ethical culture and promoting diversity through an inclusive, student-centered education system.
- Educating the university community about various forms of harassment and discrimination.
- Ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all individuals.
- Conducting fair, transparent, and unbiased investigations into any reported incidents.
- Providing ongoing training sessions and seminars to raise awareness and promote accountability.
- Upholding the principles of dignity, respect, and personal responsibility.
- Making events and activities accessible to all students, regardless of socioeconomic status or background, while cultivating a welcoming atmosphere for all guests.



## SECTION 3

### 3.1. Equal employment opportunity

#### **Building a Respectful and Inclusive Community**

Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment where all students, staff, and faculty are treated with dignity and respect. We strive to ensure equal opportunities, prevent discrimination and harassment, and foster a culture that values diversity and promotes mutual understanding.

#### **Understanding Harassment:**

Harassment is defined as any unwelcome verbal, written, or physical conduct that is based on a protected characteristic. This includes, but is not limited to, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected under Azerbaijani law. Harassment may also involve actions directed at an individual due to the protected characteristics of their relatives, friends, or associates.

#### **Examples of Harassment:**

Harassment can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Epithets and slurs
- Threats or intimidation
- Derogatory jokes or remarks
- Display or circulation of offensive or hostile written or graphic material
- Any behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment
- Actions that interfere with an individual's work or academic performance
- Conduct that negatively affects employment, academic standing, or other opportunities

Harassment may occur in person, during work or study hours, within university premises, or through university-provided communication channels such as email, phone calls, text messages, or social media platforms.

**ASOIU's Commitment:**

Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) strictly prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment. We are committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment in which every member of our community feels valued, heard, and supported.

### 3.2. Retaliation

Reporting, Non-Retaliation, and Restorative Justice at ASOIU  
Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) strongly encourages the reporting of any suspected discrimination or harassment. All reports are investigated promptly, thoroughly, and impartially. Retaliation against individuals who report, oppose, or participate in the investigation of such incidents—or who request reasonable accommodations in good faith—is strictly prohibited.

“Retaliatory action” includes intimidation, threats, coercion, discrimination, or any adverse educational or employment consequences. General incivility or rudeness, while inappropriate, does not fall under this definition.

Restorative Justice Approach:

- ASOIU promotes restorative justice practices, offering mediated resolution options when all parties agree to reconciliation.
- Psychological and legal support services are available to victims, including access to counseling and legal aid.

Retaliation is strictly prohibited and may take various forms depending on the context. Prohibited retaliatory actions include, but are not limited to:

- Taking adverse actions related to an individual’s job status or educational opportunities.
- Unreasonably interfering with someone’s academic or professional development.
- Engaging in stalking, harassment, or physical/verbal attacks.
- Encouraging or coercing others to act in a retaliatory manner on one’s behalf.

Strengthening Witness and Victim Protection

- **Defined Protection Protocols:** ASOIU will establish and communicate clear protocols to protect victims and witnesses of misconduct. These protocols ensure that individuals who report harassment, discrimination, or other violations are safeguarded from retaliation throughout the reporting and investigation process.
- **Timely Complaint Resolution:** All reported cases will be reviewed and addressed within a maximum of 30 days from the date of filing, barring exceptional circumstances. This deadline ensures accountability, timely support, and transparent outcomes for all parties involved.

### ***Options for dealing with discrimination and/or harassment***

ASOIU encourages all members of the university community to report any incidents of discrimination or harassment. If you have experienced or witnessed such behavior, you have the option to seek assistance from a Confidential Resource or to file a formal complaint.

The University understands that choosing between these options can be difficult. It is recommended that individuals consult with a Confidential Resource to receive guidance and explore available support before deciding how to proceed.

### ***Reporting an Incident of Harassment, Discrimination or Retaliation***

ASOIU encourages the reporting of all instances of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, regardless of the offender's identity, rank, or status within the university. If you believe you have been subjected to such conduct, you are urged to contact your academic mentors, faculty deans, the Personnel Practices Committee, the Legal Affairs Office Manager, or the University President.

In addition, ASOIU supports individuals in addressing issues directly when they feel comfortable doing so. If you believe someone's behavior is inappropriate or unwelcome, you are encouraged to clearly communicate this to the individual and ask that the behavior stop. In many cases, this may be sufficient to resolve the situation. However, ASOIU fully understands and respects that some individuals may choose to address the matter through formal complaint procedures instead.

### ***Complaint Procedure***

If you believe you have experienced or witnessed prohibited conduct, you are encouraged to report the incident by contacting your academic mentor, faculty dean, the Personnel Practices Committee, the Legal Affairs Office Manager, or the University President.

### **Reporting and Addressing Harassment:**

#### **Report Incidents Promptly:**

- Report any suspected harassment, discrimination, or retaliation to your academic advisor, faculty dean, Personnel Practices Committee, Legal Affairs Office, or the University President.
- Prompt reporting ensures a quicker resolution and helps prevent further harm or escalation.

#### **Investigation Process:**

- ASOIU will promptly investigate all reported complaints.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation process.
- Retaliation is strictly prohibited against individuals who report concerns in good faith.

#### **Disciplinary Action:**

ASOIU will take appropriate disciplinary action in cases of misconduct, which may range from mandatory training or counseling to suspension or termination, depending on the severity of the violation.

#### **Appeals:**

If you disagree with the outcome of the investigation or disciplinary action, you have the right to appeal the decision to the university president.

#### **False Accusations:**

- Making false or malicious accusations can result in disciplinary action.

### *University commitment during the investigation*

#### **ASOIU Disciplinary Committee Guidelines and Safeguards**

To ensure the safety and privacy of complainants, the ASOIU Disciplinary Committee enforces the following measures:

- Complainants are protected from direct interaction with the respondent within university offices or lecture halls. If separation cannot be ensured, the complainant may be granted paid leave or temporary suspension until the investigation concludes.
- The respondent may also be temporarily suspended upon receipt of the complaint to avoid conflict, communication, or intimidation during the investigation process.
- To maintain confidentiality, the University Council notifies both parties of the final decision without disclosing any investigation-related documents.

#### **Judgment and Sanctions:**

- If the Disciplinary Committee issues a condemnation judgment, and it is approved by the University Council, sanctions will be applied unless the complainant agrees to preserve the confidentiality of the inquiry.
- Any member of the university who attempts to interfere with the work of the investigative committee will face administrative penalties, regardless of their gender or status.
- The complainant may offer a concession to the investigative committee at any stage. The committee retains the discretion to accept or decline the concession.

#### **Documentation and Appeals:**

- All witness and complaint statements must be recorded either electronically or in handwritten form to ensure proper documentation.
- The respondent may appeal the committee's decision by submitting additional evidence. The university president must respond within three days, either upholding or overturning the initial decision.
- If both the complainant and respondent agree to a mutual apology, the investigative committee may approve a settlement and close the case.

