



SIKKIM ALPINE UNIVERSITY

Kamrang, Namchi, South Sikkim – 737126

(Established under Sikkim Alpine University Act, 2021)

GENDER CELL POLICY

(Policy Document – 2025)

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1. Preamble

Recognising the critical importance of Gender Equality, dignity and non discrimination the Gender Cell is established at Sikkim Alpine University functioning as a proactive body dedicated to foster gender equality, creation of gender sensitive inclusive safe and equitable environment for all the students faculty non teaching staff and stakeholders.

This policy outlines the objectives structures functions, mechanisms and procedures that guides the functioning of the cell in compliance with Articles enshrine in the constitution of India namely article 14 article 15, 16 and article 21 and the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines on gender sensitization and the POSH ACT prevention of sexual harassment of women at workplace.

Sikkim Alpine University's commitment to gender equality and diversity is deeply rooted in international and national frameworks. It aligns with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, specifically SDG 5, which focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, as well as SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 16 (peace and justice).

Gender equality is recognized as a fundamental human right and a crucial foundation for building a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable global society.

As a higher education institution Sikkim Alpine University aims to play a key role in social development by ensuring equal and fair access to all its resources, services, and opportunities for its students, staff, and faculty members.

The policy is driven by the principle that all citizens should have an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the nation's development, including women's achievements, aspirations, and life choices. Recognizing that historical disadvantages, deep rooted gender bias, and a lack of education often lead to gender-based inequities, the University is committed to identifying and remedying these imbalances to ensure every individual can achieve their full potential.

The policy aims to create an environment that promotes gender sensitivity, addresses gender-based differences, and adheres to national and international guidelines for gender equity. A national directive emphasizing equal employment opportunity for women is central to the University's mission and guides this policy.

Historically, gender discrimination has fostered a culture of exclusion and denial of opportunity for women. Therefore, SAU must be a place free from gender bias and should not tolerate unfavourable learning and working environments based on gender. The University is committed to proactive measures, including regular assessment and correction of gender-related issues, to ensure full and effective participation from all stakeholders.

2. Why an Institutional Gender Policy is Essential?

A dedicated gender policy is not merely a formality; it is a fundamental commitment by the institution to actively shape a culture of **gender equality and equity**. While discussions about gender issues are becoming more open, especially in academic settings, this openness must be formalized to create tangible, positive change.

Gender inequality is often **culturally embedded**, manifesting as various forms of discrimination against girls and women. In essence, the policy serves as the foundation for creating an environment where all members, regardless of gender, can study, work, and live with **dignity and respect**, thereby realizing their full potential.

3. Definitions:

- a) *Institute* refers to Sikkim Alpine University, the governing body responsible for administering this policy.
- b) *Campus* encompasses the entire operational area and assets of the Institute. This includes all physical infrastructure (e.g., academic buildings, hostels, staff housing, administrative blocks, libraries, and recreational grounds) and all online platforms used for educational, research, or administrative purposes.
- c) *Workplace* means the Campus and any location or activity officially sanctioned or required by the Institute that involves an Employee or Student. This includes, but is not limited to: official travel, field studies, internships, conferences, workshops, organized cultural events, sporting meets, and any external accommodation utilized for these activities. It extends to all online interaction spaces used for Institute related functions.
- d) *Hostile Work Environment* means a setting created when unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature impairs an individual's work or educational performance and/or generates an intimidating, offensive, or unfriendly atmosphere within the institutional, educational, or residential spaces.
- e) *Employee* is/are any person engaged by the Institute to perform duties, regardless of the employment terms. Academic, administrative, and technical staff; full-time, part-time, temporary, or permanent positions; visiting faculty, consultants, research assistants, and any individual hired through an agency to work on Institute premises or projects.
- f) *Student* is any individual irrespective of their gender affiliation formally enrolled in, pursuing, or having completed and awaiting certification from a course or program

offered by the Institute. Includes regular students, distance learners, trainees, research scholars, and students from other institutions participating in placements, internships, or short-term training programs at the Institute.

4. Visions of Gender Cell:

- a) Work in collaboration with the cell members and strive to achieve considerable progress regarding the promotion of gender equality additionally catering to gender intrusivity while acknowledging gender diversity.
- b) Proactively striving to identify and solve problems pertaining to gender related issues like gender discrimination, gender based violence , sexual harassment observed in the campus.
- c) Prioritisation regarding promotion of gender equality equity empowerment and maintaining inclusivity in the campus.

5. Objectives of the Gender Cell

- a) Promotion of gender equality while organising gender awareness and sensitization programmes in the University.
- b) Immediate dresses or action on any form of gender discrimination observed in the campus.
- c) Provide support, guidance and redressal to individuals facing gender related issues.
- d) To support and assist individuals facing gender based violence like sexual harassment.
- e) Encouragement of inclusive safe and supportive working and learning environment for diverse gender identities.
- f) To redress and sensitize gender related issues / stigmass and miss information rotate in biological differences and gender identity promoting awareness acceptance and inclusivity
- g) Provide assistant and support the victims of gender based violence and to any individuals who have experienced gender related trauma
- h) Providing a platform for women to share and address there problems and experiences.
- i) Try for women empowerment and initiate workshops and events within the university that alliance with the diverse dimensions of empowerment
- j) Organise awareness programs designed to support overall welfare inclusion and empowerment across individuals belonging to diverse at identities
- k) Creating safe place for female students and female staffs in both working and learning environment while also insurance the gender safety and protection are extended to all genders without limitations
- l) Emphasize respect towards gender diversity and promotion of equality in various aspects of life
- m) Organise workshops , seminars , campaigns and invite prominent resource persons wEll equipped with gender related studies to enhance knowledge skills and self confidence among student and staffs in the university.

- n) Maintenance of records of activities complaints resolutions and reports for transparency and institutional accountability.

6. Scope of the Policy – Concerning Employees

The **Workplace Gender Equality and Diversity Policy** applies to all SAU job applicants and existing employees. It mandates that all third parties and contractors working at the University also comply with its provisions.

The policy's scope covers the following key areas of the employment cycle:

- a) Recruitment, selection, and promotion
- b) Terms and conditions of employment
- c) Equal pay development
- d) Flexible working options

7. Scope of the Policy – Concerning Students.

The Gender Equality and Diversity Policy also applies to all **SAU students and research scholars**, whether they are full-time or part-time, and regardless of their physical location within the University's offices.

It focuses on ensuring:

- a) **A safe learning environment**
- b) **Equal opportunities for students**
- c) Grievances and disciplinary action

8. Employer's Duties

The Employer, is responsible for:

- a) Providing a safe working environment.
- b) Treating sexual harassment as misconduct.
- c) Displaying information about penal consequences, penalties, and the GC-ICC constitution.
- d) Organizing regular awareness and training programs for employees and students.

- e) Providing all necessary facilities and assistance to the GC-ICC for inquiries.
- f) Assisting the complainant in filing a police complaint if they choose to do so.
- g) Ensuring that the filing of a complaint does not adversely affect the complainant's status, job, or education.
- h) Monitoring GC-ICC reports and implementing recommendations in a timely manner.

9. Educational Principles and Values

The higher education system in India supports and promotes the following values, which are central to the development and implementation of the University's curriculum and policies: *equality, inclusion, and diversity*.

10. Foundational Rationale and Legal/Global Mandate.

The basis for this policy is rooted in both domestic law and international commitments:

- a) The policy acknowledges the historical context set by the Supreme Court's 1997 Vishaka Judgment, which first recognized sexual harassment as a human rights violation, and the subsequent enactment of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (SHWW Act of 2013), which provides the current legal framework
- b) The policy affirms the principles of equality and equity enshrined in the Indian Constitution, particularly Articles 14, 15, and 16, which guarantee equal protection under the law and prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste, etc. It acknowledges the state's responsibility via Directive Principles of State Policy to take affirmative action and positive discrimination measures to overcome cumulative socio-economic and political disadvantages faced by women.
- c) The policy aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015. Specifically, it targets SDG 5 (achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls) and is integrated with SDGs 10 and 16. Gender equality is recognized as both a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable society.
- d) The policy is guided by national imperatives and broad policy guidelines emphasizing equal employment opportunity for women and addressing historical gender bias and inequality that hinders participation in national development.
- e) The policy recognizes that deep-seated gender bias, lack of education, and socio-economic structures (both formal and informal) manifest in low sex ratios, discrimination against girl children, illiteracy, and denial of women's work/economic value, demanding proactive institutional intervention.

- f) The policy's strategic approach is built on a framework of five core principles, aligning with national development goals (such as those emphasized by NABARD):
- g) Promoting equal rights, powers, and responsibilities. Ensuring equitable access to all financial and developmental resources and benefits. Promoting equal and fair access to credit for gender- income generating activities.
- h) Working to remove social and economic barriers, including the wage gap and denial of equal access to and control over productive assets. Promoting women's participation in economic, institutional, and political decision-making, including gender-responsive budgeting
- i) Adopting a gender-sensitive approach to achieve sustainable, measurable, and equitable social change. This includes comprehensive awareness creation, capacity building, and promoting women's socio-economic and political standing.
- j) Establishing mechanisms for institutional accountability to ensure effective measurement and monitoring of gender progress in programs and activities
- k) Ensuring policy compliance with national policies and international gender strategies

11. Constitution of Committees

The head of the Institution , as the employer, is responsible for constituting the Gender Cell and its complaint-handling body, the **Gender Cell - Internal Complaints Committee (GC-ICC)**. Both committees are mandated to uphold ethical standards, fairness, and accountability.

The Gender Cell at the University Level is formed mainly to foster Gender Equality, promote healthy gender interactions , enhance women empowerment and address gender related issues and challenges. With this aim Gender Cell at Sikkim Alpine University is formed to Address , Redress and take action on diverse challenges observed in the Campus and work actively to promote Gender Equality and Inclusivity in the University.

The GC is responsible for the selection of **Gender Champions** who shall be responsible to address and identify Gender related issue such as gender discrimination, sexual harassment or any kind of non consensual act witnessed in the Campus. The role of the Gender Champions at the University is not just limited to addressing the issues centering around the student or their peers but also shall extend towards everyone working at the University included authority higher to them.

12. Defining Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of unwelcome acts or behavior, whether direct or implied, including:

- a) Physical contact and advances.
- b) A demand or request for sexual favours.

- c) Making sexually coloured remarks.
- d) Displaying or showing pornographic material.
- e) Any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

13. Understanding Consent

Consent must be a clear, unambiguous, and willing agreement to engage in a specific sexual activity. It cannot be passive or implied; it must be active communication such as -

- a) Expressing agreement clearly using words, such as "Yes," "I want to," or "That feels good."
- b) Clear physical signals that, in the context of the activity, indicate willing participation ‘
- c) Consent is not a one-time agreement. It must be ongoing and can be revoked at any time, even if the activity has already started. An individual has the absolute right to change their mind and withdraw consent at any point. Once consent is withdrawn, the activity must stop immediately.
- d) Consent for one activity does not imply consent for another .
- e) Consent must be given without pressure, coercion, or deceit.
- f) Consent cannot be given under duress, threat, intimidation, or pressure from a person in a position of authority or influence.
- g) Consent is invalid if it is based on a mistaken belief about the nature of the act or the individual involved (e.g., consent obtained through trickery or misrepresentation).
- h) The person must have the legal and mental capacity to understand the nature of the act.

14. Addressal of Non-Consensual Acts .

Any kind of act committed without clear, affirmative consent is non-consensual and constitutes a violation requiring immediate reporting and disciplinary action under this policy.

14.1. Addressal of Complaints:

- a) By a woman employee or student against a male in any category (employee, student, service provider, or outsider) within the campus or workplace.
- b) By a woman resident, service provider, or outsider against a male student, employee, service provider, or outsider in relation to the 'workplace'.
- c) By a male student or a student from sexual minorities against a male student or

employee within the campus or workplace.

In cases where the respondent is a service provider or outsider (third party), the GC-ICC may forward the complaint to the respondent's employer or assist the complainant in filing an FIR with the police. The GC-ICC also has the power to examine and consider complaints that fall outside these specific categories.

14.2. Inquiry Procedure

- a) Complaints must be made in writing(letter or E-MAIL) to the Coordinator or any member of the Cell. The ICC is responsible to forward any complaint related to Gender issues to the Gender Cell.
- b) A complaint must be filed within three months of the last incident, though the GC-ICC can extend this for good reason.
- c) Before starting an inquiry, the GC-ICC may attempt to settle the matter through conciliation upon the complainant's written request.
- d) The GC-ICC must send a copy of the complaint to the respondent within seven days of determining an inquiry must be instituted. The respondent has ten days to file a reply and name witnesses. The inquiry should be completed, as far as possible, within 90 days from the date of receipt of the complaint.
- e) Strict confidentiality must be maintained regarding the identity of the complainant, respondent, and witnesses. Complainants and witnesses will depose separately and not in the respondent's presence.
- f) Upon completion, the GC-ICC submits a written inquiry report to the employer within 10 days. If the allegation is proved, the GC-ICC recommends appropriate major or minor punishment, including deduction from the respondent's salary as compensation to the complainant. Malicious complaints may also lead to disciplinary action against the complainant.

14.3. Regular Meeting of the GC-

- a) The Committee is required to convene for formal for the addressal and redressal purposes concerning Gender and its issue, revision of the policy and necessary arrangements to made for the smooth functioning of the Cell. The meetings are to be taken seriously.
- b) In the first year following the Committee's formation, meetings must be held with greater frequency specifically, at least one meeting every two months to ensure a swift operation of the GC.
- c) A special unscheduled meeting may be called by the Coordinator of the GC when urgent matters arise at any period of time.
- d) To ensure valid decision-making, a required minimum number of members must be present for a meeting to officially commence. The minimum required attendance

(quorum) is set at one- third (1/3) of the Committee's total membership

- e) If the required quorum is not met at the scheduled start time The meeting will be adjourned for a period of thirty minutes. The Committee will then proceed with the business of the day with the members who are present, regardless of the number. Decisions made during this reconvened meeting shall remain valid and cannot be challenged later on the sole grounds of insufficient quorum.

15. Non- Discriminatory Policy on the basis of Gender-

The Gender Cell is committed to fostering a campus environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment, ensuring equal opportunity and treatment for every member of the Sikkim Alpine University community. Discrimination is strictly prohibited on the basis of a person's actual or perceived identity, including, but not limited to, the following protected characteristics of Gender & Identity Sex including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexual Orientation.

16. Policy Violations and Enforcement

- a) Sexual Harassment based on any of the prohibited grounds like creating a hostile environment based on gender identity is considered a form of discrimination and is strictly prohibited.
- b) The Gender Cell shall provide clear and accessible mechanisms for reporting alleged violations of this non-discrimination policy.
- c) All reported incidents will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and impartially, ensuring due process for all parties. Disciplinary action, ranging from warnings to termination/expulsion, will be taken against individuals found to have violated this policy.

17. The POSH Act and Gender Cell Compliance

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal Act, 2013 commonly known as the POSH Act is the cornerstone of legal protection against sexual harassment in the Indian workplace.

The Gender Cell at Sikkim Alpine University operates its policy and mechanisms in compliance with the spirit and requirements of the POSH Act to ensure a safe, inclusive, and harassment-free environment for all women employees and students.

18. The Gender Cell's Commitment

The Gender Cell at Sikkim Alpine University hereby states that its Policy on Sexual Harassment and its operational Reporting Mechanisms and Disciplinary Process are designed and implemented in full compliance with the provisions of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

By strictly enforcing this policy, the Gender Cell works actively to fulfill the twin objectives of the POSH Act: Prevention of sexual harassment and Redressal of complaints in a fair, confidential, and time-bound manner, thereby securing a safe and dignified environment for all women within the University community.

19. Help Line Numbers:

To ensure immediate and accessible support for members of the Sikkim Alpine University community, the following helpline numbers for both Central and State (Sikkim) authorities must be included in the Gender Cell Policy.

These helplines provide confidential counselling, legal guidance, and immediate assistance across India.

1. **Women Helpline (All India): 181** -Provides 24/7 emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence or distress.
2. **National Commission for Women (NCW):**

Helpline: 14490

Purpose: Handles complaints regarding violence against women and provides redressal/intervention, especially for matters related to the workplace.

3. **Sikkim State Women & Child Helpline (Integrated):**

Helpline :1098 and 1098

Purpose: While primarily for children, this number often serves as a key access point for general distress and gender-based violence support in the region.

4. **Sikkim Police Control Room (Emergency): 100**

- *Purpose:* For immediate reporting of a crime or emergency situation.

5. **Sikkim State Women Police Station/Cell (Gangtok):**

- *Contact:* Contact details for the nearest **Women Police Station/Cell** in the region (Gangtok, Namchi, etc.) should be verified and included as they provide specialized assistance for gender-based cases.

6. **Gender Cell (Sikkim Alpine University):**

- *Contact:* 8918129149
- *Email:* gendercell@sikkimalpineuniversity.edu.in