



SreeSankaracharya University of Sanskrit
Accredited by NAAC with A Grade
Kalady – 683574, Ernakulam, Kerala
www.ssus.ac.in

Gender Sensitivity through Safety and Security Policy

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Background

Gender Sensitivity is, as is commonly held, the surest way to ensure gender justice. Educational institutions have to play the leading role in this regard to create awareness and modify its practices to ensure gender justice on campuses. The campus community needs to be sensitised towards just relations between the genders in order to develop a democratic way of living. Here, knowledge transmission has to be essentially linked to issues of social concern and positive transformation.

A safe, secure and cohesive institutional climate is a necessary precondition to ensuring equity and quality in education, research and employment in educational institutions, irrespective of gender. Educational administrators should be seriously concerned to ensure that students and employees- both teaching and non-teaching-are safeguarded against attacks, threats and accidents, both man-made and natural. Educational institutions should play a significant role in ensuring the safety of the students and employees by putting in place fool-proof mechanisms and impregnable standards of safety. The key lies in institutionalizing the best practices and standard operating procedures that can substantively protect students and employees from any threats and assaults, physical, social or psychological. The **UGC Saksham Report on Measures for Ensuring the Safety of Women and Programmes for Gender Sensitization on Campuses 2013** and the **Samaagati Report of the Committee on Gender Justice on Campuses of the Kerala State Higher Education Council 2015** have put forward guidelines towards ensuring a gender-just and violence-free campus. In view of the above, the SreeSankaracharya University of Sanskrit has formulated the **Policy of Gender Sensitivity through Safety and Security Policy 2019**. It aims at ensuring a safe and secure environment

The Policy has the following provisions:

1) Infrastructure

Maintenance of physical infrastructure like hostels that accommodate students should be a matter of prime concern. Hygiene and sanitation must be given high priority. Crowding in rooms must be avoided at all costs and the rooms must be duly ventilated. For ensuring healthy living conditions windows of hostel rooms should be secured with wire mesh as protection against mosquitoes and to enable inmates to keep windows open for ventilation. Enough personnel must be employed to take care of cleaning, maintenance and cooking. Water supply to the hostels must be checked regularly for contamination to prevent spread of water borne diseases among inmates. Generators must necessarily be installed to provide electric supply in the event of a power failure. The

buildings for accommodations should be secured by a boundary wall of such height that it cannot be scaled over easily. In order to make it safer, a fence of spiralling barbed wires should be surmounted on the wall so that unauthorized access to the infrastructure is prevented effectively. The entry points to hostels should be restricted to one or two so that enough security can be provided. CCTV cameras should be installed facing the road so that intruders may be identified and notifying boards stating surveillance be placed under them. A register of guests can be maintained. At least one woman security personnel should be deployed at entry points of women's hostels. In the event of trans-persons taking admission and seeking hostel facilities, arrangements should be made to create a trans-friendly accommodation environment.

Working Women's Hostels and Employees Quarters should be provided with adequate security personnel and CCTV cameras for surveillance.

Men's hostels are generally found to follow no rules or regulations. A gender just campus requires gender sensitisation of and democratisation of men's behaviour. Men's hostels must also have stipulations regarding guest entry and attendance and this has to be adhered to. Effective monitoring has to be put in place to ensure a weapon-free and drug-free campus.

The workers who are employed temporarily on construction sites and elsewhere and those who are staying in temporary shelters on the Campus have to be identified and their registers maintained from time to time.

On-campus medical facilities should be made available and at least one ambulance can be kept in ready mode for attending emergency and crisis situations.

Adequate lighting should be ensured in the Campus environs so that mobility in the Campus at night is ensured. Security personnel should be deployed wherever necessary to ensure and facilitate safe and peaceful use of campus environs by the campus community. The security personnel may be given the strictest orders to not impinge upon the privacy of the campus community through surveillance and moral policing. They may be made to undergo gender sensitisation classes.

Adequate number of toilets should be built at several sites on the Campus. The Reading room in the Library that is open all night should have a toilet facility. Public toilets, preferably situated away from the canteen, should be open on a 24 hour basis and maintained with care. The Academic and Administrative Blocks should have enough clean toilets for the women employees- both teaching and non-teaching.

2) Determination to Prevent Discrimination

The University should ensure that provisions contained in UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2012 and Person with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of UGC, 1995 are observed by teaching & non-teaching staff, students and other stakeholders in letter and spirit. Discrimination, verbal or behavioural, based on caste, religion, colour, nationality, sex, gender, sexual orientation, place of birth, political conviction, language, disability and social status is strictly prohibited and the institution must do all it takes to ensure that such practices are nipped in the bud. In tune with the Transgender Policy of the Government of Kerala and the Government directive for providing admission to trans-persons, the University should ensure a trans-friendly environment.

3) Dealing with Sexual Harassment

In the face of the increasing cases of sexual harassment and violence against women, the University should, in addition to constituting the Internal Complaints Committee, institute a thoroughgoing support and education mechanism. Prevention programs can be organised in collaboration with student groups to:

- Educate the campus community about sexual violence in the context of a university setting and engage people in a commitment to get involved when they observe risky situations.
- Confront the oppressive stereotypes that are the basis for the disrespect that leads to interpersonal violence.
- Talk about healthy relationships and healthy sexuality, emphasizing the importance of communication and respecting personal boundaries
- Coordinate campus-wide awareness efforts, such as meetings, lectures, and other open spaces for dialogue on sexual violence.

4) Mechanisms for Redress and Publicity for Such

The University should display at frequently visited junctions like canteen and notice boards the helpline numbers against ragging, sexual harassment, accidents, calamities and so on so that students and employees can record and use them as and when required. The details of the ICC duly constituted along with contact numbers of members and information on necessary steps for registering complaints should be duly publicised. There should be publicity for the provisions contained in UGC (Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2009. The details and contact numbers of members of SC/ST Grievance Cell as well as Students' Grievance Cell should be publicly displayed. Complaint boxes should be placed at suitable locations for registering complaints and these complaints should be promptly addressed. The printed prospectus of

the University should publicise UGC Guidelines on Students' Entitlements 2013. All the redressal mechanisms and details of ICC should find place in the University website.

5)Self-defence Training

Self-defence training for women studying and working on campus through tie-ups with training institutions / NGOs should be made a mandatory component of extra-curricular activities undertaken in the University. Physical defence training can follow instructions on rape aggression defence model that focuses on strategies like awareness, risk reduction and risk avoidance and hands-on self-defence techniques.

6)Counselling

The University should mandatorily put in place a broad-based "Students' Counselling System" for the effective management of problems and challenges faced by students and employees. It should be a unique, interactive and target-oriented system, involving students, teachers and parents, resolved to address specific crises situations arising out of the students' gender status as well as common student concerns ranging from anxiety, stress, fear of change and failure to homesickness and a slew of academic worries. Teacher counsellors can co-ordinate with wardens of hostels for prompt pre-emptive or corrective action. Extreme caution should be placed to not duplicate gender stereotyped behaviour and expectations in trying to resolve crises. The goal of counselling should be to help overcome personal difficulties and facilitate the person to develop individual coping skills .It should never be intended to patronise and pressurise the student into conforming with patriarchal social norms.

7)Mechanisms for Danger Alert and Evacuation

In order to ensure that campus community receives timely, accurate, and useful information in the event of a significant emergency or dangerous situation on campus or in the local area that poses an immediate threat to the health and safety of campus community members, the University can install the emergency notification system through which emergency message can be sent via email, telephone, cell phone and text messaging within minutes of the occurrence of an incident. This can be useful in a situation of risk of personal safety or a calamity.The emergency information system can be supplemented by emergency support systems like link with the nearest Police station . In the event of a calamity, evacuation procedure is to be followed so that stampede-like situations can be avoided. The University should take all necessary steps to ensure that these systems are adequately tested and publicized for efficacious execution.

The University should install a fire safety system under which mechanisms for the detection of a fire, the warning resulting from a fire and standard operating procedures for the control of fire are evolved.

8)The Problems of Protectionism

While ensuring safety and access to a non-discriminatory or Sexual Harassment free environment, campus safety policies should not result in securitization, over monitoring or policing or curtailing the freedom of movement, especially for women. The provision of safety for women on campuses must eschew the practice or tendency to be overly prescriptive to women by restricting their freedom of movement. Concern for the safety of all women, but particularly young women students should not lead to discriminatory rules for women in the hostels. The attitude to women's safety in hostels often infantilizes these adult women and does not empower them to learn to strategize about their own safety. Most importantly the focus would have to shift to ensuring a safe environment around the hostel and campus. An urgent issue to address is safety for all women on campuses who want to sit in the library till late. Proper lighting is necessary. The mentality of "policing" as a panacea for social evil only spawns alternative forms of violence and subjugation.

9)Zero Tolerance Policy and Gender Sensitisation

The University should announce and publicly display its Zero Tolerance Policy towards gender discrimination and gender based violence. Programmes for gender sensitisation of the University community through workshops, seminars, posters, film shows, debates, skits, etc. should be initiated. The University may enlist the help of ICC as well as specialized NGOs to carry out these programmes.