





+91 98207 40125   
info@acesolutions.com   
www.acesolutions.com 

# POLICY FOR PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### **1. Objective**

### **2. Scope of the Policy:**

- 2.1 Coverage
- 2.2 Applicability of the Policy

### **3. Policy and Procedure for Disclosure, Investigation and Disciplinary Action**

- 3.1 Identifying Harassment
- 3.2 Identifying Sexual Harassment
- 3.3 Forms of sexual harassment
- 3.4 Committee for Prevention of Sexual Harassment:
- 3.5 Reporting a Harassment Concern
- 3.6 Investigation Process followed by IC
- 3.7 Selection of IC committee members for handling cases
- 3.8 Remedies
- 3.9 Timelines & SLA

### **4. Obligations**

- 4.1 Employees
- 4.2 Managerial Obligations

### **5. Examples of Sexual Harassment at Workplace**

### **6. Tips to Prevent Sexual Harassment while working from home/Virtual meetings...**

### **7 . List of IC Members:**

## **Introduction:**

ACSE is committed to the highest standards of mutual respect, openness, integrity, and accountability. It demands that gender equality and gender justice be ensured through all ACSE's interventions and practices. It is important for ACSE to ensure an organizational climate free from discrimination and harassment, with a particular focus on sexual harassment. Any employee who is involved in any form of sexual harassment shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

ACSE has zero tolerance for harassment of any form, irrespective of age, gender, role, seniority, caste, creed, colour, race, religion, ancestry, marital status, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, etc. So, the philosophy mentioned in the policy extends to any form of harassment, and the same spirit and process will be applied to any such case.

ACSE employees shall be treated with dignity and in accordance with ACSE's policy to maintain a work environment free of sexual harassment.

### **1. Objective:**

Sexual Harassment of employees occurring in the workplace or in other settings in which employees find themselves in connection with their employment is unlawful and will not be tolerated by the organization. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about Sexual Harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation is similarly unacceptable and will not be tolerated. ACSE treats harassment as a serious form of misconduct and has a zero-tolerance stance on the issue.

To achieve this goal, a procedure for dealing with inappropriate conduct if encountered among employees has been provided below. This policy seeks to prevent and address complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace, including harassment of women as defined and required under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013. However, in keeping with ACSE's gender-neutral work policies, this policy will extend to cover all employees regardless of sexual orientation and gender.

### **2. Scope of the Policy:**

#### **2.1 Coverage**

This policy is designed to raise awareness and promote the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. It will apply to all questions, issues, and allegations of sexual harassment. The workplace includes all those places that an employee needs to visit by virtue of his/her work and/or interacting with others as required by the organization. Such places and interaction mechanisms include office spaces, remote working spaces like home, and co-working spaces. It also includes extended workplaces while traveling, such as place of stay and work, venue of work-related events, client locations etc. It will also include virtual conversation and various other interaction forums such as voice, audio, and messaging systems

## 2.2 Applicability of the Policy

This policy shall extend to all ACSE employees, Contractors on ACSE premises, and partners and includes external incidents involving such Employees.

a. **Employee** – For the purposes of this policy, Employee shall mean any person employed by ACSE, including ACSE associates, whether full-time, part-time, temporary, voluntary, contracted, or casual, whether the terms of employment are express or implied, and also includes researchers, trainees, probationers, apprentices, consultants, and employees of project partners working on ACSE premises.

b. **Contractors/Vendors** – For the purposes of this policy, Contractors/Vendors means any third party working or involved in work inside ACSE premises or deputed on ACSE contracts, with or without its knowledge.

c. **Any person on the ACSE premises** – For any task assigned within the ACSE premises. For example, a candidate attending an interview at ACSE or a client/prospect visiting the ACSE office.

d. **Workplace** – Includes all those places that an employee needs to visit by virtue of his/her work. It includes the extended workplace while traveling, such as places of stay and work, venues of work-related events, client locations, etc., including remote working spaces like home, and co-working spaces. It will also include virtual conversations and various other interaction forums such as voice, audio, and messaging systems.

## 3. Policy and Procedure for Disclosure, Investigation, and Disciplinary Action

### 3.1 Identifying Harassment

Harassment can be described as any form of behaviour that is unwelcome, unwanted, and unreciprocated, including verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct that is offensive, demeaning, humiliating, derogatory, or any other inappropriate behaviour that fails to respect the dignity of an individual, irrespective of the intentions of the perpetrator. It takes many forms: comments, jokes, suggestions, abuse, emails, actions (e.g., staring, patting, pinching), physical contact, ridicule, verbal or non-verbal (e.g., printed material), etc. Such behaviour can either be an isolated incident or persistent behaviour. An act/conduct can be categorized as harassment if:

- a. It has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of another.
- b. It has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.
- c. It has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance.
- d. It otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment or career pursuit opportunities.

### 3.2 Identifying Sexual Harassment

For purposes of this Policy, “sexual harassment” means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual or gender-based nature in any of the following situations:

- a. When submission to such conduct is either explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition for an individual’s employment
- b. When submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual
- c. When such conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment

Some examples of that may constitute sexual harassment:

Threatening or taking adverse employment action, such as dismissal or demotion if sexual favors are not granted; demanding sexual favors in exchange for favorable or preferential treatment; making unwelcome and repeated flirtations, propositions or advances; making unwelcome physical contact; whistling, leering or making improper gestures; making offensive, derogatory or degrading remarks; making unwelcome comments about appearance; telling sexual jokes or using sexually explicit or offensive language; engaging in gender or sex-based pranks; or displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures in work areas.

Misconduct occurring during official training sessions, either within the office premises or at external training venues organized by the company.

The above list of examples is not intended to be all-inclusive.

(Ref: Examples of Sexual Harassment are given in Annexure 5)

### 3.3 Forms of sexual harassment

**Quid pro quo Harassment:** This may be defined as an exchange of sexual favors for improvement in working conditions and/or compensation. It is forbidden either to imply or withhold support for an appointment, promotion or change of assignment or to offer benefits such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications in exchange for sexual favors.

**Hostile, intimidating, offensive working environment:** This can be described as a situation in which unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature are made, and such conduct creates an intimidating or offensive environment. It will also include unwanted preferential treatment such as increased attention

towards a particular employee. Examples of a hostile, intimidating, and offensive work environment include, but are not limited to, pictures, cartoons, symbols, or found to be offensive and which exist in the workplace.

### **3.4 Committee for Prevention of Sexual Harassment:**

ACSE has an Internal Complaints Committee (hereinafter referred to as the "IC") constituted to implement and enforce this policy.

#### **The following functions are executed by the IC:**

1. Receiving complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace.
2. Initiating and conducting an inquiry as per the established procedure.
3. Submitting findings and recommendations of inquiries.
4. Taking appropriate remedial measures to respond to any substantiated allegations of sexual harassment
5. Discouraging and preventing employment-related sexual harassment.
6. Coordinating with the Employer in implementing appropriate action.
7. Maintaining strict confidentiality throughout the process as per the guidelines established.
8. Submitting annual reports in the prescribed format
1. The IC shall meet regularly to ensure the effective implementation of the Policy and to monitor effective/timely redressal of complaints, if any

### **3.5 Reporting a Harassment Concern**

Any person falling within the ambit of this policy, who feels s/he has been subjected to harassment (or any other person acting in good faith on his/her behalf) should register a complaint and seek formal intervention from the IC through any of the following means:

- Email to [ethics-India@acse.com](mailto:ethics-India@acse.com)
- Reach out to any of the individuals identified as point of contact– details mentioned in a separate list published along with the policy
- Reach out to your Manager/HR

#### **Inquiry:**

The IC will promptly and thoroughly investigate all claims of sexual harassment in accordance with the principles of natural justice and the provisions of law. In conducting the inquiry, a minimum of three committee members including the Presiding Officer should be present.

Neither the Complainant nor the

Respondents shall be allowed to bring in any legal practitioner to represent them in their case at any stage of the proceedings before the IC.

- Upon receipt of the complaint, the IC sends 1 copy of the complaint to the respondent within 7 working days.
- Respondent replies with all supporting documents within 10 working days of receiving the copy of the complaint.

All proceedings of the inquiry are documented. The IC interviews the Respondent separately and impartially. IC states exactly what the allegation is and who has made the allegation. The Respondent is given full opportunity to respond and provide any evidence etc. Detailed notes of the meetings are prepared which may be shared with the Respondent and Complainant upon request. Any witnesses produced by the Respondents are also interviewed & statements are taken. If the Complainant or Respondent desires to cross-examine any witnesses, the IC facilitates the same and records the statements. If the Complainant or Respondent seeks to ask questions to the other party, they may give them to the IC which asks them and records the other party's statement. The inquiry procedure ensures absolute fairness to all parties.

The IC shall have the powers to summon and enforce the attendance of any person, conduct an examination, request the discovery and production of documents, and/or any other matter which may be prescribed and deemed necessary for the inquiry process.

The IC shall have the right to terminate the inquiry proceedings or to give an ex-parte decision on the complaint, if the Complainant or Respondent fails, without sufficient cause, to present themselves, for three consecutive hearings convened by the presiding officer. Provided that such termination or ex-parte order may not be passed without giving notice in writing, fifteen days in advance, to the party concerned.

The IC shall submit an inquiry report to the ACSE'S authorized representative upon conclusion of the inquiry, within ten days from the date of completion of the inquiry and such report be made available to the parties concerned. The report of the IC shall be deemed to be the inquiry report for purposes of any disciplinary rules applicable to the Employee against whom a complaint of sexual harassment was made. The Employer shall act upon the recommendations within 60 days and confirm them to the IC.

In the event the IC determines that the complaint is false or malicious, the IC may recommend ACSE to subject the individual making the false complaint to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. It is hereby clarified that there is a mere inability to substantiate a complaint or provide adequate proof shall not attract action against the Complainant.

#### **Interim Relief:**

During the pendency of the inquiry, at a written request made by the Complainant, the committee may recommend to the Company to

- Transfer the Complainant or the Respondent to any other workplace.
- Grant leave to the Complainant of a maximum of 2 months, in addition to the leave she would be otherwise entitled.
- Prevent the Respondent from assessing the Complainant's work performance.
- Grant such other relief as may be appropriate.
- Once the recommendations for interim relief are implemented, the Company will inform the committee regarding the same

**On registering a formal complaint or seeking guidance, the following will be ensured:**

- a. The name of the employee registering the complaint is kept strictly confidential throughout
- b. Investigation into a complaint will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practical under the circumstances
- c. Will ensure anonymity of the case
- d. Will ensure non-retribution, any cases of retaliation will be dealt seriously. Retaliation is a serious violation and should be reported immediately. The report and investigation of allegations of retaliation will follow the procedures outlined in this Policy. Any person found to have retaliated against an individual for reporting harassment, or for participating in an investigation of allegations of such conduct, may expect the Company to impose the most severe disciplinary action available.

**IC will ensure that the principles of natural justice are adhered to including:**

- Giving reasonable opportunity to both parties to be heard as well as taking on record any relevant documents.
- Upon completion of the inquiry, inform both parties, to the extent possible, of the results.
  - Taking all other actions necessary to ensure a fair and equal process.
  - Neither the complainant nor supporting witnesses nor others cooperating with the inquiry process are victimized or discriminated against in any way.
  - The IC shall have the discretion to make appropriate interim recommendations vide an accused person, pending the outcome of a complaint.
  - It is binding on all the IC members concerned to ensure that every complaint received is kept strictly confidential and discussed only with the necessary set of people during an investigation.



### Timeline of Redressal Mechanism as per the POSH Act

Submission of complaint -	Within 3 months of the last incident
Completion of POSH inquiry -	Within 90 days
Submission of report by IC -	Within 10 days of the completion of the POSH inquiry
Implementation of recommendations -	Within 60 days

### 3.6 Investigation Process followed by IC

All complaints filed for sexual harassment at the workplace are first filed with IC. Once the IC Chairperson receives a complaint, she will conduct a basic inquiry to understand if the case is one of “sexual harassment at the workplace” using the principles of the “Reasonable Person Standard”. Once the nature of concern is established, the complaint will follow the procedure laid down for handling sexual harassment complaints. The investigating team (group from the IC members) will investigate and file a report with the IC chairperson and a decision will be taken by the committee in consultation with an external consultant, to bring objectivity and consistency.

### 3.7 Selection of IC committee members for handling cases

All the reported cases will first be directed to the IC Chairwoman who is also part of the quorum, who will then apply the parameters & select the committee. The following are the parameters that will be considered while deciding committee members who will investigate the case reported:

- a. The committee member is not from the same vertical/unit as the complainant. The chairperson may also opt out of the inquiry if falling under these criteria and nominate another chairperson for that inquiry specifically.
- b. The committee member & the complainant do not have a significant prior or current work-based relationship
- c. Severity of the case

### 3.8 Remedies

In the event the IC comes to a finding of sexual harassment against an accused person, it shall make recommendations as it deems fit and advise initiation of appropriate disciplinary/ remedial action to the Leadership. Indicative action as mentioned below: (will vary case-case)

- ACSE reserves the right to dismiss it if prima facie strong evidence is found of harassment
- ACSE reserves the right to suspend an employee or ask them not to come to office premises or to initiate legal action including police action while the investigation is on (for example – there may be a situation where a person may tamper with evidence or threaten a victim inside or outside the office premises and in such situation, a police complaint (NC/FIR) may have to be lodged even while the investigation is on within the Jurisdiction ; the victim may have to be provided with police or other safety measures.
- It could range from recommending counseling, issuing a letter of warning, withholding salary hike for a period, summary dismissal or even handing over to police in compliance with the law of the land depending on the nature of the concern

Procedure for determining compensation The IC may consider various factors as required under the law to determine the sums to be paid to the Complainant and may consider the following -

- The mental trauma, pain, suffering, and emotional distress caused the Complainant.
- The loss of a career opportunity due to the incident of sexual harassment.
- Medical expenses incurred by the victim for physical or psychiatric treatment.
- The income and financial status of the Respondent.
- Feasibility of such payment in lump sum or installments

### **3.9 Timelines & SLA**

- Whenever a case is reported to the committee through email, the committee would acknowledge the receipt of the same to the concerned employee within 'Three working days'
- The committee will have to publish the SLA to close the investigation of every case reported to them within 'two working weeks from the time the case was reported to them
- During the investigation, the IC will provide an update on the progress/ status every fortnight to the complainant

## **4. Obligations**

### **4.1 Employees**

According to the preventive steps under this policy, employees should ensure that they:

- Become fully informed about the contents of this policy. Co-operate with any measures introduced as per the policy
- Respect the sensitivities of others
- Refrain from taking discriminatory actions or decisions which are contrary to the letter or spirit of this policy
- Offer information and support to any person who they suspect is being harassed and/or otherwise report any such instance of sexual harassment to the appropriate persons
- Maintain confidentiality regarding any aspect of an inquiry to which they may be party
- Notwithstanding the company's internal procedure, every employee retains the right to file a complaint of unlawful discrimination and harassment under the law of the land with local authorities
- Ensure the complainant is not subjected to any retaliation. Any retaliation noticed or experienced is immediately reported through any of the means mentioned in point no. 3.4 above

#### **4.2 Managerial Obligations**

Employees of managerial status should ensure that:

- They foster a climate free of discrimination in their teams
- Their team members comply with this policy
- They immediately report any incident (experienced/ heard/ seen/ noticed) leading to sexual harassment through any of the means mentioned in point no. 3.4 above.
- They must not instruct, induce, or pressurize other employees to breach this policy.

#### **6. Examples of Sexual Harassment at Workplace**

“Sexual harassment” includes any unwelcome sexually determined behavior (whether direct or by implication) including:

- Physical contact and advances
- A demand or request for sexual favors
- Sexually colored remarks
- Showing pornography
- Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature
- Sharing of inappropriate images, emails
- Inappropriate language in virtual meetings
- Sexist jokes and comments in virtual team meetings
- Calling at odd hours and veering discussion to personal topics
- Unwarranted request for video calls/adjusting of camera
- Request to connect on social media, with repeated reminders to accept the same during work-related calls/communication

Non-Verbal	Verbal	Physical
Gestures	Language of a suggestive or explicit nature	Deliberate body contact
Staring/ Leering	Unwanted propositions	Indecent exposure
Invading personal space	Jokes of a sexual or explicit nature	Groping/ fondling
Pin-ups	Use of “affectionate” names	Grabbing /pinching/Patting
Offensive publications	Questions or comments of a personal nature	Brushing against another employee's body or poking another employee's body

## CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS -

ACSE believes romantic or sexual relationships between a manager or other supervisory Employee and his or her staff (reporting directly or indirectly), could create compromising conflicts of interest at work.

It is therefore in the best interest of all concerned that if there is such a relationship, the parties involved inform management so the reporting chain can be changed to ensure no direct or indirect reporting relationship.

### 6. Tips to Prevent Sexual Harassment while working from home/Virtual meetings and behaviors (not limited to) which can be termed inappropriate while working from home/Virtual meetings



**SPEAK OUT**

**Against Online Harassment**

In the current unprecedented situation, the **home** has become the *'new workplace'*.

Experts believe, the definition of workplace under PSHWW (PPR) Act 2013, can be extended to the home and therefore also to all interactions between employees working from home.

So, what constitutes Sexual Harassment Behaviour in the WFH situation ?

The virtual medium is the only modality of communication currently, and all behaviours including, but not limited to the following, come under inappropriate non-verbal behaviours:

- Sharing of inappropriate images
- Inappropriate language in virtual meetings
- Sexist jokes & comments in team groups
- Calling at odd hours and veering discussions to personal topics
- Unwarranted requests for video calls/adjusting of camera
- Friends requests on social media, with repeated reminders to accept the same during work-related calls/communication
- Gender based discriminatory decisions (downsizing/cost cutting measures)

Do connect with your IC or enlist the help of HR to connect and address your concerns

## Tips to Prevent Sexual Harassment while Working from Home



The current pandemic has made home the extended workplace for most. It is important we maintain the below etiquettes:

### While joining video calls...



- o Maintain acceptable dress code while on video mode
- o Ensure your backdrop is free of provocative artefacts
- o Avoid personal questions or dirty jokes
- o In one-on-one calls, allow colleagues to opt for "audio-only" mode
- o Take everyone's consent before recording calls

### As a Manager...

- o Document all work tasks & action items
- o Maintain regular contact with your team
- o Mandate safe & authorized communication channels
- o Observe emotional well-being of colleagues and alert HR on signs of depression/anxiety/stress/domestic violence



**When in doubt contact your HR or PoSH committee.**

## 7. List of IC Members: -

Sr. No.	Name	Role	Gender
1	Kaushik Kansara	Chairperson	M
2	Ketan Thorat	Co-Chairperson	M
3	Snehal Godbole	Co-Chairperson	F

Besides the above, an external representative would also be a member of the committee.

Sr. No.	Name	Role	Gender
1	Gopal Adhe	External Member	M

Important Contact Details:

Sr. No.	Name	E-mail ID	Mobile No.
1	Kaushik Kansara	kkansara@acseoslutions.com	9820740125
2	Ketan Thorat	kthorat@acesolutions.com	7768056644
3	Snehal Godbole	sgodbole@acesolutions.com	9011355233

## Document Control

Created by	Snehal Godbole
Owner	ACSE DIGI-TECH PVT LTD.
Effective Date	18-March-2025
Revision Date	19-March-2026
Reviewer	Arvind Sinha Kaushik Kansara
Approver	Arvind & Kaushik