



SUBJECT: STMU POLICY ON PROTECTION AGAINST WORKPLACE HARASSMENT - 2026

1. Consequent upon the approval of the Syndicate of Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University in its 40th Meeting held on September 24, 2026, the “**STMU Policy on Protection Against Workplace Harassment – 2026**”, (14 Pages) under the provisions of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 (updated by the amendment Act 2022) and the HEC Policy on Protection against Harassment in Higher Education Institutions, is hereby notified for implementation across the University.

Prof. Dr. Izhar Hussain (T.I.)
Registrar

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- All Principals of Constituent Colleges
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Policy on Protection Against Workplace Harassment

Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University

1. Introduction

STMU is dedicated to create a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all its members, including students, employees, and visitors. This Policy aims to address and prevent harassment in all its forms—verbal, physical, visual, sexual, and cyber—by providing clear definitions, reporting mechanisms, and investigation procedures. It supports individuals affected by harassment, prevents retaliation, and ensures compliance with legal standards. Through regular training and a culture of mutual respect, STMU strives to foster an environment where everyone can work, learn, and thrive free from harassment and discrimination. STMU's Policy on Protection Against Harassment incorporates all relevant clauses from the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 (updated by the amendment Act 2022) and the HEC Policy on Protection against Harassment in Higher Education Institutions.

2. Purpose of the STMU Policy on Protection Workplace Harassment

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for preventing harassment in all its types and forms, including sexual harassment, and general workplace harassment. It also aims to ensure that all university students and employees can work in an environment free from harassment, and discrimination. The university is committed to promoting respect, dignity, and equality in all its quarters.

3. Scope

STMU has zero tolerance approach to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of any person, child or adult associated with STMU. This policy applies to all members of the university community, including administration, faculty, staff, students, and visitors, regardless of their role or capacity. It encompasses all university-related activities, both on and off campus, including online interactions utilizing the university's resources.

Behaviors prohibited by STMU as harassment constitute sanctionable misconduct. Actions—whether in person or online—that endanger or threaten the safety or well-being of STMU students or employees fall under harassment. Interpersonal misconduct, whether verbal or physical, intentional or unintentional, is unacceptable. Every individual has the right to be treated with dignity, and any violation of this right undermines the accessibility and inclusivity of the university experience. It involves aggressive or hostile acts by an individual or group intended to humiliate, mentally or physically harm, intimidate, or control another individual or group. It is a form of intentional, repeated behavior that causes another person injury or discomfort.

4. Definition of Workplace Harassment

- 1) Harassment means unwanted offensive or intimidating behavior that demeans, humiliates or threatens someone, often based on characteristics like race, gender or disability creating a hostile environment at workplace. The manifestation of harassment at workplace may include but not limited to abuse of authority, creating a hostile environment for any member of the STMU community and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity and religion.
- 2) Since freedom from abuse is a basic human right, STMU considers any form of discrimination or intimidation at the workplace as "harassment". Such discrimination or assault that deteriorates the physical or emotional health and wellbeing of the members of STMU community falls under workplace harassment.

5. Types of Harassment

1) Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, stalking or cyber stalking or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or sexually demeaning attitudes including any gestures or expressions conveying derogatory connotations causing interference with work.

2) General Workplace Harassment

General workplace harassment constitutes sanctionable misconduct whether in person or online—that endanger or threaten the safety or well-being of STMU community including

students or employees. Interpersonal misconduct, whether verbal or physical, intentional or unintentional, is unacceptable. It involves aggressive or hostile acts by an individual or group intended to humiliate, mentally or physically harm, intimidate, or control another individual or group. It is a form of intentional, repeated behavior that causes another person injury or discomfort at work.

3) General workplace harassment includes but is not limited to the following.

- a) **Verbal Harassment:** This involves using spoken or written words to intimidate, insult, or degrade others. Examples include:
 - i. **Insults and derogatory remarks:** Offensive language or slurs directed at an individual's race, gender, religion, or other personal characteristics.
 - ii. **Threats:** Verbal threats of physical harm, retaliation, or other forms of intimidation.
 - iii. **Humiliation:** Publicly embarrassing or belittling someone through verbal means, such as mocking or ridiculing them in front of others.
- b) **Physical Harassment:** This involves any unwanted physical contact (such as gestures or postures) or intimidation. Examples include:
 - i. **Physical assault:** Actively causing bodily harm or injury through actions like hitting, pushing, or kicking.
 - ii. **Unwanted touching:** Making physical contact with another person without their consent, such as grabbing, pinching, or touching.
 - iii. **Blocking or restricting movement:** Physically obstructing someone's path or restricting their freedom of movement in a way that creates a feeling of threat or intimidation.

Note: All the actions categorized as harassment when done physically or verbally would also be considered as harassment when done electronically such as through the internet, e-mails, social media, texting, telephone, voicemail etc.

- c) All forms of workplace harassment discussed above are strictly prohibited in all STMU departments. STMU's Policy against Workplace Harassment applies to all the employees including administration, faculty, staff, students, and visitors—whether entering campus officially or unofficially. Any reported incident will be addressed according to the procedures outlined in this policy. Actions constituting misconduct—including damage to STMU property on campus or in its immediate vicinity, in connection with recognized programs or activities, attempts to create a hostile environment, posing a safety risk on campus, or using university computing or network resources from off-campus locations—shall be deemed to occur on campus and addressed under this policy.

6. Who can Complaint?

- 1) Any person can file a complaint including women, men, intersex or transgender individuals, racial/ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and immigrants. It shall also include a former employee who has been removed or dismissed from the service or has resigned and a parent or a guardian where the complainant is a minor.
- 2) Workplace harassment does not include legitimate managerial or supervisory actions, such as:
 - a) A supervisor (or person with supervisory authority) documenting an employee's unsatisfactory job performance and potential consequences in writing or verbally.
 - b) A supervisor or faculty member addressing a student's unsatisfactory academic work and the risk of course failure or program dismissal.
 - c) Faculty or administrative staff maintaining campus discipline and controlling inappropriate behaviors,
 - d) Inspecting university candidates or students during assessments/examinations, provided female candidates or students are inspected only by a female invigilator and male candidates or students checked by a male invigilator
 - e) Grievances related to a university employee failing to complete a task assigned under their contract, rules, regulations or practices within the stipulated timeframe.

None of the above-mentioned situations falls under STMU's Workplace Anti-Harassment Policy, provided it does not violate the STMU Code of Ethics & Conduct and falls strictly within university anti-harassment policies and procedures.

7. Complaints and Reporting

- 1) A complaint may be lodged by any person who has experienced harassment as defined in this policy mentioned above with any member of the Inquiry Committee. (Prescribed in para 8 sub para ii infra)
- 2) In cases where the conduct falls within the scope of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 (updated amendment Act 2022), the affected person may also submit a complaint to the Ombudsperson in accordance with that Act.

- 3) Where the subject matter of a complaint pertains to workplace harassment as defined in this policy, it must be submitted in writing to any Focal Person or any member of the Inquiry Committee. A complainant is not necessarily required to pursue informal resolution and may initiate a formal complaint directly through any Inquiry Committee member, who must then commence the investigation process.
- 4) Any university employee who observes harassment may submit a written report to any Inquiry Committee member. All university community members are encouraged to report observed harassment to the Inquiry Committee. To safeguard the campus community, the Inquiry Committee must investigate all violations of this policy.
- 5) Upon receiving a complaint or report, the designated recipient must share it with the other Inquiry Committee members within 24 hours for further action.

8. Designated Resources for Handling Harassment Cases

1) Focal Persons

- a) The university shall appoint focal persons in accordance with section 4 of the Higher Education Commission's Policy on harassment in Higher Education Institutions, to provide support and immediate assistance to those who experienced harassment at STMU.
- b) Upon receiving a complaint from any individual, the Focal Person would initiate the proceedings on the prescribed form (Annexure A). All harassment applications received by the focal person or any other member of the inquiry committee are forwarded to the inquiry committee within 24 hours for further proceedings.

2) Inquiry Committee

The Inquiry Committee shall be responsible for investigating and adjudicating any complaints received regarding violations of this policy.

The Inquiry Committee shall be constituted as follows:

- a) The Inquiry Committee shall consist of three members, at least one of whom shall be a woman, and one of whom shall be a member of the senior management (BPS-20 or above/equivalent) of the university. Member can be changed by the VC in a specific case of conflict of interest.

- b) All members of the Inquiry Committee shall be employees of the university and shall be appointed by the Vice Chancellor after the VC has taken nominations from senior members of the university as mentioned in para-I. administration. The VC may co-opt one or more members from outside the university if it is otherwise not possible to designate three members as described above.
- c) Members of the Inquiry Committee shall be appointed for a term of two years. No member shall serve for more than two consecutive terms. Former members shall be eligible for reappointment after a lapse of two years.
- d) Senior member of the Inquiry Committee shall be appointed as Chair by the VC, whose duties shall include, but not be limited to: maintaining order during hearings, answering procedural questions, granting or denying adjournments, maintaining proper documentation of the proceedings (which shall constitute the official record), and reporting the Committee's recommendations to the VC. All these duties shall be undertaken in consultation with the other Committee members.
- e) If the facts of a complaint are established against a member of the Inquiry Committee, that member shall immediately be replaced by another and shall not participate in any inquiry.

Note: STMU shall provide training to members of the Inquiry Committee and focal persons in the investigation and adjudication of conduct prohibited under this policy preferably on the commencement of the tenure of committee members.

3) Interim Measures and Special Arrangements

- 1) Upon receipt of a harassment complaint by designated resources or any Inquiry Committee member, depending on the nature and seriousness of the offence, the Committee shall promptly implement appropriate interim measures under intimation to the VC. These may be requested by the affected party or deemed necessary to ensure safety, prevent retaliation, and minimize disruption. Measures shall be tailored to the complainant's status. Nevertheless, these measures should be taken very carefully so that they must not disrupt the system. If the complainant is a student, interim measures shall prioritize academic continuity and safety, including but not limited to:

- a) Adjustments to class or examination schedules, including for attending hearings;
 - b) Access to counseling services or medical assistance;
 - c) Change in the work assignments;
 - d) Adjustment in class schedule, including withdrawal from a course or change in class section;
 - e) Notification to campus security (or law enforcement for serious violations);
 - f) Any other measures deemed appropriate.
- 2) If the complainant is a faculty member, interim measures shall focus on professional protection, including but not limited to:
- a) Changes in work assignments or teaching schedules;
 - b) Access to counseling or medical assistance;
 - c) Any other measures deemed appropriate.
- 3) If the complainant is an employee of STMU (administration and staff), interim measures shall address workplace safety, including but not limited to:
- a) Changes in work assignments or reporting structures;
 - b) Access to counseling services or medical assistance;
 - c) Notification to campus security (or law enforcement as needed); or
 - d) Any other measures deemed appropriate.
- 4) If the complainant is a visitor of STMU in any capacity, interim measures shall address workplace safety, including but not limited to:
- a) Access to counseling services or medical assistance;
 - b) Notification to campus security or law enforcement as needed such as suggestion for registration of FIR by administration.
 - c) Any other measures deemed appropriate.

9. Procedure for holding inquiry

The procedure for holding an inquiry shall be as follows:

- a) All complaints alleging harassment received by any office of STMU shall be directed to the Focal Persons, or the Inquiry Committee, and shall be acknowledged within 24 hours under intimation to the VC.

- b) As soon as reasonably practicable after receiving a complaint, the Inquiry Committee shall determine whether the alleged conduct meets the criteria in this policy. If a majority determines it does, a formal consent shall commence after formal notification by the VC.
- c) Within three days of receiving a written complaint, the Inquiry Committee shall:
 - i. Notify the accused of the charges and allegations in writing, providing a formal receipt;
 - ii. Require the accused to submit a written defense within seven working days of notification. If they fail to do so without reasonable cause, the Committee may proceed ex-parte.
 - iii. Inquire into the charges, examine relevant oral or documentary evidence (including summoning witnesses), and allow each party to cross-examine witnesses against them.
- d) The following rules apply to Inquiry Committee hearings:
 - i. All hearings shall be in camera;
 - ii. The Committee shall hear statements from the complainant(s), accused, and witnesses (if any), and examine documents/evidence presented by parties or gathered during the inquiry;
 - iii. The Committee may limit testimony and questioning to relevant matters and must determine facts while exercising discretion;
 - iv. The Chair may compel witness attendance; complainants and accused may request the Chair's assistance;
 - v. The complainant and accused may be represented or accompanied by a person of their choice at any stage;
 - vi. The Committee may acquire relevant evidence; parties, witnesses, and administration must cooperate;
 - vii. Proceedings shall be objectively documented with strict confidentiality maintained;
 - viii. The accused may cross-examine the complainant and witnesses unless the Committee decides otherwise;
 - ix. For unaddressed procedural matters, the Committee shall follow principles of fairness and natural justice.

- x. The committee may request legal assistance or any other assistance as required for the individual cases.
- e) All university employees and stakeholders must cooperate with investigations; refusal may result in disciplinary action. Complainants may be exonerated, by the committee, from personal attendance, however, the committee may refuse if feel inappropriate. Nevertheless, complainants shall not face disciplinary action for complaints in good faith.
- f) If a complaint targets a Committee member, they shall be excluded from that case. If the complainant identifies a conflict of interest, affected members shall be excluded, and the Vice Chancellor may appoint alternate.
- g) After the hearing, the Committee shall deliberate and decide, based upon the totality of circumstances, considering evidence credibility and context. Decisions require preferably unanimity or a majority vote. If valid, the Committee shall recommend appropriate penalties.
- h) The inquiry shall conclude within 30 days, after which the Committee shall submit written findings (including any dissenting notes) to the Vice Chancellor for endorsement. Recommendations must be implemented within seven days.

10. Confidentiality

- a) The Inquiry Committee and all involved parties must maintain confidentiality. Limited disclosure is permitted only to gather facts, implement decisions, or monitor compliance, if and when required.
- b) Inquiry Committee members and support staff may face administrative disciplinary action for breaches of confidentiality.
- c) After the completion of the inquiry, all investigation notes and records shall be kept in a confidential university file in the Registrar's Office.

11. Penalties:

If the accused is a student, the Inquiry Committee may impose:

- a) Warning or reprimand, which shall be considered in adjudicating future violations;
- b) Disciplinary probation, withholding of degree, suspension, or expulsion;
- c) Counseling or training;

- d) Additional sanctions based on offense severity (as determined by the Inquiry Committee, including:
 - i) Campus service (any service provided on campus);
 - ii) Relocation from campus housing;
 - iii) Exclusion from designated University buildings/grounds or activities (e.g., educational programs).
- e) If the accused is faculty member, researcher, or employee/staff, the Inquiry Committee may impose the following sanctions (individually or in combination), consistent with the employment contract and STMU's policies:
 - i. Written warning or reprimand;
 - ii. Counseling or training;
 - iii. Inclusion of the decision in the respondent's personnel file(s);
 - iv. Exclusion from designated University buildings/grounds or formal activities (where appropriate to the offense and not preventing professional duties);
 - v. Monetary fine;
 - vi. Suspension;
 - vii. Recommendation for dismissal proceedings;
 - viii. Other sanctions as deemed appropriate under employment policies.
- f) If the accused is a visitor (parent, guardian, patient, contractor, business partner, examination experts) the University administration may proceed directly for legal action such as registration of FIR or the inquiry committee may impose the following sanctions:
 - i. Restrict entrance into university premises.
 - ii. Legal action

12. Right of Appeal

Any party aggrieved by the decision of the inquiry committee may pursue the following appeal procedure:

- a) Both the complainant and the respondent shall have the right to appeal against the decision of the Inquiry Committee within a period of 30 days from the date of notification of the decision which shall be communicated to the parties immediately.

- b) In cases in which the conduct falls within the scope of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 ((updated by the amendment Act 2022), the aggrieved party shall have the option to file an appeal to the Ombudsperson in accordance with the provisions of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 (updated by the amendment Act 2022), within a period of 30 days from the date of notification of the decision.
- c) Any party aggrieved by a penalty imposed by the Inquiry Committee may, within 30 days of receiving written communication of the decision, prefer an appeal to the University's Appellate Body. (Prescribed in in Para 14 infra)
- d) An appeal to the Appellate Body against the decision of the Inquiry Committee can be filed on the following grounds:
 - I. the alleged conduct does or does not fall within the scope of this policy;
 - II. the Inquiry Committee decided without consideration of material information;
 - III. the imposed penalty is unfair because it is disproportionate or materially different from that imposed for similar misconduct; or
 - IV. the adjudication process followed by the Inquiry Committee was procedurally unfair.
- e) To reach its decision, the Appellate Body may communicate with the parties or the members of the Inquiry Committee, as it deems fit.
- f) The Appellate Body may, in consideration of the appeal and any other relevant material, confirm, set aside, vary, or modify the decision within 30 days in respect of which such an appeal is made, the body shall communicate the decision in writing to both parties, the VC, and the Inquiry Committee.

13. STMU Anti-Harassment Appellate Body

The STMU Anti-Harassment Appellate Body shall hear appeals submitted by the complainant or the respondent within 30 days from the date of notification of the Inquiry Committee's decision.

a) The Appellate Body shall be constituted as follows:

- I. It shall consist of three members, at least one of whom shall be a woman, and one of whom shall be a member of the senior management (BPS 20 or above/equivalent) of the university.
- II. All members shall be employees of the university and shall be appointed by the Vice Chancellor after the VC has taken nominations from senior members as prescribed in para-a. of the university administration. The VC may co-opt one or more members from outside the university if it is otherwise not possible to designate three members as described above.
- III. Members shall have no conflict of interest in particular cases and shall remain impartial and unbiased.
- IV. Members shall be appointed for a term of two years (vacant vacancy can be filled by the VC for remaining period). No member shall serve for more than two consecutive terms. Former members shall be eligible for reappointment after a lapse of two years.
- V. One member preferably senior shall be appointed as Chair by the VC, whose duties shall include, but not be limited to: maintaining order during hearings, answering procedural questions, granting or denying adjournments, maintaining proper documentation of the proceedings (which shall constitute the official record), and reporting the Appellate Body's recommendations to the VC. All these duties shall be undertaken in consultation with the other members.
- VI. If the facts of a complaint are established against a member, that member shall immediately be replaced by another and shall not participate in any inquiry.
- VII. No member of the Inquiry Committee shall concurrently be a member of the Appellate Body.

b) Mala Fide Allegations

- I. False allegations related to workplace harassment made out of mala fide intent to hurt the reputation of the persons against whom the complaint is filed shall be treated as serious offences. Making a mala fide allegation of harassment, knowing it to be false, constitutes a serious offence under this policy
- II. If the Inquiry Committee determines that a mala fide allegation has been made in the complaint, it may recommend appropriate action against the complainant by sending its

findings to the VC (recording reasons thereof and including any dissent note) for endorsement and action. In cases in which the conduct falls within the scope of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010 (updated by the amendment Act 2022), the Inquiry Committee may recommend handover of such instances to the Ombudsperson for further action against the complainant who made the false allegations with mala fide intent.

- III. The penalties are mentioned in this policy. Upon conviction, if the accused has filed a mala fide application, they shall also face the same penalties.

c) Protection Against Reprisal

STMU shall not allow reprisal or threats of reprisal against any of its members who use this policy. STMU also prohibits such threats or actions against anyone who participates in proceedings held under its jurisdiction. Retaliation or any other action against a complainant of harassment shall be taken seriously under the provisions of this policy. All allegations of retaliation will be investigated formally under the purview of this policy; if substantiated, they shall result in appropriate disciplinary action.

14. Education for Prevention of Harassment

To ensure the prevention of harassment on campus, STMU shall develop programs to educate its staff, faculty, and students, and provide written materials for reference. Such education is essential to sensitizing the STMU faculty, staff, and students and eliminating harassment on campus.

This shall be achieved in multiple ways, including those listed below:

- 1) Available on the STMU website.
- 2) Included in the information package that all new hires receive.
- 3) Incorporated into orientation sessions for new students.
- 4) Featured in the STMU Prospectus (as a summarized version).
- 5) Displayed in prominent locations on campus.
- 6) A workshop on the laws and policy regarding protection against harassment,

once or twice in a year, for the faculty and administrative staff.

- 7) The names of the Focal Persons and members of the Inquiry Committee shall be made visible and accessible to the STMU community through its website, notice boards, and other prominent locations.