

# **SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA**

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka was established with a motto, “To Restore the Dignity of Man”. The University upholds the core values of Integrity, Accountability, Transparency, Respect, Meritocracy, Academic Freedom, Creativity, Teamwork, Open-mindedness and Social Responsibility. To maintain these values, the University strives to provide an environment where students and staff can study and work without struggling to overcome the barriers of discrimination and any form of harassment on account of sex, age, ability, status, race, ethnicity or religious affiliation.

Safeguarding means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children from harm, and to respond appropriately when harm does occur. The University of Nigeria’s Safeguarding Policy, accordingly applies to:

- i. All students and staff of the University
- ii. Members of the University community (this include people who reside within the school campuses and/or own businesses operational within the school campuses but are not necessarily staff or students of the institution)
- iii. Visitors within the University
- iv. Children who may come in contact with the University-related activities

The University has the responsibility to safeguard the welfare of the above listed people, particularly women and young adults, and its safeguarding policy will be implemented without bias, discrimination and favouritism. All affected persons are encouraged to report promptly to the designated units of the University charged with the responsibility of handling cases of sexual harassment. These are the Gender and Development Policy Centre (GEN-CENT) and the Servicom Unit.

Persons found to be in violation of this Policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action which, when imposed, may lead to expulsion in the case of a student or termination of employment in the case of an employee or prosecution in case of a visitor. These may include, but is not limited to written warning, demotion, transfer, suspension, expulsion, ban from entering the university premises, counselling or therapy, campus access restriction, probation, loss of pay increase, dismissal or termination and referral by the University to law enforcement agents for prosecution.

Under this Safeguarding Policy, staff and students, Departments/Units and Faculties, as well as other members of the University community can formally report a case on behalf of a victim to the designated bodies. The same procedure used in investigating cases reported by actual victims will be used in investigating cases reported by third parties.

## II. RATIONALE FOR THE POLICY

- The University is at the forefront of advocating for gender equality and equity.
- It also promotes the creation of an enabling safe learning environment for all especially women and young adults working and learning in the University. One of the efforts of the University towards achieving this is to raise the level of moral standards among staff and students, as well as develop a comprehensive Sexual Harassment and Safeguarding Policies
- The University holds the position that the relationship among staff and students should, at all times, be guided by professional standards.

In view of the above, the Safeguarding Policy of the University of Nigeria is therefore aimed at:

- Providing protection from sexual harassment for children, young adults and women who come into contact with the University community and within the confines of the University
- Ensuring good practice in the educational sector based on regulations
- Providing laid down procedures to ensure safeguarding, and
- Outlining the protocols to adopt in cases of suspected harm.

The University has in place operational procedures detailed in this Policy to ensure its effectiveness. Also, this Policy is implemented with the observation of best health and safety practices as stipulated in existing laws. The Safeguarding Policy is non-discriminatory and devoid of gender bias in its application. The University Safeguarding Committee bears the responsibility for the dissemination of this Policy.

## III. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of determining whether a particular course of conduct constitutes sexual harassment under this Policy, the following definition will be used:

**Children:** These are persons under the age of 18 years.

**Safe Place:** A place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, unfair criticism, intimidation, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm.

**Sexual Harassment:** The Sexual Misconduct Policy of UNN defines sexual harassment as any unwelcome sexual advances, inappropriate sexual overture, requests for sexual favours, unwanted sexual conduct on any digital platform, subtle and non-subtle persistent behaviours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. A conduct constitutes sexual harassment when:

- a) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, education, living environment, safety, or participation in a University activity;

- b) Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for or a factor in decisions affecting that individual's employment, education, results, living environment, safety, or participation in a University activity; or
- c) Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's employment or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, offensive, or abusive environment for that individual's employment, education, living environment, or participation in a University activity.

**Student:** A student in the University is any person enrolled in the university for any of its programmes and with the intention of getting a certificate or statement of result upon completion of the programme. A student is under learning with goals of acquiring knowledge, developing professions and achieving easy employment. In the University of Nigeria, the academic programmes which students are enrolled into include the Pre-Degree, Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes.

**Woman:** A woman is a female human being. The word woman is usually reserved for an adult; girl is the usual term for a female child or adolescent. The plural 'women' is also sometimes used for female humans, regardless of age, as in phrases such as 'women's rights'.

**Young Adults:** For the purpose of this policy however, young adults are students and other members of the University community who are below the age of 18.

#### **IV.POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 YEARS**

##### **A) Admission Policy**

The University of Nigeria treats all its students, regardless of age on entry, as independent, mature individuals. However, persons under 18 years old, living in Nigeria are considered by law to be children, which means the University has additional responsibilities towards students who are below 18.

Where this is the case, the University shall require the applicant and his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) to sign the University's Consent Form and return it to the University as confirmation that both parties have read and understood the nature of the obligations which the University owes to its students under the age of 18 and the extent of the services and facilities available to them.

For the purpose of admission into the University of Nigeria:

- No applicant under the age of 18 will be admitted by the University until the Consent Form has been signed and returned.
- For international applicants, parents or guardians must ensure that suitable care arrangements are in place for a child under the age of 18 who will study in the University.

##### **B) Principles of Consent**

The following guidance seeks to ensure that the respective responsibilities of the University and parents in relation to a student below the age of 18 are clear. By signing the University

Consent Form, it is deemed by the University that the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) have given their consent to the following:

**Parental responsibilities:** The University of Nigeria will not take on the usual rights, responsibilities and authority which parents or guardians have in relation to a child, and it will not act in loco parentis (assuming parental responsibility) in relation to students who are under the age of 18 years.

**Contracts:** Since a student who is under the age of 18 years cannot enter into legal contracts, the University requires the student's parents/guardians to honour all obligations under any contracts that the student enters into with the University prior to his or her eighteenth birthday (e.g. payment of tuition and accommodation fees due to the University).

**Student Accommodation:** Parents and guardians should recognize that residential accommodation offered by the University is generally intended for the use of adults. Thus, they are not exempted from disciplinary actions of the University that relates to living in accommodation provided by the University.

**Field Trips:** Courses may involve compulsory or optional field trips, excursions or other periods of study away from the University campus. The University is not able to take any additional responsibility for a student who is under the age of 18 years in relation to such activities. Risk assessments are carried out before all field trips and provision is made for inclusion of students under 18 years where possible.

**Sale of Alcohol and other restricted Goods and Services:** It is illegal for alcohol and other restricted goods to be sold to, or bought by, students who are under the age of 18 years. The University endeavours to take reasonable steps to ensure that the law is not broken in relation to licensed premises under the University's control but cannot undertake to supervise any individual student. Those under the age of 18 years are not permitted entry to the University's Hotel and Restaurant for club nights.

**Relationships with Staff and Faculty:** Generally, in Nigeria, it is a criminal offence for any person in a position of trust (which include members of University staff and faculty) to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under 18 years

**Child Protection:** As a matter of law, a person under the age of 18 years is a child. The University has a responsibility to protect those under the age of 18 years from abuse and will report any suspicions or allegations of abuse of children to the appropriate Security Services or Social Services Officer. Any such suspicions or allegations will be reported to a designated Safeguarding Officer in line with the University of Nigeria's Safeguarding Policy. Hostel wardens and supervisors, Faculty staff, Academic Mentor, and any other University staff whose job description require close contacts with students will undergo all necessary checks and clearances based on the University Safeguarding Policy.

**Parental Involvement:** It is the University's usual policy that it deals with students (with whom it has a contractual relationship) and not with parents or guardians and this approach will apply equally to students who are under the age of 18 years. The University will therefore correspond with students, and not normally with parents or guardians (except when necessary to do so).

**Provision of Internet Services:** The University offers email and unregulated internet services for all its students. These services are provided on an unsupervised and unmonitored basis. Students are expected to act in an adult and responsible manner irrespective of their age when using these facilities and to abide by the University's Internet Usage Policy.

**Notification:** The Dean of Students Affairs and all relevant Deans of Faculties, Heads of academic Departments and administrative Units, hostel supervisors and wardens will be notified, upon registration, of any student within their spheres of responsibilities who will be under the age of 18 years on entry to the University. Academic staff advisers and non-teaching staff will not routinely be made aware of a student's age by their respective Heads.

**Medical Emergencies:** The University of Nigeria usually collects the contact details of students' next of kin upon registration irrespective of the student's age. If a medical emergency arises and it is not possible for the University to contact a student's next of kin within the timescale necessitated by the particular situation, the University may be required to act on the student's behalf. In such circumstances and based on medical advice of experts, a senior staff of the University (preferably a staff of Students' Affairs or the academic Department of the student) will act on behalf of the student's parent or guardian and give such consent to medical treatment as it is in the best interest of the student.

### **C) Procedure for Documenting Students under 18 Years**

The Admissions Officer of the University of Nigeria is responsible for seeking consent from the admitted students and their parents/guardians and ensures that no student admitted into the University and under the age of 18 is able to successfully register for their courses until a completed University Consent Form has been received from their parents/guardians.

The processes for documentation follow as below:

- Upon official release of names of applicants who have been offered provisional admission into the University of Nigeria, the University includes the completion of the Consent Form as part of the obligations of a prospective student who is below the age of 18.
- The University of Nigeria Consent Form is made available online on the University portal to ensure easy access by students and parents/guardians
- Upon submission of the University Consent Form, the Admissions Officer will give an acknowledgment form/letter to the student in order for that student to proceed with his/her registration
- The Admissions Office of the University provides comprehensive list of students who are under the age of 18 to the Students' Affairs Department who in turn communicates the respective Faculties and Departments of the students.
- Part of the information shared with the Students' Affairs Department, Faculties and Departments of the students include contact details of students' next of kin that should be contacted in cases of emergencies.

- It is the responsibility of the Admissions Office to ensure that all students of the University of Nigeria under the age of 18 and their parents/guardians complete and submit the University Consent Forms. Details of any outstanding consent should be communicated to the Student Affairs Department, Faculties and Departments of the affected students to ensure a follow up.

## **V. COMPOSITION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE**

Membership of the Committee comprises of nine people that will include:

- The Director of Gender and Development Policy Centre (GEN-CENT) of the University
- The Director of the Servicom Unit of the University
- The Dean of Students' Affairs
- The Chief Security Officer (CSO) of the University
- A Representative of the University Medical Centre
- Four persons (two academic staff and two non-teaching staff) nominated by the Vice-Chancellor

There must be at least four women in the Committee. This means that if the Directors of GEN-CENT and Servicom, the Dean of Students' Affairs, the CSO of the University and the representative of the University Medical Centre are all men, the four persons nominated by the Vice-Chancellor MUST be women to ensure that at least four (4) women are in the Committee.

## **VI. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE**

The University of Nigeria is committed to educating its populace on the ills of sexual harassment, intimidation and other related anti-social behaviour. It is important to note that sexual harassment, intimidation and other related activities can have debilitating effects on both the working, social conditions and the overall productivity of staff, Faculty and students in the University. It is therefore regarded as a very serious offense, necessitating disciplinary actions.

As a result, the TOR of the Safeguarding Committee shall include:

- i. To ensure dissemination and implementation of the Policy;
- ii. Provide guidance and support relating to safeguarding;
- iii. Train, supervise and support Staff directly involved with the responsibility of safeguarding;
- iv. To enforce the prescribed sanctions;
- v. To liaise with the University management for the provision of the infrastructures recommended within the Policy;
- vi. To review and update the Safeguarding Policy periodically ;
- vii. To oversee monitoring and evaluation of implementation;

- viii. Maintain the highest level of confidentiality while dealing with matters before the committee;
- ix. Liaise with external agencies in accordance to the policy where necessary.

To achieve this, the University of Nigeria is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all persons who participate in its academic programmes and related activities can work, learn and live together in an atmosphere devoid or free from all forms of abuse or harassment, exploitation or intimidation.

Therefore, the purpose of the Safeguarding Policy is to articulate the University's commitment to the elimination of sexual harassment, intimidation and other related activities. The University of Nigeria considers sexual harassment, intimidation and other related activities as a serious breach. The University supports the rights of individuals to be free from sexual harassment, intimidation and its likes while engaged in activities undertaken in any of its facilities.

The University of Nigeria Safeguarding Committee aim to use the Safeguarding Policy to:

- Create a working and learning environment that is free from sexual harassment, intimidation and other related acts and where all members of the University community are treated with courtesy, dignity and respect.
- Promote appropriate standards of conduct at all times.
- Implement strategies to ensure that all members of the University community know their rights and responsibilities in this area.
- Encourage the reporting of prohibited behaviour.
- Provide an effective complaints procedure based on principles of natural justice.
- Treat all complaints in a serious, sensitive, confidential, fair and timely manner.
- Guarantee against victimization or reprisals.

## **VII. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

This Safeguarding Policy of the University of Nigeria is guided by the following principles:

- Members of the University community have the right to freedom of expression and opinions mutually respected.
- In a bid to prevent the occurrence of any event that would jeopardize the safety of members of its learning community, the University has the responsibility through the Safeguarding Committee to educate members of its community on the provisions of its policy on Safeguarding and other attendant policies through various modes of communication. Disciplinary measures for defaulting parties will also be made known to the learning community. Consequently, Safeguarding Officers have been designated to pivotal arenas within the University such as the Health Centre, the Halls of Residence, the Departments, the Library, and other places within the University campuses where students and staff interface with other University officials. These officers have the responsibility to implement the provisions of the Safeguarding Policy.

Safeguarding Officers are also the first point for reporting issues that violate the Policy and have the duty to notify the Institution's Safeguarding Committee.

- This policy, in addition with other University wide policies like the Students' Code of Conduct and the Staff Code of conduct, will ensure that appropriate disciplinary measures are meted to defaulters of its provisions based on the stated guidelines.
- The provisions of this Policy while applicable to members of the University community generally, specifically seeks to protect Women and Young Adults. This is based on the premise of the vulnerability of this group. In executing its responsibilities, members of the Safeguarding Committee and all other officers saddled with the responsibilities of the implementation of the Policy shall ensure that the principles of confidentiality, respect for privacy rights of individuals (including self-dignity); neutrality and objectivity are strictly adhered to. More so, it is imperative that members of the learning community are prevented from any form of victimization and retaliation.
- Members of the University community have the joint responsibility to ensure that provisions of the Safeguarding Policy are adhered to in order to ensure the overall safety of the community. It is therefore important that allegations or suspicions of abuse be reported promptly. Procedures for reporting are found in the appropriate section below. Partnerships with the Student Union Government (SUG) of the University of Nigeria, Students' Clubs, religious bodies based inside the University campuses, etc, is therefore encouraged to ensure the effective dissemination of information in this regard.
- The Safeguarding Officers are accountable to the Safeguarding Committee which in turn is accountable to the Management of the University. The tenets of transparency will be embedded in all its proceedings.

### **VIII. SCOPE OF POLICY**

- The Safeguarding Policy of the University of Nigeria applies to all students and staff at all levels of management of the school.
- Students here refer to all engaged in pre-degree, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes irrespective of whether the engagement is on full-time or part-time basis.
- The Policy applies also to anyone who acts on behalf of the University in any of its programmes and activities including those taking place on-campus and off-campus.
- It applies to all contractors, sub-contractors, service providers, vendors, traders, clients, admission seekers, job applicants, staff of companies or firms operating on campus and all other visitors to the University.

### **IX. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY**

The University of Nigeria is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, intimidation and other related unacceptable activities on its campuses. It is also responsible for the wide dissemination of this Policy to all levels of its activities.

In furtherance of this, the University of Nigeria, through its Gender and Development Policy Centre (GEN-CENT) and Servicom Unit, shall not only provide training on the contents and standards of this Policy, but also introduce other measures such as gender sensitivity training for students, staff and Faculties at all levels. It will also carry out orientation training for new students and staff on appropriate behaviour.

The University will ensure that appropriate procedures are established to handle sexual harassment complaints and the specific officers responsible for dealing with complaints are specified and trained to mediate and conciliate grievances as well as discipline perpetrators found wanting.

The University is further responsible for ensuring that:

- i. Complaints are treated in an impartial, sensitive, fair, timely and confidential manner
- ii. Sexual harassment reporting is encouraged regardless of the status of the offender
- iii. Appropriate training is provided to enhance the capacity of those charged with the responsibility to manage and implement this Policy
- iv. Widespread awareness and understanding of sexual harassment is created
- v. This Policy and its procedures are monitored and reviewed every five years
- vi. All students, staff and other persons associated with the University are responsible for complying with this Policy and as such all are encouraged to read it thoroughly and ensure that they have a good understanding of the issues surrounding sexual harassment, particularly in recognizing behaviours that constitute sexual harassment.

## **X. COMPLAINTS AND PROCEDURES**

### **i) Who may report abuse?**

The victim and any other person, whether or not a member of the University community, may report an incident which took place in breach of this Policy and whether or not such breach occurred on or off campus. Complaint by non-members of the University community can be forwarded directly to GEN-CENT if the complainant does not know any Safeguarding Officer

Any University staff to whom a complaint has been officially made must forward such complaint to any Safeguarding Officer (who is trained and appointed by GEN-CENT) and who in turn forwards such complaint to GEN-CENT. Upon verification of the credibility of the complaint, the GEN-CENT will then forward to the Safeguarding Committee.

### **ii) To whom reports may be made**

The University recognizes the importance of providing a choice of reporting mechanisms and officers (male and female) to complainants in order to make them feel comfortable to come forward to discuss or report an incident. It also recognizes that in some instances, the immediate officer to whom a report may be appropriately made may be too close to the problem to serve without bias. As such, the University encourages all staff, Departments, Faculties and Units who receive formal complaints of sexual harassment and related misconducts to forward such complaints to GEN-CENT since the Centre has a network of trained experts and offices that

receives complaints and offer counselling to victims. The Centre is also responsible for the training of Safeguarding Officers.

### **iii) Format of a Complaint**

There is no prescribed format for reporting incidents. It may be reported verbally but it is preferable that it be in writing. Where a complaint is made verbally, the person to whom a report is made shall document such report appropriately, including date, time and place of report as well as his/her perception of the body language of the person making the report. The person can also tape the reporting with the consent of the complainant

### **iv) Methods of Dealing with Complaints**

The GEN-CENT shall evaluate all reported cases and either resolve or forward to the Safeguarding Committee for appropriate action in line with the Safeguarding Policy of the University of Nigeria. Investigation of cases shall be conducted strictly in line with the University's Sexual Harassment Policy to ensure free and fair hearing for both the accuser and the accused.

Cases involving Student-Staff, Staff-staff and Student-Student will all be handled strictly in line with the University's Sexual Harassment Policy.

### **v) Suppression of Complaints**

- It is a serious offence for any staff/group of staff, student/group of students to suppress any case/cases of sexual misconduct at any level of the University windows.
- Person/persons involved in such suppression or cover up shall be punished in line with the staff or student regulations.

### **vi) Liability of Complainants and Witnesses**

This Policy shall not be used to bring frivolous or malicious complaints against students, staff or any other member of the University community. Anybody who makes a false complaint or raises false alarm with intent to discredit, blackmail or damage the reputation of another person shall be penalized in line with Staff Regulations or the Students' Academic Regulations. The same shall apply to any false witness.

### **vii) Confidentiality**

Confidentiality shall be maintained in all reported cases unsafe practices within the University. The identity of persons who give useful information on cases of sexual misconduct will be protected and information provided shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. Any person who, without authorization, reveals such information shall be subject to disciplinary action.

### **viii) Appeals**

Either the complainant or the alleged harasser who is dissatisfied with the outcome of a proceeding may appeal to the University's Sexual Harassment Appeal Committee within one week of notification of the outcome. Outcome of a proceeding in this paragraph includes the

decision to grant or refuse an appeal for an extension of time to lodge a complaint. Such an appeal must be lodged within seven days of the decision of the Committee.

#### **XI. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES – Different Policy statements and deliverables**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Policy Statements</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Time frame</b>
Policy Statement 1	To create sufficient awareness across the University community about the dangers and negative effects of sexual harassment, thereby engendering a sense of social responsibility and zero tolerance for sexual harassment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Adoption and implementation of the University’s Women and Young Adults Safeguarding Policy.</li> <li>2) Display of the Policy on the University website for easy access.</li> <li>3) Production and dissemination of the Policy to new staff and students at the beginning of every session.</li> <li>4) Production of a variety of posters showing the University’s sexual harassment hotlines to be posted on the University website and at strategic places across the University.</li> <li>5) Organization of at least one orientation and training programme for staff and students every academic session</li> </ol>	October - November, 2025
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Policy Statements</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Time frame</b>
Policy Statement 2	The Policy aims at creating a learning and working environment devoid of abuse for building an efficient organization and achieving gender equity and equality.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Establish structures where aggrieved parties can seek redress (to avoid overlapping of functions, these structures will operate to complement the central role played by GEN-CENT to this effect)</li> <li>2) Institutionalized attention and support should be given to victims of sexual harassment from designated Counselors as the first points of call with dedicated telephone hotlines for victims of sexual harassment.</li> <li>3) To establish procedures to be followed in cases of sexual harassment.</li> <li>4) The university shall enforce existing regulations on time limit for visitors in the hostels as a safety precaution.</li> <li>5) The University shall ensure that necessary infrastructures like electricity and transportation are functioning.</li> <li>6) The University Management shall establish an online anonymous assessment of compliance to safeguarding procedures by students every end of semester</li> </ol>	January – April, 2026

S/N	Policy Statements	Deliverables	Time frame
Policy Statement 3	<p>The University encourages all staff and students to report any act of abuse to the appropriate authority for necessary action. The University promises to keep all information about the complainants confidential so as to protect their privacy. In view of the fact that the University is aware of false accusations of sexual harassment, it shall take appropriate measures to discipline complainants, if allegation of sexual harassment is found to be false.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The University will empower all staff and students to help victims who report cases of sexual harassment to them to formally forward their complaints to the appropriate places in line with the provisions of the Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>2) All personnel that come in contact with the complainant and the report shall maintain high confidentiality in handling the complaint</li> </ol>	January – April, 2026
Policy Statement 4	<p>To conduct regular and continuous monitoring and evaluation to determine the level of implementation and progress in the achievement of the objectives of the University’s Women and Young Adults Safeguarding Policy.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The University shall collate and analyze data from the Safeguarding Policy Action Committee and other credible sources.</li> <li>2) The University shall establish a surveillance system that regularly tracks incidences of sexual harassment and appropriate penalties.</li> <li>3) The University shall publish and disseminate annual reports on the level of compliance and implementation of the Policy as a means of sharing best practices and lessons learnt.</li> <li>4) The University Management shall mandate the security unit to register all vehicles and motorcycles coming into the Campus at every hour and restrict vehicular movement in some areas on campuses during some hours of day and at night</li> </ol>	April – December, 2026