

# Azerbaijan Technological University (ATU) Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy

## 1. Introduction

Azerbaijan Technological University (ATU) is committed to maintaining an environment free from all forms of harassment and discrimination. This policy aims to protect students, staff, faculty, and visitors from inappropriate conduct based on race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or any other personal characteristic. ATU promotes respect, equality, and dignity for all individuals, fostering an atmosphere of mutual understanding and inclusion.

The policy aligns with local laws and international human rights standards and is grounded in our commitment to social justice, as embodied in global goals such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Prevent and address all forms of harassment, discrimination, and victimization within the university.
- Promote a culture of respect and dignity where differences are valued.
- Outline clear procedures for reporting and investigating complaints.
- Provide protection and support for individuals who experience harassment or discrimination.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the ATU community, including:

- **Students** (undergraduate, postgraduate, exchange students, etc.).
- **Academic and administrative staff.**
- **Visitors and contractors** engaged in university activities.
- **Partners and collaborators** involved in joint projects or events on university premises.

It covers behavior both on campus and at off-campus activities related to the university, including university-sponsored events, conferences, and fieldwork.

## 4. Definition of Harassment and Discrimination

### 4.1 Harassment

Harassment includes any unwanted physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct that demeans, humiliates, or intimidates an individual or group based on protected characteristics such as:

- Gender
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- National or ethnic origin
- Any other personal attributes

Harassment can manifest as:

- **Verbal harassment:** Insults, slurs, or derogatory comments.
- **Physical harassment:** Unwanted physical contact or threatening gestures.
- **Visual harassment:** Displaying offensive images or symbols.
- **Sexual harassment:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

## 4.2 Discrimination

Discrimination refers to treating individuals or groups unfairly based on protected characteristics. Discriminatory behavior may involve:

- Exclusion from participation in activities or opportunities.
- Denial of access to resources or benefits.
- Inequitable treatment in academic or employment decisions, such as grading, hiring, or promotions.

Forms of discrimination include:

- **Direct discrimination:** Treating someone less favorably because of their characteristics.
- **Indirect discrimination:** Policies or practices that apply to everyone but disproportionately disadvantage a particular group.
- **Victimization:** Retaliating against an individual for raising concerns or filing a complaint about harassment or discrimination.

## 5. Prohibited Conduct

ATU strictly prohibits the following behaviors:

- **Sexual Harassment:** Any form of unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, including inappropriate remarks, touching, or advances.
- **Racial Harassment:** Any actions, words, or behaviors that denigrate someone based on race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin.

- **Bullying and Psychological Harassment:** Repeated actions intended to intimidate, demean, or undermine an individual's dignity, whether in person or online.
- **Disability Discrimination:** Unfair treatment based on physical or mental disabilities, including failure to provide reasonable accommodations.
- **Gender-Based Harassment:** Any demeaning or hostile conduct related to a person's gender identity or gender expression.

These behaviours, whether committed by students, staff, or visitors, are not tolerated and will result in disciplinary action.

## 6. Reporting Mechanisms

ATU provides several avenues for reporting incidents of harassment or discrimination, ensuring confidentiality and prompt action:

### 6.1 Informal Reporting

- Individuals who feel they have experienced harassment or discrimination are encouraged to raise their concerns directly with the person responsible if they feel comfortable doing so. Often, misunderstandings can be resolved informally through open communication.

### 6.2 Formal Reporting

- If informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, individuals can file a formal complaint with the university's designated **Human Resources Department**.
- Complaints should be made in writing and include details such as the nature of the incident, the people involved, and any witnesses.

### 6.3 Anonymous Reporting

- ATU offers an anonymous reporting system where individuals can submit concerns without revealing their identity. While this may limit the scope of the investigation, it allows individuals to voice concerns safely.

## 7. Investigation Process

Upon receiving a formal complaint, the following steps will be taken:

1. **Acknowledgment:** The complainant will receive confirmation of the report within three working days.
2. **Initial Assessment:** A preliminary review will determine if the complaint falls under the anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy.
3. **Investigation:** A thorough, confidential investigation will be conducted, which may include interviews with the complainant, the respondent, and any witnesses. Relevant documentation or evidence will also be reviewed.

4. **Outcome:** A report of findings will be prepared, and a decision will be communicated to the parties involved. If harassment or discrimination is found, appropriate corrective actions will be taken.

## 8. Disciplinary Actions

Individuals found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary measures in accordance with ATU's **Code of Conduct**. Disciplinary actions may include:

- Verbal or written warnings.
- Mandatory training on harassment and discrimination.
- Suspension or expulsion (for students).
- Termination of employment (for staff).
- Removal from campus (for visitors or contractors).

## 9. Protection from Retaliation

ATU strictly prohibits any form of retaliation against individuals who report harassment or discrimination, participate in investigations, or support others in exercising their rights. Retaliatory behaviour will be treated as a serious violation of this policy and will result in disciplinary action.

## 10. Training and Awareness

ATU is committed to raising awareness about harassment and discrimination prevention. The university will:

- Provide mandatory **training** to all students, faculty, and staff on recognizing and preventing harassment and discrimination.
- Conduct **workshops** and **awareness campaigns** to promote a culture of respect and inclusion across campus.
- Maintain **resources and support services** such as counselling, mediation, and conflict resolution to help individuals navigate issues related to harassment and discrimination.

## 11. Monitoring and Review

The Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective and up-to-date. Feedback from students, staff, and stakeholders will be solicited to evaluate the policy's impact. The policy will be updated as necessary in response to new developments or legal changes.

## **12. Conclusion**

Azerbaijan Technological University reaffirms its commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment free from harassment and discrimination. We strive to foster a community where diversity is celebrated, and all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.