AZERBAIJAN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy

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1. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

Azerbaijan Technical University (hereinafter "AzTU") is committed to maintaining a learning, working, and research environment in which all individuals are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. Discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation, and retaliation undermine academic integrity, professional standards, and personal wellbeing and are incompatible with the University's values.

The purpose of this Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy (hereinafter the "Policy") is to establish a clear institutional framework for:

- preventing discrimination and harassment;
- defining acceptable standards of behaviour;
- providing accessible and fair reporting and response mechanisms;
- ensuring protection from retaliation; and
- promoting equity, inclusion, and accountability across the University community.

This Policy applies to all members of the University community and to third parties who participate in or provide services connected to AzTU activities. It supports an inclusive institutional culture and ensures that concerns are addressed promptly, fairly, and confidentially.

1.1. Legislative and Institutional Context

This Policy is developed in accordance with:

- the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- applicable national legislation on equality, labour relations, education, and human rights;
- AzTU's Charter, Code of Conduct, and internal regulations; and
- relevant international standards and best practices in higher education governance and equality.

2. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

- **Discrimination:** Unfair or unequal treatment of an individual or group based on protected characteristics that results in disadvantage, exclusion, or denial of equal opportunity.
- **Protected Characteristics:** Characteristics that must not form the basis for discrimination, including sex, gender, age, disability or health status, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion or belief, marital or family status, sexual orientation, social origin, and other status protected under applicable law.
- **Harassment:** Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, or of a sexual nature, that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Any unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an unsafe or humiliating environment.
- **Bullying:** Repeated unreasonable behaviour, including misuse of power, that intimidates, humiliates, or undermines an individual.

- **Victimisation:** Unfair treatment of a person because they raised a concern, made or supported a complaint, or participated in a process under this Policy.
- **Retaliation:** Any adverse action taken in response to reporting or participating in a process under this Policy. Retaliation is prohibited.
- **Complainant:** A person who reports discrimination or harassment or submits a complaint.
- **Respondent:** A person whose behaviour is alleged to have breached this Policy.
- **Interim Measures:** Temporary actions taken to protect individuals and prevent harm while a matter is assessed or investigated.

3. APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to all members of Azerbaijan Technical University, including:

- students at all levels;
- academic and administrative staff;
- senior management and governing body members;
- researchers and doctoral candidates.

It also applies to visitors, contractors, suppliers, service providers, visiting researchers, exchange participants, applicants, and other third parties who participate in or interact with AzTU activities.

The Policy applies across all University-related contexts, including teaching and learning environments, employment settings, research activities, University events, fieldwork, placements, travel on University business, and online or digital environments connected to AzTU.

Where conduct occurs off-campus, this Policy may apply if the conduct is connected to AzTU activities, relationships, or reputation, or if it has an impact on the University community.

4. GOVERNANCE

AzTU maintains a clear governance structure to ensure effective prevention, reporting, and response under this Policy.

- **University Council:** Approves this Policy and receives periodic summary reporting on institutional risks, trends, and prevention measures.
- **Law Office (Operational Lead):** Maintains the Policy, ensures legal compliance, provides procedural guidance, and oversees documentation standards.
- **Department of Human Resources Management:** Leads staff-related intake, case management, investigations where appropriate, and employment-related outcomes. Ensures protections against retaliation.
- **Student Affairs:** Leads student-related intake, support coordination, and case management, ensuring procedural fairness and wellbeing safeguards.
- **Faculties and Departments:** Promote awareness, encourage early reporting, cooperate with investigations, and support interim measures.
- **All Staff and Students:** Maintain respectful behaviour, report concerns in good faith, and cooperate with Policy processes.

For each reported matter, AzTU assigns a designated Case Coordinator responsible for timely handling, documentation, and communication with involved parties.

5. NON-DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PREVENTION, RISK AREAS, AND INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

AzTU upholds equality, dignity, and mutual respect as core institutional values. Decisions related to admission, employment, promotion, assessment, access to learning or research opportunities, and access to services must be based on merit and objective criteria and must not be influenced by protected characteristics or personal bias.

5.1. Prohibited Conduct

Discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, victimisation, and retaliation are strictly prohibited. This includes conduct occurring in person, in writing, by phone, or through electronic and social media channels.

Prohibited conduct also includes misuse of authority, threats, intimidation, exclusionary practices, and deliberate actions that undermine equal participation.

5.2. Reporting, Intake, and Case Management

AzTU provides accessible reporting routes to encourage early reporting and timely response. Reports may be submitted by affected individuals or witnesses through:

- Department of Human Resources Management (staff-related matters);
- Student Affairs (student-related matters);
- the Law Office (procedural guidance or formal submission);
- designated University reporting email or online form; or
- managers or academic leaders, who must escalate matters appropriately.

Anonymous reports may be accepted and assessed based on available information and the ability to take fair action.

5.3. Interim Measures and Procedural Safeguards

Upon receipt of a report, AzTU conducts an initial assessment to determine the appropriate pathway. Where necessary to protect individuals or prevent further harm, interim measures may be applied. These measures are not disciplinary findings.

Interim measures may include adjustments to schedules, supervision, access permissions, or learning and working arrangements, while preserving confidentiality and fairness.

5.4. Investigation, Decision-Making, and Outcomes

Investigations are conducted by trained personnel or authorised investigators in accordance with fair process principles. Investigations include evidence collection, interviews where appropriate, and documented findings.

Indicative timeframes are:

- acknowledgement of receipt within 3 calendar days;
- investigation completion typically within 15–30 calendar days; and
- decision communication within 10 calendar days following investigation conclusion.

Where a breach is substantiated, proportionate actions are applied in line with applicable procedures, which may include corrective measures, training, restrictions on contact, academic or employment measures, or disciplinary proceedings.

5.5. Protection from Retaliation, Confidentiality, and Records

Retaliation against any person who reports a concern in good faith or participates in a process under this Policy is prohibited and treated as a serious breach.

AzTU maintains confidentiality to the extent possible and shares information only on a need-to-know basis. Secure records of reports, investigations, decisions, and measures are retained in accordance with institutional and legal requirements.

5.6. Prevention, Training, and Awareness

AzTU implements prevention measures including awareness campaigns, induction content, periodic training for staff and students, and specialised training for case-handling personnel. Prevention activities are planned annually and reviewed based on monitoring outcomes and risk trends.

5.7. Disciplinary Measures

Discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and retaliation established through the procedures of this Policy constitute disciplinary misconduct. Measures are proportionate to the seriousness, repetition and impact of the conduct and take account of aggravating and mitigating circumstances.

Staff. In accordance with Articles 186 and 187 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the following disciplinary measures may be applied to employees:

- reprimand;
- severe reprimand with a final warning;
- termination of the employment contract where the grounds provided by Article 70 of the Labour Code are met.

Before a disciplinary measure is applied, the employee is given the opportunity to provide a written explanation. Measures are imposed by order of the Rector within the time limits established by the Labour Code and recorded in the employee's personnel file. Sexual harassment is additionally addressed in line with the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Guarantees of Gender (Men and Women) Equality".

Students. Students are subject to disciplinary measures under the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Education" and AzTU's internal regulations for students, including:

- written warning;
- reprimand;
- suspension of access to University accommodation or extracurricular activities;
- expulsion from the University.

Where the conduct contains signs of an administrative or criminal offence, AzTU refers the matter to the competent state authorities.

5.8. Protection of Complainants

From the moment a complaint is registered, AzTU takes measures to protect the complainant and witnesses from further harm and retaliation. Depending on the circumstances and with the complainant's consent, these measures may include:

- changes to working or study schedules, workplace, academic group or reporting line, without loss of pay, grades or other entitlements;
- a written no-contact instruction issued to the respondent;
- reassignment of the respondent's supervisory, teaching or assessment responsibilities in relation to the complainant pending the outcome;
- access to case information restricted to persons directly involved in handling the case;
- referral to psychological support services.

Interim measures do not constitute a finding of misconduct and must not disadvantage the complainant. Retaliation against a complainant, witness or any person assisting an investigation constitutes separate misconduct subject to the measures in this Section. A complaint made in good faith does not lead to disciplinary action against the complainant, even where the allegation is not substantiated.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

This Policy is implemented through supporting procedures, guidelines, and training programmes integrated into AzTU's governance and operational systems.

All University units are responsible for cooperating with implementation requirements and ensuring consistent application across activities and locations.

7. MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Implementation effectiveness is monitored through indicators that may include:

- number of reports received by category and channel;
- timeliness of acknowledgements, investigations, and decisions;
- number of retaliation allegations and outcomes;
- training completion rates; and
- trend analysis of recurring risk areas and prevention actions.

An annual summary report is prepared by the Policy Owner with input from implementing units and presented to the appropriate governance body.

8. POLICY EVOLUTION

This Policy is reviewed at least every two years or earlier where required by legal changes, institutional risk trends, or significant incidents.

Reviews are informed by monitoring results, case trend analysis, and feedback from implementing units. Revisions are approved through established University governance processes. Prior versions remain in effect until a revised Policy is formally adopted.

AZTU

AZERBAIJAN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

25 H. Javid Avenue, Baku, Azerbaijan, AZ 1073
(+994 12) 539-13-05

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



