



Sri Sri University

(Established under UGC State Private University Regulation 2003)

Sri Sri Vihar, Bidyadharpur Arilo, Ward No-3, Cuttack-754006

Name of Policy	Anti-Discrimination & Equal Employment opportunity Policy	Department responsible Prepared by	Executive Registrar Prof. D.P. Sahoo
Department	All	Checked by	Executive Registrar
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ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

I. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

1.1 The Sri Sri University (hereinafter referred to as SSU) is committed to promoting a workplace that provides equal employment opportunities and is free from all forms of discrimination. The SSU recognises that workplace discrimination is a serious violation of the rights and freedoms of employees and potential employees at a workplace.

1.2. Since discrimination at the workplace of-any nature whatsoever, serves to further marginalise those who face discrimination in different spheres of life, owing to caste, class, religion, sexuality, gender identity and disability, amongst others, and can have severe detrimental effects on their mental, physical, and social well-being of the individual. SSU ethically and in action is against such practices.

1.3. The fundamental rights of the Indian Constitution recognise the principle of equality and non-discrimination'. Article 14 of the Constitution vests in all persons the right to equality before the law. Article 15 of the constitution, prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or a combination of them. Article 16 of the constitution, prohibits discrimination in the realm of public employment. Both Articles 15 and 16 of the constitution, also recognise the principle of positive discrimination or affirmative action, stating that the adoption of special measures for women, children, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes would not be a violation of the principle of equality, and would serve to remedy the structural inequalities existing in Indian society.

1.4. SSU believes that the adoption of the Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy is an important step towards the creation of an inclusive work environment that values and accepts the diverse cultural and social backgrounds of its staff, and where each individual feels that all decisions are taken free of discrimination, giving them an equal opportunity based on their relevant abilities and skills. The due process provided under the Policy will be followed by the Anti-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity Committee, and every effort shall be made to avoid any backlash or retaliatory action against persons making complaints under the Policy.

2. FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

2.1. SSU will strive to create a safe and non-discriminatory work environment. It will act decisively against all forms of discrimination and implement this Policy in its true letter and spirit.

2.2. SSU acknowledges that the principle of neutrality, for example, being gender neutral or caste neutral, would serve to deepen existing marginalisation and would not advance the principle of equality in the workplace. Instead, it is guided by the principle of substantive equality and recognises that women, Dalit and Adivasi communities, Muslims, LGBTQIA+ persons, amongst others, are more vulnerable to workplace discrimination than others. It resolves to be conscious of the structural and individual vulnerabilities faced by persons in the formulation and implementation of this Policy.

2.3. SSU will seek to ensure that its workforce is diverse and representative, at all levels of its functioning, including senior management. It will pro-actively recruit from marginalised

communities, including from Dalit, and Adivasi communities, Muslims, LGBTQIA+ persons, and persons with disabilities, including persons with psychosocial disabilities, and mental illness, amongst others.

2.1. SSU will keep all its employment, human resource, travel, leave and other policies under periodic review, to take proactive measures to identify and eliminate structural barriers to workplace diversity. In the process an open channel of feedback on the formulation of the policy will be encouraged from the staff members.

2.5. SSU will organise periodic training for sensitising employees and consultants on issues relating to workplace discrimination. It will empanel experts on issues of gender, caste, religion, physical and mental health, disability, and the law, and ensure that training on these issues is held periodically.

2.6. SSU will ensure the display of the key aspects of this Policy in both English and the local language at conspicuous places, including the contact details of the members of the Committee constituted under the Policy.

3. PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

SSU will treat the following attributes as protected characteristics for the prohibition of unfair treatment and ensuring equal employment opportunities:

- Age,
- Caste,
- Colour,
- Descent,
- Disability,
- Economic status,
- Family background,
- Gender identity,
- Genetic or other predisposition toward illness,
- Health status,

- HIV status,
- Language,
- Maternity,
- Marital or civil partnership status,
- Medical record,
- Physical features,
- Place of birth,
- Race,
- Religion,
- and Sexual orientation
- or a combination of them.

4. ENSURING EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 SSU will not deny to any employee irrespective of their nature of employment or potential employee including consultants, equal employment opportunities on the basis of a protected characteristic.

4.2 It is clarified that any distinction, exclusion, eligibility condition, or preference in respect of particular recruitment, appointment, promotion, or provision of training opportunities' will not be a denial of equal employment opportunities if it is directly linked to the requirements of work to be undertaken.

4.3. When carrying out any recruitment, appointment, promotion, or provision of training opportunities, SSU may ask an individual to disclose personal information regarding their identity and protected characteristics to take measures of positive discrimination or to consider steps for reasonable accommodation. It will be made clear to the individual that such disclosure is voluntary' and, if made, will be treated as confidential and only disclosed to those persons considering the application.

5. ADDRESSING WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

5.1. Workplace discrimination occurs when a person is unfairly treated at the workplace on the basis of one or more of the protected characteristics, which may include any of the following acts, whether directly or by implication, namely:

- a. coercion;
- b. communication or expression of negative stereotypes, or, abusive or offensive comments, including jokes, about a person's protected characteristics;
- c. creation of a hostile work environment;
- d. disruption of work;
- e. harassment;
- f. restriction with regard to the access of common spaces or use of common resources;
- g. any other unwelcome, physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct, done in person, or through any other mode of communication.

5.2. Unfavourable treatment of a person on the ground of association of such person with another person with a protected characteristic will amount to workplace discrimination. Further unfavourable treatment of a person on the perception' whether accurate or otherwise, of such a person as having a protected characteristic will amount to workplace discrimination.

5.3. An act of discrimination may be committed intentionally or unintentionally.

5.4. For the purposes of this Policy, the workplace includes the following:

- a. all the establishments of SSU located in India and also in countries beyond Indian sub-continent;
- b. any place where employees or consultants are required to visit for work such, as meetings, workshops, trainings, and conferences;
- c. the virtual workplace, that is, where any of employees or staff are connected through

the internet or telecom. regardless of the platform and without regard to geographic boundaries; and

d. transportation undertaken for any work-related purpose.

5.5. It is clarified that any differential treatment directly linked to the requirements of work to be undertaken will not constitute workplace discrimination.

6. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

6.1. A person with a protected characteristic, who is otherwise qualified to perform their job, may request reasonable accommodation in their working conditions to enable them to perform the essential functions of their work or enjoy equal benefits at the workplace. Reasonable accommodation entails adjustments to the working conditions, deadlines, forms of communication, providing flexibility in timings, amongst others.

6.2. Upon receiving such a request, SSU will assess its ability to implement such reasonable accommodation. If it determines that such measures would cause it a significant administrative or financial hardship, it may decline to implement them.

7. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEE

7.1. The Anti-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity Committee ('the Committee') as constituted under this Policy will have the jurisdiction to consider complaints of workplace discrimination and denial of equal employment opportunities.

7.2. The Committee will have the following members:

- a senior employee as the Chair Person of the Committee
- one employee of SSU
- one independent person as an external member, who has knowledge on issues of equality, anti-discrimination, social work or law

7.3. The external member will not have any regular financial, professional or social dealings with SSU and its management, to ensure the independent nature.

7.4. In a situation where a complaint is made against a senior employee of the organisation/Chief Executive Officer/ Executive Director, an independent Special Committee will be constituted, consisting of three independent and external members only.

7.5. Such a Committee will hold their position for a period of three years from the date of their nomination.

7.6. The external member will be remunerated with a daily allowance reasonably, which may be decided from time to time, for discharging their duties as a member.

8. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

8.1. A complaint of a denial of equal employment opportunity or workplace discrimination may be made by:

a. A current or former employee, whether employed on a regular, temporary, ad hoc, or daily wage basis, a current or former consultant, or any person worked or is working for remuneration or on a voluntary basis; and

b. A third party that comes into contact with any person from SSU during the course of their work.

The person making the complaint is referred to as the Complainant. The person against whom the complaint is made is referred to as the Respondent.

8.2. A complaint against workplace discrimination and or denial of equal employment opportunities should be made in the following manner:

a. The complainant may submit a written and signed complaint to any member of the Committee.

If the complainant is unable to make the complaint on account of disability, mental illness or for any other reason, the Committee may depute a person to assist them in making the complaint and through the process of the Committee or permit the complainant to take the assistance of a person of their choice, such as

b. Their counsellor, to assist them in this regard.

c. In the event of the death of the complainant, any person who has knowledge of the incident may submit the complaint, with the written consent of the complainant's legal heir, including family of origin, next of kin, and chosen family of the complainant.

d. The Committee may act on anonymous complaints if they are of a nature, which may be inquired into without requiring the participation of the complainant. In particular, these may relate to structural issues, employment conditions or policies.

8.3. The Complaint should be submitted within six months from the incident, and in case of multiple incidents, within six months from the latest incident. In case of any exigent circumstances, the Committee may relax this requirement, and extend the time for filing a complaint.

8.4. The Committee will ensure that the identity of the Complainant and their witnesses are kept confidential.

8.5. Redressal Process:

a. The Committee will send a written acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint to the complainant.

b. Within seven working days of receiving the complaint, the Committee will inform the respondent in writing that a complaint has been received, and provide them with a copy. The respondent will have an opportunity to respond to the complaint in writing within the next seven working days. SSU will strive to create an environment where the employees will feel safe to complain. in case of discrimination.

c. If the complainant consents, the Committee may initiate a conciliatory process between the complainant and the respondent. The complainant should not be pressurised directly or

indirectly into entering conciliation. No monetary settlement will be made as a basis for conciliation. The Committee will then follow a non-adversarial process and seek to arrive at a fair conclusion that is agreeable to both parties. The resulting agreement will then be communicated to the Chief Executive Officer and be acted upon, and no further inquiry will be made by the Committee into the matter.

If conciliation is not possible or a settlement cannot be arrived at, the Committee will launch its redressal process. The complainant and the respondent will be called upon to submit all supporting documents and a list of witnesses.

The evidence of the complaint and their witnesses will be recorded first, and thereafter that of the respondent and their witnesses. The opposite party may submit a list of questions to the committee, which the Committee will ask the witness. The Committee will ensure that questions are respectful, especially for the Complainant and their witnesses, where they feel safe and comfortable and are not humiliated or threatened.

The Committee will follow the principles of Natural Justice while listening to the parties.

No advocates or lawyers for either party will be present during the proceedings of the inquiry.

If either complainant, without sufficient cause, fails to attend three consecutive hearings, the committee may terminate the proceedings. If the Respondent fails to attend three consecutive hearings, it may proceed to arrive at a decision without the Respondent.

8.6. Interim Measures

During the pendency of the inquiry, on request by the complainant, the Committee may recommend SSU authorities to:

1. grant the complainant leave if requested by the complainant as per the applicable leave rules.
2. transfer the respondent to another workplace, team or project to minimise the interaction between the parties;
3. modify reporting structures so that the respondent is not evaluating the work or performance of the complainant;

4. take other measures to provide a conducive environment of safety and protection to the complainant against victimisation as a consequence of making a complaint;
5. In making its recommendation, the Committee will ensure that the interim measures do not have the direct or indirect effect of penalising the complainant for making the complaint.

8.7. Final Decision:

- a. Decisions taken by the committee will be through a majority vote.
- b. Within 7 days of the conclusion of the inquiry. The Committee will submit its report containing' the findings and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor of the University.
- c. Where the Committee concludes that the complaint against the respondent has not been proved, it will recommend to the VC, SSU that no action is required to be taken on the complaint.
- d. Where the committee concludes that the complaint against the respondent has been proved, it may recommend any of the following:
 - i. Counselling;
 - ii. Censure or reprimand;
 - iii. Apology to be tendered by the respondent;

Punishments of any nature in-case to be administered will be decided by the VC, SSU. This may include:

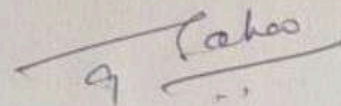
- a. With holding promotion and/or increments
- b. Suspension for a fixed period without pay;
- c. Termination:
- d. If the respondent is a third party vendor or consultant, the VC, SSU may decide to terminate its contractual relationship.
- e. The VC, SSU will act upon the Committee's recommendations within 7 days.

9. PROTECTION AGAINST VICTIMISATION AND RETALIATION

No person will be penalised, formally or informally, for making a complaint under this policy or cooperating in the redressal process. Any person who engages in such retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of services.

10. INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

10.1. In case any question / clarifications arises as to the interpretation of this policy, the interpretation which furthers equality and diversity would be adopted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Chao', is written over a horizontal line.

Executive Registrar