



Notre Dame Institute of Education

# Gender equity Policy





## **Notre Dame Institute of Education**

### **Gender Equity Policy**

#### **1. Introduction and Purpose**

Educational institutes are spaces for intellectual and personal growth, where students, staff, and faculty engage in collaborative learning. To ensure this environment remains supportive and inclusive, a robust policy addressing harassment, gender discrimination, and bullying is essential. Such a policy protects the rights and dignity of all individuals, ensuring they feel safe and valued.

This policy aligns with the institute's mission to foster an equitable and respectful learning community. It underscores the commitment to creating an environment where diversity is celebrated and everyone is free from fear or intimidation. By eliminating behaviors that threaten personal or academic growth, the institute upholds its values of equity, integrity, and respect for human rights.

#### **2. Commitment to Gender Equity**

NDIE upholds gender equity as a fundamental institutional principle that informs its educational mission, governance, and daily practices. We recognize that true inclusivity goes beyond the mere absence of discrimination and requires active efforts to promote fairness, equity, and full participation for people of all genders—whether cisgender, transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming.

##### **2.1 Institutional Philosophy**

NDIE believes that a gender-equal learning and working environment enhances academic and work excellence, strengthens community engagement, and fosters social justice. Gender equity contributes to the holistic development of individuals and is critical to building a respectful, diverse, and innovative educational and work space.

##### **2.2 Objectives**

To advance gender equity, NDIE is committed to the following:

- Ensure equal rights and opportunities for all individuals in admissions, recruitment, training, leadership roles, research opportunities, and professional development—irrespective of gender identity or expression.
- Integrate gender considerations into all institutional policies, programs, and procedures to eliminate systemic barriers and create a level playing field for all.
- Respect and affirm the self-identified gender of all individuals, including the use of chosen names and pronouns in classroom, administrative, and communication settings.
- Promote a campus environment free from gender-based violence, microaggressions, and stereotyping. Facilities and services, including restrooms and counseling support, will be made inclusive and accessible to all genders.



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- Strive for gender balance in decision-making bodies, hiring panels, student leadership, and faculty governance to reflect the diverse composition of the NDIE community.
- Conduct regular workshops, seminars, and trainings on gender equity, unconscious bias, inclusive communication, and respectful conduct for students, faculty, and staff.
- Mainstream gender equity into institutional policy and planning processes. Conduct regular reviews and collect disaggregated data to assess gender equity outcomes and guide improvements.

### **2.3 Accountability and Implementation**

- All NDIE members—students, staff, faculty, and administration—are responsible for contributing to a culture of gender equity.
- Reports of gender-based discrimination or violations of gender equity will be handled in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy and in alignment with NDIE’s core values of integrity, justice, and respect.

### **3. Definitions**

Clear definitions ensure all stakeholders understand the scope and intent of this policy:

- **Harassment:** Any unwelcome behavior—verbal, physical, or digital—that intimidates, offends, or humiliates, creating an uncomfortable environment.
- **Gender Discrimination:** Gender discrimination refers to unfair treatment based on gender identity, gender expression, or biological sex, including stereotyping roles, denying opportunities, or perpetuating biases.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwanted advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature that undermines a person's dignity or performance.
- **Bullying:** Consistent acts of threatening, aggressive physical conduct, or verbal abuse aimed at others, particularly those who are younger, smaller, weaker, or otherwise in a position of relative disadvantage.
- **Victimization:** Retaliatory actions against someone who reports harassment or participates in investigations.
- **Hostile Environment:** A setting where pervasive harassment or discrimination creates an atmosphere of fear, discomfort, or exclusion.
- **Cyberbullying:** Cyberbullying involves using electronic technologies—such as cell phones, email, social media, or text messaging—to engage in verbally threatening or harassing behavior.

### **3. Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to everyone associated with the institute, including students, faculty, administrative staff, contractual workers, and visitors. It governs all interactions within the institute’s physical premises and extends



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to off-campus events, academic trips, and digital platforms such as social media and emails. Any behavior that affects the institute's environment or an individual's well-being, whether in person or online, falls under the purview of this policy.

By covering both on-campus and online activities, the institute acknowledges the evolving nature of interactions in the digital age and aims to provide a comprehensive framework for addressing misconduct.

### **4. Rights and Responsibilities**

#### **4.1. Rights:**

- Every individual has the right to learn or work in an environment free from harassment, discrimination, and bullying.
- Stakeholders have the right to report incidents confidentially and without fear of retaliation.
- Victims are entitled to institutional support, including counseling, academic accommodations, and access to fair investigative processes.

#### **4.2. Responsibilities:**

- **Students and Employees:** Uphold respectful behavior, refrain from participating in prohibited conduct, and report violations promptly.
- **Administration:** Ensure the policy is effectively communicated, investigate complaints thoroughly and impartially, and maintain the confidentiality of all involved parties.
- **Institute:** Provide training sessions and awareness programs to promote understanding and adherence to this policy.

### **5. Prohibited Conduct**

Harassment and discrimination take many forms, including but not limited to:

- **Verbal Abuse:** Insulting, belittling, or making offensive remarks.
- **Physical Intimidation:** Unwanted touching, blocking paths, or using gestures to threaten.
- **Cyber Harassment:** Sending offensive messages, spreading false information online.
- **Sexual Misconduct:** Unwanted advances, sexually explicit messages, or coercion.
- **Gender Bias:** Stereotyping roles, ignoring pronouns, or unequal treatment.
- **Exclusionary Behavior:** Intentionally excluding or isolating individuals.
- **Retaliation:** Taking negative action against those who report misconduct.





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**Note:** A non-exhaustive list of behavior is attached at the end of the document to further clarify the prohibited conduct.

### **6. Reporting Mechanism**

The institute provides multiple secure avenues for reporting incidents while ensuring accessibility and confidentiality:

- **Online Reporting:** Individuals can submit complaints through **email** to the Director, which allows confidential reporting.
- **Face-to-Face Reporting:** Complaints can be made directly to the **Director** for immediate assistance.
- **Multi-Tier Reporting Channels:** Complaints can escalate through the following levels:
  1. Faculty member
  2. Program Coordinator
  3. Director
  4. Inquiry Committee

Upon receiving a report, the institution will:

1. **Record the complaint** to ensure proper documentation.
2. **Acknowledge receipt immediately** to reassure the complainant within 5 working days.
3. **Initiate an appropriate response**, including an initial review within 10 days.

To facilitate a thorough investigation, reporting parties should provide as much detail as possible, including dates, locations, and potential witnesses.

### **7. Investigation Procedures**

Investigations are conducted to ensure fairness, impartiality, and confidentiality. The process involves the following steps:

#### **7.1 Preliminary Review:**

- An initial assessment by the Director determines whether the complaint falls under the policy's jurisdiction.

#### **7.2 Informal Resolution:**

Informal resolution seeks to bring the involved parties together to discuss and address the complaint. Aggrieved individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct (in line with the policy) may choose to speak



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directly with the person responsible or request that the Director act as a liaison to facilitate an informal discussion with the individual charged with misconduct, to resolve the issue.

#### **7.3 Formal Resolution**

If a student does not wish to use the informal resolution process, or if it is unsuccessful, the formal resolution process should be initiated. A formal complaint can be submitted to the Director. A written and signed complaint must be submitted within **10 working days** of the incident. The complaint should clearly detail the nature of the incident, including any offensive language or conduct, and be directed to designated members of the Inquiry Committee.

**Note:** If the complainant is unable to file the complaint within the 10-day period due to extenuating circumstances, they may request an extension. The Inquiry Committee may grant the extension at its discretion, provided a reasonable explanation is given.

#### **7.4 Inquiry Committee Members:**

- The committee will have four members: the Director, the Deputy Director, two members of the institute. However, the committee must maintain an equal balance of genders.
- Members of the Committee shall be individuals who are known for being principled, credible, fair, and gender-sensitive and have a strong character (someone who will not change their decision due to pressure from friends, colleagues, or seniors). They shall have no conflict of interest in particular cases and shall be impartial and unbiased.
- Committee members must declare any personal or professional relationships with involved parties. Those with conflicts will be replaced by neutral representatives

#### **7.4 Reviews and Investigation:**

- The procedures outlined in this section apply to all members of the NDIE community, including students, faculty, administrative staff, and other employees, in cases where harassment, bullying, or discrimination is formally reported.
- Upon receipt of the complaint, **interim protective measures** may be implemented to safeguard the well-being of the complainant. These may include, but are not limited to, schedule adjustments, temporary changes in work or class assignments, no-contact directives, or other accommodations as deemed appropriate.
- Both the complainant and the individual charged with misconduct have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or friend from within the institution. The support person may accompany the complainant or respondent but cannot actively participate in the investigation or provide testimony during the inquiry.
- The Inquiry Committee will provide its findings and recommendations in writing, along with the reasons, within 10 working days of starting the inquiry. If the investigation cannot be completed within



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10 working days, the committee will inform both parties of the delay and provide an updated timeline for the completion of the investigation.

- If a student is found guilty of the misconduct, the penalties will be determined according to the University's Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.
- If a staff member is found guilty of harassment, the Director will then consult with the inquiry committee to determine any sanctions to be imposed.
- After case resolution, the complainant will be contacted for a confidential well-being check to ensure no retaliation has occurred.
- Retaliation against complainants, witnesses, or investigators is strictly prohibited. Individuals found engaging in retaliatory acts, such as exclusion, intimidation, or career penalties, will face the same disciplinary actions as offenders

### **7.3 Confidentiality:**

Identities of complainants and respondents are protected throughout the investigation. Individuals who report incidents of harassment or gender-based discrimination should be assured that their personal information will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. The investigation process should be conducted discreetly, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis to protect the integrity of the process and the privacy of all parties involved. Investigators and decision-makers should ensure that sensitive details of the case are not disclosed to individuals who do not need to be involved, ensuring privacy for both the complainant and the accused. While confidentiality will be maintained to the greatest extent possible, it is important to note that confidentiality may be limited in certain circumstances, such as when there is a risk of harm to individuals or when there are legal requirements for disclosure.

### **7.4 Whistleblowing Mechanism**

- The whistleblowing mechanism provides a safe and confidential channel for everyone at NDIE to report gender-based issues or harassment without fear of retaliation. It ensures that all reports are taken seriously and addressed appropriately.
- All NDIE members, including students, faculty, and staff, can report incidents through the same mechanisms outlined above.
- All reports will be handled with strict confidentiality to protect the identity of the whistleblower. The whistleblower's details (if disclosed) will only be shared with the investigation team when necessary and with their consent. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis to maintain privacy.
- Retaliation against a whistleblower is strictly prohibited and will be treated as a serious violation of this policy. Any individual found engaging in retaliatory actions, such as exclusion, intimidation, or career penalties, will face strict disciplinary measures. The institute will conduct follow-up assessments with whistleblowers (if known) to monitor potential retaliation.





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- Reports received through whistleblowing channels will be reviewed promptly by the investigation committee. If the report is anonymous, efforts will be made to verify the validity of the claims without compromising the whistleblower's identity. The committee will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and begin an initial review within ten working days.
- The whistleblower (if known) will be informed about the progress and outcome of the investigation, subject to confidentiality constraints. In cases where action has been taken, the committee will provide updates on the resolution process while protecting the privacy of all parties involved. If no action is taken, the whistleblower will receive a clear explanation, ensuring transparency and trust in the reporting system.

## 8. Consequences and Disciplinary Actions

The following course of consequences may be applied; however, the decision rests with the Inquiry Committee to determine sanctions proportionate to the severity and circumstances of the misconduct. The Committee will ensure that all actions are fair, consistent, and aligned with the principles of this policy.

### 8.1 For Students

- **First Offense:** Written warning and mandatory participation in **sensitivity training** for inappropriate comments, gestures, or gender/harassment-related behavior.
- **Second Offense:** Suspension from classes for a **specified duration**, with a **formal note in the academic record**.
- **Third Offense:** Expulsion with **no eligibility for re-admission**.

### 8.2 For Employees

- **First Offense:** Written reprimand and mandatory **anti-harassment training**.
- **Second Offense:** Suspension **without pay**, with a **formal entry in the personnel file**.
- **Third Offense:** Termination of employment, with **legal action if applicable**.

### 8.3 For Visitors

- **First Offense:** Verbal warning and **active monitoring** during their stay.
- **Second Offense:** Immediate **removal from the premises**, with a formal **prohibition notice** for future entry.
- **Severe or Repeated Violations:** Permanent banning from institute access, with **legal proceedings if necessary**.





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### 9. False or Malicious Complaints

While the institute encourages all members to report genuine concerns, knowingly filing a **false or malicious complaint**—with the intent to defame, harass, or cause harm to another individual, will be treated as a serious violation of this policy. If an investigation determines that a complaint was made in bad faith or with deliberate intent to mislead, the complainant may be subject to **disciplinary action** as deemed appropriate by the Inquiry Committee.

Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, formal reprimand, suspension, or termination/expulsion, depending on the severity of the misconduct and the role of the individual involved.

**Note:** A complaint that cannot be substantiated after investigation does not automatically imply bad faith unless there is clear evidence of intentional falsification or manipulation.

### 10. Support, Prevention, and Implementation

The institute is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and harassment-free environment by providing support services, preventive measures, and a structured implementation plan.

#### 10.1 Support Services for Affected Individuals

To prioritize the well-being of those impacted by harassment, discrimination, or bullying, the institute offers:

- **Counseling Services:** Access to trained counselors through external agencies.
- **Reporting Assistance:** Dedicated staff to guide individuals through the complaint process.

#### 10.2 Preventive Strategies

The institute adopts proactive strategies to educate and empower stakeholders:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Posters, digital resources, and outreach efforts to promote respectful behavior and highlight reporting mechanisms.
- **Training Workshops:** Interactive sessions on gender sensitivity, harassment prevention, bystander intervention, and respectful communication for students and staff.
- **Policy Integration in Orientation:** All students and employees receive the policy during onboarding, ensuring clarity on expectations and procedures.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Anonymous surveys and focus groups to assess policy effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

### 11. Implementation and Policy Enforcement

To ensure the policy remains relevant and effective, the institute will:





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- **Policy Dissemination:** Publish the policy on the official website and incorporate it into orientation programs.
- **Regular Training & Awareness:** Conduct periodic training sessions and refreshers.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Perform regular audits, assess reporting trends, and update procedures based on feedback.
- **Policy Review & Updates:** Revise the policy every three years or more frequently if emerging challenges or gaps arise.





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### **Prohibited Conduct**

The institute strictly prohibits all forms of harassment, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, victimization, and the creation of a hostile environment. The following actions constitute violations of this policy:

#### **1. Harassment**

- Insulting, belittling, or mocking someone.
- Using offensive or inappropriate language.
- Making discriminatory or degrading remarks.
- Yelling or shouting at someone in a threatening or demeaning manner.
- Using humor to isolate or target an individual or group.
- Spreading harmful rumors or gossip.
- Engaging in physical intimidation, such as pushing, shoving, or blocking someone's path.
- Making aggressive gestures intended to intimidate.
- Unwanted physical contact, including touching, hugging, or any form of invasion of personal space.
- Sending threatening or harassing messages through text, email, or social media.
- Excluding someone from activities in a way that creates isolation or marginalization.
- Engaging in psychological tactics to control or intimidate someone.

#### **2. Gender Discrimination**

- Assigning roles or responsibilities based solely on gender.
- Assuming capabilities or interests based on gender stereotypes.
- Excluding individuals from opportunities due to gender.
- Dismissing opinions based on gender biases.
- Providing unequal resources, support, or mentorship.
- Making jokes or comments that demean individuals based on gender.
- Disrespecting preferred pronouns or chosen gender identities intentionally and repeatedly.
- Favoring one gender over another in selection processes.
- Engaging in gender-based teasing, ridicule, or harassment.

#### **3. Sexual Harassment**

- Making sexually explicit jokes, comments, or remarks.
- Persistently asking for dates or romantic attention after being told no.
- Making inappropriate comments about someone's appearance, body, or clothing.
- Sharing sexual rumors or gossip.
- Sending or displaying sexually suggestive materials without consent.
- Making suggestive gestures, leering, or invading personal space inappropriately.
- Offering benefits in exchange for sexual favors.
- Threatening harm or punishment for rejecting sexual advances.





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### **4. Bullying**

- Using language to belittle or insult others.
- Engaging in unwanted physical contact (e.g., hitting, pushing).
- Deliberately excluding someone from discussions or activities.
- Making verbal, written, or implied threats.
- Spreading false information to harm someone's reputation.
- Sending abusive messages through digital platforms.
- Creating fear through intimidating actions or words.

### **5. Cyberbullying**

- Sending threatening messages via email, social media, or other digital platforms.
- Posting or sharing content meant to embarrass, shame, or humiliate someone.
- Disseminating false information online to harm someone's reputation.
- Sharing private information or screenshots without consent.
- Excluding individuals from online forums or social groups to isolate them.
- Creating fake accounts or impersonating others to cause harm.
- Using digital tools to unfairly manipulate surveys, polls, or voting mechanisms.

### **6. Victimization**

- Retaliating against someone for reporting harassment.
- Threatening or intimidating individuals involved in an investigation.
- Excluding someone from activities due to their involvement in a complaint.
- Spreading false information about a whistleblower.
- Assigning unfair workloads or responsibilities as a form of punishment.

### **7. Hostile Environment**

- Making persistent discriminatory comments that create discomfort.
- Repeatedly insulting or mocking someone in a way that creates stress or fear.
- Regularly making offensive jokes or comments.
- Allowing harassment or discrimination to occur without intervention.
- Spreading gossip or rumors that contribute to an unwelcoming atmosphere.
- Belittling or excluding others, creating an atmosphere of inferiority.

**Note:** This list is not exhaustive. Any unwelcome behavior—verbal, physical, or digital—that creates an uncomfortable or hostile environment may be considered harassment and will be addressed accordingly.