PHOENICIA UNIVERSITY

Policy on Non-Discrimination Against Women

PU-NDAW-0825-ED2

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1. Overview

Phoenicia University (PU) is committed to gender equality and to protecting the rights, dignity, and equal participation of women across all areas of University life. The University prohibits discrimination against women and is committed to ensuring equitable access to education, employment, professional development, leadership, research, financial assistance, and institutional opportunities.

This Policy consolidates the University's commitments to gender equality and non-discrimination against women and establishes a unified framework for their implementation, monitoring, and review. It complements the University's existing policies and procedures governing equal opportunities, admissions, employment, financial aid, reasonable accommodation, maternity and family care, discrimination, harassment, grievances, and lifelong learning.

2. Purpose/Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to:

- establish the University's institutional commitment to gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women;
- safeguard women's equal access to education, employment, financial assistance, research, leadership, and University activities;
- prohibit discrimination, gender-based harassment, and retaliation in accordance with applicable University policies;
- identify institutional responsibilities for implementing and monitoring gender-equality commitments;
- promote the identification and removal of barriers affecting women's participation and progression; and
- establish a framework for monitoring outcomes, evaluating implementation, and strengthening institutional practice.

3. Scope/Application

This Policy applies to all University activities, operations, and environments, including admissions, teaching, assessment, research, recruitment, employment, remuneration, promotion, financial aid, student life, governance, professional development, and public learning activities.

It applies to all members of the University community, including students, applicants, faculty, staff, and researchers, as well as individuals participating in or engaging with University activities.

The Policy covers activities and interactions taking place on campus, online, off campus, or within University-sponsored or University-affiliated programs.

4. Accountability

This Policy applies to all faculty, staff and University personnel involved in its implementation.

Accountable/Responsible Officer	Accountable Officer
Accountable Officers	Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Office
Responsible Officer	University Diversity Office (UDO)

The QAA Office is accountable for monitoring the implementation of this Policy, coordinating periodic reviews, and overseeing the monitoring of gender-related institutional indicators.

The UDO leads implementation and coordinates institutional efforts to advance gender equality in accordance with the University's governance arrangements and the decisions of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEIC).

5. Definitions

Discrimination: Unfavorable treatment based on sex, gender, pregnancy, maternity, marital status, or family status.

Gender Equality: Equal rights, opportunities, protections, and participation for women and men.

Sexual Misconduct: Prohibited all forms of unwanted sexual conduct that violate a person’s dignity including comments or jokes of a personal and sexual nature, harassment, assault, unwanted sexual contact, sexual exploitation, and coercive sexual behavior.

Retaliation: Adverse action against a person for reporting concerns or participating in a proceeding in good faith.

Reasonable Accommodation: Appropriate adjustments provided in accordance with applicable University policies.

Harassment: Unwanted conduct related to a person's sex, gender, pregnancy, maternity, marital status, or family status that violates the person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

Gender-based harassment: Harassment directed at a person on the basis of their sex or gender.

6. Institutional Commitment

PU commits to:

6.1. Protecting women's rights, dignity, and equal treatment throughout their engagement with the University.

6.2. Ensuring that decisions concerning admission, assessment, employment, remuneration, promotion, financial aid, research, leadership, and participation are made in accordance with established criteria and without unlawful or prohibited discrimination.

6.3. Prohibiting discrimination based on sex, gender, pregnancy, maternity, marital status, and family status, in accordance with applicable law and University policy.

6.4. Identifying and addressing institutional, procedural, and practical barriers that restrict women's access, progression, representation, or participation.

6.5. Preventing and addressing gender-based harassment, sexual misconduct, and retaliation through established reporting, investigation, and resolution procedures.

6.6. Promoting women's participation in fields and activities in which they are under-represented, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

6.7. Monitoring gender-related data and using the findings to inform institutional planning, decision-making, and continuous improvement.

7. Commitments by Area

7.1. Admissions, Access to Education, and Lifelong Learning

- Publishing clear admission requirements and assessment criteria for all academic programs and ensuring equal admission opportunities without gender or marital status discrimination.
- Conducting school visits, career guidance, workshops, and mentoring activities to encourage young women to pursue higher education across academic disciplines.
- Providing part-time enrolment in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Master of Laws (L.L.M) programs.
- Encouraging women's participation in public lectures, workshops, training, and lifelong learning, particularly for those returning to education or facing personal or family-related barriers.

- Considering accessibility, scheduling, and other participation barriers when planning educational and public learning activities.
- Women who are pregnant, have children under 6, or whose studies were interrupted by childbirth or childcare are guaranteed a seat in any programme for which they meet the admission requirements, as set out in Section III of the Admissions Office Policy.

7.2. Employment, Remuneration, and Professional Development

- Applying transparent, merit-based criteria to recruitment, appointment, remuneration, promotion, training, professional development, and leadership appointments.
- Ensuring equitable access to employment benefits, research opportunities, and career advancement based on qualifications, responsibilities, performance, and established criteria.
- Reviewing workforce composition and compensation data annually to identify gender disparities and inform institutional action.

7.3. Teaching, Research, and Academic Participation

- Promoting women's participation in STEM through outreach, mentoring, and scholarship opportunities.
- Integrating gender equality, diversity, and inclusion perspectives into curricula and academic activities.
- Promoting equitable opportunities for women in research, academic committees, governance, and leadership, subject to established qualifications and appointment criteria.
- Protecting women from discrimination in teaching, assessment, research, placements, and student organizations, and maintaining an academic environment free from gender-based harassment.

7.4. Financial Aid and Scholarships

- Administering financial aid and scholarships through documented criteria and procedures based on academic merit, financial need, or other approved categories.
- Maintaining the Female Financial Aid for STEM Disciplines initiative, providing partial or full tuition support based on assessed need, eligibility, and available funding.
- Ensuring that financial aid decisions follow established Financial Aid Committee procedures.

7.5. Governance, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

- Maintaining governance arrangements that support diversity, equity, inclusion, and human rights, and supporting the DEIC in setting University-wide direction under its approved mandate.
- Assigning the UDO responsibility for coordinating implementation, supporting gender-equality initiatives, and overseeing designated reporting pathways for gender-based and sexual harassment concerns.
- Providing appropriate training in gender equality, women's empowerment, disability support, and related matters to personnel responsible for these functions.

- Addressing sexism, gender-based discrimination, and implicit bias under the University's Ethics Policy and applicable nondiscrimination policies.
- Promoting accessible learning events, materials, and digital resources and providing reasonable accommodation for applicants, students, and employees with disabilities under applicable University policies.
- Addressing barriers that disproportionately restrict women's participation, including those related to disability and intersecting circumstances.

7.6. Pregnancy, Maternity, and Family Care

- Providing full-time female faculty and staff with 70 consecutive calendar days of fully paid maternity leave, with requests for up to six additional weeks of unpaid leave considered under the Maternity, Paternity and Family Care Leave Policy.
- Protecting employees' positions, salaries, and benefits during maternity leave and reinstating them upon return, in accordance with applicable policy.
- Providing reasonable accommodation relating to pregnancy and maternity under the applicable staff and student nondiscrimination policies.
- Supporting family-friendly arrangements, including partner-provided childcare, breastfeeding-friendly spaces, and flexible arrangements.

7.7. Protection from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

- Receiving and addressing complaints under the Discrimination and Harassment Policy, Grievance Policy and Procedure, and other applicable staff and student nondiscrimination policies, with sexual misconduct and gender-based harassment consulted through the designated UDO-overseen pathway.
- Prohibiting informal resolution of sexual misconduct or gender-based complaints where required by applicable procedures and implementing appropriate interim protective measures without prejudging the complaint.
- Safeguarding complainants' and respondents' procedural rights, including appeal rights where provided, and permitting students to bring a support person to formal meetings.
- Maintaining access to mental and women’s health counselling through established support arrangements, including the University's partnership with the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped (LWAH).
- Protecting complainants, witnesses, and other participants from retaliation and referring substantiated violations for appropriate action.

7.8 Protection from Sexual Misconduct

PU maintains zero tolerance for sexual misconduct. Consent must be freely given, informed, specific, and ongoing. Consent does not exist where:

- a power imbalance or position of authority materially affects the person’s ability to choose freely;
- a person is incapacitated by alcohol, drugs, sleep, a medical condition, or another cause;

- a person cannot communicate consent because of a language barrier, disability, shock, or similar circumstance;
- consent is obtained through threat, coercion, intimidation, or abuse of authority;
- a person is silent or passive, or has expressed uncertainty, hesitation, or unwillingness; or
- the parties have previously engaged in consensual sexual activity. This does not, by itself, mean consent exists for later conduct.

8. Complaints and Reporting

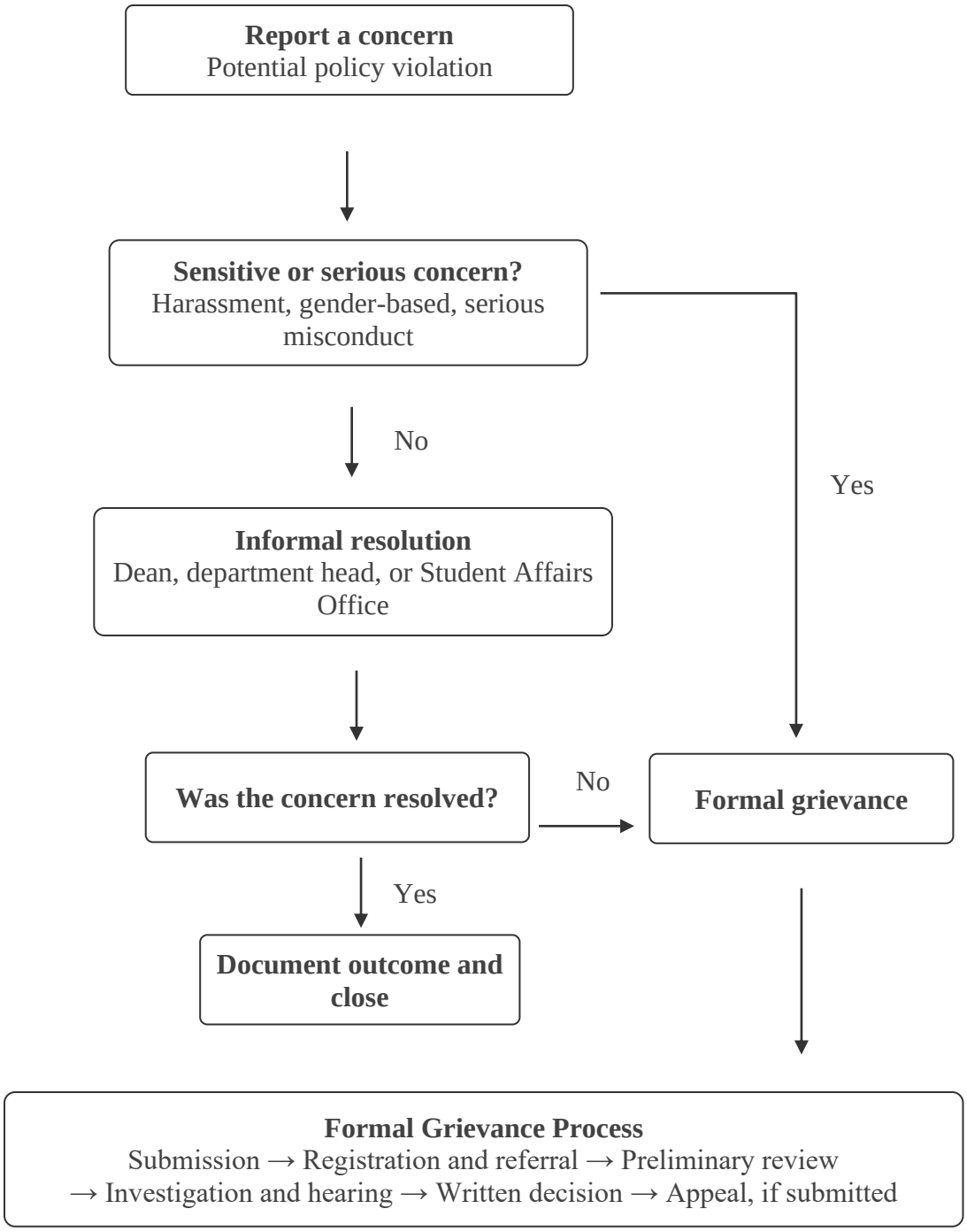
PU encourages women to report any concerns regarding discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or other potential violations of this Policy. Women who believe they have experienced discrimination may submit a formal complaint by completing the **Complaints Form**.

Non-academic complaints are submitted to the SAO for student matters or HR for faculty and staff matters. All complaints are handled in accordance with the University's Grievance Policy and Procedure and other applicable policies.

For more information: https://www.pu.edu.lb/complaints

9. Grievance Process Summary Chart

The flowchart below outlines the steps for submitting and resolving grievances under the University's Grievance Policy and Procedure. It identifies the main stages of the process, including informal resolution, formal review, and the handling of cases that require direct formal action.


Report a concern
Potential policy violation
Sensitive or serious concern?
Harassment, gender-based, serious misconduct
No
Yes
Informal resolution
Dean, department head, or Student Affairs Office
Was the concern resolved?
No
Formal grievance
Yes
Document outcome and close
Formal Grievance Process
Submission → Registration and referral → Preliminary review
→ Investigation and hearing → Written decision → Appeal, if submitted

10. Monitoring and Review

The QAA Office monitors the implementation of this Policy and reviews data on women's access and recruitment, retention and progression, graduation, employment, leadership and representation, research, and campus experience, in coordination with the relevant University units.

The Gender Representation and Pay Overview is published annually. This Policy is reviewed periodically to ensure it remains effective and consistent with other University policies.

11. Related Policies

- ✓ Women's Access and Participation Policy;
- ✓ Admissions Office Policy;
- ✓ Equal Opportunities Policy;
- ✓ Discrimination and Harassment Policy;
- ✓ Faculty and Staff Nondiscrimination Policy;
- ✓ Student Nondiscrimination Policy;
- ✓ Maternity, Paternity and Family Care Leave Policy;
- ✓ Financial Aid and Scholarship Policy;
- ✓ Grievance Policy and Procedure;
- ✓ Policy on Reasonable Accommodation;
- ✓ Lifelong Learning Access Policy;
- ✓ Ethics Policy.

12. Conclusion

PU is committed to ensuring that women have equal access to education, employment and University life, free from discrimination, harassment and retaliation. This Policy records those commitments and the procedures through which they are applied.

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