

HETAUDA SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT & SOCIAL SCIENCES (HSMSS)

CODE OF CONDUCT & GRIEVANCE HANDLING GUIDELINES

1. Introduction

Hetauda School of Management & Social Sciences (HSMSS) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace for all employees, with special attention to the safety and well-being of female staff. In line with the UGC Code of Conduct on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEA/SH), HSMSS establishes this Code of Conduct and Workplace Safety Guidelines to promote dignity, equality, and zero tolerance toward harassment, exploitation, bullying, discrimination, or misconduct. These guidelines encourage responsible behavior, professional communication, and provide a clear, confidential, and survivor-centric grievance reporting mechanism. All complaints are addressed promptly, impartially, and fairly. This Code applies to all employees, including faculty, administrative staff, interns, visiting staff, and service providers.

2. Scope of the Guidelines

The guidelines cover all professional environments at HSMSS, including offices, meeting rooms, Conference Hall, study areas, and Class rooms. They also apply during official work-related travel, field visits, and institutional events. HSMSS expects all employees to maintain professional conduct and ensure the safety, dignity, and respect of female colleagues in all interactions.

3. Prohibited Behaviors

HSMSS strictly prohibits all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. This includes unwelcome sexual advances, comments, jokes, gestures, inappropriate physical contact, derogatory remarks regarding gender, appearance, or personal life, sharing sexually explicit messages or materials, threats, coercion, and retaliation against survivors. Discrimination based on gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, or socio-economic background, verbal abuse, humiliation, or interference with grievance procedures is also strictly forbidden. All employees are expected to maintain high standards of integrity, professionalism, and respect in the workplace.

4. Safe Space Cell (SSC) and Investigation Committee

HSMSS has established the **Safe Space Cell (SSC)** to provide a dedicated, confidential, and survivor-centric mechanism for handling workplace grievances. The Cell receives complaints, ensures preliminary screening, and oversees the grievance process.

To ensure impartiality and thorough investigations, HSMSS also establishes a **Workplace Safety Investigation Committee (WSIC)** under the supervision of the SSC. This committee is responsible for conducting formal investigations of complaints, reviewing evidence, interviewing involved parties, and preparing recommendations for corrective action. The SSC coordinates with the WSIC throughout the process to ensure adherence to UGC SEA/SH guidelines and protection of the complainant's rights and confidentiality.

The SSC is monitored by the HR Officer, who ensures oversight, confidentiality, and reporting to management. Together, the SSC and WSIC work to foster a secure and supportive workplace environment where female employees can report concerns without fear of retaliation.

5. Reporting Mechanisms

Female employees may submit grievances through multiple secure channels, including a physical complaint drop box located in a safe area on campus, an anonymous online grievance form, direct email to the Safe Space Cell, Cell phone in-person submission to SSC Officer. The identity of complainants is strictly protected, retaliation is not tolerated, and employees have the right to decline mediation or confrontation. HSMSS ensures confidentiality and provides support at every stage of the grievance handling process.

6. Grievance Handling and Investigation Process

Complaints are registered and preliminarily screened within forty-eight hours of receipt. Cases requiring further investigation are referred to the Workplace Safety Investigation Committee (WSIC), which conducts a formal investigation, including evidence review and interviews with relevant parties. Recommendations for resolution are prepared by the committee and implemented by the SSC while keeping the complainant informed. Employees have the right to appeal decisions to higher authorities or pursue legal remedies if necessary. The grievance handling process is transparent, fair, and centered on the safety and dignity of female employees.

7. Corrective Actions

Based on the investigation, corrective actions may include verbal or written warnings, counseling, suspension, restriction from institutional facilities, termination of employment, or referral to legal authorities in cases of criminal offenses. Any proven false accusations may also result in disciplinary action. HSMSS ensures that corrective measures are proportionate, fair, and consistent with UGC guidelines.

8. Survivor-Centric Principles

HSMSS prioritizes the safety, rights, and dignity of female employees at every stage. This includes strict confidentiality, protection from retaliation, immediate safety support, and access to psychosocial, medical, or legal services. Employees have the autonomy to continue or withdraw from the complaint process at any stage, and their rights and dignity are respected throughout.