

# PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

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**Science Connect Ltd.**

Flat A2, House 226/2, Madhobilata, Road 10. /A (old 19), Modhubazar,  
West Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh.

Mobile: +88 01838 435449, +88 01915 685004

[nayem.sc20@gmail.com](mailto:nayem.sc20@gmail.com) , [nayem@scienceconnectbd.com](mailto:nayem@scienceconnectbd.com)

Science Connect Ltd. is committed to the principles of gender equity and equality and to creating a gender-sensitive working environment. Any discrimination faced by women or men is addressed to ensure that all staff have equal opportunities and access to resources to contribute to the organization's vision and goals. Sexual harassment breaches the core values of Science Connect Ltd. and is a violation of human and workers' rights. Although anyone may be subject to this behaviour irrespective of age, sex, marital status, education or profession, women are generally more victimized. The organization is committed to both preventive and corrective measures in this regard.

### **What is sexual harassment?**

Sexual harassment is inappropriate, unwanted and unwelcome conduct or behaviour of a sexual nature perceived as harassment by the receiver, which has an adverse effect on the dignity of women and men both inside and outside the workplace.

Sexual harassment is defined as any direct or indirect form of the following behaviours:

- a. unwanted physical contact or conduct
- b. verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- c. demeaning, insulting, intimidating or sexually aggressive comments
- d. threats that refusal of sexual advances will have an adverse effect on employment conditions
- e. demeaning comments or psychological pressure for refusing sexual advances.

### **Consequences of sexual harassment**

The existence of sexual harassment in the workplace tends to be hidden and may not be known or acknowledged by employees or management. The consequences however, for both the organization and the individual, are serious. Victims of sexual harassment are affected psychologically and may feel humiliated or disoriented. Feelings of insecurity, anger, fear, unease, self-questioning and depression can occur in both their working and personal environments. Physical manifestations may result in inability to work, lowered productivity and motivation.

### **Prevention of sexual harassment**

#### ***The organization***

Science Connect Ltd. ensures a comfortable and safe working environment, where employees respect each other, conduct themselves in an acceptable manner, and where sexual harassment is not tolerated. The Science Connect Ltd. Gender Policy requires that attitudes and behaviour by staff demonstrate commitment to the principles of equality and sensitivity. Orientation on the Sexual Harassment policy is provided to all staff, including management, and guidelines incorporated into the Staff Rules and Regulations.

Science Connect Ltd. encourages a spirit of openness in the workplace so that complaints of sexual harassment can be voiced in a safe environment and staff feel confident and secure in challenging unacceptable behaviour.

#### ***Staff members***

Employees are encouraged to immediately express their concern directly to the person

responsible about any behaviour they find uncomfortable or offensive. Employees are also encouraged to contact the Gender Focal Point, Gender Specialist, immediate supervisor and/or Human Resources if they feel that another staff member is facing sexual harassment.

### **Making a complaint Personal measures**

There are several options for staff members to follow in addressing a complaint:

- informing the harasser that the advances are unwelcome and asking him/her to desist,
- documenting the experience
- informing the designated Gender Focal Point, Gender Specialist, supervisor or Human Resources.

Confidentiality should be maintained by avoiding discussion of allegations with people not directly involved in addressing the issue.

### **Role of management**

The supervisor or manager is responsible for taking immediate action in dealing with harassment when the complaint is brought to their attention. S/he will ensure that no retaliatory action is taken against the complainant, either during the investigation or after its resolution.

### **Investigating a complaint**

A complaint must be filed within 30 days of the event, after which an investigation committee will be formed, and immediate action will be taken if necessary to ensure that no further harassment occurs. The committee may seek legal advice at any time. If the alleged offender is a non-employee, their employer is informed of the complaint for appropriate measures to be taken.

### **Resolving a complaint**

The investigation committee will complete the investigation within one month of receiving the complaint, and will communicate the outcome to the complainant and the accused. If there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the complaint, there will be no further action, but the staff member is encouraged to report any future incidences of harassment or retaliation. If there is evidence that the charge of sexual harassment is false or intentional, the complainant will face the consequences outlined in the Staff Rules and Regulations. If the allegations are substantiated, disciplinary measures will be taken. Support is available to the complainant to recover from the consequences of the harassment.

### **Disciplinary measures**

The full range of disciplinary processes at Science Connect Ltd. are possible outcomes of the investigation. Depending on the seriousness of the incident the disciplinary measures may include:

- oral reprimand
- written reprimand
- withholding of increments
- suspension of up to a maximum of 14 days without pay

- re-assignment/demotion
- dismissal.

The complaint and the results of the investigation are recorded in the personal files of the complainant and the alleged harasser.