

# **Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy Checklist – Research Report on Tertiary Institutions**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Background**

1. The Association for the Advancement of Feminism (AAF) received funding from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in 2017/18 to conduct a study on anti-sexual harassment policies in the tertiary educational sector. This research is a continuation of (1) AAF's 64 items Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy Checklist - Research Report on Eight UGC-funded Universities in Hong Kong from the period of 2009 to 2012; (2) AAF's 36 items Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy Checklist – Research Report on Eight UGC-funded Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions, including some of the self-financed institutions, community colleges that offer sub-degree courses, other types of institutions, as well as primary and secondary schools in Shum Shui Po District from the period of 2014 to 2015.
2. The 2017/18 research project used the 36 items of Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy checklist to examine the written policies of both UGC-funded universities and other self-financed tertiary institutions that offer sub-degree and degree programs.
3. This is a review on the Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies of both eight UGC-funded universities and other tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. The research goes beyond an investigation on whether each institution has written policies on Anti-Sexual Harassment. AAF's checklist has been used to review the clauses of the policies to examine rooms for improvement regarding the policies and procedures involved in handling sexual harassment cases in the institutions concerned.

### **Research Objectives**

4. To improve the written policies on anti-sexual harassment of both eight UGC-funded universities and other self-financed tertiary institutions and to raise the awareness on the significance of Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy.

### **Research Method**

5. The research has been conducted in two stages. From May to August 2018, we first checked whether the written Anti-sexual Harassment Policies can be obtained from the website of the institutions concerned. If yes, we used the checklist as an instrument to examine whether the written Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy covers each item listed in the checklist. ✓ or ✗ were used to indicate the results of the assessment. The completed checklist was sent to each of the institutions concerned through email requesting the responses. If no written Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy can be found on the internet, enquiry was made through email requesting a copy of the latest version of Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies. Then assessment of the policy was conducted by using the checklist. From June to November in 2018, we collected responses from UGC-funded universities and other tertiary institutions. We particularly looked into the fact that whether revisions over the policies were made over the past few years particularly in the UGC-funded universities. Concerning other tertiary

institutions, the focus was on whether the institution has written Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and there is enough coverage for protection.

- Tertiary Institutions: 2017/18 Checklist (same as 2014/15 checklist) (36 items)
- The checklist is divided into four parts: (1) Policy Making, (2) Policy Content, (3) Complaint Handling Procedures, and (4) Policy Implementation.

6. Response rates:

- UGC-funded universities' response rate to the checklist assessment is 100% (all 8 universities replied)
- 34 self-financed tertiary institutions (34 institutions in total; 10 institutions completed the checklist assessment, and the remaining 24 institutions did not complete the checklist assessment.) Overall, the response rate of self-financed tertiary institutions is 29.4%.

### **Research Results**

7. The results indicated that while UGC funded universities' overall performance is 79.2% (75.7% in 2014/15 research study) in terms of the fulfillment of checklist assessment, that of self-financed institutions is 49.2%.

8. In eight UGC-funded universities, the rate of fulfillment in policy implementation (87.5%) is better than that in policy making (85.9%), policy content (65.0%), and complaint handling procedures (82.7%).

9. Among the 10 self-financed tertiary institutions, the rates of fulfillment in policy making, policy content, complaint handling procedures, and policy implementation are 68.0%, 37.0%, 49.2%, and 38.0% respectively.

10. It can be seen that, differences were found in the fulfillment of four parts of the checklist assessment between the eight UGC-funded universities and the 10 self-financed institutions. Among the four areas, largest differences are shown in policy implementation (49.5 percentage points) and complaint handling procedures (33.5 percentage points).

11. It is worth mentioning that, in the research process it was found that some of the self-financed tertiary institutions, which affiliate UGC-funded universities used the same Anti-sexual Harassment Policies of their respective UGC-funded universities. Since the affiliated institutions were located in different campuses and used different websites, it is questionable whether these self-financed institutions implemented the policy in the same manner, for example, whether the institution has a designated Equal Opportunities Officer stationed in the campus, whether the names, email addresses and phone numbers of the person(s) responsible for complaint, information and advice are indicated, and whether the policy is accessible through the internet, etc. It is desirable for the affiliated self-financed tertiary institutions to make separate arrangements, which could ensure good practice in policy implementation. However, the current research does not cover the relevant findings.

### **Recommendations**

12. The review on the written anti-sexual harassment policy is just a starting point. The purpose of this research is to raise the awareness of tertiary institutions about their anti-sexual

harassment policies, particularly the self-financed ones. There are rooms for improvement in different aspects of the policies. Other than responding to AAF's checklist assessment, the institutions should evaluate the existing policies, review the various sections of the policy, conduct consultations and make modifications.

13. Suggestions for improvement in two areas of the written policies: "Offer Assistance to Affected Parties" and "Policy Coverage." The institutions should review the written policies on anti-sexual harassment in terms of assistance to and protection of the affected parties.

14. Training programmes to all employees and students: Both UGC-funded universities and other tertiary institutions shall call all members' attention to sexual harassment. The determination to fight against sexual harassment is associated with ideas like gender/power/discrimination/differences which are closely connected with the beliefs and values, like diversity and dialogue, supporting the educational goals of tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions that have included the clause "reviewing policies on regular basis" must strive for the highest standards in policy implementation.

15. Recommendations to the Education Bureau: strengthen the role of the Education Bureau in encouraging self-financed tertiary institutions to upload written policies of Anti Sexual Harassment onto their websites and to adopt bilingual policies.

16. Recommendations to the Equal Opportunities Commission: organise Anti-sexual Harassment Policy forum in tertiary institutions to facilitate exchanges between different tertiary institutions. This would provide opportunities in circulating the research results in order to strengthen the determination of tertiary institutions in improving their anti-sexual harassment policies.