Follow-up Report of the Break the Silence Study: Anti-Sexual Harassment Actions Taken by Universities in 2019-2021

Progress of the Nine Universities in Implementing the Recommendations from the EOC's Report of "Break the Silence: Territory-Wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong"

Equal Opportunities Commission 2022

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Context of the Report

Background

1.   Collaborating with nine universities in Hong Kong, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) conducted its very first territory-wide, independent, and large scale mixed-method study examining the issue of sexual harassment of university students in Hong Kong in 2018. The Study, namely *Break the Silence: Territory-Wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong*,[1] was released in January 2019. It found that 23% of the responding university students reported that they had been sexually harassed on campus, off campus by fellow students or staff, or online by anyone.

2.   The nine universities participating in the Study were (in alphabetical order): City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong Metropolitan University,[2] Lingnan University, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Education University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and The University of Hong Kong.

3.   Since the release of the Study, the Policy, Research and Training Division of the EOC has conducted a series of follow-up actions to promote the research findings and advocate for policy changes, including organising training, seminars and roundtables with key stakeholders, as well as individual meetings with Senior Management Teams of the participating universities to offer them institution-specific advice and recommendations to eliminate campus sexual harassment. Responses from the management of the universities were highly positive, many of them committed themselves to review our recommendations and take actions accordingly.

4.   In May 2021, the Chairperson of the EOC wrote to all Presidents/Vice-chancellors of the nine participating universities inviting them to provide the EOC with an update of the anti-sexual harassment actions taken or planned by their institutions since 2019. A *Standardised Report Form* (see Annex 2) was provided to all universities

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[1]   CHAN, James K.S., LAM, Kitty K.Y., CHEUNG, Christy C.M., LO, Jimmy T.Y. (2019)
Break the Silence: Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong.
Retrieved from
https://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/Upload/ResearchReport/SH2018/ENG/SH%20University%20Report_ENG_Full%20Report.pdf
[2]   Formerly the Open University of Hong Kong

for them to benchmark their actions and measures against the 16 recommendations made in the *Break the Silence* report (see Annex 1).
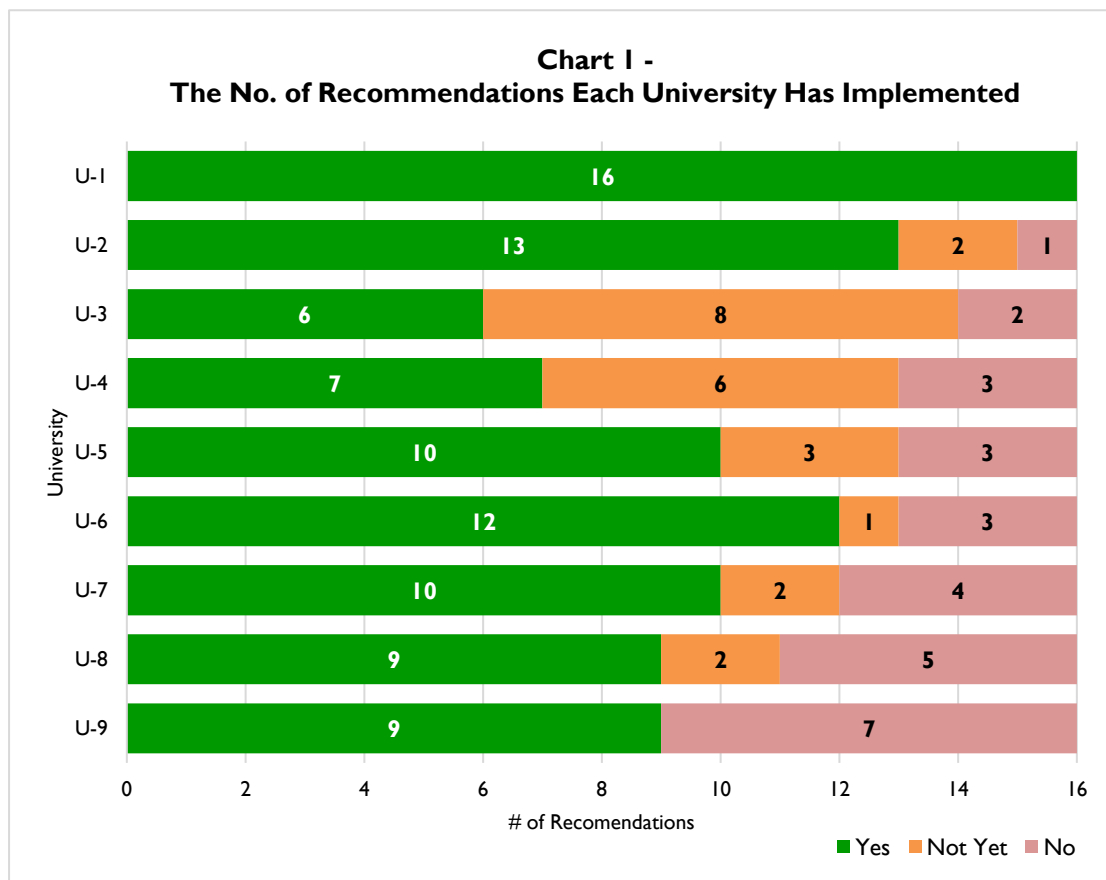
5.   All nine universities have provided detailed written responses in the *Report Forms* and returned to the EOC by the end of July 2021. After clarifying and adjusting some of the responses to align them with one another, this follow-up report aggregated and summarised the self-reported data in those *Report Forms* to illustrate a snapshot of progress of the nine universities in preventing and eliminating sexual harassment, without identifying any individual institutions.

Objectives

6.   This follow-up report has the following objectives:

- To allow all the participating universities to share and learn from each other about their actions to eliminate sexual harassment;

- To track the impact of the EOC's *Break the Silence* research report published in 2019; and

- To allow key stakeholders, such as other tertiary institutions which did not participate in the EOC *Break the Silence* Study, to know more about how to prevent and eliminate campus sexual harassment; and

- To provide the EOC with concrete evidence to formulate its next steps in combatting sexual harassment in the higher education sector and society as a whole.
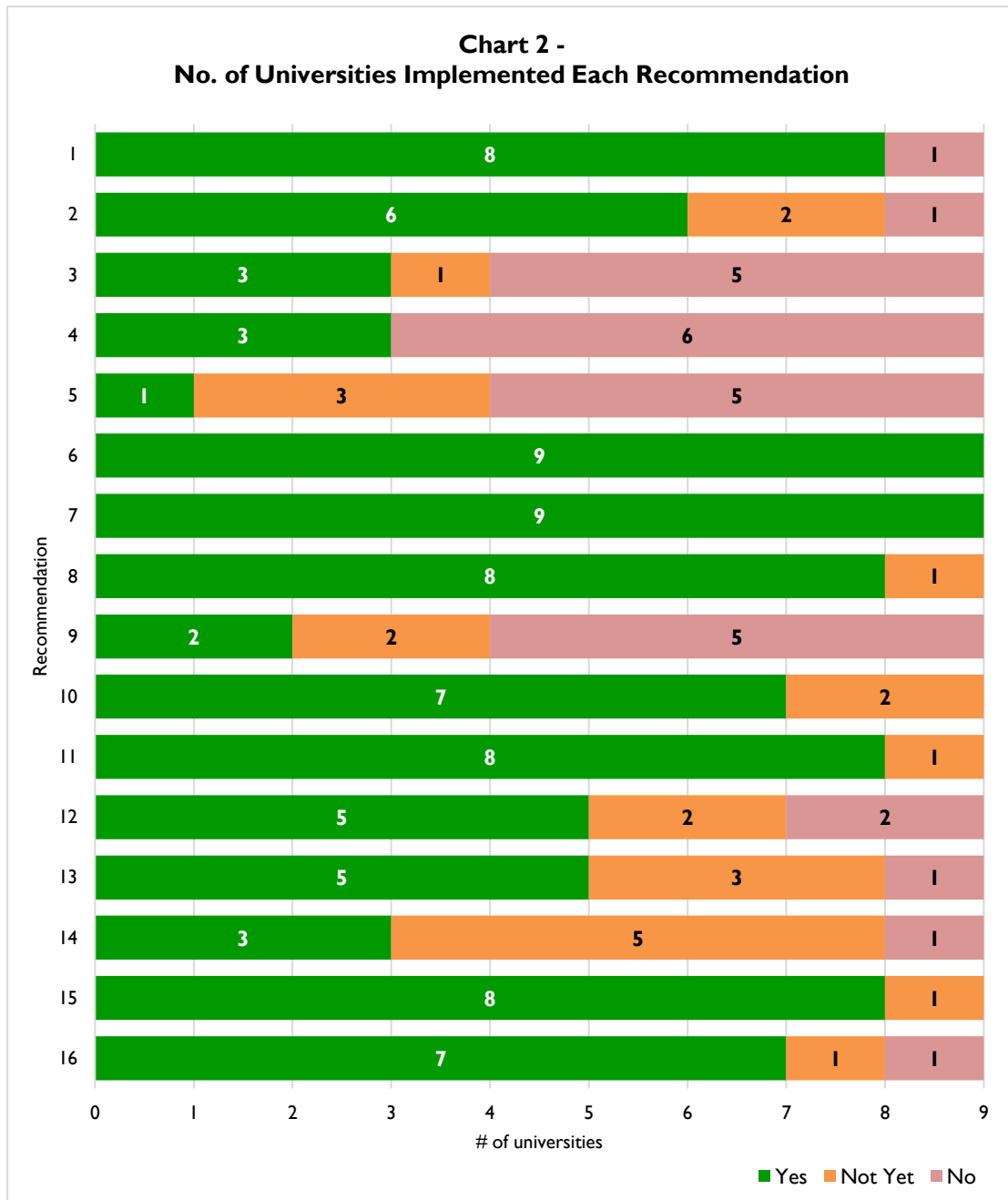
Overall Findings

7.   Overall, the nine participating universities reported having implemented, or committed to implementing, an average of **13** out of 16 recommendations made in the EOC report (Mean=12.9; Median=13.0). This encouraging figure indicated that many of the participating universities have translated their commitment on anti-sexual harassment into real actions, and have given due consideration to the recommendations made in the *Break the Silence* report.

**Chart 1 -
The No. of Recommendations Each University Has Implemented**

University	Yes	Not Yet	No
U-1	16		
U-2	13	2	1
U-3	6	8	2
U-4	7	6	3
U-5	10	3	3
U-6	12	1	3
U-7	10	2	4
U-8	9	2	5
U-9	9		7

# of Recomendations

8.   Chart 1 above indicates the number of EOC's recommendations each university reported having implemented, or committed to implementing. All of them reported having implemented, or committed to implementing, **nine** or more recommendations, while one university reported that they have already implemented all **16** recommendations.

9.   Chart 2 below indicates the number of universities that reported having implemented each of the EOC's recommendations:

**Chart 2 -
No. of Universities Implemented Each Recommendation**

Recommendation	Yes	Not Yet	No
1	8		1
2	6	2	1
3	3	1	5
4	3		6
5	1	3	5
6	9		
7	9		
8	8	1	
9	2	2	5
10	7	2	
11	8	1	
12	5	2	2
13	5	3	1
14	3	5	1
15	8	1	
16	7	1	1

# of universities

■ Yes ■ Not Yet ■ No

Recommendations adopted by ALL universities

10. ALL nine participating universities reported having implemented **Recommendation 6 and 7**. Both recommendations, which are related to sexual harassment complaint handling mechanisms, suggest that each university should clearly lay out the division of labour among departments explicitly for handling sexual harassment complaints, as well as specify that confidentiality and protection against victimisation are guaranteed in their anti-sexual harassment policy and complaint procedures.

11. Also, ALL nine universities reported that they have implemented, or planned to implement **Recommendation 8, 11, and 15**. The three recommendations are:

- Recommendation 8: All staff who have frequent encounters with students (e.g. professors, tutors, departmental staff handling students enquiries or welfare) should receive basic training regarding how to deal with situations like witnessing a sexual harassment incident or a victim seeking assistance from them for being sexually harassed.

- Recommendation 11: It is recommended that the centralised university sexual harassment complaint hotline and counselling services should be widely promoted within the campus.

- Recommendation 15: Universities may consider engaging tools that fit in the learning and social habits of the young generation, such as mobile-friendly online training modules, videos and short films, and social media to effectively deliver the message of anti-sexual harassment to university students.

Recommendations implemented by the fewest universities

12. Only **four universities** reported that they have implemented, or committed to implementing, **Recommendation 3, 5, and 9.** The three recommendations are:

- Recommendation 3: University may consider introducing an "anonymous online feedback channel" for students and staff to report sexual harassment incident that they experienced or witnessed. The channel is NOT a replacement of the formal complaint mechanism, but a tool that allows university to collate data and monitor the nature and scale of sexual harassment on campus.

- Recommendation 5: Universities should publish reports every year regarding the effort they made to eliminate sexual harassment and enhance gender equality, so as to enhance transparency and reaffirm all stakeholders that it has taken the matter seriously.

- Recommendation 9: Compulsory training on prevention of sexual harassment should be provided to all new employees (both teaching and non-teaching staff)

as part of the induction programme. Refresher training should be offered every three years to existing staff to ensure that they have a basic understanding of sexual harassment and keep them abreast of the latest development in sexual harassment legal provisions and the related university policies and measures.

13.   Also, **Recommendation 4**, a recommendation suggesting that each universities should conduct periodic university-wide anonymous surveys on the latest trend and prevalence of sexual harassment, was adopted by the fewest number of universities— only **three out of 9**.

14.   Some universities which chose not to implement the said recommendation suggested that instead of each university conducting its own survey, the EOC could conduct territory-wide surveys of university students periodically, similar to the *Break the Silence* study, for more efficient use of resources.

Detailed Findings

15. The following section provides detailed findings of all the 16 recommendations, and highlights some good practices implemented by individual institutions on anti-sexual harassment.

Recommendation 1

Universities should consider appointing a top-level managerial staff member, at least at the level of Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Vice-President, to oversee matters related to anti-sexual harassment, gender equality and sexuality education.

16. **Eight out of nine universities** reported appointing one or two top-level managerial staff member(s), at least at the level of Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Vice-President, to oversee matters related to anti-sexual harassment, gender equality and sexuality education, in line with Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that each department and residential hall/college of universities should assign a "Gender Focal Point (GFP)", who serves as the link between the university management and the department/hall/college, to make sure the university's policy on gender equality and anti-sexual harassment can be properly implemented at all levels. The GFP also serves as the resource person to provide advice for their colleagues in the same unit on how to handle or refer cases of sexual harassment.

17. **Six out of nine universities** reported that they have assigned a "Gender Focal Point (GFP)" in each department and residential hall/college, as per Recommendation 2. **Two universities** mentioned that they were considering or planning to appoint GFPs. Among the six universities which have GFPs, five reported that they have offered regular training to GFPs.

18. The number of GFPs appointed vary among the six universities. While one university appointed up to 208 GFPs, the rest appointed fewer than 60 GFPs, ranging from 17 to 57.

19. Good practice(s):
- A university reported appointing focal points for equal opportunities for each Faculties/Schools and administrative offices with a two-year term. These staff members take up the role of GFPs and are trained as mediators and panel members for handling sexual harassment complaints. The university also said they organised informal sharing sessions for GFPs to share their experience in advising students and handling sexual harassment cases.

Recommendation 3
University may consider introducing an "anonymous online feedback channel" for students and staff to report sexual harassment incident that they experienced or witnessed. The channel is NOT a replacement of the formal complaint mechanism, but a tool that allows university to collate data and monitor the nature and scale of sexual harassment on campus.

20. **Three out of nine universities** reported that they have introduced an "anonymous online feedback channel" for students and staff to report sexual harassment incidents that they experienced or witnessed, in line with Recommendation 3. All three of them started after the publication of the *Break the Silence* report. One university reported that they have received eight anonymous reports, while the other two said they have yet to receive any, since the establishment of the mechanism.

21. **One university** said they have planned to establish an anonymous online feedback channel, while five universities reported not establishing the said channel due to the existence of other reporting mechanisms or the preference for identified reporting. One university also raised that "in respect of fairness", anonymous complaints should not be encouraged.

22. Good practice(s):
- A university created an online reporting system which has a textbox for students or staff to describe the details of their sexual harassment complaints or enquiries anonymously and open-endedly.
- Another university mentioned that they used existing questionnaire platforms available at the university, i.e. Qualtrics and QuestionPro, for creating an anonymous feedback channel on their website. This university

mentioned that they took reference from a similar questionnaire of the University of Cambridge when designing the form which only consists of closed-ended questions. They have also refined the form based on experiences and feedback from the EOC. It was reported that the university has passed key information of some cases to units concerned to take appropriate actions.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended that each university should conduct a university-wide anonymous survey (similar to the questionnaire of this Study) every three to five years, preferably funded by the UGC or the Government, to track the latest trend and prevalence of sexual harassment systematically.

23. **Three out of nine universities** reported planning to a conduct university-wide anonymous survey every three to five years to track the latest trend and prevalence of sexual harassment systematically, as per Recommendation 4. Two of them reported having done similar surveys in the past.

24. For the universities not planning to do their individual survey, some suggested the EOC conduct territory-wide survey similar to the *Break the Silence* report for more efficient use of resources.

Recommendation 5

Universities should publish reports every year regarding the effort they made to eliminate sexual harassment and enhance gender equality, so as to enhance transparency and reaffirm all stakeholders that it has taken the matter seriously.

25. **One out of nine universities** reported publishing a report every year regarding the effort it made to eliminate sexual harassment and enhance gender equality, in line with Recommendation 5. **Three universities** mentioned that they planned to publish reports in 2021/22.

26. For the universities which did not adopt Recommendation 5, some reported issuing email announcement to staff and students regularly and releasing some relevant information on the websites of the corresponding committees or offices.

Recommendation 6

Each university should lay out the division of labour among departments explicitly for handling sexual harassment complaints, so that staff members can find the right office to provide assistance to victims once a report is received to save the victim from being referred from one office to another.

27. **ALL nine universities** reported laying out the division of labour among departments explicitly for handling sexual harassment complaints, in line with Recommendation 6. Among them, six universities reported they have reviewed the policies in the last two years.

28. Good practice(s):
   - ALL nine universities have made the flow charts or relevant policies accessible online (some are only available to their students and staff).
   - A university mentioned that the division of labour among departments for handling sexual harassment complaints is clearly stated in the relevant policies and procedures that are available on their website. Those procedures were promoted using various channels such as posters, leaflets and booklets, and in particular, exhibitions were organised regularly to present the flow chart of complaint procedures in each semester on campus.

Recommendation 7

Confidentiality and protection against victimisation should be clearly specified in the anti-sexual harassment policy and complaint procedures. University may consider making interim administrative arrangement, when appropriate, by arranging a different academic supervisor if he/she is the respondent of the sexual harassment complaint filed by a student.

29. **ALL nine universities** reported they have clearly specified confidentiality and protection against victimisation in relevant policies and procedures.

30. Good practice(s):
   - A university reported that it strongly emphasises the fact that any acts of victimisation in a sexual harassment incident are not acceptable, and disciplinary actions will be taken for those who are encouraging or engaging in acts of victimisation. Also, this university has polices to ensure a

separation of the complainant and the respondent during the course of sexual harassment investigation to minimise the risk of victimisation. The separation will cease at an appropriate time or after the conclusion of the investigation is drawn.

Recommendation 8

All staff who have frequent encounters with students (e.g. professors, tutors, departmental staff handling students enquiries or welfare) should receive basic training regarding how to deal with situations like witnessing a sexual harassment incident or a victim seeking assistance from them for being sexually harassed.

31.   As per recommendation 8, **eight out of nine universities** reported providing basic training to all staff who have frequent encounters with students regarding how to deal with situations like witnessing a sexual harassment incident or a victim seeking assistance from them for being sexually harassed. Among them, six universities reported working with the EOC to provide training.

32.   The remaining **one university** said they have planned to implement the abovementioned training.

33.   Good practice(s):
- A university reported requiring heads, administrative staff and residence masters/tutors to attend mandatory training on anti-sexual harassment since June 2018. They will also be invited to attend refresher workshops three years after the mandatory training.
- Furthermore, the above university has offered voluntary training workshops for other frontline staff who may receive sexual harassment complaints since 2020, and over 180 persons attended the said workshops in 2020-21. They suggested that compulsory training would be more efficiently conducted via self-access materials, which they encouraged staff members to complete an online anti-sexual harassment tutorial developed for students.
- Another university reported that it requires all relevant staff to undertake a university online training module on preventing sexual harassment, which covered relevant policies and procedures of sexual harassment case handling. Periodic reminders are sent to those who have not undertaken the training.

> ### Recommendation 9
>
> *Compulsory training on prevention of sexual harassment should be provided to all new employees (both teaching and non-teaching staff) as part of the induction programme. Refresher training should be offered every three years to existing staff to ensure that they have a basic understanding of sexual harassment and keep them abreast of the latest development in sexual harassment legal provisions and the related university policies and measures.*

34. For Recommendation 9, **two out of nine universities** reported providing compulsory training on prevention of sexual harassment to all new employees (both teaching and non-teaching staff) and refresher training to existing staff, while **two other universities** said they have planned to provide such compulsory training.

35. Also, five universities reported providing non-compulsory training on prevention of sexual harassment to employees. Among them, some universities incorporated anti-sexual harassment briefings or case discussions into their existing training programmes for some of their staff members, such as compulsory research seminars for professors and post-doctoral researchers, or orientation programme for new staff.

36. Good practice(s):
   - A university reported planning to create a self-access training for new staff which included prevention of sexual harassment and other institutional policies. They believe that the self-access training could help enforce compulsory training more effectively.
   - Another university mentioned that it will request staff to complete an online training module within a period of time and the relevant records will be recorded in the HR system.

> ### Recommendation 10
>
> *Staff who are responsible for implementing the centralised sexual harassment complaint mechanism, in particular, should receive formal and comprehensive training, including sensitisation training of how to communicate with victims of sexual harassment and assault, understanding of anti-discrimination law, and how to conduct investigation in accordance with the principle of natural justice. Refresher training should also be provided to them regularly.*

37. **Seven out of nine universities** reported providing formal and comprehensive training and regular refresher training to staff who are responsible for implementing the centralised sexual harassment complaint mechanism, as per Recommendation 10. **The remaining two universities** reported planning to offer the mentioned training.

38. Among the seven universities which have already offered the said training, six universities specified that they offered training on anti-discrimination law whereas five universities offered training on how to communicate with victims and conducting investigation in accordance with the principle of natural justice.

39. The frequencies of providing refresher training varied across universities, ranging from **every year** to **every three to five years**.

40. All of these universities reported offering the training in collaboration with the EOC, while some inviting in-house legal counsels, alumni barristers, and NGOs to speak at these training.

41. A university commented that, despite the training, staff members might still be overwhelmed by the workload and difficulties of conducting an investigation because they are not professionally trained.

42. Good practice(s):
  - A university mentioned it offered a complete training package for members of its committee on handling matters related to sexual harassment. The package included a workshop on handling informal cases, a workshop on handling formal cases, and sharing by experienced committee members on handling formal sexual harassment complaints.

Recommendation 11

It is recommended that the centralised university sexual harassment complaint hotline and counselling services should be widely promoted within the campus.

43. **Eight out of nine universities** reported widely promoting the centralised university sexual harassment complaint hotline and counselling services within the campus, in line with Recommendation 11. **The remaining one university** reported planning to implement the recommendation.

44. Common channels of promotion were reported to include websites, emails, social media, leaflets and notice boards. Some universities also reported covering the information on complaint and counselling services in student handbooks and orientation programmes.

> **Recommendation 12**
>
> *A short compulsory training should be offered to all incoming students during the orientation programme. The training should focus on three key components, including the definition of sexual harassment and case scenarios illustrating what sexual harassment is, what to do, and where to seek help when students encountered sexual harassment.*

45. **Five out of nine universities** reported offering short compulsory training to all incoming students during the orientation programme, as per Recommendation 12. **Two universities** reported similar training was planned.

46. Among the five universities, two offered compulsory training via online training course(s), three via face-to-face lecture(s)/workshops(s) and some used video training or zoom lectures.

47. Good practice(s):
- A university reported requiring all new students to watch a two-minute video before proceeding to their student IT account registration, and another university reported requiring all hall residents to complete an online training and quiz before accepting hall offers.
- A university reported including a session on preventing sexual harassment in existing compulsory courses for Year 1 students. Anti-sexual harassment information was also provided during the student registration process, to ensure all students are equipped with such knowledge before the start of their study.

> **Recommendation 13**
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> *Universities should specifically develop some in-person and interactive workshops for students to discuss issues related to consent and relationship, as well as the role and responsibility of bystander. Students who live in residential halls or university accommodations should be required to attend at least one of those workshops.*

48. **Five out of nine universities** reported offering in-person and interactive workshops for students to discuss issues related to consent and relationship, as well as the role and responsibility of bystander. Some of these universities also reported offering workshops on topics such as "dating violence and possible symptoms after sexual harassment" and "prevention of sexual harassment in the hall context or in relation to student activities".

49. Among the five universities, only one reported requiring students who live in residential halls or university accommodations to attend at least one of the interactive workshops. Meanwhile, three universities reported requiring hall tutors to attend compulsory training about preventing sexual harassment.

50. Good practice(s):
- One university reported organising annual interactive workshops for staff of residential halls, including Residence Masters and Tutors, and a series of nine seminars for all residents on topics such as interpersonal relationships during emerging adulthood; and cyber friendships, online dating and sexual health in 2020/21.
- Another university reported requiring all hall residents to watch a two-minute video produced by the EOC and answer one scenario question upon hall check-in since August 2020, and offering same-gender group discussion with Resident Masters to student leaders of halls since 2020. It was suggested that same-gender discussions enabled a free and open dialogue among participants whereas targeting student leaders could raise their awareness and prompt them to report or refer cases in a timely manner. The university maintains that the current arrangement is an effective way of achieving the desired result.

Recommendation 14

It is recommended that education programmes in relation to responsible drinking should be introduced to all students. Discussions on the relationship between sexual consent and alcohol consumption should be highlighted in these programmes, especially for students living in residential halls or university accommodations.

51. **Three out of nine universities** reported offering training on responsible drinking to students, in line with Recommendation 14.

52. Also, **five universities** reported planning to provide similar educational programmes. Among these five universities, two of them reported prohibiting drinking and possession of alcoholic beverages in student accommodation.

53. Good practice(s):
   - A university mentioned that they have invited NGOs to launch an interactive workshop about preventing alcoholism to all students in 2020. It also reported that the hall staff would refer resident students who are found to have drinking issues to the university's counselling services.

> **Recommendation 15**
>
> *Universities may consider engaging tools that fit in the learning and social habits of the young generation, such as mobile-friendly online training modules, videos and short films, and social media to effectively deliver the message of anti-sexual harassment to university students.*

54. **Eight out of nine universities** reported engaging tools that fit in the learning and social habits of the young generation to effectively deliver the message of anti-sexual harassment to university students, as per Recommendation 15. **One university** reported planning to implement similar measures.

55. Three universities reported offering online courses developed by the universities and eight reported utilising the EOC's online training module. Five mentioned utilising videos and short films.

56. Good practice(s):
   - One university reported having an online tutorial which was prepared with learning and social habits of the young generation in mind. The production team included undergraduate students, who produced animated videos to present cases of sexual harassment.
   - Another university reported utilising an online quiz game since 2014 and presenting souvenirs to students who has successfully completed it to encourage their participation.

Recommendation 16

University may consider including an element of anti-discrimination of minority students, such as LGBTI students, ethnic minority students, students with disabilities, in its anti-sexual harassment training, and spending more effort on eliminating discrimination and bias towards minority students on campus.

57. **Seven out of nine universities** reported including an element of anti-discrimination of minority students in their anti-sexual harassment training, and spending more effort on eliminating discrimination and bias towards minority students on campus, in line with Recommendation 16. **One university** reported planning similar measures.

58. Good practice(s):
   - A few universities reported organising campaigns to raise awareness towards equal opportunities and inclusivity. For example, three universities reported organising campaigns annually since 2015. For one of the universities' campaigns, it was reported that the topics has been extended from disability to other issues including ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation and social class since 2019.
   - One university reported including equity and diversity related knowledge in academic curriculum via general education courses which covered social issues and knowledge on inclusion, disability, canine service and anti-discrimination.

Discussion and Next Steps

59.   To conclude, the EOC is pleased to learn that all the nine participating universities have been making great efforts towards building a safe and harassment-free campus for university students. In particular, it is encouraging to see that, in average, 13 out of 16 recommendations raised in the *Break the Silence* report have been adopted by the nine participating universities. Also, all participating universities reported having implemented, or committed to implementing, nine or more recommendations.

60.   The EOC would like to take this opportunity to express commendation for the nine universities' anti-sexual harassment work, as well as our sincerest gratitude for their active participation and support in our *Break the Silence* study and this follow-up report.

61.   In order to further promote anti-sexual harassment at the higher education sector, some key points and takeaways learned from this report are listed as follows which worth further examinations and discussions with key stakeholders:

Governance, policies and complaint-handling mechanism

62.   **On the recommendation of establishment of an anonymous online feedback mechanism (Recommendation 3),** some universities which did not adopt the recommendation raised the concern of potential unfairness. They may think a due investigation in accordance with the sexual harassment complaint procedures—with opportunities for both the complainant and alleged harasser to respond and reply—could not be conducted, if the identity of the complainant is unknown.

63.   However, as mentioned in the *Break the Silence* report, such proposed anonymous channel is not a replacement of the formal complaint mechanism, it aims to be a tool that allows university to collate data and monitor the nature and scale of sexual harassment on campus, as some students may prefer not to go through the formal complaint procedures, but would still like to let the university be informed about the problem.

64.   To further ease the potential concern of unfairness, universities may consider specifying in the online feedback mechanism that direct actions against individual cannot be taken as a result of anonymous reporting. They may also consider following

the practice of creating an online questionnaire only consisted of closed-ended questions, provided with a list of multiple choice responses for the respondents to select, this may allow the university to still understand the nature of the issue without having any specific persons identified or named. For instance, below is an extract of the online anonymous reporting form established by the University of Cambridge:[3]

Confirm the type of behaviour that took place: *

☐ sharing private sexual materials of another person without consent

☐ kissing without consent

☐ controlling or coercive behaviour

☐ inappropriately showing sexual organs to someone

☐ making offensive comments about someone's personal traits or assumed personal traits

☐ inappropriate use of social media

☐ repeatedly following another person

☐ engaging in sexual intercourse or a sexual act without consent

☐ inappropriate touching through clothes without consent

☐ treating someone differently because of their personal traits or assumed personal traits

☐ physical misconduct (hitting, pushing, spitting, pulling hair etc)

Choose all of the relevant behaviours that took place, the behaviours may have occurred in person, in writing or through any online platform

65. **On the recommendation of conducting a periodic university-wide survey to track the prevalence of sexual harassment of each university (Recommendation 4),** some universities which decided not to implement it suggested that the EOC could conduct a territory-wide study similar to the *Break the Silence* report. While the EOC may explore the possibilities to do so subject to resources availability, it is not a replacement of university-wide surveys conducted by individual university, as the latter could be designed to collect data to identify sexual harassment that are context-specific to certain institutions only.

66. For instance, individual university survey could allow its own institution to know which particular venues, departments, or residential halls/colleges have a higher prevalence of sexual harassment, or if a new trend of sexual harassment conducts is emerging (e.g. online sexual harassment on social media), the university can then tailor-make some relevant training programmes or anti-sexual harassment measures to tackle the hotbed of sexual harassment at its own institution.

67. **On the recommendation of assigning gender focal points (GFPs) at each department or residential hall/college (Recommendation 2),** while

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[3] University of Cambridge (n.d.). *Anonymous reporting for students and staff.* Retrieved from
https://www.studentcomplaints.admin.cam.ac.uk/anonymous-reporting-students-and-staff

eight out of nine universities reported that they have implemented, or planned to implement the recommendation, it is noted that the number of GFPs varies a lot across different universities (i.e. 17 to 208).

68.   It is understood that the number of GFPs appointed is more a matter related to the structure and the number of department/hall/college of the universities. However, the EOC believes that each university department and residential hall/college should have *at least one* GFP, in order to attain the purpose of serving as the link between the university management and the respective department/hall/college.

69.   The GFPs should be responsible for making sure the university's policy on gender equality and anti-sexual harassment can be properly implemented at all levels. They should also serve as the resource persons to provide advice for their colleagues in the same unit on how to handle and/or refer cases of sexual harassment.

70.   Moreover, following the good practice of one of the universities, the EOC recommends that universities should organise informal sharing sessions for GFPs to share their experience in advising students and handling sexual harassment cases regularly. These sessions could allow them to keep abreast of the latest trend of campus sexual harassment, as well as to learn from one another the tips and skills on handling or referring sexual harassment cases effectively.

Training and awareness-raising campaigns

71.   This follow-up report has found that all the nine participating universities have reported allocating substantial resources and manpower for organising anti-sexual harassment training and awareness-raising campaigns for their students and staff. Many of them reported collaborating with the EOC, NGOs, or in-house legal counsels in providing those training. This indeed echoed with EOC's internal figure, which was found that the number of EOC's sexual harassment-related training sessions offered to universities, as well as the total number of participants attended those training, have increased substantially in 2021.

72.   While the EOC fully recognised the efforts devoted by all the universities, it also observed that making those training compulsory for students or staff, is reported to be one of the key challenges encountered by universities. For instance, only four universities reported that they have implemented, or planned to implement the **recommendation on providing compulsory training on prevention of sexual**

harassment to all teaching and non-teaching staff, as part of the induction programme (Recommendation 9).

73.   One university also shared that they were unable to require all students who live in residential halls or university accommodation to attend in-person and interactive workshops on issues related to consent and relationship, **as per Recommendation 13**, due to the lack of trainers available for delivering those workshops to their large size of student population.

74.   While similar concerns have been raised by university representatives since the *Break the Silence* report in 2019, some universities have indeed managed to overcome those challenges by utilising online or self-access training materials. In addition, the EOC is currently collaborating with the eight UGC-funded universities to produce a brand new anti-sexual harassment online training module for university students, those universities may consider making the module a compulsory requirement for students, and/or developing similar mandatory online training materials for its students and staff members.

Next steps

75.   For the next steps, the EOC is going to organise a roundtable in 2022 with all the representatives of participating universities to exchange their views and experiences in combatting sexual harassment. The EOC will also invite representatives from other universities and tertiary institutions to attend the roundtable, with a view to encourage them to learn from the good practices adopted by the participating universities as appropriate.

76.   Once again, the EOC would like to express our gratitude and congratulate all the efforts taken by the nine participating universities in combatting sexual harassment. We wish this could be a good example for all other universities and tertiary institutions to follow, in order to eliminate sexual harassment for everyone in the higher education sector in Hong Kong.

Annex 1: 16 Recommendations Made to the Participating Universities in the *Break the Silence* Report [4]

Recommendation 1 *(p. 126 of the Report)*

Universities should consider appointing a top-level managerial staff member, at least at the level of Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Vice-President, to oversee matters related to anti-sexual harassment, gender equality and sexuality education.

Recommendation 2 *(p. 127 of the Report)*

It is recommended that each department and residential hall/college of universities should assign a "Gender Focal Point (GFP)", who serves as the link between the university management and the department/hall/college, to make sure the university's policy on gender equality and anti-sexual harassment can be properly implemented at all levels. The GFP also serves as the resource person to provide advice for their colleagues in the same unit on how to handle or refer cases of sexual harassment.

Recommendation 3 *(p. 127-128 of the Report)*

University may consider introducing an "anonymous online feedback channel" for students and staff to report sexual harassment incident that they experienced or witnessed. The channel is NOT a replacement of the formal complaint mechanism, but a tool that allows university to collate data and monitor the nature and scale of sexual harassment on campus.

Recommendation 4 *(p. 128 of the Report)*

It is recommended that each university should conduct a university-wide anonymous survey (similar to the questionnaire of this Study) every three to five years, preferably funded by the UGC or the Government, to track the latest trend and prevalence of sexual harassment systematically.

Recommendation 5 *(p. 129 of the Report)*

Universities should publish reports every year regarding the effort they made to eliminate sexual harassment and enhance gender equality, so as to enhance transparency and reaffirm all stakeholders that it has taken the matter seriously.

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[4] CHAN, James K.S., LAM, Kitty K.Y., CHEUNG, Christy C.M., LO, Jimmy T.Y. (2019)
Break the Silence: Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong. Retrieved from
https://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/Upload/ResearchReport/SH2018/ENG/SH%20University%20Report_ENG_Full%20Report.pdf

Recommendation 6 *(p. 129-130 of the Report)*

Each university should lay out the division of labour among departments explicitly for handling sexual harassment complaints, so that staff members can find the right office to provide assistance to victims once a report is received to save the victim from being referred from one office to another.

Recommendation 7 *(p. 130 of the Report)*

Confidentiality and protection against victimisation should be clearly specified in the anti-sexual harassment policy and complaint procedures. University may consider making interim administrative arrangement, when appropriate, by arranging a different academic supervisor if he/she is the respondent of the sexual harassment complaint filed by a student.

Recommendation 8 *(p.130-131 of the Report)*

All staff who have frequent encounters with students (e.g. professors, tutors, departmental staff handling students enquiries or welfare) should receive basic training regarding how to deal with situations like witnessing a sexual harassment incident or a victim seeking assistance from them for being sexually harassed.

Recommendation 9 *(p. 131 of the Report)*

Compulsory training on prevention of sexual harassment should be provided to all new employees (both teaching and non-teaching staff) as part of the induction programme. Refresher training should be offered every three years to existing staff to ensure that they have a basic understanding of sexual harassment and keep them abreast of the latest development in sexual harassment legal provisions and the related university policies and measures.

Recommendation 10 *(p. 131-132 of the Report)*

Staff who are responsible for implementing the centralised sexual harassment complaint mechanism, in particular, should receive formal and comprehensive training, including sensitisation training of how to communicate with victims of sexual harassment and assault, understanding of anti-discrimination law, and how to conduct investigation in accordance with the principle of natural justice. Refresher training should also be provided to them regularly.

Recommendation 11 *(p.132 of the Report)*

It is recommended that the centralised university sexual harassment complaint hotline and counselling services should be widely promoted within the campus.

Recommendation 12 *(p. 132-133 of the Report)*

A short compulsory training should be offered to all incoming students during the orientation programme. The training should focus on three key components, including the definition of sexual harassment and case scenarios illustrating what sexual harassment is, what to do, and where to seek help when students encountered sexual harassment.

Recommendation 13 *(p. 133-134 of the Report)*

Universities should specifically develop some in-person and interactive workshops for students to discuss issues related to consent and relationship, as well as the role and responsibility of bystander. Students who live in residential halls or university accommodations should be required to attend at least one of those workshops.

Recommendation 14 *(p. 134 of the Report)*

It is recommended that education programmes in relation to responsible drinking should be introduced to all students. Discussions on the relationship between sexual consent and alcohol consumption should be highlighted in these programmes, especially for students living in residential halls or university accommodations.

Recommendation 15 *(p. 134-135 of the Report)*

Universities may consider engaging tools that fit in the learning and social habits of the young generation, such as mobile-friendly online training modules, videos and short films, and social media to effectively deliver the message of anti-sexual harassment to university students.

Recommendation 16 *(p. 135 of the Report)*

University may consider including an element of anti-discrimination of minority students, such as LGBTI students, ethnic minority students, students with disabilities, in its anti-sexual harassment training, and spending more effort on eliminating discrimination and bias towards minority students on campus.

Annex 2: Standardised Report Form

A. University's commitment and governance

Recommendation 1 *(p. 126 of the Report)*	
Universities should consider appointing a top-level managerial staff member, at least at the level of Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Vice-President, to oversee matters related to anti-sexual harassment, gender equality and sexuality education.	
Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*

☐ **Yes**
  • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy)
  • Who is/are the appointed managerial staff member(s)?
_____
 	
☐ **Not yet**
  • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)
 	
☐ **No**
  • What is the reason behind?
 	
_____
	Good practices/experience sharing (if any):
	
	Challenges encountered (if any):
	
	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):

Recommendation 2 *(p. 127 of the Report)*

It is recommended that each department and residential hall/college of universities should assign a "Gender Focal Point (GFP)", who serves as the link between the university management and the department/hall/college, to make sure the university's policy on gender equality and anti-sexual harassment can be properly implemented at all levels. The GFP also serves as the resource person to provide advice for their colleagues in the same unit on how to handle or refer cases of sexual harassment.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • How many GFPs are there in your university? _____ • Is there any regular anti-sexual harassment training provided for all GFPs? ☐ Yes / ☐ No	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	

Recommendation 3 *(p. 127-128 of the Report)*

University may consider introducing an "anonymous online feedback channel" for students and staff to report sexual harassment incident that they experienced or witnessed. The channel is NOT a replacement of the formal complaint mechanism, but a tool that allows university to collate data and monitor the nature and scale of sexual harassment on campus.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • How many reports did your university receive via the feedback channel in total? _____	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	

Recommendation 4 *(p. 128 of the Report)*

It is recommended that each university should conduct a university-wide anonymous survey (similar to the questionnaire of this Study) every three to five years, preferably funded by the UGC or the Government, to track the latest trend and prevalence of sexual harassment systematically.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • When will your university conduct the next anonymous survey? _____ (mm/yyyy) • Has your university conducted any anonymous survey before? ☐ Yes / ☐ No	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):

Recommendation 5 *(p. 129 of the Report)*

Universities should publish reports every year regarding the effort they made to eliminate sexual harassment and enhance gender equality, so as to enhance transparency and reaffirm all stakeholders that it has taken the matter seriously.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • Please provide the link to the last report published: _____	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	

B. Victim-centric reporting mechanism in responding to sexual harassment

Recommendation 6 *(p. 129-130 of the Report)*	
Each university should lay out the division of labour among departments explicitly for handling sexual harassment complaints, so that staff members can find the right office to provide assistance to victims once a report is received to save the victim from being referred from one office to another.	
Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • Link to the flow chart of your university's complaint handling procedure: _____ • When did your university last review its sexual harassment compliant handling procedures and mechanism? _____ (mm/yyyy)	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	

Recommendation 7 *(p. 130 of the Report)*	
Confidentiality and protection against victimisation should be clearly specified in the anti-sexual harassment policy and complaint procedures. University may consider making interim administrative arrangement, when appropriate, by arranging a different academic supervisor if he/she is the respondent of the sexual harassment complaint filed by a student.	
Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy)	Good practices/experience sharing (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):

Recommendation 8 *(p.130-131 of the Report)*

All staff who have frequent encounters with students (e.g. professors, tutors, departmental staff handling students enquiries or welfare) should receive basic training regarding how to deal with situations like witnessing a sexual harassment incident or a victim seeking assistance from them for being sexually harassed.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • Compulsory training on anti-sexual harassment is provided for the following staff members who have *frequent encounters with students*: ☐ all professors ☐ all tutors or teaching assistants ☐ departmental staff handling students enquiries or welfare • How often is refresher training provided for them? _____ • Who is responsible for delivering the training? _____	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy) ☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any): ☐ *Non-compulsory training* on anti-sexual harassment is provided for: ☐ all professors ☐ all tutors or teaching assistants ☐ departmental staff handling students enquiries or welfare

Recommendation 9 *(p. 131 of the Report)*

Compulsory training on prevention of sexual harassment should be provided to all new employees (both teaching and non-teaching staff) as part of the induction programme. Refresher training should be offered every three years to existing staff to ensure that they have a basic understanding of sexual harassment and keep them abreast of the latest development in sexual harassment legal provisions and the related university policies and measures.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • Compulsory training on anti-sexual harassment is provided for: ☐ *new* teaching staff / ☐ *new* non-teaching staff • How often is refresher training provided for them? _____ • Who is responsible for delivering the training? _____	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy) ☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any): ☐ *Non-compulsory training* on anti-sexual harassment is provided for: ☐ *new* teaching staff / ☐ *new* non-teaching staff

Recommendation 10 *(p. 131-132 of the Report)*

Staff who are responsible for implementing the centralised sexual harassment complaint mechanism, in particular, should receive formal and comprehensive training, including sensitisation training of how to communicate with victims of sexual harassment and assault, understanding of anti-discrimination law, and how to conduct investigation in accordance with the principle of natural justice. Refresher training should also be provided to them regularly.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • The following training is provided for staff who are responsible for *implementing the sexual harassment compliant mechanism*: ☐ sensitisation training of how to communicate with victims of sexual harassment and assault ☐ understanding of anti-discrimination law related to sexual harassment ☐ how to conduct investigation in accordance with the principle of natural justice • How often is refresher training provided for them? _____ • Who is responsible for delivering the training? _____ ☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy) ☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any): Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):

Recommendation 11 *(p.132 of the Report)*

It is recommended that the centralised university sexual harassment complaint hotline and counselling services should be widely promoted within the campus.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • How did your university promote its hotline and counselling services? _____ ☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy) ☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any): Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):

C. Awareness-raising training targeted at attitude changing

Recommendation 12 *(p. 132-133 of the Report)*	
A short compulsory training should be offered to all incoming students during the orientation programme. The training should focus on three key components, including the definition of sexual harassment and case scenarios illustrating what sexual harassment is, what to do, and where to seek help when students encountered sexual harassment.	
Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*

☐ **Yes**
  • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy)
  • Compulsory training is offered to all incoming students via:
    ☐ online training course(s)
    ☐ face-to-face lecture(s)/workshop(s)
    ☐ other means (please specify): _____
  • Who is responsible for delivering the training?
 	
_____
 	
☐ **Not yet**
  • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)
 	
☐ **No**
  • What is the reason behind?
 	
_____
	Good practices/experience sharing (if any):
	
	Challenges encountered (if any):
	
	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):

Recommendation 13 *(p. 133-134 of the Report)*

Universities should specifically develop some in-person and interactive workshops for students to discuss issues related to consent and relationship, as well as the role and responsibility of bystander. Students who live in residential halls or university accommodations should be required to attend at least one of those workshops.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*

☐ **Yes**
• The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy)
• Interactive workshops on the following topics are offered to students:
    ☐ consent and relationship   ☐ role and responsibility of bystanders
    ☐ others (please specify): _____
• Are students living in residential halls or university accommodations required to attend at least one of those workshops? ☐ Yes / ☐ No
• Who is responsible for delivering the training? _____
	Good practices/experience sharing (if any):
	
	Challenges encountered (if any):

☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	

Recommendation 14 *(p. 134 of the Report)*

It is recommended that education programmes in relation to responsible drinking should be introduced to all students. Discussions on the relationship between sexual consent and alcohol consumption should be highlighted in these programmes, especially for students living in residential halls or university accommodations.

Recommendation implemented?	*Details (if any)*
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • Who is responsible for delivering the training? _____	Good practices/experience sharing (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):

Recommendation 15 *(p. 134-135 of the Report)*

Universities may consider engaging tools that fit in the learning and social habits of the young generation, such as mobile-friendly online training modules, videos and short films, and social media to effectively deliver the message of anti-sexual harassment to university students.

Recommendation implemented?	Details (if any)

☐ **Yes**
• The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy)
• What kinds of tools did your university utilise for promoting anti-sexual harassment?
  ☐ online courses developed by your university
  ☐ online courses developed by individual faculties/departments
  ☐ EOC's online training module   ☐ videos and short films
  ☐ social media platforms   ☐ others (please specify): _____
	Good practices/experience sharing (if any):
	
	Challenges encountered (if any):

☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	

Recommendation 16 *(p. 135 of the Report)*

University may consider including an element of anti-discrimination of minority students, such as LGBTI students, ethnic minority students, students with disabilities, in its anti-sexual harassment training, and spending more effort on eliminating discrimination and bias towards minority students on campus.

Recommendation implemented?	Details (if any)
☐ **Yes** • The recommendation has been implemented since _____ (mm/yyyy) • What did you university do to cater the needs of LGBTI students, ethnic minority students, and students with disabilities, in its anti-sexual harassment training? _____	Good practices/experience sharing (if any): Challenges encountered (if any):
☐ **Not yet** • It is *planned* to be implemented in _____ (mm/yyyy)	Related actions taken or future planned actions (if any):
☐ **No** • What is the reason behind? _____	

- End -