

Guidelines for Girls' Education Officers

The Transforming Teacher Education and Learning Programme in Ghana (T-TEL, 2014-2018) aims at transforming the delivery of pre-service teacher education in Ghana by improving the quality of teaching and learning in all Colleges of Education.

Teaching Practice is of vital importance to improve the quality of teachers who graduate from the Colleges of Education to teach in Kindergarten, Primary and Junior High Schools in Ghana. Therefore, as part of the improvement of pre-service delivery, T-TEL has a Schools Partnership (SP) component which aims at providing systematic and uniform practice of Teaching Practice and in the Mentoring of Student Teachers. Through the SP component of T-TEL better links will be made between Colleges of Education, Partner Schools and supporting District Education Directorates.

The SP component is implemented by a national team of School Partnerships Advisers (SPAs) with an international key SPA to support the team. As one of their responsibilities, the School Partnership Advisers (SPAs) have developed Teaching Practice Guidelines for different key stakeholders. These Guidelines for Circuit Supervisors will help support you in your role of supporting student teachers during their teaching practice at schools. These Guidelines align with the T-TEL Student Teacher Handbook, Tutor Handbook and Mentor Handbook which you will become familiar with.

Purpose

The purpose of the Girls' Education Officers' (GEOs) Guidelines is to describe clearly the actions to be taken by the GEOs in monitoring and supporting Gender Protection Strategies in Partner Schools, with emphasis on female Student Teachers. This will also support the future implementation of a Gender Policy for schools and the Sexual Harassment Framework. See Annexes 1 and 2 below.

Actions to be taken by the Gender Education Officer

- Attend an orientation meeting with the SPAs on T-TEL gender protection strategies for Teaching Practice.
- Prepare an action plan for monitoring and supporting of Teaching Practice schools (use Annexes 1 & 2 to help you with this)
- Discuss and seek approval from District Department of Education for implementation of the action plan.
- Visit each school at least twice during the Teaching Practice. Fill out monitoring forms and present to DDE for evaluation (refer to Annexes 1 & 2 to help you format questionnaires).
- Visit male and female Student Teachers in their communities to counsel student teachers on the need to lead exemplary lives among the members of the society.

During the school visit, ask questions like the following questions (please also develop your own questionnaires using Annexes 1 & 2 to guide you) and insist on answers and evidence of action in terms of gender responsive strategies:

- Is the school management / PTA mindful of sexual harassment and have they put in place, strategies to protect all student/pupils, especially, the girl child?
- Are there also strategies to prevent and address sexual harassment of teachers and Student Teachers during their teaching practice?
- Has the Lead Mentor helped to secure gender responsive accommodation for all Student Teachers, especially the Female Student Teachers?
- Do Student Teachers employ teaching strategies or methods that are gender responsive? E.g. Equal participation and distribution of questions in the classroom, encouragement of girls, leadership roles for girls, mixing of girls and boys in seating arrangements.
- Does the Lead Mentor provide gender responsive support to Student Teachers well-being?
- Does the Mentor demonstrate classroom strategies to challenge traditional gender roles?

Annex 1: Guidelines for Protection Strategies for Student Teachers on Teaching Practice

The Gender Responsive competencies that are described in the table below provide a comprehensive set of guidelines or indicators for protection of Student Teachers, particularly female Student Teachers, during their teaching practice. The Gender Responsive competencies highlight the systems and procedures that should be in place in all TP schools to safeguard Student Teachers. These Gender Responsive competencies are included as a core component of the T-TEL Project Monitoring and Evaluation Scorecard.

Gender Responsive competencies for Mentors	Example actions or strategies
1. The Mentor makes sure that their school sexual harassment policy has been developed and implemented	a) The school has received and adopted the National Teaching Council’s Sexual Harassment Policy. If the policy has not yet been circulated, the Lead Mentor should help the school complete the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The school’s staff develops an agreed definition of what constitutes sexual harassment (e.g. sexual bullying, suggestion, touching and favours. Coming from staff/community towards other teachers, Student Teachers and pupils) ii. The school staff agree on a transparent reporting system for teachers, Student Teachers or pupils experiencing sexual harassment (e.g. victim can go to a designated female staff member, problem then taken to HT/SMC, then circuit supervisor, etc.) iii. The school staff nominates an appropriate, trained staff member to act as the first point for reporting and to act as a counsellor for those experiencing sexual harassment iv. The school staff develops a reprimand system for those guilty of sexual harassment (e.g. develop appropriate punishments for staff, HT, community members, pupils, etc.) v. The HT disseminates the sexual harassment definition, reporting system and reprimand system to all teachers, Student Teachers, pupils and community members b) The Mentor ensures that all Student Teachers are aware of the school’s sexual harassment policy and reporting system c) The Mentor monitors female Student Teachers’ relationships with staff/community members to make sure they are free from sexual harassment
2. The Mentor helps to secure gender responsive accommodation for female Student Teachers	a) The Mentor meets with their Student Teacher before teaching practice begins to help them find safe accommodation b) The Mentor ensures that their Student Teacher does not have to live with a teacher, Mentor or member of staff c) The Mentor ensures that if their Student Teacher lives in a community member’s house, the community member has been vetted and is aware of the school sexual harassment policy d) The Mentor ensures that their Student Teacher’s accommodation is close to the school and is safe at night (adequate lighting, security guards/watchmen), particularly for females e) If possible, the Mentor tries to ensure that pairs of female Student Teachers find accommodation together
3. The Mentor ensures gender responsive treatment of Student Teachers at the school	a) The Mentor and staff’s daily behaviour does not reinforce traditional gender roles (e.g. only female Student Teachers run errands or clean up) b) The Mentor ensures that female and male Student Teachers are treated equally by staff, community and pupils c) The Mentor monitors female Student Teachers’ relationships with staff/community to make sure they are free from bullying, intimidation and any form of abuse d) The Mentor ensures that female and male Student Teachers have equal access to school resources and teaching/learning materials e) The Mentor encourages and supports female Student Teachers in teaching subjects like maths and science f) The Mentor encourages female Student Teachers to take leadership roles during teaching practice g) The Mentor supports and makes allowances for female Student Teachers who have to balance family responsibilities (such as marriage, pregnancy, child-care)

Table continues overleaf

4. The Mentor provides gender responsive support to Student Teacher well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Mentor builds confidence in Student Teachers, especially females b) The Mentor monitors female Student Teachers' day-to-day well-being c) The Mentor takes action to address female Student Teachers' problems/needs d) The Mentor makes sure that female Student Teachers feel comfortable and secure e) The Mentor ensures that female teacher toilets have water and hygiene bins and that female Student Teachers are allowed to use these
5. The Mentor demonstrates gender responsive classroom practices while co-teaching with Student Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to give equal chances to girls and boys to ask/answer questions b) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to assign leadership roles equally to girls and boys in lesson activities c) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to make sure girls and boys participate equally in activities d) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to be patient with girls and boys who may be shy or afraid to speak out e) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to check if both girls and boys equally understand the lesson f) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to provide constructive verbal feedback to both girls and boys in class
6. The Mentor demonstrates classroom strategies to challenge traditional gender roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to use teaching materials that do not show or reinforce traditional gender roles (e.g. women cooking/cleaning and men in professional roles) b) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to point out traditional gender roles that appear in books and discuss how traditional gender roles can limit what girls think they can achieve in their lives c) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to use examples (in exercises/activities) that challenge or reverse traditional gender roles (e.g. like showing men/boys cleaning the house) d) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to make girls and boys feel confident to challenge traditional gender roles in general (e.g. encourage boys to cook and girls to be doctors) e) The Mentor shows Student Teachers how to support/encourage girls in studying and achieving in subjects like maths and science
7. The Lead Mentor contributes to improving the school's gender responsive Mentoring practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Lead Mentor checks that there is an equal number of female and male Mentors at the school (if there is an imbalance, the Mentor advocates for the gender balance of Mentors) b) The Lead Mentor completes the Gender Responsive Scorecard after every teaching practice and reflects on how they can improve next time c) The Lead Mentor has all Student Teachers anonymously appraise their Mentors using the Gender Responsive Scorecard at the end of their teaching practice d) The Lead Mentor collects and looks at all the Student Teachers' appraisals of their Mentors and identifies areas that need improvement e) The Lead Mentor facilitates discussion with other Mentors to choose/prioritise follow-up actions for areas that need improvement f) The Lead Mentor advocates/budgets for gender responsive training for all staff and Mentors g) The Lead Mentor advocates/budgets for gender responsive infrastructure improvements

Annex 2: Sexual Harassment Guidelines

Sexual Harassment can be defined as any unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, whether on a one-time basis or series of incidents that might cause offense, humiliation, awkwardness or embarrassment, or that might reasonably be conceived as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment, opportunity for promotion, grades, etc. (*Association of Women Lawyers in Africa: AWLA, 2003*)

It is important to note that any form of sexual harassment occurs within a situation of unequal power relations between and among parties, and therefore in this policy document issues of sexual harassment are considered within the context of the power inequities within which any form of harassment is alleged to have occurred.

The specific objectives of anti-sexual harassment guidelines are:

- to prevent the occurrence of sexual harassment in any form or shape in the College / school community
- to deal with cases of sexual harassment if they occur
- to encourage victims of sexual harassment to seek redress without fear of reprisal
- to offer assistance and support to victims of sexual harassment
- to outline clearly the disciplinary actions that would be instituted against perpetrators of sexual harassment in schools.

Sexual Harassment guidelines are committed to securing a working and learning environment that is free from sexual exploitation and intimidations. It abhors the following forms of sexual harassment:

- verbal, physical, written and pictorial communication relating to gender or sex which has the
- purpose or effect of unreasonable interference an individual's performance, or which creates a hostile, offensive, or intimidating atmosphere for the recipient
- Unwelcome and irrelevant comments, references, gestures or other forms of personal attention which are inappropriate to the academic, employment, or residential setting
- A request for sexual favours when submission to, or rejection of such a request might reasonably be viewed as a basis for evaluative decisions affecting an individual's future
- Sexual imposition that is non-consensual touching
- Abuses of power relations such that individuals receive unfair treatment based on gender or sexuality
- Threat or coercion of sexual relations; sexual contact which is not freely agreed by both parties, including rape.

Sexual harassment can be **addressed and or prevented** if Individuals are held personally accountable for their actions and behaviours in the event of complaints of sexual harassment against them. There should be agreed procedures outlined in dealing with complaints and appeals against decisions in connection with complaints of sexual harassment.

Examples of Supporting Procedures are as following:

Any student, employee or member of the school community who perceives herself/himself to have been sexually harassed or to have been subjected to retaliation following a sexual harassment incident, must do the following in order to protect his/her rights.

The complainant can follow either the **formal or informal** procedures outlined in this guidelines. Complainants are encouraged to use the informal procedures in the first instance. However, in certain cases (stipulated in sub-section for Definition of Terms of this document), the formal procedure is strongly recommended.

i) Informal Approach

A student, employee or member of the school community who feels that he/she has been a victim of sexual harassment is encouraged not to ignore the incident or the offending person. In the first instance, the victim of the harassment should ask the person causing the harassment to stop the harassing behaviour. If this is not possible for any reason, or the harassment continues, or if it stops but the victim feels that he/she would require advice or support in order to protect his/her rights, he/she should not hesitate to follow the steps outlined below:

- The recipient of the harassment action (victim) confronting the offender about what he/she did;
- Having the contact person(s) talk to the offender;
- If the offender is employed by the school, having the contact person(s) or a member of the Disciplinary Committee advice or assist in an appropriate intervention.
- Taking no further action.
- If the immediate safety of the parties involved is at stake, the contact person(s) shall inform a member of the School Disciplinary Committee or one of the above-named contact person(s), who shall work out the appropriate means to address the safety of the complainant. This may include visiting a clinic/hospital or the police station.

If a complaint cannot be resolved through the above options, or if, in the course of the Informal Procedure, the alleged offender is not cooperative, then the formal procedure, spelt out in the schools form.

ii) Formal Procedure

The Formal Procedure shall usually be embarked upon in the following instances:

- Where the alleged offender does not cooperate in the informal procedure;
- Where the alleged offender has several complaints against him/her;
- Where the immediate safety of the parties involved is at stake;
- Where informal mediation does not appear to stop the harassment
- Where the following types of harassment have occurred:
 - sexual assault
 - threat or coercion of sexual relations
 - sexual contact which is not freely agreed to by both parties
 - sex that may appear consensual but reflects unequal power relations and which provides
 - avenues for the receipt of benefit, (such as sex or sexual contact between a Head of Department and a subordinate).

The following guidelines shall apply in formal procedures:

- the complainant shall formally request to the Sexual Harassment Committee to take further action;
- the schools' Disciplinary Committee / Sexual Harassment Committee shall notify the alleged offender that the matter is being taken further, and that it may result in disciplinary action;
- the Sexual Harassment Committee shall, soon as possible, but not later than one week from receiving a relevant request, initiate a separate investigative meetings with the complainant and the alleged offender, together with their agents (if any) to attempt to resolve the matter,
- unless both the complainant and the alleged offender agree to a joint meeting being convened; the Disciplinary Committee / Sexual Harassment Committee shall, within seven days, of the close of hearing, advise the complainant and the alleged offender in writing of the outcome of the investigations, including any recommendations made or sanctions imposed.

Examples of Sanctions that can be taken:

Sanctions that may be imposed by the Sexual Harassment Committee and/or Vice-Principal shall include, but not limited to the following:

- Public apology
- Mediation
- Relocation of the offender to another Department/ Section. Under no circumstances should the complainant be relocated.
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Referral to the appropriate law enforcement body like the police and social welfare department
- Termination of employment

Responsibility for Monitoring, Implementation and Compliance:

Responsibility for Implementation of guidelines must be that of the Schools Disciplinary Committee / Sexual Harassment Committee

Support the Following Actions:

- a) The school has received and adopted the National Teaching Council's Sexual Harassment Policy. If not, the Lead Mentor should help the school complete the following actions:
- b) The school's staff has developed an agreed definition of what constitutes sexual harassment (which includes sexual bullying, suggestion and favours, from staff/ community towards teachers, mentees and students)
- c) The school has developed a transparent reporting system in the school for mentees, teachers or students experiencing sexual harassment
- d) The school has developed a reprimand system for those guilty of sexual harassment
- e) The school has disseminated the sexual harassment definition, reporting and reprimand system to all teachers, mentees, students and community members
- f) The school has an assigned counsellor for those experiencing or afraid to report sexual harassment
- g) Mentors ensure that female mentees are aware of the reporting system for sexual harassment
- h) Mentors monitor mentees' relationships with staff/ community members to make sure they are free from sexual harassment
- i) Mentors monitor mentees' relationships with staff/ community members to make sure they are free from bullying, intimidation and any form of abuse.