

REYKJAVÍK UNIVERSITY

POLICY TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

NATIONAL CONTEXT



Gender-based violence (GBV) has been on the agenda in Icelandic universities for a long time. All seven universities in Iceland are required to have a Gender Equality Plan, in accordance with Act No. 1050/2020 on Equal Status and Equal Rights Irrespective of Gender (and Act No. 96/2000 on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men). Moreover, Act No. 46/1980 on the Working Environment, Health and Safety in Workplaces and Regulation No. 1009/2015 on Measures against Bullying, Sexual Harassment, Gender-Based Harassment and Violence in Workplaces require universities, as well as other employers, to provide a safe and healthy working environment. Many universities employ professional counsellors to respond to GBV. GBV is also a regular topic at the 'Equality Days' festival that has been held annually by the University of Iceland since 2009¹ and by all Icelandic universities since 2015.² Nonetheless, the first #MeToo movement in 2017, and specifically the movement among women in the sciences, called on universities to take further action. Women in the sciences started a petition to demand that the academic community end gender and sexual harassment and violence that thrives in the community. They also published 106 anonymous statements about experiences of GBV in the academic community.³

¹ https://english.hi.is/university/equality_days

² <https://www.ru.is/skipulag/samfelagsabyrgd/jafnrettisdagar/>

³ <https://www.visir.is/g/20171884043d>



INSTITUTIONAL POLICY



Reykjavík University has implemented two policies and strategies that address GBV. One of them is a policy dedicated to GBV, the Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints Concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment⁴ (hereinafter called the Strategy) and the other is the Code of Ethics, a more general document that addresses GBV as one of its parts.⁵ It also recently adopted a new Equality Plan for the years 2021-2023, not specifically dedicated to GBV.

The rector is responsible for equality work within Reykjavík University, but all managers and directors are responsible for the progress on equality issues and for implementation and follow-up on the equal rights plan. There is also an Equal Rights Committee (which mainly follows up on the Equal Rights Plan with HR) and an Ethics Committee (which manages GBV and sexual harassment complaints).



URLs

- › Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment: <https://en.ru.is/the-university/strategies/bullying-and-sexual-harassment>
- › Code of Ethics: <https://en.ru.is/the-university/ru-code-of-ethics/>
- › Equal Rights Plan: <https://en.ru.is/the-university/strategies/equality-programme>

Entry into force: The Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment entered into force in 2012 and the Equal Rights Plan came into force in 2021. It is not known when the Code of Ethics came into force.

TRAINING



In the school year 2017-2018, following the #MeToo movement, Reykjavík University held trainings, meetings, and presentations in its departments. The training was for all the staff but on some occasions just for men. There was also training for management on responding to GBV within the university. Assistance was provided by a psychologist who works in this field. After #MeToo, the institution started working on its equality plan for 2018–2020, which had a strong focus on GBV, and on revising its Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints Concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment. The Strategy was presented to all staff in a newsletter and managers had the responsibility to present it within their departments. Staff had training on the revised Strategy and consequences, prevention, and zero tolerance towards bullying and sexual harassment.

ROLE IN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION



In terms of curricula, in the year 2021-2022 there was one course on violence offered at the university at the undergraduate level, which was in psychology, but gender issues and GBV are

⁴ <https://en.ru.is/the-university/strategies/bullying-and-sexual-harassment>

⁵ <https://en.ru.is/the-university/ru-code-of-ethics/>



not addressed in the course description. There have been several events about GBV that have been hosted and organised by Reykjavik University^{6,7,8}.

CONTENT OF THE POLICY



Forms of gender-based violence: The three policies combined cover **two** forms of violence: sexual harassment and gender-based harassment. Each of the policies addresses these two forms of violence.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gender-Based Violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Economic and Financial Violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Stalking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological Violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Violence |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual Harassment | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender-Based Harassment | |

7Ps covered: The three policies combined cover **5Ps** – prevention, protection, prosecution, provision of services, and policy. Prevalence and partnership are not covered. Protection and policy are only covered by the Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment, while prevention is only covered by the Equal Rights Plan. Prosecution and provision of services are covered by both the Equal Rights Plan and the Strategy. The Code of Ethics, therefore, does not cover any of the Ps.



UniSAFE has developed the 7P model as a basis for analysing policies on GBV. For more information, see the deliverable report D3.1 Report on the conceptual and theoretical state of the art: <https://unisafe-gbv.eu/project-public-deliverables/>

The P for policy is considered in place if the institution has a GBV-focused policy or more general policies that have a procedure for reporting and investigating.

⁶ <https://www.ru.is/haskolinn/vidburdir-hr/lidnir-vidburdir/naudgun-verknadurinn-skommin-og-kerfid>

⁷ <https://www.ru.is/haskolinn/lidnir-vidburdir/vidburdadagatal-lagadeildar/kynferdisbrot-i-brennidepli>

⁸ <https://www.ru.is/haskolinn/vidburdir-hr/lidnir-vidburdir/malthing-um-stafrant-kynferdisofbeldi>



Target groups

Academic staff
 Non-academic staff
 Students



Intersectionality addressed

No.

All **three** policies address all target groups, academic staff, non-academic staff, and students.



Specific vulnerable groups: The Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment does not cover any specific vulnerable group. The Code of Ethics and the Equal Rights Plan jointly cover eight vulnerable groups, as well as the 'other' category. They both

address international students and staff, students and staff with disabilities, students and staff with migration and ethnic minority backgrounds, and LGBTQIA+ students and staff.

In the 'other' category, the Code of Ethics states: 'Art. 2: We prevent the occurrence of any form of injustice, be it bullying, sexual harassment, or discrimination on the grounds of irrelevant factors such as gender, age, faith, nationality, race, disability, or sexual orientation', while the Equal Rights Plan states: 'Do not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, skin colour, age, childbearing, ethnicity, social origin, disability, language, religion, political or other views on life, property, origin, economic status, lineage, family circumstances, or incapacity for work.'

Bystanders addressed: Yes, in the Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment. In particular, witnesses to acts of bullying or harassment are encouraged to bring this behaviour to the attention of the dean or director of their school or department, the Ethics Committee, or the president of Reykjavik University.

Role of perpetrators addressed: No.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY



Indicators: No.

Monitoring: Yes. The Equal Rights Plan has a form of monitoring. There is a follow up with victims after six months. In the case of students, this is done by the student council or psychologists, and in the case of teachers it is done by the manager at the next level above or by the director of Human Resources.

Evaluation: No. Information on evaluations is not available for the Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment or for the Code of Ethics. The Equal Rights Plan does not set out an evaluation process.

INSTITUTIONAL PROCEDURE



The Strategy for Responding to Notifications and Complaints concerning Bullying and Sexual Harassment defines a single **procedure for everyone**.

The policy defines: who to contact, how to report, responsible persons/units, and outcomes.

The policy defines the procedure as follows:

Who to contact and responsible persons/units: Students who believe they have been bullied or harassed by an employee or student are urged to notify the dean or director of their school or department, the Ethics Committee, or the president of Reykjavik University. If the complaint concerns any of the above-mentioned persons, the level of management immediately above the person concerned shall be contacted. Witnesses to acts of bullying or harassment are also encouraged to bring such behaviour to the attention of the above-mentioned persons. Students are furthermore urged to consult with and seek support and advice from the student counsellors regarding the process.

How to report: A formal investigation shall be initiated in response to all notifications or complaints concerning bullying or harassment. If deemed necessary, an independent expert shall be invited to evaluate the circumstances and confirm whether bullying or harassment has taken place. The person who lodges the complaint has the right to request that this action be taken.

Outcomes: If a complaint concerning bullying or harassment is confirmed, the perpetrator may be reprimanded or dismissed from work/studies.

This document reflects the situation as of January 2022.

Acknowledgment: *this vignette has been created on the basis of the work carried out by national researcher Finnborg S. Steinþórsdóttir in 2021, as part of the deliverable report D5.1 Inventory of policies and measures to respond to GBV in European universities and research organisations (2022). Available here: https://zenodo.org/record/5939082#.YfvXE_jTW5c*

