

## UNIVERSITY OF AKUREYRI

### 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 2009<sup>1</sup> and by all Icelandic universities since 2015.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://english.hi.is/university/equality\\_days](https://english.hi.is/university/equality_days)

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

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



## INSTITUTIONAL POLICY



The University of Akureyri has implemented three policies and strategies that address GBV. Two of them are more general documents that address GBV as part of the policy and one is a dedicated GBV policy: the Gender Equality Plan<sup>4</sup> (hereinafter called the GEP), Regulations on Responding to Bullying, Violence, Gender-Based and Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based and Sexual Violence within the University of Akureyri<sup>5</sup> (hereinafter called the Regulations), and the Code of Ethics.<sup>6</sup> The Professional Council, which operates according to the rules on responding to bullying, violence, gender-based and sexual violence within the University of Akureyri, is the key actor in responding to GBV. The rector, the University Council, and the Management Board are responsible for implementing the Gender Equality Plan. The Equal Rights Committee has the primary role of following up on the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan and the Strategy on Equal Access to Studies and Work at the University of Akureyri.



### URLs

- › Regulations on Responding to Bullying, Violence, Gender-Based and Sexual Harassment, and Gender-Based and Sexual Violence within the University of Akureyri: <https://www.unak.is/english/university/governance/laws-and-regulations/regulations-on-responding-to-bullying-violence-gender-based-and-sexual-harassment-and-gender-based-and-sexual-violence-within-the-university-of-akureyri>
- › Gender Equality Plan: <https://www.unak.is/english/university/strategies-and-policies/gender-equality-plan>
- › Code of Ethics: <https://www.unak.is/english/university/governance/the-code-of-ethics-of-the-university-of-akureyri>

**Entry into force:** The Regulations entered into force in **2019**, the GEP in **2021** (as a revision of previous GEPs), and the Code of Ethics in **2017**.

## TRAINING



Educational material on the nature, consequences of, and response to gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence are accessible in the student handbook on the UNAK website. No other form of training is present.

## ROLE IN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION



It is the objective of the University of Akureyri to mainstream gender in all courses where it is possible to do so, in accordance with Article 15 of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unak.is/english/university/strategies-and-policies/gender-equality-plan>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unak.is/english/university/governance/laws-and-regulations/regulations-on-responding-to-bullying-violence-gender-based-and-sexual-harassment-and-gender-based-and-sexual-violence-within-the-university-of-akureyri>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unak.is/english/university/governance/the-code-of-ethics-of-the-university-of-akureyri>



Irrespective of Gender.<sup>7</sup> No information on progress in fulfilling this objective has been published. A post-graduate course on psychological trauma and violence is offered at the School of Health Sciences. That course was also taught in the Continuing Education programme at the University of Akureyri, and 140 students attended. The Police Science programme, which trains future police officers, offers a course titled 'gender and power relations' that addresses GBV.<sup>8</sup> A few lectures on GBV have been held by the University of Akureyri at the 'Equality Days' festival since 2017. In 2021, a presentation was made by online GBV activists titled 'assholes and sex education'; in 2018 a presentation titled 'offended men and #metoo' was organised by a man specialist at the national Directorate of Equality; and in 2018 a presentation was made by a man feminist activist challenging masculine ideals and the opposition to #MeToo.<sup>9</sup>

## CONTENT OF THE POLICY



**Forms of gender-based violence:** The three policies combined cover **five** forms of violence, namely GBV, gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and online violence. All three policies cover gender-based harassment. The Regulations and the GEP both additionally cover GBV, sexual violence, and sexual harassment. The Code of Ethics is the only policy that covers online violence.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual Violence         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online Violence      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual Harassment       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender-Based Harassment |  |

**7Ps covered:** Jointly, the three policies address **6Ps**, namely prevalence, prevention, protection, prosecution, provision of services, and policy. However, only the Regulations cover prevalence, provision of services, and policy, while only the GEP covers prevention. Both of these policies cover protection and prosecution. Neither of the policies covers partnership. This also means that the Code of Ethics does not cover any of the 7Ps.



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/>

<sup>7</sup> University of Akureyri (2021) Gender Equality Plan. Available at: <https://www.unak.is/english/university/strategies-and-policies/gender-equality-plan>

<sup>8</sup> University of Akureyri (n.d.) OVT0176200 Ofbeldi og valdatengsl. Náms- og kennsluskra 2021-2022. Available at: <https://ugla.unak.is/kennsluskra/index.php?tab=nam&chapter=namskeid&id=86420620216&kennsluar=2021>

<sup>9</sup> University of Akureyri (2018) Jafnréttisdagar. Available at: <https://www.unak.is/is/samfelagid/frettasafn/frett/jafnrettisdagar-2018>



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.



**Target groups:** All three policies address **all target groups**, namely academic staff, non-academic staff, and students. Additionally, the Regulations and the GEP include others involved in university operations.



**Intersectionality addressed:** Yes. The GEP states that special emphasis shall be placed on preventing gender inequality from occurring in groups that may be faced with other kinds of inequality, such as because of disability, skin colour, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or other factors.



**Specific vulnerable groups:** The Regulations do not cover specific vulnerable groups. The GEP and the Code of Ethics jointly cover **eight** vulnerable groups, as well as the 'other' category. They both address international students and staff, students and staff with disability, students and staff with migration and ethnic minority backgrounds, and LGBTQIA+ students and staff. The Code of Ethics addresses other groups with the following statement: 'We do not discriminate between people, e.g. on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, religion or views'.

**Bystanders addressed:** Yes. This is only addressed in the Code of Ethics, which states that everyone should be alert to any signs of harassment, both in person or online.

**Role of perpetrators addressed:** No.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY



**Indicators:** Yes. Only the GEP defines an indicator related to prevention, which focuses on training and instructions.

**Monitoring:** Yes. The Regulations require monitoring of the number of cases and provide for a follow-up with the victim and with the perpetrator after a defined period of time. Specifically, with regard to the number of cases, the Professional Council must record and maintain statistical information on the cases the Council receives and should publish this information annually. The Code of Ethics and the GEP do not provide for any monitoring.

**Evaluation:** Information not available.

## INSTITUTIONAL PROCEDURE



A single procedure **for all** is set out in the Regulations. The Code of Ethics and the GEP do not define any procedure.

**The policy defines:** who to contact, how to report, the investigation process, time frame, and responsible persons/units.



Who to contact and how to report: Anyone wishing to report an incident or offence committed against them, either currently or in the past, by a staff member, student, contractor, or guest at UNAK, or anyone wishing to report an offence of which the person has reasonable suspicion or knowledge shall contact the Professional Council or the project manager of Human Resources at UNAK. UNAK staff members can also contact their immediate supervisor; if this person is the one who is accused of committing the offence, staff members can contact the supervisor's supervisor. Students can also contact student counsellors, the head of the faculty, or, depending on the circumstances, the dean of the school. Any person who receives a report concerning an offence shall refer the matter to the Professional Council for processing without any delay.

Responsible persons/units: The Professional Council.

Description of the investigation and time frame: The Professional Council is required to investigate cases and to submit a conclusion as soon as possible. The measures that the Council takes to investigate are always taken in consultation with the alleged victim. When a report concerning an alleged offence is received by the Professional Council, the alleged victim shall be summoned to a meeting of the Council where s/he is given the opportunity to relate the details of the case. The Council assesses the circumstances and either summons the alleged perpetrator to a Council meeting, where s/he is given an account of the report and provided with an opportunity to comment on the case, or seeks information from other parties before discussing the case with the alleged perpetrator. Following interviews with the parties to the case, the Council makes a decision on whether the case will be formally processed. The Council has unrestricted access to information pertaining to the case in the archives of UNAK and the archives of the faculties. If the Council decides to formally process a case, it notifies the parties to the case, as well as the supervisors of the academic or work unit(s) of the parties involved. The supervisors shall, after consulting with the Council, take measures that may be necessary relating to the academic and work arrangements of the parties in the case. Efforts shall be made to reach an accommodation in regard to work arrangements while the case is being processed. It is not permitted to transfer the person who has reported an offence from their place of work or study unless the person requests this. The Council shall offer the alleged victim professional assistance from a psychologist, social worker or a therapist. The person against whom the complaint is made shall be offered professional assistance if the Council believes this to be necessary. If the alleged victim wishes to report the matter to the police, the Council will assist the person as far as possible and will do so also if the alleged victim chooses to report the matter to the police at a later stage in the processing of the case. Once the investigation has been concluded, the Council issues a statement outlining its conclusions to the parties involved and their supervisors. If the Council finds that an offence has been committed, it will submit proposals for an appropriate response to the supervisor of the unit concerned who will decide on the next steps, in consultation with the project manager of Human Resources and/or student counsellors. The final decision in such cases is taken in accordance with laws and regulations that apply to the University of Akureyri. Within three months of the measures being taken, the Council summons all the parties to the case and the relevant supervisors to a meeting to assess the results of the measures. If the results are satisfactory, the case is considered closed; if they are not, the Council submits proposals for further measures.

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](https://zenodo.org/record/5939082#.YfvXE_jTW5c)*

