



Covenant Applied Informatics and Communication African Centre of Excellence (CApIC-ACE)

Covenant University

Sexual Harassment Policy

2019 - 2024

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1.0 PREAMBLE

Covenant Applied Informatics and Communication Africa Centre of Excellence (CApIC-ACE) domiciled at Covenant University is set up to address the urgent need of building a critical mass of indigenous African scientists with the necessary bioinformatics, genomics, information and communication engineering knowledge and skills to drive and sustain impactful researches necessary to eradicate malaria and reduce the burden of breast and prostate cancer in West and Central African region. These activities will be carried out in collaboration with our academic, clinical and industrial institutions in Nigeria, Africa, Germany, France, US, and the UK. Furthermore, CApIC-ACE will take advantage of our present funding to build further Infrastructure and provision of quality education and training that will enhance our future work in health research and education. To achieve these objectives, CApIC-ACE will recruit highly motivated students across West and Central African and train them within its academic programs (Biochemistry, Computer Science, Bioinformatics, Information and Communication Engineering) with international-accreditation curricula. We have also put together a team of international, regional, national expertise as collaborators, who will further serve as resource persons for the center. Meanwhile, our industrial partners will provide CApIC-ACE the platform needed to translate its research output and provide internship opportunities for our students. To ensure hitch-free academic relationship, performance and output of the Center, faculty, staff and students will be guided by rules that are stated in our policies.

Sexual harassment such as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, is a common form of violence that can cause enduring psychological harm. Both women and men are targets of such behaviour though women and girls are the primary targets. This document is to aid the Centre to prevent, report and respond to sexual harassment. The Centre is committed to providing a citadel of learning where all may search for knowledge and wisdom free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is serious misconduct; very serious wrongdoing and improper behaviour which may lead to dismissal. Sexual harassment may take the form of victimisation, a hostile environment that interferes with another's performance at work or in study or an alleged perpetrator influences or attempts to influence a person's educational or employment circumstances by coercing or attempting to coerce/force that person to engage in sexual activities; i.e an alleged perpetrator influences or attempts to influence: the admission of a student to the centre; or the access of a student to training, organisational or funding opportunities; or interferes in grading or evaluation; by coercing or attempting to coerce a student to engage in sexual activities. The Centre will not tolerate sexual harassment.

This Policy is in line with global best practice in 21st century Higher Education Institutions and complements the sexual harassment policy of Covenant University. It covers staff, students and those temporarily working in the centre, such as contract staff, casual staff, contractors, and consultants.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT AND SCOPE

The Covenant Applied Informatics and Communication African Centre of Excellence (CApIC-ACE), Covenant University, Nigeria is committed to providing a safe and healthy academic and work environment free from any form of harassment including sexual harassment for all its faculty, staff and students. Sexual harassment diminishes individual dignity and impedes equal employment and educational opportunities and equal access to freedom of academic inquiry. Sexual harassment is a barrier to fulfilling the Center and University's scholarly, research, educational, and service missions. The centre will operate a zero tolerance for any form of sexual harassment, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all

allegations. Anyone accused of sexually harassing another will face disciplinary action in line with rules as stated in the Center and University policies which may include outright dismissal.

This policy aims to:

- i. Create a working and learning environment that is free from sexual harassment and where all members of the centre are treated with courtesy, dignity and respect.
- ii. Foster appropriate standards of conduct at all times.
- iii. Implement strategies to ensure that all members of the centre know their rights and responsibilities with respect to sexual harassment.
- iv. Encourage the reporting of prohibited sexual behaviour.
- v. Provide an effective procedure for complaints.
- vi. Treat all complaints in a serious, sensitive, fair and timely manner.
- vii. Guarantee against victimisation or reprisals.

The scope of this policy are as follows:

- i. This policy applies to every person in the centre regardless of gender, level, function, and status. Faculty, staff, students, researchers, employees, and everyone interacting with the centre are covered by this policy.
- ii. The centre is committed to carrying out all provisions in this policy and monitoring its effectiveness.
- iii. This policy will be revised and improved upon on a consistent basis.
- iv. The policy covers all sexual harassment whether it takes place within or outside the centre, including social events, training sessions or conferences sponsored by the centre.

3.0 DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that violates the rights of a person. Unwelcomed conduct that constitutes sexual harassment include:

(a) The conduct was made as a term or condition of an individual's educational progress, living environment, employment, or participation in the Centre's activities.

(b) The acceptance or refusal of the conduct is used as the basis or factor in decisions affecting the victim's education, employment, living environment, or participation in the Centre's activities.

(c) The conduct impacts the individual's academic or employment performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for that individual's work, education, living environment, or participation in the Centre.

Examples of conduct or behaviour which constitute sexual harassment include but not limited to physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.

Physical conduct that constitute sexual harassment include insinuations or suggestions of a sexual nature; unwelcome physical contact such as patting, pinching, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching; Physical violence, including sexual assault; The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favours; Repeatedly standing too close or brushing up against a person; sexual threats, sexual comments, sex-related jokes/insults, inappropriate enquiries about a person's sex life, graphic comments about a person's body, whistling of a sexual nature and the exchange of sexually explicit material by electronic means or otherwise.

Verbal conduct that constitute sexual harassment include Sexual comments, stories and jokes; Sexual advances; Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy; Insults based on the sex of the worker; Sending sexually explicit messages (via phone or email)

Non-verbal conduct that constitute sexual harassment include Repeatedly making sexually suggestive gestures; Gazing or looking in a lascivious or unpleasant way; Making or posting sexually demeaning or offensive pictures, indecent exposure and the display or delivery of sexually explicit images by electronic or other

4.0 PROCEDURE

Anyone who believes he/she has been the target of sexual harassment is encouraged to inform the alleged harasser orally or in writing that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. However, the centre recognizes that sexual harassment may occur in unequal relationships (i.e. between a mentor and a mentee) and that it may not be possible for the victim to inform the alleged harasser. If a victim cannot directly approach an alleged harasser or does not wish to communicate directly with the harasser or if such communication has not been effective, he/she can report allegations to designated officials responsible for receiving complaints of sexual harassment or any senior colleague in the center. Our designated personnel for filing complaints is **Mrs. Shola Coker (olushola.coker@covenantuniversity.edu.ng: +2348097784446)**. When a designated person receives a complaint of sexual harassment, he/she will:

- i. immediately record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s)
- ii. ascertain the views of the victim as to what outcome he/she wants
- iii. ensure that the victim understands the centre's procedures for dealing with the complaint
- iv. discuss and agree the next steps: either informal or formal complaint, on the understanding that choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the victim from pursuing a formal complaint if he/she is not satisfied with the outcome
- v. keep a confidential record of all discussions
- vi. respect the choice of the victim

The victim can either use the formal or informal mode of complaints. If the victim wants to address the issue informally, the designated personnel will:

- i. give the alleged harasser the chance to respond to the complaint
- ii. create an opportunity for both parties to discuss and resolve the issue informally to the complainant satisfaction
- iii. keep a record of all discussion and events that takes place
- iv. follow up after the issue has been resolved to ensure the behavior has stopped
- v. ensure that response and action taken on the complaint is done speedily and within 7 days

If the victim wants to make a formal complaint or if the outcome of the informal complaint did not yield a satisfactory outcome for the victim, the formal complaints method should be used to resolve the matter. The designated staff who initially received the complaint will refer the matter to a senior person to initiate a formal investigation. The senior staff may handle the situation by him/herself or refer it to a committee of three others (creation of a committee should be done bearing in mind gender- balance)

The investigator will:

- i. interview the victim and alleged harasser separately
- ii. interview any other relevant third parties
- iii. decide whether the incident happened or not
- iv. produce a report with details of the investigations, findings and any recommendations

- v. if the harassment is confirmed, decide on the appropriate sanction for the alleged and remedy for the victim
- vi. follow up to ensure implementation of the recommendations, the behavior has stopped and victim is satisfied with the outcome
- vii. keep a record of all actions taken
- viii. ensure all records are kept confidential
- ix. ensure the process is carried out as soon as possible and in any event within 14 days of the complaints being made

5.0 RESPONSE

5.1 Sanctions and disciplinary measures

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the harassment. Serious cases of physical violence will result in immediate dismissal of the harasser. The disciplinary process is only an outline and requires the center to determine the severity of the harassment. We reserve the right to deviate from the process indicated above, depending on the severity of the incident and other circumstances. Anyone found to have sexually harassed another person under the terms of this policy is liable to any of the following:

- i. receive a verbal or written warning or an adverse performance evaluation (for infrequent or less serious allegations)
- ii. receive suspension and perhaps penalties such as a fine (for periodic or more serious sexual harassment incidents)
- iii. face dismissal (for frequent or extremely serious allegations)
- iv. face criminal prosecution if the victim is a minor.

5.2 Sexual Harassment Management at Acute Stage-Emergency Health Care.

In the event where the sexual harassment has possibly led to sexual intercourse, the following should be done;

- i. Stabilize the victim/patient.
- ii. Gather information and Obtain Consents as some Forensic investigation may need to be done.
- iii. Obtain any medical history and sexual history.

5.3 Implementation of this policy

The center will ensure that this policy is widely circulated to all staff and students; will be included in the staff and student handbooks. All students must be trained on the content of this policy as part of their induction into the center. It is the responsibility of the management to ensure that all staff and students are aware of the policy.

5.4 Monitoring and evaluation

The center will not underestimate the importance of monitoring this sexual harassment policy and will ensure that it anonymously collects statistics and data as to how it is used and whether or not it is effective. Supervisors and other management officials will report on compliance with this policy, including the number of incidents, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will be done on a yearly basis. As a result, the center will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed. Monitoring and evaluation can be done through different means, including questionnaires completed by employees, feedback from students and staff. This is important to review the effectiveness of the policy and the complaints procedure.

5.5 Education and Awareness-of Sexual Harassment

It is imperative that the members of the centre feel safe at all times and this emotional security comes from the right level of knowledge and sensitization on the benefits provided within the community. Using events that encourages diversity, encourage integration and signpost support is one of the major ways of challenging harassment. The centre/ University will include sexual harassment and related issues into its core training/ orientation event to let staff and students to have an idea on complaint procedures and details of contact personnel such that they will recognize and effectively deal with sexual harassment. There would also be posting of harassment policies and resources through accessible locations as email communications, intranet, cafeteria messages, walkway, notice boards, porters lobby in hostels and bathrooms etc. To raise the level of awareness, the following would be done:

- i. Make the policy clear and available to all stakeholders and management must ensure zero tolerance to the policy.
- ii. Frequent training sessions should be conducted.
- iii. The reporting procedure must be clarified.
- iv. A safe working environment should be created and the consequences clarified.

5.6 Prevention of Sexual Harassment

The administrators must be on constant vigil to protect students from the needless suffering of sexual harassment. Centre personnel must never turn a deaf ear to students' seemingly trivial cries for help. Sexual harassment is not something young people need to learn to tolerate. Rather, it must be confronted and stopped so that schools can be safe and positive places for children to learn. As recommended by best practices worldwide, some of the techniques that can be used to prevent harassment are:

For Students

- i. We must make the elimination of sexual harassment a top priority.
- ii. Educate students about sexual harassment. Students must be taught the difference between friendly teasing and bullying, between flirting and harassment. Behavior expectations must be clearly defined and explained; fair and consistent consequences need to be outlined and reinforced.
- iii. Get parents involved. Parental involvement is critical to long-term behavior modification. In many cases, parents will need to be educated about sexual harassment and its harmful effects in order to help them identify harassment and respond appropriately.
- iv. Teach students how to deal with harassment. Ignoring the situation can often lead to a cycle of ongoing harassment and victimization.
- v. Zero Tolerance to the Policy.

For Staff

- vi. Make the Policy Accessible and available to avoid ignorance.
- vii. Staff should be trained regularly to be able to identify red flags.
- viii. The workplace should be monitored and all complaints should be taken very seriously.
- ix. Zero Tolerance to the Policy.

5.7 Penalty for Falsely Accusing a Person of Sexual Harassment

Any staff covered by this policy who has filed a complaint alleging that he/she has been a victim of sexual harassment within the centre/University and a subsequent investigation reveals that the individual has falsely accused the purported harasser of sexual harassment knowingly, and that, in fact, no sexual harassment occurred, shall be subject to discipline, which may include but not be limited to verbal reprimand, written reprimand, suspension without pay, demotion, or dismissal, with respect to employees and whatever steps are deemed appropriate with respect to non-employees.

Any student covered by this policy who has filed a complaint alleging that he/she has been victim of sexual harassment within the centre/University and a subsequent investigation reveals that the student has falsely accused the purported harasser of sexual harassment and that, in fact, no sexual harassment occurred, shall be subject to discipline as set forth in the current student handbook.

6.0 Code of Conduct

- i. The center encourages and expects all persons to immediately report verbally or in writing, incidents of sexual harassment to the officer in charge.
- ii. No person shall be required to report an allegation of sexual harassment to the individual who is the harasser.
- iii. All complaints of sexual harassment will be investigated and promptly resolved. The complainant and alleged harasser will have the opportunity during the investigation to present witnesses or other evidence with respect to the complaint. Upon receipt of an allegation of sexual harassment from any person, the officer in charge will commence investigation into the complaint within 48 hours.
- iv. Each complaint of sexual harassment shall be promptly investigated in a way that respects the privacy of all parties concerned to the extent permitted by law and to the extent practical and appropriate under the circumstances.
- v. Verbal reports of sexual harassment should be put in writing by the individual complaining or by the person who receives the complaints and should be signed by the person complaining; however, if a complaining person chooses not to sign a written complaint for any reason, a thorough and complete investigation of the complaint must still be made.
- vi. The Centre Management will designate a sufficient number of employees who are trained to investigate sexual harassment complaints.
- vii. The complaint investigator will put his/her findings in writing and will forward a copy to the Centre/University management within one week or a reasonable extension of time thereafter for good cause after concluding the investigation.
- viii. The investigator will communicate his/her findings, in writing, to the center as expeditiously as possible. The center/University will communicate the findings of the investigator to the complainant and the alleged harasser.
- ix. The record of the investigation with findings and recommendation for discipline will be maintained by the Centre/University Management, in the office of the Center, separate and apart from any personnel file. The findings and recommendation for discipline will only become a part of an individual's personnel file if disciplinary action is taken against an individual for sexual harassment.