**ATATURK UNIVERSITY**

**POLICY DOCUMENT AGAINST GENDER DISCRIMINATION, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE**

1. **AIM AND SCOPE**

Atatürk University has adopted this policy as a duty to present the knowledge and service for the benefit of the society that produced with its graduates who can contribute to sustainable development at a regional and national level, who can analyze and synthesize, who can apply what they have learned, who have communication, teamwork and leadership skills, and its employees who can solve problems, who produce knowledge and technology at an international level, who have enthusiasm for teaching and learning. In addition, commitment to labour and merit, national and universal values, respect for human rights and differences of opinion, social and cultural sensitivity are among the basic principles and values that Atatürk University adopts and attaches importance.

Atatürk University aims to create a university environment that is free from discrimination, exploitation or any kind of sexual harassment and assault based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other basis, in order to create a university environment that will enable and support personal, academic and intellectual development. Members of the University are also obliged to show due diligence in creating and maintaining the intended environment. In institutional environments where hierarchical relations are dominant, sexual harassment and assault are often rendered invisible due to the difficulties in expressing it by those who have been sexually harassed or attacked, and both the individual and the institutional environment suffer from this situation. Atatürk University guarantees that sexual harassment and assault will not be ignored in any way, and all members of the university know and accept this.

* 1. **AIM**

Gender discrimination is a fact that disrupts work peace, significantly reduces academic and professional productivity, and should be fought without tolerance. Providing equal opportunities and chances to everyone regardless of gender discrimination is an indispensable part of Atatürk University's management approach.

The purpose of this policy document is to determine the basic principles with a participatory and transparent manner of rule through which all individuals can have equal opportunities and rights without being exposed to gender discrimination, and is to undertake to create a study, research and educational environment free from gender discrimination, as well as showing that Atatürk University is adamant on fighting all forms of violence arising from it.

* 1. **SCOPE**

The provisions in this policy document cover all University components without limitation of time and place. The policy document covers incidents such as sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and especially violence arising from gender discrimination that occurs within the University and actions that impact the academic and working life of the University. Any behaviour, violence and harassment involving gender discrimination by any administrators, employees, students, guests, suppliers or non-employees of the institution are unacceptable.

The University carries out various events to raise awareness for all its units and operates information mechanisms on these issues. It uses investigation and sanction mechanisms effectively against gender-based violence, sexual harassment and assault.

1. **BASIS**

In preparing its policy, this document grounds on the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Turkish Penal Code No. 5237, Civil Servants Law No. 657, Higher Education Law No. 2547 and Student Discipline Regulations of Higher Education Institutions dated 18.08.2012 and No. 28388, published in the Official Gazette and international agreements to which we are a party.

**3. DEFINITIONS**

**3.1. Gender Discrimination:** Gender discrimination has been observed in all societies, especially as discrimination against women, and it means any discrimination, exclusion and restriction based on gender to prevent or remove women's enjoyment or exercise of their rights..

**3.2. Gender-Based Violence:** Gender-based violence is a form of gender discrimination, mainly inflicted upon women. Violence against women, in the public or private places, occurs in forms of acts including gender-based threats, pressure and depriving of liberty which cause physical, sexual, psychological, social and economic damages to victims.

**3.3. Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment is a fact that can remain ambiguous in the intimate and complex area of ​​interpersonal relationships, and therefore not easy to define, evaluate and prove. This situation pushes the abused to remain silent, thus creating an environment suitable for harassment. The definitions and classifications below, which are related to sexual harassment in this document, are based on the definitions developed in various documents so far. In general terms, “sexual harassment” includes non-consensual, sexually explicit and offensive words, attitudes or other forms of behaviour without body contact. Repeated acts or a single act can be considered sexual harassment, depending on the place and context of the event. Acts that are not heavy enough to cause discomfort are not considered harassment.

According to the duration, intensity and nature of sexual harassment, it can be divided into two as simple harassment and severe harassment.

**A) Simple Harassment:** Acts that are sexually offensive and do not involve physical contact, including teasing, offering sex, making sexual jokes and compliments or using slang words, acting unusually persistent in flirting, harassing with digital or other pornographic material, asking questions about a person’s sexual life, or gossiping. The acts mentioned are not necessarily committed for sexual purposes in this context. Acts performed with the intention of joking or insulting are also considered harassment. The quality of simple harassment becomes aggravated if it is repeated continuously despite warnings.

**B) Severe Harassment:** These are the actions that occur with acts such as blackmail or open threats and aim to control the person's behaviour. As it may be related to the abuse of one's professional or academic position of authority, severe harassment can occur among those of equal status. It might also occur in situations where it is stated or implicitly stated that the person will pay prices in his/her student, academic or business life or when he/she does not accept the sexually explicit offer, and that if he/she accepts, he/she will make undeserved gains. If such acts are committed, for example, by taking advantage of the convenience of working in the same workplace, or committed by a lecturer or a student by taking advantage of the convenience that the public duty or service relationship has provided, this situation is a qualified violation that requires aggravating the penalty in accordance with Article 105/2 of the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237. In addition, If the victim has to quit his/her job, leave school or his/her family due to this act, the penalty to be imposed is even more severe.

**3.4. Sexual Assault:** Sexual assault is a violation of a person’s bodily immunity by acts aiming at satisfying non-consensual sexual desires on a person’s body.

Sexual assault can occur in two forms:

**A)** The first sexual assault is a violation of the person’s bodily immunity in the form of bodily assault. The contact does not necessarily have to be naked and related to the sexual organs.

**B)** In the second type of sexual assault, the physical immunity of the person is violated by the penetration of anything from the outside (organ or object) into the body. If this assault occurs by abusing the authority provided by the public office, guardianship or service relationship, it requires an aggravated penalty in the Turkish Penal Code.

**3.5. Sexual Abuse:** Acts of sexual assault and sexual harassment against those under 18 are considered "child sexual abuse." This crime has been regulated under the title of "Sexual Abuse of Children" in Article 103 of the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237. In addition, it has been regulated in the provisions of 3/d and e of Article 103 that the penalty to be imposed will be increased by half in cases where the abuse is committed by the educator or trainer by abusing the public office or the authority provided by the service relationship. Using force or presenting a threat while the act is being committed is also one of the qualified states of the crime.

**3.6. Threats or Retaliation:** Making professional or educational life difficult, implicitly or openly, for revenge, is also considered a form of harassment because the person refuses sexual or emotional offers or wants/goes to complain about harassment. Penalties to be imposed for acts of threat and blackmail have been regulated in Articles 106 and 107 of the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237.

**3.7. Promise of Reward:** It is the promise of any kind of privilege, including receiving an award, promotion, grade or similar undeserved earnings if the person accepts a sexual or emotional behaviour or offer. It is a promise of rewarding to state expressly or implicitly that undeserved gains will be provided if the person accepts a sexual behavior or offer. The following examples, including but not limited to these cases, are considered promises of rewarding:

- Promising to increase grade, provide academic or financial support and give exam questions in advance if the person who is exposed to sexual behaviour or offer is a student;

- Promising to provide a promotion or salary increase, reduce the workload and shorten the working hours if the person who is exposed to sexual behaviour or offer is an employee.

**4. SANCTIONS AND SUPPORTS**

**4.1** With this policy paper, Atatürk University declares that it is ready to prevent the kinds of events described above and to operate an effective investigation and sanction mechanism in case of such allegations and complaints.

**4.2.** Atatürk University undertakes to inform its students and staff about all kinds of gender-based violence, harassment and assault, to provide all kinds of support to the victims immediately and free of charge, and to take all claims and complaints about such acts seriously and effectively.

**4.3.** Atatürk University acts in accordance with the principle of confidentiality of the private lives of the applicant(s) and the person(s) complained of at all stages.

**4.4.** Atatürk University shows the necessary attention and care to prevent behaviours that may cause the victim to be victimized again or damage the honour of the parties, and acts in a way that will not damage the trust of the parties.

**4.5.**  If the claimant deliberately lies or makes false statements, legal action is taken in accordance with Turkish Penal Code No. 5237, Civil Servants Law No. 657, Higher Education Law No. 2547 and Student Discipline Regulations of Higher Education Institutions dated 18.08.2012 and No. 28388, published in the Official Gazette and other relevant legislations.

**4.6.** Atatürk University conducts studies on gender discrimination, violence and harassment and establishes commissions to maintain an effective struggle.

**5. MEASURES**

The measures to be taken for behaviours and practices that prevent women’s empowerment are listed below:

**1.**Establishment of a gender equality unit, which will operate under the chairmanship of a Vice-Chancellor, within the body of ATAKSAM (Atatürk University Women's Issues Application and Research Centre), where complaints can be made and support mechanisms are activated,

**2.** Raising awareness on gender equality, carrying out studies and events to carry into effect the gender equality in real terms, acting together with non-governmental organizations on these issues,

**3.** Conducting educational activities specifically on gender equality issues for all university staff and students (such as distribution of brochures, creation of a website, giving conferences),

**4.** Providing psychological support to people who witness and are affected by gender-based violence, sexual harassment and assault,

**5.** Adopting positive discrimination practices such as quotas in favour of women who are under-represented in administration and decision-making mechanisms,

**6.** Carrying out studies to create the necessary awareness among university students, employees and the public that the issues of women's rights and violence are not of concern only to women, but the ones to the entire society,

**7.** Arranging and illuminating the university campus and classrooms for the safety of female students and increasing the number of security staff during evening classes at late hours,

**8.** Having contact with local administrations to ensure safe access to university campuses,

**9.** Taking seriously the complaints of those who have been sexually harassed and assaulted and encouraging them to express themselves,

**10.** Preparing a guideline on the precautions to be taken by individuals who have been subjected to sexual harassment and assault, as well as on statements and proofs,

**11.** Activating an effective investigation and sanction mechanism,

**12.** Acting in accordance with the principle of confidentiality at every stage of handling allegations of sexual harassment and assault,

**13.** Ensuring that individuals with different sexual identities benefit equally from the policy in question.

**In conclusion, Atatürk University takes necessary initiatives for women’s empowerment in the light of the above-mentioned objectives, scope, definitions and measures. It undertakes that actions, attitudes and behaviours aimed at preventing women's empowerment will not be ignored and that all necessary measures will be taken to activate sanction mechanisms.**