

## Sexual Misconduct Policy

Genus is operationally supported by the University of the Witwatersrand. Therefore, its policy is aligned with the sexual misconduct policies of this institution. The complete Wits sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape policy and procedures document can be accessed [here](#). Partner institutions and departments who do not have their policy are encouraged to use it to inform their own or use it as is.

Genus is committed to providing all members with a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment. Sexual harassment is unacceptable and undermines our core values of collaboration, integrity, and equality. This policy outlines the expectations, procedures, and consequences related to sexual harassment within our community.

### Definitions

- **Sexual Misconduct:** Any unwelcome verbal, non-verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment or interferes with an individual's ability to participate fully in activities.
- **Complainant:** The person who experienced or witnessed sexual harassment.
- **Respondent:** The person accused of sexual misconduct.

### Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Genus Community, including but not limited to grantees, researchers, postdoctoral fellows, postgraduate students, staff, volunteers, and visitors.

### Prohibited Conduct

Unwanted sexual behaviour and sexual harassment encompass a range of actions that are perceived as demeaning, compromising, embarrassing, threatening, or offensive to the complainant. This includes behaviours such as:

- Unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- Displaying sexually explicit material in any form.
- Making derogatory comments, jokes, or innuendos based on gender or sexual orientation.
- Sex-related jokes, insults or gestures, graphic comments about a person's body, inappropriate enquiries about a person's sex life or whistling of a sexual nature
- Stalking, cyberbullying, or other forms of online harassment of a sexual nature.
- Retaliation against anyone who reports or participates in an investigation of sexual harassment.

## **Reporting Procedure**

Anyone who believes they have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment within the Genus Community should promptly report the incident to one of the following individuals:

Ms Tandi Scott-Turner, [Tandi.Scott-Turner@wits.ac.za](mailto:Tandi.Scott-Turner@wits.ac.za), Office: 011 717 6695

Reports can be made in person, in writing, or electronically and can be done confidentially if desired. Anonymous reports will also be accepted.

## **Investigation Process**

Genus will promptly initiate an impartial investigation upon receiving a report. The investigation will be conducted discreetly and involve interviews with the complainant, respondent, and any relevant witnesses. All parties involved will be treated with respect and sensitivity.

## **Consequences**

If the investigation substantiates the allegation of sexual harassment, appropriate action will be taken based on the severity of the offence and in accordance with Genus's policies and procedures. Consequences may include, but are not limited to:

- Counselling or education for the respondent.
- Formal warning or probation.
- Suspension or expulsion from applying to Genus.
- Legal action if the conduct violates applicable laws.

## **Retaliation**

Retaliation against any individual who reports or participates in an investigation of sexual harassment is strictly prohibited. Anyone found engaging in retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action. Retaliation includes but is not limited to:

- Sabotage and withholding of research materials, support or opportunities following the sexual harassment complaint.
- Threatening or intimidating the individual who reported sexual harassment. Blackmail.
- Spreading false rumours or gossip.
- Assigning undesirable tasks or work conditions to the individual.
- Ignoring or isolating the individual within the workplace.
- Creating a hostile or unwelcoming environment for the individual.
- Taking actions that negatively impact the individual's work or reputation, including negative performance reviews, micromanagement

## **Resources**

Genus is committed to providing support to those affected by sexual harassment, including:

- Refer to counselling services.

- Information on legal rights and options.
- Referral to external support organisations.

### **Review and Update**

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with best practices.

By fostering an environment of respect and accountability, we aim to create a community where everyone can thrive and contribute to scientific advancement without fear of sexual harassment.