

Policy Framework for Gender Equity and Equality

1. Background

Gender inequality and violence including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in universities have been recorded as serious shortcomings in the Sri Lankan University System. The UGC has taken note of the issues and is of the view that, without addressing these deep-rooted inequalities and inequities within the University System, Sri Lankan universities cannot seriously call themselves centres of academic excellence. These issues will also curb the goal of the government to make the country a regional education hub. The UGC has hence taken up the challenge to address these concerns by establishing in October 2015 the UGC Centre for Gender Equity and Equality that would institute socially responsive and gender-sensitive university sub-cultures with an environment of freedom and security that allows all university students and staff to pursue their study and work free of discrimination and oppression. The Centre shall be managed directly by the UGC Standing Committee for GEE. The management structure of GEE is shown in **Figure 1**

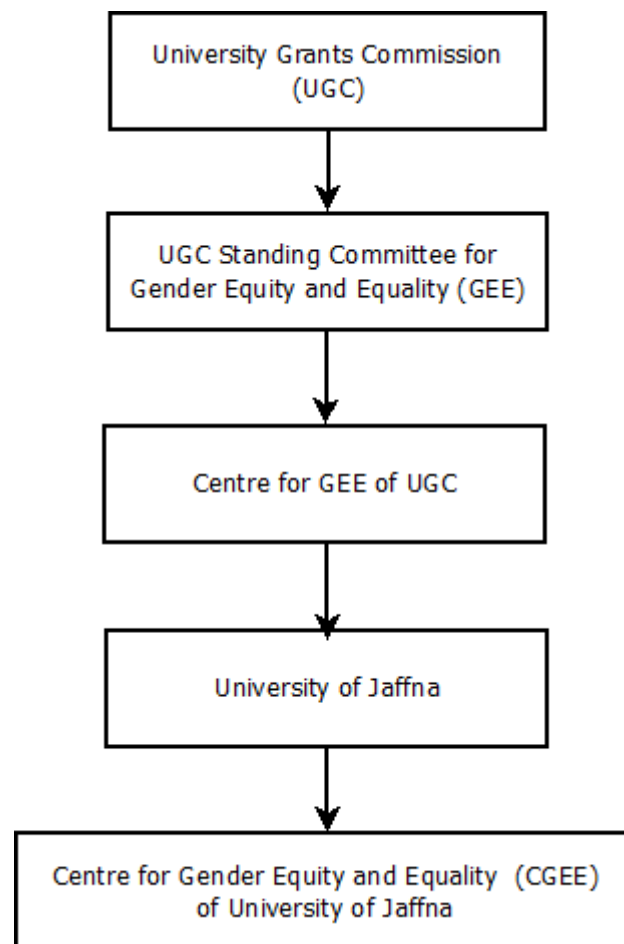


Figure 1 : Management Hierarchy of GEE

2. Commitment of the University of Jaffna

The University is committed to promote GEE among its students and staff. This implies ensuring equal rights and opportunities, empowerment of women, and an environment free of all forms of discrimination and harassment. The University Community is thus responsible for ensuring that the University is free of gender inequity and of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

The University is keen to promote gender equality, eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, and provide an inclusive working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected in order that they may attain their full potential. The University shall work to remove any barrier to GEE that may deter people of the highest ability from being part of University.

3. Policy Framework

This policy framework is designed to assist the university to ensure GEE in all student and staff activities, equitable participation and appropriate representation of all genders in the decision making processes and prevention of SGBV.

3.1. Scope of Policy

The Policy shall be the basis for the University to promote GEE in cooperation with the Government, the UGC and the society at large.

The Policy shall apply to the entire University Community (comprising students and employees in permanent, regular or temporary employment of the University) as well as visitors and service providers of any description, who are on invitation or have dealings with the University in an official capacity.

The Policy shall also equally apply to off-campus conduct that may have significant adverse implications for any member of the University Community or the University.

3.2. Overarching Policy Statement

Achieving GEE for all staff and students is a strategic objective of the University. The University explicitly plans to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue into both its core and supportive functions. The University is committed to lead the next generation on the path to secure equality and equity of opportunity for all students, staff and external users in using university resources, irrespective of gender.

In realizing GEE, the University shall endeavour to do everything within its means not to overlook the diversity of the University Community. The policy recognizes gender education as a cornerstone of the process of achieving GEE and empowerment of women through a transformative development process.

The University is committed to work with all its stakeholders within and outside the University, in accordance with the strategic actions outlined in this document.

This policy provides preventive mechanisms against violation of the policy, and anyone violating the policy shall be subject to disciplinary action as stated in the By-laws.

3.3. Policy Vision

A gender-responsive university with zero tolerance towards SGBV

3.4. Policy Mission

To enable a gender-responsive environment and to integrate gender into the functions of the University in order to attain GEE and gender empowerment to achieve zero tolerance against SGBV

4. Guiding Principles

The Policy is based on the following principles of GEE:

- Ensuring equal participation of all genders of the University Community in the implementation of the Policy;
- Upholding Gender Empowerment as central to the achievement of Policy goals and objectives;
- Upholding transparency, accountability, confidentiality and sensitivity in the implementation of the Policy as appropriate; and
- Upholding mutual understanding and respect among staff and students to ensure an environment free of SGBV and conducive to learning and working.

The Principle of Zero Tolerance to SGBV shall be upheld under all conditions.

5. Specific Guiding Objectives

1. Ensure GEE in decision making:
 - Promote and achieve gender balance in enrolment of students as best as possible.
 - Achieve and maintain gender balance in unions and other such university bodies.
 - Maintain gender-disaggregated statistics of staff and students for decision making.
2. Address gender issues in the content of courses:
 - Develop policy documents with a gender perspective.
 - Emphasise use of gender sensitive language at all levels.
3. Prevent instances of SGBV at the University:
 - Sensitize university community on GEE, and SGBV and consequences.
 - Create awareness on reporting procedure for victims of SGBV.
 - Provide prompt, effective, consistent and fair guidelines for handling instances of SGBV.
 - Provide disciplinary procedures and vindicate justice for the aggrieved.
 - Promote research and publication of research findings and recommendations regarding GEE and SGBV.
 - Provide adequate security and surveillance in the public/common spaces to prevent SGBV.

6. Policy Resolutions

6.1. Organizational Culture

Scope: *Promotion and enforcement of a gender-responsive organizational culture by the University of Jaffna to eliminate gender inequities in all university activities.*

The University shall in this context:

- develop and enforce policy guidelines on the use of gender inclusive language throughout the university;
- review and update all existing policies, forms, and procedures to eliminate sexist language and establish gender equality;
- develop and operationalize policy prohibiting public display of visual aids and materials that are demeaning to men and women; and
- organize special gender awareness orientation programmes for new members of university bodies.

6.2. Creation of Awareness

Scope: *Achieving better understanding and appreciation of GEE and prevention of SGBV throughout the entire University Community with the aim of averting the occurrence of SGBV.*

The University shall in this context:

- conduct workshops on GEE and SGBV for all staff and students;
- create and support an advocacy group to address issues of GEE and SGBV;
- disseminate the Policy on GEE and By-laws relating to SGBV to all members of staff and students;
- ensure that all staff and students abide by the Policy; and
- regularly sensitize the University Community on the Policy.

6.3. Safety and Security

Scope: *Promotion of a secure and inclusive gender neutral environment in the University, effective protection of bodily integrity and dignity of every member of the University Community and strengthening of safety and security measures for the purpose.*

The University shall in this context:

- strictly implement policy and regulations on sexual harassment and gender based violence;
- develop and enforce guidelines to ensure a secure environment that includes street and security lighting; posting security at strategic locations; providing night surveillance services; availing hotlines for emergencies and other such situations with particular attention to Halls of Residence;
- institute concrete mechanisms to deal with gender-based violence against students and staff; and

- strengthen counselling services and allocate adequate resources for prevention, management, and rehabilitation of survivors of gender based violence at the university.

6.4. Curricular and Co-curricular Programmes

Scope: *Centralizing gender in the formal curriculum and strengthen its place in co-curricular programmes*

The University shall in this context:

- create a framework for gender sensitization in the university curriculum;
- centralize gender issues in the formal university curriculum;
- review and revise all existing curricula to ensure that the new programmes are gender responsive;
- encourage staff and students to actively participate in gender focused co-curricular activities; and
- design and implement a mandatory cross cutting core course on gender and development for undergraduates and postgraduate students.

6.5. Capacity Building and Training

Scope: *Enhancing the capacity of members of the university community and managers to help the implementation of the policy.*

The University shall in this context:

- train all members of the University Community to facilitate policy implementation;
- institute empowerment programmes to protect all members of the university community against SGBV;
- strengthen the current guidance and counselling unit to deal effectively with cases of SGBV; and
- facilitate university health providers to recognize and be responsive to emotional and psychological needs of staff and students.

6.6. Research and Innovation

Scope: *Adoption of a gender-responsive research environment that improves its community's understanding of national development issues and their impacts on the lives of men and women*

The University shall in this context:

- design and conduct gender-focused research skills training programmes for members of the staff;
- design and implement an affirmative action programme to encourage participation of female members of staff, with specific budget allocation to support their multiple roles in society;

- develop dissemination outlets of international standard for gender focused research and publications;
- encourage increased operational research leading to evidence-based programming and/or service delivery for handling of SGBV research agenda;
- facilitate identification of SGBV research capacities/needs and develop an SGBV research agenda; and
- encourage research methodologies and approaches that are sensitive to survivors of SGBV and lead to mechanisms for eradicating SGBV.

6.7. Women's Participation in Decision Making

Scope: *Ensuring that the University adopts proactive measures to increase women's participation in decisions on recruitment, promotion and retention in order to eliminate existing gender imbalances within systems, structures and all core activities of the University*

The University shall in this context:

- design and implement programmes ensuring equal opportunity and affirmative action;
- design and implement a gender-responsive cross generational leadership and mentoring programme for young female staff in all disciplines;
- establish and implement programmes with adequate facilities and resources to support the multiple roles of university staff by way of career, studies and care-providing;
- develop and implement a human resources policy that is gender sensitive and responsive; and
- develop a databank of qualifications, expertise and experience of women in university governing bodies such as the Council, Senate and affiliated bodies.

6.8. Resource Mobilization and Gender Mainstreaming

Scope: *Active promotion of resource mobilization and gender budgeting as means of ensuring adequate and sustainable budget allocations for effective institutionalization of gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue within the core activities of the University.*

The University shall in this context:

- develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy for financing the GEE objectives;
- design guidelines and implement gender budgeting training programme for all key members of the staff involved in planning and budgeting;
- earmark budgetary resources based on a clearly defined allocation of university funding for gender mainstreaming in all core functions of the University; and
- establish a mechanism for financial accountability for resources allocated for gender mainstreaming.

6.9. Staff and Student Welfare

Scope: *Planning and safeguarding the welfare of all its staff and students by the University to achieve prime productivity*

The University shall in this context:

- engender human resource policies;
- formulate and implement a gender-sensitive policy on disability including accessibility to the university buildings and facilities;
- formulate and implement a policy on pregnant and parenting students and sensitize all relevant staff on sexual and reproductive rights of students; and
- invest on-campus child care facilities for the benefit of parenting staff.

6.10. Creation of the Centre for GEE (CGEE)

A Centre for GEE (CGEE) shall be created to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the GEE Policy. The CGEE shall come under the purview of the Vice Chancellor. The CGEE shall be created by the University through,

- approval for the positioning of the CGEE by Senate and Council;
- founding the CGEE with adequate space and staff;
- implementation of a Resource Mobilization Strategy to enable the CGEE to access resources; and
- appointing the Committee of CGEE that would to assess progress, monitor and evaluate the GEE Programme, identify and develop sustainable strategies.

7. The Centre for GEE (CGEE)

The CGEE shall be headed by a Director appointed by the Council as specified in the By-law, and shall:

- provide training on gender equity and equality (including social intersections) to establish a core team of gender experts;
- conduct research, review policy, and provide policy inputs at the university level;
- introduce curricular reforms to inculcate the concepts and practices of GEE in order to develop relevant skills to prevent and respond to SGBV;
- initiate mechanisms to receive complaints on SGBV from the University Community, to act on complaints, and make recommendations to the Vice Chancellor as necessary;
- identify ways and means of preventing SGBV in the University and empower staff and students to prevent and respond to SGBV, by developing relevant skills; and
- consistently enhance its capacity to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the GEE Policy at institutional level.

8. Committee of CGEE

The founding members of the Committee of CGEE shall be appointed by the Vice Chancellor with the approval of the Council. All elected and appointed members shall hold office for two years from the date of appointment.

The CGEE shall be governed by the Committee of CGEE comprising the following members.

1. Two members (one male and one female) nominated by the Council from among its appointed members (internal and external)
2. Proctor
3. Director of Student Welfare
4. Two Wardens of Hostels (one male and one female) appointed by the Vice Chancellor
5. Chief Marshal or his/her nominee
6. DR/SAR/AR of Legal Affairs and Documentation Branch of University of Jaffna
7. Two academics (one male and one female) either retired or in service, from any other State University in Sri Lanka, with proven scholastic record in gender issues, appointed by the Vice Chancellor on the recommendation of the Senate
8. Two non-state actors (one male and one female) engaged in gender related activism appointed by the Vice Chancellor in concurrence with the Council
9. Six representatives (three males and three females) from among the academic staff elected in accordance with election procedure approved by the Council
10. Two representatives (one male and one female) from among the administrative staff elected in accordance with election procedure approved by the Council
11. Two representatives (one male and one female) from among the non-academic staff elected in accordance with election procedure approved by the Council
12. Six representatives (three males and three females) from among the students elected in accordance with election procedure approved by the Council
13. A representative from the Police Children & Women Bureau appointed by the Vice Chancellor in concurrence with the Council, based on recommendation of Kopay Police Station

The first meeting of the newly formed Committee of CGEE shall be presided by the Vice Chancellor and convened by the Registrar. The members of Committee of CGEE at this meeting shall

- (a) select the Director (Chairperson) from among the six elected members of the Academic Staff; and
- (b) elect a Secretary from among the two elected members of the Administrative Staff.

Subsequently, the Director and the Secretary shall be appointed by the Council. The Director and the Secretary shall be responsible for compliance with GEE Policy and carrying out the responsibilities under the Policy Framework for GEE and By-Laws relating to SGBV.

The quorum for the meetings of the Committee shall be 2/3rd of the members.

8.1. Working Committee and Sub-Committees of the CGEE

The Committee of CGEE shall have the Working Committee and the following Sub-Committees comprising members drawn from the relevant bodies of the University, which shall offer expertise and additional support to the CGEE:

1. Resource Mobilization Sub-committee
2. Education and Research Sub-committee
3. Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-committee
4. Grievances Sub-committee

The Sub-Committees shall review annually their progress in implementing GEE Policy and submit regular progress reports to the Committee of the CGEE for consideration and forwarding to the Council. The annual progress reports of CGEE shall be published on the University website.

8.1.1. Working Committee

The Working Committee shall comprise:

- Director of CGEE,
- all representatives of the Academic Staff in the Committee of CGEE, and
- the Secretary of the Committee of CGEE.

The Working Committee shall ensure the smooth functioning of the CGEE and facilitate the sub-committees to perform their roles responsibly.

8.1.2. Resource Mobilization Sub-Committee

The Resource Mobilization Sub-Committee shall comprise:

- a Chairperson who shall be a representative of academic staff in the Committee of CGEE, and
- one representative each from the academic staff of each faculty.

The Sub-Committee shall

- design mechanisms to create annual allocation for GEE activities in the annual budget of the university based on the proposal submitted by the CGEE;
- prepare the annual budget estimation for CGEE;
- follow up the financial allocations and proceed with disbursements as per the university financial regulations;
- work closely with other sub-committees to create widespread awareness about GEE and the grievance mechanism to address complaints of SGBV among the university community; and
- recommend an affirmative action programme to encourage participation of female members of staff, with specific budget allocations, to support their multiple roles in the society.

8.1.3. Education and Research Sub-Committee

The Education and Research Sub-Committee shall comprise:

- a Chairperson who shall be a representative of academic staff in the Committee of CGEE and
- one representative each from the academic staff of each faculty.

The Sub-Committee shall

- sensitize the university community about the GEE policy, By-laws relating to SGBV and grievance redressing mechanism by making the same available in library, offices and online portal;
- disseminate information about the activities of CGEE by displaying relevant materials at important places and circulating the same through proper channels to the university community;
- publish brochures, handbooks and flyers on GEE and SGBV in all three languages;
- train the staff and students on gender-focused research skills;
- develop guidelines to ensure that research processes and innovations integrate gender analysis wherever applicable;
- facilitate dissemination of gender focused research findings by creating a research forum or an agenda in the existing research conferences in the university;
- recommend an affirmative action programme with specific budget allocation to encourage participation of female staff members and support their multiple roles in the society;
- conduct awareness programmes for newly enrolled students and recently recruited staff during student orientation and staff induction programmes respectively;
- steer interactive dialogues in each faculty among staff and students;
- sensitize staff who deal with student welfare and discipline;
- promote incorporation of GEE and SGBV aspects in the curricula of degree programmes;
- design and implement a gender-responsive cross generational leadership and mentoring programme for all female staff members;
- train volunteer groups of students to raise consciousness on SGBV and grievance redressing mechanism among their peers;
- encourage registered trade unions to amend their constitutions according to the GEE policy and By-laws relating to SGBV; and
- organize activities to sensitize about proportionate representation in all university bodies.

8.1.4. Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-Committee

The Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-Committee shall comprise:

- a Chairperson who shall be a representative of academic staff in the Committee of CGEE and
- one representative each from the academic staff of each faculty.

The Sub-Committee shall

- design mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the performance of the CGEE and the University in implementing this policy and the related By-law;
- put in place performance indicators with time frames to measure the progress in implementation of the above;
- create avenues for receiving views of the university community on the GEE policy and By-law relating to SGBV;
- review the By-law relating to SGBV from time to time considering the emerging issues and trends highlighted by research findings; and
- monitor the updates in existing policies, By-laws, procedures and forms related to GEE and SGBV.

8.1.5. Grievances Sub-Committee

The Grievances Sub-Committee shall comprise five members from the Committee of CGEE of whom

- three are members of the academic staff of the University of Jaffna and/or any other university coming under the purview of the UGC,
- one is a member of the administrative staff, and
- one is a member of the non-academic staff.

The Sub-Committee shall be chaired by one of the members of the academic staff and the member of the administrative staff shall be the Secretary.

The Sub-Committee shall

- sensitize the university community about the GEE policy and grievance redressing mechanism by displaying flyers, brochures and handbooks in library, offices and online portal;
- develop a form to receive written complaints, allegations and reports of SGBV;
- ensure all complaints are addressed with due regard to key principles including confidentiality, impartiality, objectivity, timelines, accuracy and thoroughness;
- provide support to the Inquiry Committee on SGBV with respect to documentation;
- provide institutional avenues for victims and offenders to meet trained counsellors to deal with the root causes of SGBV issues;
- report the root causes of SGBV and recommend preventive measures to the Vice Chancellor based on the reports from the Counselling Division and trained counsellors; and

- publish an annual statistical handbook on reported SGBV incidents.

9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability for GEE

9.1. Responsibility for Implementation of GEE

All members of the University Community and all persons associated with the University have the responsibility to adhere to the GEE Policy. Overall responsibilities in relation to the Policy are as follows:

(a) The Council

As the Governing Authority of the University, the Council is responsible for ensuring that the University fulfils its legal and financial responsibilities to implement GEE and eliminate all forms of gender based discrimination. In order to fulfil this, the Council shall receive bi-annual progress reports through the Vice Chancellor on the monitoring and implementation of the GEE Policy to ensure that the Policy is put into effect. The Council shall, as necessary, discharge its responsibility through the management structures of the University.

(b) The Vice Chancellor

The Vice Chancellor shall be responsible for ensuring that the Policy is effectively implemented and that each member of the staff is aware of his/her responsibilities, accountability and training needs; and to ensure that appropriate action is taken against any member of the staff or a student who violates the Policy.

The Vice Chancellor shall delegate to the CGEE the responsibility of taking forward the GEE agenda and putting it into full effect. The Vice Chancellor shall take necessary action on issues concerning GEE and SGBV, based on the recommendations of the CGEE.

(c) The Rector of a Campus

The Rector shall ensure that the Policy is effectively implemented in the Campus and that the staff are aware of their responsibilities, accountability, and training needs, and for ensuring that appropriate action is taken against any member of the staff or a student who violates the Policy.

(d) The Registrar

The Registrar shall ensure that the policy is effectively implemented among the administrative and non-academic staff and that members of the staff are aware of their responsibilities, accountability and training needs, and for ensuring that appropriate action is taken against any member of the staff who violates the Policy.

(e) Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments

Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments shall ensure effective implementation of the Policy within their ambit of responsibility. This requires allowing the CGEE to publicize the Policy and institute strategic actions and procedures to implement the Policy; ensuring that all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities and receive

support and training to put them into effect; and ensuring that necessary action is taken against staff and students who discriminate on grounds of gender.

9.2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective institutional arrangement for monitoring and evaluation is key to achieving the objectives of the policy and shall be achieved by instituting an effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the system to ensure adherence to this policy.

10. Institutional and Regulatory Frameworks

The implementation of the GEE Policy requires a well-coordinated and guided institutional framework to translate goals, objectives and strategies into action programmes at all levels of the university functions. The implementation of the Policy shall therefore be operationalized through existing University bodies such as Senate and Council that are responsible for University Policy.

This document, *“Policy Framework for Gender Equity and Equality”* is approved by the Council of University of Jaffna at its 454th meeting held on 09th June 2021.