

ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), ERNAKULAM

GENDER POLICY

1. PREAMBLE

St. Teresa's College is committed to gender equality and inclusion in all aspects of campus life, in alignment with India's constitutional values and both national and international frameworks. The policy is rooted in Article 15 of the Constitution (which guarantees non-discrimination on the basis of sex) and also inculcates the Sustainable **Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality)** by aiming to “*end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere*” (Target 5.1) and by **adopting a sound institutional policy for gender equality** (Target 5.c/5.9). It reflects the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** focus on “*Equitable and Inclusive Education*”, which treats gender as a cross-cutting priority and specifically includes *female and transgender individuals* among disadvantaged groups. Furthermore, this policy draws on **UGC guidelines** (e.g. the UGC 2015 Gender Sensitization/“Saksham” recommendations and UGC's 2015 Regulations on Sexual Harassment) that direct all higher education institutions to create safe, gender-equitable environments and undertake gender sensitization programs. It also upholds relevant initiatives of the Kerala Government, including directives on inclusive admissions and safety. In essence, the College endeavours to be a model institution for gender equality and justice, meeting national and international standards for gender equality.

1.1 Inclusivity and Intersectionality:

As a **women's only college**, we are dedicated to the empowerment of women in higher education. At the same time, the College affirms that gender is not binary and that our campus must be welcoming and safe for gender-diverse and non-binary individuals. In line with Kerala's progressive policies, the College extends its educational opportunities to transgender students who seek admission, and will do so in a manner that respects the institution's women-focused identity while affirming gender diversity. All students, staff, and faculty – irrespective of gender – will be treated with equal dignity, respect, and support on our campus. Moreover, the College adopts an intersectional approach to gender equality, acknowledging that women and gender minorities may face overlapping forms of disadvantage (based on caste, class, ability, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). Accordingly, this policy strives for non-discrimination on any ground and for proactive measures to support those at the intersections

of multiple marginalized identities. All stakeholders – leadership, faculty, students, and staff – share responsibility for upholding this policy and creating a “**gender-just environment of learning**”. The following sections detail policy provisions across key institutional areas:

2. FACULTY AND STAFF RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The College is committed to fair, inclusive, and gender-equitable practices in hiring, retaining, and developing faculty and staff. Our goals are to ensure equal opportunity, increase diversity (especially women’s representation in all roles and levels), and build gender competence among employees:

- **Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination:** Recruitment, hiring, and promotion processes shall be gender-neutral and free from bias or discrimination. The College prohibits any form of gender-based discrimination or harassment in employment practices, in line with UGC’s **Promotion of Equity Regulations 2012** which “*prohibit discrimination/harassment on the basis of gender in HEIs*”. Selection committees will have adequate gender representation, and criteria will focus on merit and diversity. All genders (women, men, transgender, non-binary) shall receive equal consideration for employment and career advancement, consistent with our policy of non-discrimination and the principle of “equal pay for equal work” .
- **Inclusive and Affirmative Hiring:** As a women’s institution, we especially encourage applications from qualified women candidates in fields where they are under-represented, and we strive for a gender balance among faculty over time. At the same time, we welcome candidates from gender minority groups (such as transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals) for appropriate positions, to foster an inclusive workforce. The College will not bar any gender from staff positions unless exigencies of women’s safety clearly demand it (e.g. women’s hostel wardens will typically be female for student safety); however, any such role-specific gender requirement will be sparingly used and justified by policy.
- **Gender-Sensitive Workplace Policies:** The College will maintain family-friendly and gender-sensitive HR policies to support all employees. Sexual harassment or any sexist behaviour in the workplace is strictly forbidden, and all employees must abide by a code of conduct that reflects gender equality values.
- **Capacity Building and Training:** The College will invest in continuous professional development with a focus on gender awareness. All faculty and staff shall undergo

mandatory gender sensitization training at induction and periodic refreshers thereafter. These trainings will cover topics such as gender biases in the classroom or workplace, inclusive pedagogy (for faculty), prevention of sexual harassment (PoSH), and understanding the needs of diverse genders. By educating our educators and staff, we ensure that those “*strategically positioned to act as agents of change*” are themselves gender-sensitive in their teaching, supervision, and daily interactions. Participation in external gender workshops or certification (e.g. on counseling, PoSH procedures, LGBTQ+ inclusion) will be encouraged and financially supported where possible.

- **Mentorship and Leadership Development:** The College will actively mentor and support women and other underrepresented genders in faculty/staff roles to advance into leadership positions. Senior women faculty will be groomed for academic leadership (HoD, Dean, Principal positions) through leadership training programs and opportunities to take on decision-making roles. This echoes SDG Target 5.5 calling for women’s “*full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels*”. The College will identify talented women staff and provide career development support (mentors, networking, management workshops) to prepare them for higher responsibility. We will also aim to appoint women in key administrative roles wherever feasible, as representation at the top is crucial for institutional gender equality. Similarly, any transgender or minority-gender staff will be given mentorship and growth opportunities to thrive in our institution.
- **Evaluation and Accountability:** Any gender gaps in hiring, retention, or pay will be analyzed and addressed through corrective action plans. The success of this policy area will be measured by improved gender diversity in staff, satisfaction surveys disaggregated by gender, and increased number of women and gender-diverse staff in senior roles over time.

3. STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND SUPPORT

The College strives for inclusive and equitable access to education for all students, upholding the principle that no person should be denied admission or support on the basis of gender or any intersecting identity. As a women’s college, we have a special focus on educating women, but we extend our inclusivity to transgender and gender-diverse students in line with government policies. Key commitments in admissions and student support include:

- **Non-Discriminatory Admissions: Admissions are open to all candidates and in alignment with Kerala Government directives, the College will also admit **transgender students** (including trans women, trans men, or non-binary individuals, as self-identified) into its programs. The Government of Kerala in 2018-19 mandated that “*every college should give admission to [the] transgender community if they seek admission*” and even introduced reservation of two additional seats in each college for transgender students. The College fully complies with these orders – ensuring that transgender applicants are actively encouraged and given due consideration during admissions, without discrimination or bias.**
- **Outreach and Access for Marginalized Groups:** In line with NEP 2020’s goal of “*bridging social category gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes*”, the College will conduct outreach to and facilitate admissions for women from underrepresented communities – such as students from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes, minority religious communities, economically weaker sections, and differently-abled students. We will ensure that admission policies are transparent and inclusive, providing weightage or special consideration as per government norms for disadvantaged groups (e.g. as per reservation policies or special quotas for persons with disabilities, etc.). Our commitment is that **no aspiring student will be denied admission solely due to her gender identity or intersecting socio-economic disadvantages.**
- **Financial Aid and Scholarships:** Recognizing that financial barriers often impede girls’ and transgender persons’ access to higher education, the College will strengthen financial support mechanisms. In addition to any government scholarships, the College will offer need-based and merit-based scholarships and tuition-fee concessions for eligible female and transgender students. This aligns with national efforts – the Ministry of Education has taken measures like fee reductions, more institutes, and scholarship schemes to support women’s higher education. We will proactively connect students with national scholarships and fellowships (e.g. NSP scholarships for girls, UGC’s Indira Gandhi PG Scholarship for Single Girl Child, state-level scholarships for women, etc.) and provide guidance in applying for aid.
- **Bridge Programs and Academic Support:** Many young women, especially from rural or marginalized communities, may face initial challenges in transition to college. We will organize **bridge/remedial courses** for students who need them. Peer tutoring, mentoring by faculty, and study skill workshops will be in place.

- **Mentoring and Counselling:** Mentorship will be gender-sensitive – mentors will be trained to understand challenges that women and LGBTQ+ students might face (such as gender bias, imposter syndrome, family pressures to marry, etc.) and to provide supportive guidance. We will also provide professional counselling services on campus, to whom students can confidentially discuss personal, psychological, or academic concerns. Regular counselling drives and mental health workshops (with a focus on issues like self-esteem, assertiveness training for women, etc.) will be organized. These support systems will particularly help those who face intersectional burdens (e.g. a student who is a first-generation college woman from a low-income family) to cope and succeed.
- **Support for Transgender and Non-Binary Students:** To be truly inclusive, the College will implement specific measures to support any transgender or non-binary students on campus. Their privacy and dignity will be protected – e.g. maintaining confidentiality about a student’s transgender status if they so desire, and allowing students to update their gender identity and name in college records upon submission of valid documentation (self-declaration or government ID, as per prevailing norms). **Gender-neutral facilities** will be available for their comfort. We will also offer counselling and peer support groups for LGBTQ+ students as needed, and ensure zero tolerance for any bullying or exclusion of gender-diverse students. All faculty and staff will be sensitized to use a student’s preferred pronouns and name. In essence, transgender students will receive the same care, respect, and opportunities as other women students, as well as any additional support required to address challenges unique to their experience.
- **Retention and Special Measures:** The College will monitor female student *retention and success rates* to detect any gender-specific issues. If certain groups (e.g. women from a particular community or parenting students) have higher dropout rates, targeted interventions will be launched. For instance, if a student becomes pregnant or marries during her course, the College will offer counselling and options like a break in studies or flexible coursework submission, so she can complete her education (consistent with university regulations). The College will facilitate re-entry for women who had to discontinue studies due to marriage, childbirth or other gender-related reasons. **Safety nets** – such as a grievance mechanism and responsive faculty advisors – will help address problems early and prevent students from leaving due to an uncomfortable

environment. In short, we aim for 100% completion of education for those who enroll, with personalized support wherever necessary.

- **Holistic Development and Leadership:** Beyond academics, the College will provide co-curricular and extra-curricular support geared towards women's empowerment. We will encourage female and gender minority students to participate in clubs, sports, leadership roles in student council, etc., sometimes through reserved positions or additional guidance if needed to boost confidence. Workshops on life skills (self-defense classes, financial literacy, women's health, etc.) will be provided to all students to strengthen their personal agency. Notably, the College will implement the UGC's "**Gender Champions**" initiative, designating interested students as **Gender Champions** who can work as peer leaders to promote gender equality on campus. All these efforts ensure that students receive not only equal access to college, but equal encouragement to grow, lead, and excel during their time here.

4. CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

The academic curriculum and teaching methods of the College will be systematically reviewed and improved to reflect gender sensitivity, inclusivity, and empowerment. We believe that what is taught and how it is taught should actively challenge gender biases and promote equality. Key policy measures include:

- **Inclusive Curriculum Content:** The College shall strive to mainstream gender into the curriculum across all disciplines. This means curricula will be reviewed to eliminate gender stereotypes. Wherever possible, topics on gender equality, women's rights, and inclusion will be introduced – whether as modules within courses or as separate elective courses. Additionally, short-term programs such as workshops or certificate courses on gender sensitization (for example, a 30-hour module on gender awareness) will be offered to supplement the formal curriculum. By making curriculum content more representative and critical of inequality, we prepare students (of all genders) to recognize and remedy gender biases in their fields.
- **Gender-Sensitive Pedagogy:** We will ensure that teaching methods are gender-sensitive and inclusive, so that the classroom becomes a space where everyone feels respected and able to participate. The College will train and encourage its faculty to use **gender-fair language**, to interact equally with all students, and to be aware of dynamics such as who speaks or gets attention in class. Female students will be actively

encouraged to take leadership in class discussions, group work, and projects, building their confidence. Pedagogical techniques like collaborative learning and open discussions on social issues will be used to engage students with concepts of equality. We will also sensitize faculty to avoid any implicit biases in assessment – grading and feedback should be impartial and supportive for all. If needed, faculty development programs will cover gender-sensitive pedagogy, echoing UNESCO’s guidance that teachers must “*believe in gender-sensitive education*” to truly have gender-sensitive classrooms. In addition, the College encourages inclusive classroom practices for transgender or non-binary students – e.g. using correct pronouns, addressing bullying immediately, and ensuring such students are not misgendered or isolated in class.

- **Faculty Training and Sensitization:** These sessions will help lecturers redesign their course materials with a gender lens and share techniques for equitable teaching. New faculty orientation will include modules on the expectations for gender-inclusive teaching at our college.
- **Classroom Environment and Participation:** The College mandates that all classrooms, labs, and academic spaces maintain an environment of mutual respect and equality. Any instances of gender-biased remarks, derogatory comments, or exclusionary behaviour among students will be treated as misconduct. Faculty will set the tone by establishing ground rules for respectful communication. We will also ensure equal access to academic resources and opportunities.
- **Assessment and Feedback Through a Gender Lens:** The College will seek student feedback on inclusivity regularly. The College also commits to recognizing and celebrating academic achievements of women and gender-diverse students – for example, we have instituted awards which are given during the ‘Achievers’ day’- – to reinforce positive role modelling and break any myths about limitations on what women can do.
- **Promotion of Gender Studies and Research in Academia:** We will maintain a rich collection of books, journals, and e-resources on gender issues in our library for use in coursework and research. Students from any discipline will be encouraged to undertake research projects or term papers on gender-related topics, fostering an interdisciplinary understanding of gender. Such efforts prepare students to be sensitive and informed professionals after graduation who can incorporate gender analysis in their future workplaces and communities.

5. INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Gender equality principles will be embedded in the governance structures and leadership culture of the College. We recognize that truly inclusive policy requires support from the top and representation of women and gender-diverse persons in decision-making. This section outlines how the College's governance, administrative policies, and leadership practices will promote and model gender equity:

- **Gender-Balanced Governance Bodies:** The College will ensure adequate representation of women (and when applicable, other gender minorities) in all governance and advisory bodies. This includes the College Governing Council/Board, Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), faculty committees, student council, and other decision-making committees. In cases where external members are part of governance (e.g. industry advisors, alumni reps), the College will seek to include accomplished women and gender-diverse persons to bring their perspectives.
- **Leadership Roles and Capacity Building:** The administration will create a pipeline by providing leadership training, mentoring, and growth opportunities to women faculty/staff with potential. We will also identify any structural barriers that have historically limited women's rise to leadership (for example, timing of meetings that conflict with childcare, lack of networking opportunities, etc.) and address them – e.g. by scheduling meetings considerately, and sponsoring women to attend leadership programs. The goal is not only to benefit the individuals but also to signal to students and society that women can and do lead effectively. By amplifying women's voices in academia and building their leadership capacity, the College contributes to breaking the glass ceiling in higher education.
- **Gender Sensitisation Committee:** The College will strengthen the existing Gender sensitisation Committee to oversee the implementation of this Gender Policy across all sections, recommend new initiatives, and review progress annually. It will also coordinate with the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) on harassment issues and with student groups like Gender Champions to ensure a cohesive effort. The Committee will meet regularly (at least once a semester) and its recommendations will be given due weight in college policy decisions.
- **Policy Integration and Decision Processes:** Gender considerations will be integrated into all institutional policies and decisions. Before approving major decisions (such as infrastructure projects, budget allocations, new programs), the College leadership will

assess any differential impact on women or gender minorities. For instance, when planning budgets, funds for gender initiatives (self-defense workshops, sanitary facilities, etc.) will be protected. When evaluating faculty for promotions or awards, the criteria will be conscious of not penalizing those who took maternity breaks or had other gender-related career impacts. In procurement and vendor selection, the College will be mindful of supporting women-led enterprises or ensuring that outsourced services (security, sanitation) adhere to gender fairness for their employees. By making gender equality an explicit part of governance ethos, we ensure it is not an afterthought but a built-in criterion for success.

- **Transparency and Grievance in Governance:** The College will uphold transparency in how gender-related issues are handled by leadership. If any student or staff perceives gender bias in a decision (academic or administrative), they can approach the Grievance Cell for review without fear.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** The Principal and top management bear ultimate responsibility for the execution of this gender policy. They will incorporate gender equity goals into the institutional strategic plan and monitor key indicators (enrollment of women/trans students, faculty gender ratio, harassment case resolutions, etc.). By institutionalizing accountability, we ensure this policy is not merely symbolic but leads to tangible changes in the governance culture in Favor of gender justice.
- **External Linkages and Advocacy:** We will seek partnerships with organizations working on women's empowerment – for instance, inviting members of the **National Commission for Women (NCW)** or the **Kerala Women's Development Corporation** to advise or audit our campus, and collaborating with NGOs for gender training. The leadership will also use its influence to advocate for gender-inclusive policies in higher education forums, contributing to broader change.

6. PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A safe, accessible, and enabling environment – both physical and virtual – is crucial for achieving gender equity on campus. The College will develop and maintain infrastructure (buildings, facilities, and IT platforms) that cater to the needs of women and gender-diverse persons, ensuring safety, comfort, and equal access. The following measures will guide infrastructure planning and management:

- **Safe Campus Facilities:** The College is committed to providing a secure campus where students and staff feel safe at all times. In line with UGC's recommendations, we will implement safety measures without resorting to overly restrictive rules that impede women's freedom. Key steps include: adequate lighting across campus (well-lit pathways, parking areas, and common spaces to eliminate dark corners); installation of CCTV surveillance in strategic locations while respecting privacy (covering entry/exits, corridors, but not invasive in private areas); and deployment of trained security personnel (with at least some female guards, especially in women's hostel areas, and with gender-sensitization training for all guards). The campus layout will be regularly reviewed through a **safety audit** from a woman's perspective – for instance, ensuring that isolated areas have alarm points or are closed off if not needed, trimming overgrown bushes, etc. Emergency response mechanisms will be in place, such as a **24x7 helpline** that students can contact, and an on-call warden or staff for hostel emergencies. The focus will be on making the environment safe by design, rather than controlling women's behaviour.
- **Gender-Specific Facilities:** Being a women's college, we will ensure that all basic facilities meet women's needs. This includes sufficient ladies' washrooms in every block, maintained with hygiene and privacy (with sanitary napkin vending machines and disposal bins in toilets, cleaned frequently). We will also provide at least one sick room/first-aid room equipped for women. There will also be common rooms or lounge areas for women students to rest, socialize, or study in a comfortable female-only space – these rooms will have amenities like drinking water, menstrual hygiene supplies, etc.
- **Inclusive and Accessible Design:** The College infrastructure will follow the principles of universal design, benefiting everyone regardless of gender, disability, or other status. For instance, all new buildings will have ramps/elevators for differently-abled access, which helps pregnant women or any student with temporary injuries as well. Campus maps and signage will be clear to assist newcomers (important for first-generation women students who may not be fluent in English). Specific to gender inclusivity, the College will work toward establishing **gender-neutral restrooms** in addition to the existing male/female facilities – this is especially to accommodate transgender or non-binary individuals who may not be comfortable in binary-designated spaces. At least one gender-neutral toilet (accessible to anyone) will be provided in academic blocks as a start. Hostel allocations will be handled case-by-case for transgender students: trans women will be housed with other women if they are comfortable, whereas a trans man

or non-binary student might be offered a separate room or other safe arrangement in consultation with them, ensuring they have equal housing access without facing harassment.

- **Hostel and Residence Safety:** Many women students reside in our hostel, so hostel infrastructure and rules are critical to gender policy. The hostels will have proper security measures (e.g. a sign-in/out register) but also a comfortable living environment. Hostel wardens will be trained on gender sensitization and will enforce rules in a fair, non-arbitrary manner. Hostel curfews will be set balancing safety with personal freedom; any special late permissions (for academic or personal emergencies) will be handled with understanding. The hostel facility will have adequate street lighting on its premises and safe boundary walls. Visitor policies will be gender-sensitive – for example, male visitors may have restricted access to women’s living areas, but there will be reasonable provision for parents or guardians to meet students in designated areas. Importantly, hostel rules will avoid moral policing (no discrimination or punishment for residents based on clothing, friends, or lifestyle, as long as basic code of conduct is observed). We adopt the **UGC’s stance that safety should not translate into overly restrictive monitoring**—hence, our hostels aim to be safe spaces that empower young women to learn independence, rather than treating them as inherently vulnerable. Regular feedback from residents will be taken to improve hostel services (e.g. installing grievance/suggestion boxes in hostels).
- **Digital Infrastructure and Online Safety:** In the digital realm, the College will ensure equal digital access and a safe cyber environment. All students and staff will have access to campus IT facilities (computer labs, internet connectivity, online learning platforms) without gender bias – since our institution is women-only for students, the focus is on ensuring female students, who might often be less exposed to technology due to societal factors, get ample opportunities to build digital skills. The College will conduct digital literacy programs (as also recommended by UGC’s recent directives for women’s empowerment) so that our women students become confident in using computers, the internet, and emerging technologies. This fulfills SDG Target 5.b which calls for empowering women through technology. Alongside providing access, we will secure the online safety and privacy of our community: a Cyber Policy will be in place to prevent and address cyber-harassment or misuse of online platforms. For example, any online forums or class WhatsApp groups will have codes of conduct, and any cyber-bullying (such as trolling a student based on gender or appearance) will be actionable

under our grievance mechanisms. The College's official website and social media will use inclusive language (avoiding sexist wording) and will highlight our gender equality commitments. We will also ensure that online systems have inclusive gender options and do not force applicants to misidentify. Data privacy will be strictly maintained for sensitive information (especially around gender or medical data). IT staff will be sensitized to keep student data secure (e.g. a student's transgender status or personal details will not be disclosed without consent).

- **ICT for Safety:** We will provide students guidance on using technology safely: e.g. workshops on cyber safety specifically for women (how to handle cyber-stalking, privacy settings on social media, etc.). This empowers students to navigate the digital world securely.
- **Maintenance and Sanitation:** A gender-responsive infrastructure also means clean and hygienic facilities, as women are disproportionately affected by poor sanitation (e.g. during menstruation). The College will ensure that housekeeping staff keep washrooms and common areas very clean and functional. Adequate water supply in restrooms, safe drinking water points, and disposal facilities for sanitary waste will be maintained. Female housekeeping staff will be employed for women's areas to ensure comfort.
- **Environmental Safety:** Other infrastructural aspects include safe laboratory practices (since women should feel safe in science labs, with proper training to all on handling equipment safely and addressing any specific pregnancy-related risks with care), hazard-free environment (well-ventilated classrooms, no sexual harassment in crowded spaces). In disaster management plans (fire, evacuation), special care will be taken for hostels and areas where women congregate, with drills conducted with sensitivity (e.g. ensuring decency during hostel fire drills, etc.).

7. SAFETY, HARASSMENT PREVENTION, AND GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

We will comply fully with legal requirements (such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013) and UGC regulations, adopting a zero-tolerance policy towards harassment. Key components are:

- **Zero Tolerance Policy:** The College unequivocally commits to a **zero-tolerance stance on sexual harassment and gender-based violence**. Any act of sexual harassment, stalking, molestation, unwelcome touching, gender-based bullying, or

other misconduct of a sexual or sexist nature is strictly prohibited and will invite prompt disciplinary action. This policy applies to all members of the college community – students, faculty, non-teaching staff, as well as visitors/vendors on campus.

- **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC):** As required by the PoSH Act 2013 and UGC Regulations, the College has constituted an **Internal Complaints Committee**. The ICC is a formally notified body that will receive and address complaints of sexual harassment from any woman employee or student (and in our inclusive interpretation, from any gender, since UGC encourages a gender-neutral approach). The ICC composition meets legal norms: chaired by a senior woman faculty, with at least half women members, including one external member with expertise in sexual harassment issues, and representatives from faculty, staff, and students. The ICC's mandate and powers (conducting inquiries, recommending action, etc.) follow the law. Importantly, even though the PoSH Act focuses on women complainants, our policy (reflecting UGC's broadened guidelines) will allow any victim of sexual harassment, regardless of gender, to approach ICC – e.g. if a transgender student or even a male staff member faces harassment on our campus, the ICC will address it with equal seriousness. The ICC will also handle complaints of **gender discrimination** (non-sexual) or sexist behaviour, or refer them to appropriate authorities, to ensure all gender-based grievances are resolved.
- **Awareness and Accessibility:** The College will take steps to ensure that **every** student and staff member is aware of the anti-harassment policy and the ICC mechanism. We will prominently display on the website the names, phone/email contacts of ICC members, and a clear flowchart of the complaint process. The College will also conduct awareness workshops every year for students and separately for faculty/staff to sensitize them to issues of sexual harassment, power dynamics, and how to intervene as bystanders. These workshops will emphasize that *anyone* can be a target or perpetrator of harassment – reinforcing that men must also behave appropriately and that harassment in women's spaces (including same-sex harassment or harassment by women in power) is also not tolerated.
- **Complaint Mechanisms:** Multiple channels will be available to file a complaint or report a grievance. A complainant can approach any ICC member in person, or submit a written complaint (signed or even anonymous, though formal action may require a signed complaint). The ICC is bound to maintain **confidentiality** and dignity

throughout the process – the complainant’s identity will not be disclosed except to those necessary for inquiry, and the proceedings will be kept confidential as per law.

- **Procedures and Support:** When a complaint is received, the ICC will follow the procedures outlined in the PoSH Act/UGC Regulations – which typically involve: acknowledging the complaint, offering the option of conciliation (only if the aggrieved wants it and not for severe cases), constituting an inquiry committee if needed, conducting a thorough and fair investigation with opportunity for both complainant and accused to present evidence, and then submitting a report to the Principal with findings and recommended actions. The College will ensure that inquiry processes are prompt and impartial – possibly completing inquiries within the stipulated 90 days. If a complaint is found valid, the College will take appropriate disciplinary action against the perpetrator: this could range from written apology, counselling, and training (for minor infractions) to suspension, termination, or expulsion in serious cases. Our policy aligns with the principle of **proportional punishment and zero tolerance** – meaning even first offenses can warrant strong action if grave (like sexual assault would lead to police involvement and expulsion). In all cases, retaliation or victimization is strictly prohibited – if anyone retaliates against a complainant or witness (for example, giving a student low marks after she complained, or isolating a staff member), that will be treated as a serious offense on its own. The ICC will monitor the situation post-complaint to prevent victimization. The College will also provide interim relief as needed (e.g. changing class sections if a student feels unsafe around the accused, leave of absence for recovery, etc.).
- **Support for Survivors:** The College recognizes the courage it takes to come forward with complaints. We are committed to supporting survivors of harassment. This includes providing counselling services (professional counselling or referral to external counselling/hotlines) for those who undergo trauma. The College will also maintain academic support for affected students – e.g. allowing rescheduling of exams or extending deadlines if a student’s academics were disrupted due to an incident. No complainant will suffer academic or career setbacks for using the grievance process; if anything, we will try to empower them to continue without fear. We also encourage a supportive peer culture – through sensitization, we will ensure peers do not ostracize someone who complains, and instead stand in solidarity
- **Preventive Measures and Campus Culture:** Our aim is to prevent harassment before it occurs by building a campus culture of mutual respect. To this end, regular **gender**

sensitization and respect workshops are mandatory for all members. Special focus will be given to male staff/faculty (since the student body is female) to ensure they interact with students professionally and respectfully at all times – any misbehaviour by a male teacher or staff toward students will be dealt with stringently. We will also sensitize female faculty/staff to avoid any harassment of subordinates (e.g. bullying junior staff in gendered ways, or shaming students). **Anti-ragging measures** (as per UGC regulations on ragging) are also enforced, with an anti-ragging committee in place; these often overlap with gender issues, as ragging can include sexual harassment or sexist humiliation. Our anti-ragging policy is thus integrated – any ragging incident with a gender/sexual dimension will be handled under both anti-ragging and this gender policy.

- **Legal Compliance:** The College will remain up-to-date and compliant with all relevant laws and UGC directives. We already implement the **UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in HEIs) Regulations, 2015**, which provide the framework for our ICC and related measures. We will also adhere to any **Kerala state laws or university statutes** on student grievance redressal.
- **Continuous Training of ICC and Administrators:** The ICC members will undergo training to handle cases with sensitivity and fairness. Likewise, all administrators and hostel wardens will be oriented on dealing with complaints and creating an open environment for reporting.
- **Grievances Beyond Harassment:** While sexual harassment is a key focus, **gender-related grievances** can be broader – e.g. a female student might complain that a rule is discriminatory (like not being allowed to wear certain attire), or a female staff member might feel she was unfairly passed over for promotion due to gender bias. The College will ensure that its **General Grievance Redressal System** is tuned to handle such complaints seriously and without prejudice.

8. RESEARCH AND OUTREACH

The College recognizes its role not just in teaching but also in contributing to **research, knowledge creation, and community outreach** on gender equality and women's empowerment. We will actively promote research that adopts a gender lens and engage with the community to spread awareness and support gender justice beyond our campus. Our policy measures in this domain include:

- **Encouraging Gender-Related Research:** Faculty and students will be encouraged and supported to undertake **research on gender equality, women's issues, and intersectional topics.**
- **Community Outreach Programs:** The College will extend its gender equality efforts to the wider community (local and beyond) as part of its social responsibility. The aim is two-fold: to empower community members (especially women/girls) with knowledge and to expose our students to ground realities, thus sensitizing them further. We will coordinate with local government bodies (Panchayats, Municipal Corporation) and Kerala's Women & Child Department to align with any ongoing schemes (like **Kudumbashree** women empowerment programs in Kerala).
- **Seminars, Conferences and Publications:** The College will organize **seminars, panel discussions, and conferences** on gender-related themes regularly. Such academic events create dialogue and also put our college on the map for gender discourse. Participating in inter-collegiate events like debates or essay competitions on women's empowerment will also be supported. Notably, we plan to invite successful women and gender-diverse role models (scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, activists) to campus to speak – this not only inspires our students but also signals to the community our dedication to uplifting women.

9. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND REVIEW

To ensure that the above policy provisions are put into practice effectively, the College will establish clear implementation and monitoring mechanisms. The Gender Policy will be reviewed and updated periodically – at least once every **3 years**, or sooner if significant changes in law/policy occur (e.g., new UGC guidelines or national policies). During a review, feedback will be sought from across the community: the ICC, student council, faculty forum, etc., to incorporate their experiences. If an evaluation shows that certain measures are not effective, the policy will be revised accordingly. The College will also submit necessary reports to UGC/AICTE or other regulators regarding gender initiatives, showing that we meet or exceed required norms.