

## **Grievance Redressal Policy**

This policy document outlines the procedures for addressing and resolving grievances raised by students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of an Arts and Science College affiliated to Mahathma Gandhi University in Kerala, based on the guidelines and regulations of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

### **Policy Statement**

It is the policy of Union Christian College, Aluva to provide an effective and efficient mechanism for addressing and resolving grievances raised by students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders, in compliance with the regulations and guidelines of the UGC. The policy is a firm stand of zero tolerance to discrimination, harassment and promotes equality and tolerance of diversity.

### **Objectives**

- To provide a transparent, fair, and accessible mechanism for addressing and resolving grievances raised by students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders.
- To promote a culture of trust, accountability, and responsiveness in the College community.
- To ensure that grievances are addressed and resolved in a timely and effective manner.
- To provide appropriate remedies and redressal for grievances raised by students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders.

### **The Procedure**

**Submission of complaints:** Any member of the College community who has a grievance may submit a written grievance to the Principal or relevant committees, either in person or through the online provision of the college website.

**Acknowledgment of complaints:** The college shall acknowledge receipt of the grievance within 3 working days and initiate the grievance redressal process. The Principal shall direct the complaints received to the relevant committee in consultation with the staff council members.

**Review of complaints:** The committee shall review the complaint and gather relevant information and evidence as needed to investigate the issue. The committee may formally request a response from the person or Department against whom the grievance has been raised.

**Mediation or conciliation:** If the grievance can be resolved through legally prescribed mediation or conciliation, the committee shall facilitate the process to achieve a mutually acceptable solution.

**Formal hearing:** If the grievance cannot be resolved through mediation or conciliation, the committee shall conduct a formal hearing, giving the parties involved an opportunity to present their case and provide evidence. All evidences and responses would be duly recorded and acknowledged by signature of the parties.

**Decision:** The committee shall provide written recommendations to the Principal, within the stipulated period of receiving the complaint. The Principal in consultation with the Staff Council shall make decisions based on the recommendations of the committee. The decision shall include appropriate remedies and redressal for the complaint, such as compensation,

apology, or corrective action. The final decisions would be intimated to the complainant and the other parties involved

**Appeal:** If the person who raised the complaint is not satisfied with the decision of the committee, they may appeal to the Principal of the College within 15 days of receiving the decision. The Principal shall review the appeal and provide a final decision within 30 days of receiving the appeal.

**Record-keeping:** The College shall maintain records of all complaints received, investigated, and resolved, including the date of receipt, the nature of the complaint, the parties involved, the steps taken to investigate the grievance, the decision, and any remedies or redressal provided. The college is also committed to the confidentiality of the records and the privacy of individuals.

**Communication:** The College shall communicate this policy to all relevant stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and students, and ensure their awareness and compliance with the policy.

**Review and Revision:** This policy shall be reviewed and revised as needed to ensure compliance with the regulations and guidelines of the UGC, State and Central Government and to promote an effective and efficient mechanism for addressing and resolving grievances.

This policy document outlines the procedures for addressing and resolving grievances raised by students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders Union Christian College, Aluva based on the guidelines and regulations of the UGC. The College is committed to providing an effective and efficient mechanism for addressing and resolving grievances, in compliance with regulations and guidelines, and to promoting a culture of trust, accountability. Students are informed of the various provisions and committees that function in the college for grievance redressal; during their induction to the program, details published in college website and through the college calendar distributed to individual students.

The college promotes democracy at all levels of management and among students and therefore has maintained an open door policy for all grievances. Through the democratically elected Students Union, Department Associations, the statutory College Council and various committees under grievance redressal mechanism, the college ensures appropriate and timely redressal of complaints.

#### The Committees for Grievance Redressal

1. College Grievance redressal Cell
2. Internal complaints committee
3. Anti-ragging committee
4. SC/ ST monitoring cell
5. Anti-sexual harassment cell

The members of the committee are decided by the college staff council in accordance with the periodic directives of UGC, Kerala Government and the Central Government.

1. **Grievance Redressal Cell:** The College has a Grievance Redressal Cell (GRC) in accordance with the UGC regulations 2018 consisting of a Chairperson and members appointed by the Principal. The GRC shall be responsible for receiving, reviewing, and resolving academic and nonacademic grievances raised by individual students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders.

GRC shall consist of the following members:

1. **Chairperson:** The Chairperson of the GRC shall be Principal or a senior faculty member nominated by the Principal of the College.
2. **Convener:** The Convener of the GRC shall be a faculty member nominated by the Chairperson.
3. **Members:** The GRC shall consist of 2 to 3 members, including faculty members, non-teaching staff, and student representatives, nominated by the Chairperson and Convener in consultation with the Staff Council of the College.
4. **Tenure:** The tenure of the GRC members shall be for a period of 2 years, and they shall be eligible for re-nomination.
5. **Training:** The members of the GRC shall undergo regular training and orientation to update their knowledge and skills in handling grievances and ensure their awareness and compliance with the policy and procedures.
6. **Conflict of interest:** Members of the GRC shall declare any potential conflict of interest in handling a specific grievance and recuse themselves from the process if necessary.
7. **Confidentiality:** The members of the GRC shall maintain strict confidentiality and not disclose any information related to the grievance to anyone who is not directly involved in the grievance redressal process.

By constituting the GRC members in this manner, the College aims to ensure a diverse and representative membership, with the necessary expertise and training to handle grievances effectively and fairly, while maintaining confidentiality and impartiality.

2. **Internal complaints committee (ICC):** is a mandatory committee in all organizations to address the issues of sexual harassment. It is constituted under the UGC regulations 2015, read with Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act SHWW 2013 and as per AICTE regulations against the sexual harassment of women in higher education institutions.

ICC may conduct inquiry based on the legal provisions of the relevant law and may keep records following all legal procedures and may also issue reasoned order and may also take disciplinary action of lying under oath or providing misleading information intentionally.

The Chairman of the ICC may destroy the records of the procedure after the conclusion of the procedure and the time for the appeal has lapsed.

1. members: 50% of the members should be women.

1. The chairperson / Presiding officer: shall be a woman employed at senior level in the workplace.

2. Two faculty members
3. One nonteaching employee
4. One member from NGO / familiar with issues of sexual harassment
5. Two democratically elected student representatives in case the complaint involves students.

2. **Training:** The members of the ICC shall undergo regular training and orientation to update their knowledge and skills in handling grievances and ensure their awareness and compliance with the policy and procedures.

3. **Conflict of interest:** Members of the ICC shall declare any potential conflict of interest in handling a specific grievance and recuse themselves from the process if necessary.

4. **Confidentiality:** The members of the ICC shall maintain strict confidentiality and not disclose any information related to the grievance to anyone who is not directly involved in the grievance redressal process.

ICC is committed to spread awareness about policy of the college against sexual harassment. The committee shall take initiative to create awareness about harassment and legal procedure of the complaints through classes during orientation program at the induction of students and faculty to the college and yearly campaigns by various clubs for students and faculty in the college.

**3. Anti-ragging committee:** constituted according to the UGC Regulations on “curbing the menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions, 2009”, Ragging is a criminal offense and UGC has framed regulations on curbing the menace of ragging in higher educational institutions in order to prohibit, prevent and eliminate the scourge of ragging. These regulations are mandatory for all universities/ institutions.

The Anti-Ragging Committee (ARC) ensure compliance with the provisions of the regulations as well as the provisions of any law for the time being in force concerning ragging; investigate complaints and also, monitor and oversee the performance of the Anti-Ragging Squad in prevention of ragging in the institution. The Anti-Ragging Committee is responsible for inculcating a culture of Ragging Free Environment on Campus. The Anti-Ragging Committee is involved in designing strategies and action plan for curbing the menace of ragging in the college by adopting an array of activities. The committee is also responsible for conducting awareness programmes from time-to-time on campus.

**Anti-Ragging Squad and monitoring cell:** work under the supervision and guidance of the Anti-Ragging Committee and engage in checking places like hostels, buses, canteens, grounds, classrooms and other places of student congregation to keep a vigil and stop the incidences of ragging, if any, and report them if they happen. The squad role is also to educate the students at large by adopting various means about the menace of ragging and related punishments.

**Students and Parents Undertaking Affidavit;** In compliance of the second amendment in UGC Regulations, it is compulsory for each student and every parent to submit an online Anti-Ragging undertaking affidavit every academic year.

College has displayed the email address and contact number of the Nodal Officer of the Anti-Ragging Committee in the website, college calendar, and through notice boards in various campus areas.

1. Members: The Principal in consultation with the College council and in accordance with the periodic directives from UGC and national and State governments constitutes the anti-ragging committee, squad, monitoring cell. This is subject to review every year. Seniority & experience of the faculty members in the committee in handling the complaints and Gender parity is ensured

1. The Anti-Ragging Committee shall be headed by the Principal
2. Two representatives of faculty members: students Dean and another faculty member
3. Representative of Parents (nominated by PTA)
4. Two Students belonging to the fresher's category as well as seniors
5. Non-teaching staff.
6. Area newspaper reporter
7. The President of local Panchayat.
8. Member from an NGO, with experience in dealing with ragging related issues.

2. Legal measures: The college strictly follows all the legal and criminal proceedings with regard to ragging complaints. The squad may conduct on the spot enquiry, observing a fair and transparent procedure and take follow up actions.

3. Procedure: On receipt of the recommendation of the Anti-Ragging Squad or on receipt of any information concerning any reported incident of ragging, the Principal shall immediately determine if a case under the penal laws is made out and if so, either on own or through a member of the Anti-Ragging Committee shall file a First Information Report (FIR), within twenty four hours of receipt of such information or recommendation, with the police and local authorities, under the appropriate penal provisions.

**4. SC/ ST monitoring cell:** is formed as per the guidelines of committee is formed for prevention of atrocities against SC/ST students under the Act No. 33 of 1989, Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The cell has the responsibilities of maintaining social equity, equality, justice and inclusiveness in campus. The committee also monitors the compliance to reservation policy and ensures smooth functioning of processes during staff selection, student admissions, obtaining scholarships and fee structure during their course of study. The committee has the responsibility of monitoring and maintaining records of SC ST students in campus, the funds and facilities provided for them. The committee also has the responsibility to conduct enquiry and provide recommendations to the Principal in case of any violations of rights or discrimination is reported or observed within the campus.

1. Members:

1. Chairman: The Principal of the college
2. Secretary: senior faculty member of the college belonging to backward community
3. Two faculty members with experience in handling the issues related to backward castes.

4. President of the local Panchayat

5. Non-teaching staff member belonging to backward community.

2. Procedure: in case of any lapse/ violations to the SC ST Act or complaints of discrimination is brought to the attention of the Principal, He/ She may take immediate measures to rectify the same. In case the remedy cannot be done immediately, the Principal may seek recommendations from the committee and resolve the matter in an urgent manner. The committee may recommend legally prescribed punitive or criminal proceedings on which the Principal may take final decision in consultation with the College Staff council. The Principal or the committee shall have the responsibility of communicating the actions taken to the complainant and the college community to ensure that no such situation happen again.

5. Anti- Harassment Cell: The UGC (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redress of Sexual Harassment of Women Workers and Students in Higher Education Institutions) Regulation, 2015 is a federal law that prohibits sexual harassment of women employees and students in higher education institutions. Regulation 2 (1) presents a gender-neutral vision of the term 'student'. The provision clarifies that 'student' signifies an individual enrolled in a particular program in a higher educational institution thereby avoiding sensitizing a specific gender. The cell ensures equity, equality and fair treatment of students and staff regardless of region, class, caste, sexual orientation, minority identification, and being differently-abled. The cell has the responsibility of sensitising the college community against sexual harassment, ensure fairness of treatment and equality of all members within campus, conduct inquiry and recommend punitive/ corrective action to the Principal in case of any harassment.

Members: 50% of the members shall be women or other gender minority.

1. Dean of Students Affairs
2. One senior faculty of the college.
3. Two faculty members with experience in dealing with issues of gender based discrimination
4. Member of non-teaching staff.
5. The Staff Council may nominate a Student (identified with discriminated community) to be included in cases involving harassment of student.

2. If any complaint is received or observation of harassment, the Principal may take immediate action or corrective steps in consultation with the College Staff Council. If not the committee may be directed to look into the matter and suggest recommendations within stipulated time. The Decisions will be communicated to the complainant and college community and also right to appeal against the decision and get modifications is maintained.

3. The cell may conduct periodic surveys, sensitization campaigns to ensure an environment of equality within campus.