CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY

POLICY ON PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION FOR REPORTING DISCRIMINATION

1. PREAMBLE

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) recognises that an effective anti-discrimination framework relies upon an institutional environment where individuals can report acts of discrimination, harassment, victimization, or bias without fear of administrative, professional, or personal reprisal.

The University is committed to safeguarding members of its academic and non-academic communities who, in good faith, report suspected acts of discrimination, participate as witnesses, assist in formal inquiries, or oppose discriminatory practices within the University.

This Policy establishes the University's absolute prohibition of retaliatory actions against whistleblowers, complainants, witnesses, and panel members, setting out clear reporting mechanisms, protective measures, investigation protocols, and disciplinary sanctions.

The Policy operates consistently with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 42), the Labour Act, national whistleblower protection guidelines, the University's enabling statutes, regulations, conditions of service, and applicable international labor standards.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- strictly prohibit any form of retaliation against individuals who report discrimination or participate in discrimination proceedings;
- define retaliatory conduct across academic, administrative, and student support environments;
- establish secure, confidential, and accessible channels for lodging reports of retaliation;
- ensure prompt, impartial, and robust investigation of retaliation complaints;
- provide interim protective measures for reporting individuals during ongoing inquiries;
- impose strict disciplinary sanctions on individuals or officers found guilty of retaliatory acts; and
- foster a culture of transparency, accountability, mutual trust, and moral courage within the University.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies across all campuses, faculties, directorates, research institutes, and operational units of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, and covers:

- all academic staff, including senior academic leaders, professors, lecturers, and research staff;
- administrative, technical, and professional staff across all cadres;
- junior staff, maintenance personnel, and support staff;
- enrolled undergraduate and postgraduate students;
- temporary, part-time, ad-hoc, and contract workers; and

- witnesses, panel members, advisors, or representatives participating in discrimination grievance proceedings.

Nothing in this Policy shall be interpreted as protecting individuals who intentionally lodge false, malicious, or bad-faith allegations, which remain subject to standard institutional disciplinary actions.

4. DEFINITION AND FORMS OF RETALIATION

4.1 Definition of Retaliation

Retaliation is defined as any adverse, coercive, discriminatory, or punitive action taken against an individual because they have exercised their right to report discrimination, filed a grievance, testified as a witness, or assisted in an investigation under University policies.

4.2 Prohibited Retaliatory Actions

Prohibited retaliation includes, but is not limited to:

a. termination of employment, demotion, suspension, or denial of promotion or tenure;

b. arbitrary reduction of salary, withholding of allowances, or denial of step increments;

c. unfair academic evaluation, grade tampering, or withholding of student results;

d. reassignment to undesirable duties, forced transfer, or arbitrary workload escalation;

e. exclusion from departmental meetings, research projects, committee memberships, or official communications; and

f. verbal threats, physical intimidation, harassment, public humiliation, or defamation.

5. PROTECTIVE AND INTERIM MEASURES

Upon receipt of a credible report of retaliation, the University may implement immediate protective measures to safeguard the complainant or witness. These measures may include temporary reassignment of supervisory reporting lines, administrative transfer of either party, shielding academic grading processes, or granting administrative leave during the investigation.

6. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

Any individual who believes they are experiencing retaliation for reporting discrimination may lodge a written complaint directly with the Office of the Vice-Chancellor or the designated Institutional Ethics Committee.

All complaints shall be investigated with utmost confidentiality, speed, and strict adherence to principles of natural justice. The burden of proof shall rest on the institution to demonstrate that an adverse employment or academic action taken against a reporter was based solely on legitimate, non-retaliatory grounds.

7. DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS

Retaliation against a reporter or witness constitutes severe gross misconduct under University rules. Any staff member or officer found guilty of retaliatory conduct shall be subject to immediate disciplinary sanctions, including summary dismissal, termination of appointment, demotion, or official reprimand as determined by the Governing Council.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Members of the University community shall:

a. refrain from engaging in, supporting, or encouraging retaliatory behavior against any reporter or witness;

b. maintain strict confidentiality regarding ongoing discrimination reports and investigation proceedings; and

c. report any observed or suspected retaliatory acts to designated institutional authorities immediately.

9. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

The University Management shall:

a. guarantee absolute confidentiality for reporting parties to the fullest extent permitted by law;

b. enforce protective measures promptly to insulate complainants from academic or professional harm;

c. ensure impartial investigation procedures free from administrative interference; and

d. provide psychological, counseling, and legal support resources for victims of retaliatory conduct.

10. GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE OVERSIGHT

The University shall designate the **Anti-Retaliation and Whistleblower Oversight Panel** (under the Senate Committee on Discipline and Ethics) to:

a. oversee the enforcement of protective measures for individuals reporting discrimination;

b. monitor institutional compliance and track retaliation complaint resolutions across campuses; and

c. submit an annual Anti-Retaliation and Good-Faith Reporting Report to the Vice-Chancellor and Council.

11. PUBLICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

This Policy shall be made publicly available on the official University website and staff/student portals. Anti-retaliation notices and confidential reporting contact details shall be displayed prominently across administrative and academic buildings.

12. REVIEW AND REVISION

This Policy shall be reviewed at least once every three years or earlier if required by statutory updates, judicial precedents, or directives from government regulatory authorities. All revisions shall be formally documented and approved.



Prof. Kate Azuka Omenugha, Fnipr
Vice Chancellor

Date: 24/10/2026