

ASSTON PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED

(FORMERLY KNOWN AS ASSTON PHARMACEUTICALS PRIVATE LIMITED)

CIN: - U24304MH2019PLC324187 Reg. Office-4TH FLOOR OFFICE NO A-431 BALAJI BHAVAN, PLOT NO 42A SECTOR-11 CBD BELAPUR, NAVI MUMBAI, THANE, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA, 400614, Phone No.: 022-49731419 / 49731411, Email id:- aston.tech14@gmail.com

POLICY ON PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT (POSH) IN ASSTON PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED.

Sexual harassment at the workplace results in violation of the fundamental rights of a woman

- to equality under Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India
- to life and to live with dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution
- to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business which includes a right to a safe environment free from sexual harassment.

Protection against sexual harassment and the right to work with dignity are universally recognised human rights by international conventions and instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which has been ratified on 25 June 1993 by the Government of India.

ASSTON PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED. is an equal employment opportunity company and is committed to creating a healthy working environment that enables employees to work without fear of prejudice, gender bias and in a harassment-free workplace to all employees without regard to race, caste, religion, colour, ancestry, marital status, gender, age, nationality, ethnic origin or disability. The Company also believes that all employees of the Company have the right to be treated with dignity. Sexual harassment at the workplace or other than workplace if involving an employee or employees is a grave offence and is, therefore, punishable.

This Policy extends to all employees of ASSTON PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED. and any other company which may be incorporated in future with the applicability of ASSTON PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED. HR policies - hereinafter referred to as “Company”/ “Organization” in this policy. It is deemed to be incorporated in the service conditions of all employees of the Company in India. Local country laws will take precedence over this policy, in other geographies, if applicable.

1. Introduction

At ASSTON PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED., all employees are expected to uphold the

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highest standards of ethical conduct at the workplace and in all their interactions with business stakeholders. This means that employees have a responsibility to:

- Treat each other with dignity and respect
- Follow the letter and spirit of the law
- Refrain from any unwelcome behaviour that has sexual connotation (of sexual nature)
- Refrain from creating a hostile atmosphere at the workplace via sexual harassment
- Report sexual harassment experienced and/or witnessed to appropriate authorities and abide by the complaint handling procedure of the company.

This policy has been framed in accordance with the provisions of “The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013” and rules framed thereunder (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”). Accordingly, while the policy covers all the key aspects of the Act, for any further clarification reference shall always be made to the Act and the provisions of the Act shall prevail. If any aspect relating to sexual harassment not explicitly covered in this policy is provided for by the law, then the law will be applicable. In case of any conflict between the policy and the law, the law will prevail.

This policy provides protection against sexual harassment of women at the workplace and the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and matters related to it.

2. Scope

This Policy extends to all employees of the Company and is deemed to be incorporated in the service conditions of all employees of the Company in India. Local country laws will take precedence over this policy, in other geographies, if applicable.

3. Definitions

- **Sexual harassment** may occur not only where a person uses sexual behaviour to control, influence or affect the career, salary or job of another person, but also among co-workers. It may also occur between an employee and someone that the employee deals with in the course of his/her work who is not employed by the Company.

“Sexual Harassment” includes any one or more of the following unwelcome acts or behaviour (whether directly or by implication), but not limited to:

1. Any unwelcome sexually determined behaviour, or pattern of conduct, that would

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cause discomfort and/or humiliate a person at whom the behaviour or conduct was directed namely:

- A. Unwelcome sexual advances involving verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct, implicit or explicit
 - B. Physical contact and advances including, but not limited to touching, stalking, sounds which have explicit and /or implicit sexual connotation/overtones, molestation
 - C. Teasing, Voyeurism, innuendos and taunts with an implicit sexual connotation, physical confinement and /or touching against one's will
 - D. Demand or request for sexual favours
 - E. Sexually coloured remarks or remarks of a sexual nature about a person's clothing or body
 - F. Display of pictures, signs etc. with sexual nature/ connotation/ overtones in the work area and work-related areas
 - G. Showing pornography, making or posting vulgar/indecent/sexual pranks, teasing, jokes, demeaning or offensive pictures, cartoons or other materials through email, SMS, MMS, gestures etc.
 - H. Repeatedly asking to socialize during off-duty hours or continued expressions of sexual interest against a person's wishes
 - I. Giving gifts or leaving objects that are sexually suggestive
 - J. Eve teasing, innuendos and taunts, physical confinement against one's will or any such act likely to intrude upon one's privacy; Persistent watching, following, contacting of a person; and
 - K. Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature
2. The following circumstances if it occurs or is present in relation to any sexually determined act or behaviour amount to sexual harassment:
- A. Implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment in employment;
 - B. Implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment in employment;
 - C. Implied or explicit threat about the present or future employment status;

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D. Interference with the person's work or creating an intimidating or offensive or hostile work environment; or

E. Humiliating treatment, likely to affect health or safety.

An alleged act of sexual harassment committed during or outside of office hours falls under the purview of this policy. Further, it is important to note that whether harassment has occurred or not, does not depend on the intention of the people but on the experience of the aggrieved woman.

- **Aggrieved woman:** In relation to a workplace, a woman, of any age, whether employed or not, who alleges to have been subjected to any act of sexual harassment by the respondent.
- **Complainant:** Any aggrieved woman who makes a complaint alleging sexual harassment under this policy
- **Respondent:** A person against whom a complaint of sexual harassment has been made by the aggrieved woman under this policy
- **Employee:** A person employed at the workplace, for any work on regular, temporary, ad-hoc or daily wage basis, either directly or through an agent, including a contractor, with or without the knowledge of the principal employer, whether for remuneration or not, or working on a voluntary basis or otherwise, whether the terms of employment are express or implied and includes a coworker, a contract worker, probationer, trainee, apprentice, interns or called by any other such name.
- **Special Educator:** A Special Educator means a person trained in communication with people with special needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs.
- **Workplace:**
 - A. Premises, locations, establishments, enterprises, institutions, offices, branches or units established, subsidiaries which are controlled by the Company.
 - B. Places visited by the Employee arising out of or during the course of employment including official events, accommodation and transportation provided by the employer for undertaking a journey.

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- **Employer:** A person responsible for management, supervision and control of the workplace

4. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all to respect the rights of others and to never encourage harassment.

It can be done by:

- A. Refusing to participate in any activity which constitutes harassment
- B. Supporting the person to reject unwelcome behaviour
- C. Acting as a witness if the person being harassed decides to lodge a complaint.

5. Redressal Mechanism – Formal Intervention

In compliance with the Act, any complaint under this policy shall be followed by a formal redressal mechanism as described in this Policy.

A. Internal Complaints Committee (hereafter referred to as “committee”)

To prevent instances of sexual harassment and to receive and effectively deal with complaints pertaining to the same, Internal Complaints Committees (IC) have been appointed for all administrative units/offices of the company. The detail of the committee is notified to all covered persons at the location (workplace). The committee at each location comprises of:

1. Presiding Officer: A woman employed at a senior level in the organization or workplace
2. At least 2 members among employees, that are committed to the cause of women or who have had an experience in social work or have the legal knowledge
3. One external member from amongst non-governmental organizations or associations committed to the cause of women or a person familiar with the issues relating to sexual harassment
4. At least one-half of the total members nominated must be women

The committee will be responsible for:

- Receiving complaints of sexual harassment at the workplace
- Initiating and conducting an inquiry as per the established procedure
- Submitting findings and recommendations of inquiries
- Coordinating with the employer in implementing appropriate action

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- Maintaining strict confidentiality throughout the process as per established guidelines
- Submitting annual reports in the prescribed format

B. Committee Members

Internal Complaint Committees have been formulated for all locations/divisions.

IC at the corporate level will comprise of the following:

1. Chairperson/Presiding Officer
2. 2 members- Women working at the senior level
3. External Member & NGO Representative

C. Lodging a Complaint

An aggrieved woman may make, in writing, a complaint of sexual harassment at the workplace to the Internal Committee within a period of 3 months from the date of incident/last incident. The Internal Committee can extend the timeline by another 3 months for reasons recorded in writing if satisfied that these reasons prevented the lodging of the complaint within the period.

Provided that where such a complaint cannot be made in writing, the Presiding Officer or any Member of the Internal Complaint Committee shall render all reasonable assistance to the woman for making the complaint in writing.

1. If the Aggrieved Woman is unable to make a complaint on account of her physical incapacity, a complaint may be filed by:
 - her relative or friend; or
 - her co-worker; or
 - an officer of the National Commission for Women or State Women's Commission; or
 - any person who has knowledge of the incident, with the written consent of the Aggrieved Woman
2. If the Aggrieved Woman is unable to make a complaint on account of her mental incapacity, a complaint may be filed by:
 - her relative or friend; or

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- a special educator; or
 - a qualified psychiatrist or psychologist; or
 - the guardian or authority under whose care she is receiving treatment or care; or
 - any person who has knowledge of the incident jointly with the Aggrieved Woman's relative or friend or a special educator or qualified psychiatrist or psychologist, or guardian or authority under whose care she is receiving treatment or care
3. If the Aggrieved Woman for any other reason is unable to make a complaint, a complaint may be filed by any person who has knowledge of the incident, with her written consent.
4. If the Aggrieved Woman is deceased, a complaint may be filed by any person who has knowledge of the incident, with the written consent of her legal heir.

The complaint shall be submitted by the complainant to the IC in writing or shall be submitted to the IC electronically at aston.tech14@gmail.com. The complaint can also be physically submitted to any IC member.

D. Receiving a Complaint (guidelines)

Dealing with incidents of harassment is not like any other type of dispute. Complainants may be embarrassed and distressed, and it requires tact and discretion while receiving the complaint.

The following points are to be kept in mind by the receiver of the complaint:

- Complaints are listened to, and the complainant is informed that the Company takes their concerns seriously. The complainant is informed that these concerns will be reported to the appropriate committee and follow up will be done speedily.
- Situations are not to be pre-judged and no assumptions should be made. Written notes are to be taken while listening to the person. When taking notes, the complainant's own words, where possible, are to be used accurately. A clear description of the incident in simple and direct terms is prepared and details are confirmed with the complainant.

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- All notes are kept strictly confidential. The complainant's agreement must be taken to allow proceeding with the matter, which involves a formal investigation.
- The complainant is advised that although the process is confidential, the respondent needs to be informed and any witnesses and persons directly involved in the complaint process will also learn of the complainant's identity.

Care is taken to prevent any disadvantage to or victimization of either the complainant or the respondent.

E. Resolution procedure through conciliation

Once the complaint is received, before initiating the inquiry, the committee may take steps to conciliate the complaint between the complainant and the respondent. **This must be done only if requested by the aggrieved woman.**

No monetary settlement can be made as a basis of conciliation.

In case a settlement is arrived at, the committee records & reports the same to the employer for taking appropriate action. Resolution through conciliation is to happen within 2 weeks of receipt of the complaint.

The committee shall provide copies of the settlement to the complainant & respondent.

Where a settlement is arrived at, no further inquiry is to be conducted by the committee.

F. Resolution procedure through formal inquiry

The committee will initiate an inquiry in the following cases:

- No conciliation is requested by the aggrieved woman
- Conciliation has not resulted in any settlement
- The complainant informs the committee that any term or condition of the settlement arrived through conciliation, has not been complied with by the respondent

1. Manner and Procedure of inquiry into complaint:

- The complainant should submit the complaint along with supporting documents and the names of the witnesses if any.
- The Committee will hold a meeting with the Complainant within seven days of receipt of the complaint, but no later than a week in any case.

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- At the first meeting, the Committee members shall hear the Complainant and record her allegations. The Complainant can also submit any corroborative material with documentary proof, oral or written material, etc., to substantiate her complaint.
- The Committee shall proceed with the enquiry and communicate the same to the Complainant and Respondent.
- Upon receipt of the complaint, the committee will send 1 copy of the complaint to the Respondent within 7 working days of receiving the complaint.
- Respondent shall reply with all supporting documents within 10 working days of receiving the copy of the complaint.
- Thereafter, the Respondent may be called for a deposition before the Committee and an opportunity will be given to him/her to give an explanation, whereafter, an inquiry shall be conducted and concluded.
- The Complainant shall be provided with a copy of the written explanation submitted by the Respondent.
- If the Complainant or the respondent desires any witness/es to be called, they shall communicate in writing to the Committee the names of witness/es that they propose to call.
- The Committee shall call upon all witnesses mentioned by both the parties.
- The Committee shall provide every reasonable opportunity to the Complainant and the Respondent for putting forward and defending their respective case.
- If either party desires to tender any documents by way of evidence before the Committee, the same is to be supplied as original copies of such documents. Signatures should be affixed on the respective documents to certify these to be original copies.
- No legal practitioner can represent any party at any stage of the inquiry procedure.
- The Complaints Committee is to make an inquiry into the complaint in accordance with the principles of natural justice.
- In conducting the inquiry, a minimum of three committee members including the Presiding Officer must be present.

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- The employer shall provide all necessary assistance for the purpose of ensuring full, effective and speedy implementation of this policy.
- Where sexual harassment occurs as a result of an act or omission by any third party or outsider, the company shall take all steps necessary and reasonable to assist the affected person in terms of support and preventive action.
- In the event, that the complaint does not fall under the purview of Sexual Harassment or the complaint does not mean an offence of Sexual Harassment, the same would be dropped after recording the reasons thereof.

If the complainant or respondent desires to cross-examine any witnesses, the Committee facilitates the same and records the statements. In case the complainant or respondent seeks to ask questions to the other party, they may give them to the Committee which asks them and records the statement of the other party.

Any such inquiry is completed, including the submission of the Inquiry Report, within 90 days from the date on which the inquiry is commenced. The inquiry procedure should ensure absolute fairness to all parties.

2. Interim Relief

During the pendency of the inquiry, on a written request made by the complainant, the committee may recommend to the employer to:

- Transfer the complainant or the respondent to any other workplace
- Grant leave to the aggrieved woman of 3 months at the maximum, in addition to the leave she would be otherwise entitled
- Prevent the respondent from assessing the complainant's work performance
- Grant such other relief as may be appropriate once the recommendations of interim relief are implemented, and the same is informed to the committee.

3. Termination of Inquiry

The committee may terminate the inquiry or give an ex-parte decision, if the complainant or respondent respectively is absent for 3 consecutive hearings, without sufficient reason. A 15-day written notice is to be given to the party, before termination of enquiry or ex-parte order.

4. Action to be taken after the inquiry

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Post the inquiry, the committee submits its report containing the findings and recommendations to the employer, within 10 days of completion of the inquiry.

5. Complaint unsubstantiated

Where the committee arrives at the conclusion that the allegation against the respondent has not been proved, it recommends to the employer that no action is required to be taken in this matter. Further, the committee ensures that both parties understand that the matter has been fully investigated, that the matter is now concluded, and neither will be disadvantaged within the Company.

6. Complaint substantiated

Where the committee arrives at the conclusion that the allegation against the respondent has been proved, it recommends to the employer to take necessary action for sexual harassment as misconduct, in accordance with the applicable service rules and policies, and this may include:

- Counselling
- Censure or reprimand
- Apology to be tendered by respondent
- Written warning
- Withholding promotion and/or increments
- Suspension
- Termination
- Or any other action that the employer may deem fit.

The Company is required to act upon the recommendations within 60 days and confirm to the committee. Post-implementation of the actions, follow up with the complainant should also occur to ascertain whether the behaviour has in fact stopped, whether the solution is working satisfactorily and if no victimization of either party is occurring.

7. Penal Consequences of Sexual Harassment

In case the Committee finds the degree of offence coverable under the Indian Penal Code, then this fact shall be mentioned in its report and appropriate action shall be initiated by the employer, for making a Police Complaint. Under the Indian Penal Code, (IPC), Section (S. 354A) which deals with Sexual Harassment has made this a 'cognizable offence' i.e., a

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person charged with Sexual Harassment may be arrested without a warrant.

8. Malicious Allegations

Where the committee arrives at the conclusion that the allegation against the respondent is malicious or the aggrieved woman or any other person making the complaint has made the complaint knowing it to be false or the aggrieved woman or any other person making the complaint has produced any forged or misleading document, it may recommend to the employer to take action against the woman or the person making the complaint.

While deciding on malicious intent, the committee should consider that mere inability to substantiate a complaint need not mean malicious intent. Malicious intent must be clearly established through a separate inquiry.

9. Confidentiality

The identity of the complainant, respondent, witnesses, statements and other evidence obtained in the course of the inquiry process, recommendations of the committees, and action taken by the employer are considered as confidential materials, and not published or made known to the public or media.

Any person contravening the confidentiality clauses is subject to disciplinary action as per the Employment Agreement, Non-Disclosure and Non-Solicitation Agreement, H.R. Policies, other Company Policies and the Act.

10. Appeal

Any party not satisfied or further aggrieved by the implementation or non-implementation of recommendations made may appeal to the appellate authority in accordance with the Act, within 90 days of the recommendations being communicated.

11. Awareness

Awareness sessions are to be organized to:

- Formulate and widely disseminate an internal policy or charter or resolution or declaration for prohibition, prevention and redressal of sexual harassment at the workplace intended to promote gender-sensitive safe spaces and remove underlying factors that contribute to a hostile work environment against women.
- Carry out orientation programs and seminars for the Members of the IC.

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- Conduct capacity building and skill-building programs for the Members of the IC.
- Declare the names and contact details of all the Members of the IC.
- Use modules developed by the State Governments to conduct workshops and awareness programs for sensitizing the employees with the provisions of the Act.

12. Legal compliance

The IC shall in each calendar year prepare, in such format as may be prescribed, an annual report and submit the same to the employer and the District Officer (as defined in the Act).

The report shall have the following details:

- number of complaints of Sexual harassment received in the year
- number of complaints disposed of during the year
- number of cases pending for more than 90 days
- number of workshops or awareness program against Sexual Harassment carried out
- nature of action taken by the employer or District Officer

This version of the policy is effective from **01st October 2024** and supersedes all prior policies and communication on this matter.