



## NYANSAPƆ Photonics School for Health and Safety Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy

21 to 26 September 2026 | Department of Physics, KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana

Organised by the Ghana Photonics and Optics Laboratory (GPOL), College of Science, KNUST, Kumasi

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The Ghana Photonics and Optics Laboratory (GPOL), the lab that runs the school within the College of Science at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), is committed to providing an environment conducive to the free and robust exchange of scientific ideas. This environment requires that all participants be treated with equal consideration and respect. While we encourage vigorous debate of ideas, personal attacks create an environment in which people feel threatened or intimidated. This is not productive and does not advance the cause of science. All participants in the NYANSAPƆ Photonics School for Health and Safety are therefore expected to conduct themselves professionally and respectfully.

It is the policy of the school that all forms of bullying, discrimination and harassment, sexual or otherwise, are prohibited at any school activity, whether held in the lecture room, the laboratory, during the community outreach day, at meals and social events, or in any online or written communication connected to the school. This policy applies to every individual at the school, whether participant, fellow, student, lecturer, facilitator, volunteer, staff member, organiser or guest. It is also a violation of this policy to retaliate against an individual for reporting bullying, discrimination or harassment, or to intentionally file a false report.

Bullying, discrimination and harassment of any sort by someone in a position of power, prestige or authority is particularly harmful, since those of lower status or rank may be hesitant to express their objections or discomfort out of fear of retaliation. The organising committee will take any disciplinary action it deems appropriate if, after a thorough investigation, it finds that a violation occurred.

### How this Code relates to KNUST policies

The school is hosted by KNUST and its College of Science, and this Code of Conduct complements, and does not replace, the policies of the University. All participants are also expected to observe the relevant policies of KNUST, including:

- [Sexual Harassment Policy](#)
- [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Gender Policy](#)
- [Ethics Policy](#)
- [Disability Policy](#)

- [Security Policy](#)
- [Counselling Policy](#)

Where this Code and a KNUST policy address the same matter, the KNUST policy prevails.

## **What are bullying, discrimination, harassment and retaliation?**

For the purposes of this policy, the terms below are defined as follows.

**Bullying** is the ongoing abuse and intentional mistreatment of one or more vulnerable persons or groups by a more powerful individual or group. It consists of repeated verbal behaviour (name-calling, verbal attacks), physical behaviour (use of physical force or aggression), or social behaviour (ostracism, exclusion, spreading rumours) that causes physical or psychological harm. Being more powerful may include being physically bigger or stronger, having more social status, or having influence over someone's studies, employment or professional advancement.

**Discrimination** is the unjust or prejudicial treatment of categories of people based on personal attributes such as race, sex, age, colour, sexual orientation, body size, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, marital status, political affiliation, or other attributes not related to the merit of one's work or scientific research or ideas.

**Harassment** consists of unwanted, unwelcome and uninvited behaviour that demeans, threatens or offends another and results in a hostile environment. Harassing behaviour includes, but is not limited to, the use of epithets, derogatory comments or slurs, assault, stalking, impeding or blocking movement, threats of violence, offensive touching, any physical interference with normal work or movement, and visual insults such as derogatory images, posters or cartoons. Harassment is often, but not always, based upon personal attributes such as race, sex, age, gender, colour, sexual orientation, body size, ethnic or national origin and disability.

**Sexual harassment** consists of harassing behaviour based upon sex, gender or sexual orientation. It includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours (often accompanied by overt or implied promises or threats relating to studies, employment, professional advancement or recognition), lewd comments or images, or other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, where such conduct creates an unreasonable, intimidating, hostile or sexually offensive environment and may interfere with the target's participation or professional performance.

**Retaliation** consists of negative action or treatment towards someone who has reported bullying, discrimination, or harassment. It may include excluding a reporting individual from school or professional activities, injuring a reporting individual's professional or personal reputation, or unjustly demeaning a reporting individual's work. Retaliation can be used as a method of bullying or harassment, but more importantly, it creates an environment that discourages victims and bystanders from reporting offensive behaviour.

## **What we expect of all participants**

To help keep the school welcoming and productive for everyone, all participants are expected to:

- Treat fellow participants, lecturers, facilitators, volunteers, staff and members of the host community with respect and consideration.

- Engage in scientific debate vigorously but courteously, criticising ideas rather than people.
- Respect the laboratory, equipment and safety instructions, and follow the guidance of facilitators during all hands-on and outreach sessions.
- Be mindful that participants come from many countries, cultures and backgrounds, and avoid language or behaviour that others may reasonably find demeaning or exclusionary.
- Comply with the laws of Ghana, the regulations of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), and the instructions of the organising committee.

## **Health and safety in the laboratory and at the venue**

Because the school involves hands-on work with optical and laser equipment, all participants must take health and safety seriously and follow the KNUST Health and Safety Policy while on campus. In particular, you should:

- Follow the instructions of facilitators and the relevant risk assessments at all times, and never operate equipment, lasers, or chemicals without authorisation and supervision.
- Wear any personal protective equipment provided and observe all posted safety rules in the laboratory.
- Make sure you know the locations of fire exits, assembly points, and first-aid arrangements for each venue.
- Report any accident, injury, near miss, or hazard immediately to a facilitator or organiser, who will record it in line with the University's incident reporting procedure.

## **What should I do if I experience or witness misconduct?**

Individuals may be unaware that their conduct is offensive and are often willing to correct their behaviour if so informed. If you experience or witness bullying, discrimination or harassment and feel empowered to do so, you are encouraged to inform the individual immediately that their comments or behaviour are unwelcome.

However, the organising committee understands that direct confrontation is not possible or advisable in every situation. You are not required to address or confront a person engaged in offensive behaviour. If you do not feel comfortable addressing the person, or if the behaviour continues after they have been advised that their conduct is unwelcome, you should report the incident.

## **How do I report an incident?**

If you wish to report bullying, discrimination or harassment that you have witnessed or experienced, you may do so through any of the following methods:

- Speak in person to any member of the organising committee, or to a school facilitator or volunteer, at any time during the school.

- Email the school's code of conduct contacts: [abritwum.cos@knust.edu.gh](mailto:abritwum.cos@knust.edu.gh), [photonics@knust.edu.gh](mailto:photonics@knust.edu.gh) and [mkedonkor.cos@knust.edu.gh](mailto:mkedonkor.cos@knust.edu.gh).
- For sexual harassment specifically, you may also report to the KNUST Anti-Sexual Harassment Committee, the University's standing body for receiving and investigating such complaints. The organising committee can help you make contact.

If you are in immediate danger or witness a medical or safety emergency, contact KNUST campus security or local emergency services first, and then notify the organising committee.

You are encouraged to write down as many relevant details as you can recall, such as names, dates, times, locations, and the behaviour or statements made, which can help in any future investigation of the incident.

We are very sensitive to the consequences of making a report. In line with the KNUST Sexual Harassment Policy, reports may be made anonymously, though providing your contact details makes it easier to investigate fully and support you. Your confidentiality will be maintained, except where disclosure is necessary to protect another person's rights or to allow a proper investigation, in which case disclosure will be limited to what is necessary. No retaliation will be taken or tolerated against anyone who makes a good-faith report.

## **What happens if I report an incident?**

Upon receiving a report of misconduct, the organising committee will conduct a prompt and thorough investigation. This will include speaking with all parties who have knowledge of the incident, including the reporting individual, the alleged victim (if different from the reporting individual), any known witnesses, and the alleged offender. The investigation will be led by designated members of the organising committee, who may seek further guidance from KNUST or other appropriate professional counsel before reaching a decision.

If the committee finds that a violation of this policy has occurred, it may take any disciplinary action it deems appropriate. This may include a warning, exclusion from particular sessions or social activities, or removal from the school without refund or recompense. Serious or repeated offences may result in more significant consequences, such as being banned from future GPOL events, notification of the individual's home institution or employer, withdrawal of any fellowship, and the filing of a report with KNUST authorities or law enforcement, where applicable.

## **Support and protection for anyone affected**

Our first priority is the safety and well-being of anyone who experiences harassment, discrimination, or bullying. If you are affected, you will be taken seriously, treated with respect, and supported throughout, whether or not you decide to make a formal report.

Where needed, and in consultation with you, the organising committee will put appropriate interim measures in place for the duration of the school to help keep you safe and comfortable. Any such measures are precautionary and do not imply any finding of wrongdoing.

How you proceed is your decision. You may want the behaviour addressed without a full investigation, or you may want to make a formal report; both are equally valid, the choice is entirely yours, and you can make a formal report at any time. The organising committee will not pressure

you towards any particular course of action. Working with the KNUST Anti-Sexual Harassment Committee and the KNUST Counselling Centre where relevant, we will explain the options open to you and the support available at each stage. Confidential counselling is available through the KNUST Counselling Centre.

## Wellbeing and accessibility

Beyond the reporting process, the school cares about the general wellbeing of every participant. If you are facing any personal difficulty during the school, you can speak to an organiser in confidence and, where helpful, be put in touch with the KNUST Counselling Centre.

We want every participant to be able to take part fully. If you have a disability, or any other accessibility or dietary requirement, please tell the organising committee in advance so that reasonable accommodations can be made, in line with the KNUST Disability Policy.

## Questions

For any question about this policy, or about the incident investigation process, remedial actions or appeals, please contact the organising committee at [abritwum.cos@knust.edu.gh](mailto:abritwum.cos@knust.edu.gh), [photonics@knust.edu.gh](mailto:photonics@knust.edu.gh) or [mkedonkor.cos@knust.edu.gh](mailto:mkedonkor.cos@knust.edu.gh).

## References: applicable KNUST policies

The full text of each policy referenced in this Code is available from the KNUST University Policies page:

- **Sexual Harassment Policy:** <https://www.knust.edu.gh/sites/default/files/2020-09/SEXUAL%20HARASSMENT%20POLICY%202020.pdf>
- **Health and Safety Policy:** <https://www.knust.edu.gh/sites/default/files/2019-02/HEALTH%20AND%20SAFETY%20POLICY%202018.pdf>
- **Equality and Diversity Policy:** <https://www.knust.edu.gh/sites/default/files/2019-02/Equality%20Policy%202018.pdf>
- **Gender Policy:** <https://www.knust.edu.gh/sites/default/files/2019-03/Gender%20Policy%202019.pdf>
- **Ethics Policy:** <https://www.knust.edu.gh/sites/default/files/2019-02/Ethics%20Policy%202018.pdf>
- **Disability Policy:** <https://www.knust.edu.gh/sites/default/files/2019-02/Disability%20Policy%202018.pdf>
- **Security Policy:** <https://www.knust.edu.gh/sites/default/files/2023-02/KNUST%20SECURITY%20POLICY.pdf>
- **Counselling Policy:** <https://www.knust.edu.gh/sites/default/files/2022-10/COUNSELLING%20POLICY%20online.pdf>

Full list of University policies: <https://www.knust.edu.gh/about/knust/policies>

*This Code of Conduct is adapted from the Optica Anti-Harassment Policy and Code of Conduct and is aligned with KNUST's policies. It applies to all participants in the NYANSAPC Photonics School for Health and Safety.*