

Explainer: What are the Khanya policies, and why we must follow them

By Siyabonga Mviko

The annual Khanya College Winter School begins on Sunday, 14 July 2024 but will officially open on Monday, 15 July 2024. This school marks an incredible 25 years since it began in 1999 in which time has produced many incredible ideas that participating organisations could adopt to respond to challenges, they and communities face, for example, the Imbila Yesu newsletter itself came out of the school. The winter school is a safe environment for activists and communities, for years the school has been able to produce free and maximum participation, especially for women comrades.

Part of the work to ensure free and maximum participation of the activists are the house rules and the sexual harassment policy adopted by the College. This policy, which is committed to by the Khanya staff but applies to and binds board members of the College, the constituencies Khanya works with, participants in events, volunteers, and interns as well, is one way in which Khanya protects participants from gender-based discrimination and violence such as homophobia but more so sexual harassment.

Participants must be aware that sexual relations are discouraged between staff members and participants in Khanya programmes.

But what is the Khanya College sexual harassment policy? Well, generally, the policy identifies as sexual harassment “unwanted sexual attention or persistence of abusive nature implied or expressed promise or reward” for granting a sexual request, or any threat and actual harassment for refusal to grant a sexual favour or demand or request.

Language that is homophobic in nature will also not be tolerated at Khanya. The participants are given a copy of the full policy statement which also lays out the procedure to follow should, we forbid, a participant suffer sexual harassment.

Participants and staff members cannot plead ignorance, the College will take the maximum penalty against anyone who commits these offences.

There will also be a list of house rules which participants have to follow to make full use of the limited duration of the school. The house rules do not only help the College to adopt certain attitudes towards gender issues or how it handles resources for supporting organisations, but they also help to cut out negative behaviours at the school. They have come from participants over the years.

Some of those include the promotion of values such as democracy and accountability, and zero-tolerance towards divisive, discriminative behaviour. Others serve as a guide to keep participants safe while they are in Johannesburg. This means that participants will not be allowed to use the accommodation as a drinking party space while taking walks and tours of the city, or going out into the streets alone is also discouraged.

The rest relate to the advised behaviour of activists during the programme to ensure the most effective use of the time and to allow a conducive environment of learning,

discussion and reading to be forged, as well as networking to happen between participants at the school.

We look forward to a school without negative disruptions, we hope that comrades use the school to learn and share their knowledge while leaving a lasting positive impression.

This article was submitted as part of the Imbila Yesu publication produced daily for the duration of the Winter School in 2024 (14-20 July 2024). It appeared in Edition 1, released on 15 July 2024.

You may republish this article, so long as you credit the author and Karibu! Online (www.Karibu.org.za), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.