

**Speaker:** *Reema Nunlall*

**Presentation title:** #AmINext: Are universities' efforts to prevent sexual harassment a punitive or preventive one?

The #AmINext social media campaign reflects students' concerns about the possibility of being victims of sexual harassment. Many universities across South Africa have developed sexual harassment policies in response to the high levels of gender-based violence (GBV). However, GBV experienced in institutions of higher education continues to overwhelm media headlines, thus questioning universities' attempts to address GBV on campus. A more comprehensive response to GBV in higher education is evident, therefore the study aims to determine whether sexual harassment policies in higher education institutions adopt a punitive-reactive approach or a preventive-proactive approach. Existing sexual harassment policies available on universities' websites formed the study's sample. The policies were content analysed guided by a summative approach involving latent and manifest content analysis. The process was informed with the question: how does policy address prevention of sexual harassment at higher education institutions? Procedures of handling sexual harassment cases seem to outweigh preventive measures. Common themes regarding a punitive-reactive approach include formal and informal reporting procedures, investigative procedures, confidentiality, and disciplinary actions. Communication of sexual harassment policies was a reoccurring theme, however, awareness of policies through communication reflects a deterrent stance. Neglecting preventive measures suggests that the aim of sexual harassment policies are to avoid liability in lawsuits and a quick response to student outrages. The implications of the study findings will be discussed.