

# USC Office of Equity and Diversity

## Sexual harassment

The Office of Equity and Diversity investigates complaints by faculty, staff, students and applicants (for both employment and student admissions) who believe themselves to be harmed by sexual harassment. The office represents the university to government agencies on those same matters. Our office also investigates **Title IX complaints** against the university, as well as complaints of retaliation related to Title IX complaints.

Should a complaint of sexual harassment be brought to your attention, contact our office immediately. In order to assure that all complaints are addressed quickly and appropriately, departments may not proceed in any way to investigate allegations of this sort on their own.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when any of the following apply:

- submission to such conduct is either explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment, appointment, admission, or academic evaluation
- submission to such conduct is used as a basis for evaluation in personnel decisions or academic evaluations affecting an individual
- such conduct has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment
- such conduct has the effect of interfering with a student's academic performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile, offensive, or otherwise adverse learning environment

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### In the classroom

Specific examples of sexual harassment by a student may include, but are not limited to, making written, verbal, physical, and/or visual contact of a sexual nature when the conduct or speech is so severe or pervasive, and offensive, as to undermine others' educational experiences and thus deny equal access to university resources.

- Written examples: suggestive or obscene letters or notes
- Verbal examples: derogatory comments, slurs, jokes, or epithets of a sexual nature; sexist remarks; requests for sexual favors; repeated and unwelcome propositions for dates
- Physical examples: assaults; impeding or blocking movement; touching; body contact
- Visual examples: sexual gestures; inappropriate display of sexually explicit objects, pictures, cartoons, posters, or drawings with sexist implications

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### In the workplace

Specific examples of sexual harassment by faculty or staff may include, but are not limited to, all of the above examples.

#### More examples

- Lewd remarks or whistles of a sexual nature
- Sexually suggestive visual displays (e.g., photographs, calendars)
- Jokes, humor, or insults of a sexual nature
- Repeated, unwanted discussions of sexual matters
- Discussion of and rating sexual attributes and attractiveness
- Asking or commenting about someone's sexuality or sex life
- Remarks about your own sex life and desires

- Gratuitous derogatory comments about women in the work or academic environment
- Unwelcome, sexually suggestive gestures, body language, or sounds (staring, winking, throwing kisses, leering)
- Sexual misuse or abuse of power or hierarchical authority
- Deliberate, repeated gender-based humiliation/intimidation

Sexual harassment involves unwanted sexual conduct. Sometimes the person accused will state that the complainant consented to the sexual conduct. Consent must be meaningful and freely given. See the discussion of consent in the section on [sexual assault](#).

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## Retaliation

It is a violation of university policy to retaliate against anyone for exercising the right to make a complaint. This includes attempts or threats of retaliation, or efforts to impede an investigation. Retaliation is a violation of this policy whether or not the underlying claim of harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment or sexual assault is proven. Anyone who perceives retaliation should immediately notify our office.

- [What happens when I file a complaint?](#)
- [Complaint form](#)
- [USC's Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault policy](#)

## Your obligations as a USC employee

- Immediately report sexual harassment whenever you observe it even if the people involved are not under your direct supervision. This obligation exists no matter who the people are: they can be students, faculty, employees or contractors; they can be visitors, volunteers, or alumni; they can be customers at a university restaurant or passengers on a tram—in short, anyone who interacts with the USC community.
  - Cooperate fully with any investigation concerning sexual harassment or retaliation. You are obligated to be immediately available to investigators and to be truthful and forthcoming. The lack of full cooperation is subject to disciplinary action.
  - Never take any retaliatory action against someone who makes a sexual harassment complaint or who is involved in the investigation. Retaliatory action will be investigated and is subject to disciplinary action.
  - If you receive a complaint about sexual harassment, promptly report the complaint to the Office of Equity and Diversity at (213) 740-5086.
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## USC Office of Equity and Diversity

USC's Office of Equity and Diversity is a department of the [Human Resources division](#), led by Associate Senior Vice President [Janis McEldowney](#). The division also includes the offices of [Human Resources Administration](#), [Policy Development and Communication](#), [Benefits Administration](#), [Retirement Plan Administration](#), and the [Center for Work and Family Life](#).

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