



Sexual Harassment: What You Should Know

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Princeton University strives to be an intellectual and residential community in which all members can participate fully and equally in an atmosphere free from all manifestations of bias and from all forms of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Respect for the rights, privileges and sensibilities of each other is essential in preserving the spirit of community at Princeton. Actions that make the atmosphere intimidating, threatening, or hostile to individuals are, therefore, regarded as serious offenses. Every member of the University community should be aware that Princeton is strongly opposed to sexual harassment and assault and that such behavior is prohibited by both federal

and state law and by University policy. It is the intention of the University to take whatever action may be needed to prevent, correct and, if necessary, discipline behavior that violates its policy.

Policy Statement

The University defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to or rejection of such conduct is made implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of instruction, employment, or participation in University activity;
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making academic or personnel decisions affecting an individual;
- such verbal or physical conduct has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work, academic performance, or living conditions by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

(Rights, Rules, Responsibilities, 1998 Edition, University-Wide Conduct Regulations, Pp. 5,6)

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual attention that makes a person uncomfortable or causes problems in school, at work, or in social settings. Either men or women can be targets of sexual harassment, and sexual harassment can occur between individuals of the same gender. It may result from an intentional or unintentional action and can be subtle or blatant. In order to determine if the examples below constitute sexual harassment, the full context in which the behavior occurs must be

considered:

- An undergraduate phones and sends email messages to someone she has a crush on, even though this person has clearly indicated no interest in her.
- A supervisor regularly makes sexually suggestive remarks in front of his staff. Several staff people have asked him to stop, but the behavior continues.
- A student dated her instructor at the beginning of the semester. She now believes her final grade for the course is not an accurate reflection of her work, but is an act of retaliation for ending the relationship.
- From time to time, a group of students hang out in front of the dining hall and rate female students (from 1 to 10) as they leave the building. Some women avoid that dining hall because of this behavior.
- Two members of an eating club persistently ask a prospective member to talk about favorite sexual fantasies. When the prospective member refuses and walks away, one member yells, "You won't get in this club if you don't know how to take a joke."
- An employee sends unsolicited pornographic material and obscene messages to another employee via e-mail.

How you Can Deal With Sexual Harassment

People who harass will have no reason to stop unless they are challenged. Therefore, it is imperative to support and encourage targets of harassment to come forward. Indeed, supervisors have an institutional and legal responsibility to respond to these concerns appropriately. However, many people do not report their experiences. They are afraid they will not be believed or that others will say they "asked for it." It's natural in such circumstances to feel uncomfortable and worried. Yet, ignoring or minimizing the problem will not make it go away.

You can sometimes stop harassment by taking direct action. If you believe you are being, or have been, sexually harassed, you should take the following steps immediately:

- Speak up at the time and say "no" to the harasser. Be direct, and firmly tell him or her to stop harassing you. Don't apologize and

don't smile. Clearly communicate your disapproval of behavior with which you are uncomfortable and which you consider to be harassing.

- If speaking to that person is uncomfortable or unsuccessful, consider writing him or her a letter. Identify the incident(s), what you found objectionable and how it made you feel. State that you would like the harassment to stop. Keep a dated copy of the letter for yourself, and also consider consulting with the SHARE Office or one of the other confidential counselors.
- Keep records. Document all incidents and conversations that involve sexual harassment, including date, time, place, witnesses, and what was said and done.
- **Seek assistance.** If the harassment does not stop, or if you would like confidential advice on deciding how to deal with the harasser, contact the SHARE counselors or any of the other confidential counselors listed in this brochure.

Responding to Incidents

You should know that if you believe you have been sexually harassed, you have options for addressing such conduct. The University's response system is designed to afford a complainant (the person who is bringing a charge) and a respondent (the person who is answering a charge), a fair, prompt, and appropriate resolution process. The process is designed to help persons who need support as they address these incidents and incorporates both informal resolutions and formal disciplinary procedures.

To resolve a complaint informally, a University designated individual will privately mediate an agreement between two parties who do not need to meet face to face. If the terms of the agreement are kept, the matter is considered closed and no disciplinary action is involved. A formal sexual harassment complaint is handled by the appropriate University judicial system. The protocol for handling informal and formal complaints is available from SHARE, designated individuals or any of the other resources offered here.

If you witness or experience harassment or discrimination based on sexual orientation, the SHARE Office provides a completely confidential place to discuss your concerns. You will obtain information, advice, or help with initiating a complaint or filing a private report. The affirmative action officer, ombuds officer, deans of student life, human resources

region managers, associate deans of the faculty, and directors of studies are all available to answer questions and provide information on University policies and procedures for resolving conflicts between individuals and/or groups. In addition to those above, you may also report an incident to the Office of Public Safety or the LGB Coordinator.

Levels of Confidentiality

The Most Confidential Communication. Conversations with **confidential counselors** listed in this pamphlet afford complainants and respondents the highest level of confidentiality. Conversations with confidential counselors are not disclosed to anyone (unless there is a threat of physical harm to that individual or others) without the expressed permission of the person seeking advice. Members of the University community who wish only to talk about their experience and are gathering information about the University system for responding to incidents of sexual harassment, should first seek the advice of a confidential counselor to ensure that those conversations receive the maximum degree of protection from disclosure.

Private communication. Conversations with **designated individuals** listed in this pamphlet afford complainants and respondents private but less confidential communication. The primary role of the designated individuals is to see that the institution responds promptly and fairly to complaints of sexual harassment. Designated individuals are able to answer questions, provide guidance, discuss options, mediate informal complaint resolutions, and, when necessary, refer persons to other appropriate resources.

Unlike confidential counselors, who have protected confidentiality, designated individuals, with knowledge of actionable harassment, have institutional responsibility to take prompt and appropriate steps to resolve complaints. It may be determined that the allegations constitute such a serious threat to the wellbeing of the community that an informal resolution is inappropriate. In such cases, the University reserves the right to pursue further action.

Campus Resources Regarding Sexual Harassment

The following Designated individuals and Confidential Counselors are available to resolve complaints of sexual harassment privately between parties.

[Designated Individuals and Confidential Counselors \(PDF\)](#)

This document has been prepared by the SHARE Office (Sexual Harassment/Assault Advising, Resources and Education) in consultation with a member of the Office of General Counsel and the University Affirmative Action Officer. It contains resources and options for dealing with sexual harassment on campus



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