

What You Need to Know About Sexual Harassment [Instructors]

WHAT IS SEX-BASED HARASSMENT

What is Sex-Based Harassment?

Sex-Based Harassment is a form of sex-based discrimination, involving treatment that negatively affects someone because of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. It encompasses various behaviors, comments, and cues of a sexual nature that create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment.

Under the Discriminatory and Sexual Misconduct policy, there are two primary categories of Sex-Based Harassment:

1. Quid Pro Quo Sex-Based Harassment

- *Definition:* This occurs when a person in a position of authority abuses that power by conditioning benefits or opportunities on sexual favors or threatening negative consequences for refusal.
- *Examples:*
 - A professor offering a student a better grade in exchange for sexual acts or threatening a lower grade if the student refuses.
 - A supervisor promising a promotion for agreeing to a date or threatening demotion for declining.

2. Hostile Environment Sex-Based Harassment

- *Definition:* Hostile Environment harassment involves unwelcome sex-based conduct that is severe or pervasive enough to interfere with an individual's educational or work experience. This type of harassment can occur in various settings, such as classrooms, offices, labs, or public spaces, and can involve anyone within the university community.
- *Types of Behavior:*
 - **Verbal:** Includes comments and noises of a sexual nature, such as whistling, making "kissy" sounds, or sexualized jokes. It also includes repeatedly asking someone out after they have declined, discussing someone's body or sexual preferences, and using sexist, homophobic, or transphobic slurs.
 - **Visual:** Encompasses sending or displaying sexual images or materials through email, text, social media, or posting them on physical spaces such as walls or doors.
 - **Physical:** Involves unwelcome physical contact, such as purposefully brushing up against someone in a sexual way, unwanted touching, or exposing one's genitals. It also includes acts of sexual violence.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I OBSERVE
HARASSING/INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR?**

Document the Incident

- Record key details, including date, time, location, individuals involved, and the specific behavior. This documentation may be important for reporting and addressing the issue.

Consider Intervening if Safe and Appropriate

- As a faculty member, you are in a position to model respectful, inclusive behavior. If it feels safe, consider the following options to address the situation:
 - **Check in with the Person Affected**
 - Approach the individual affected by the behavior to ensure their well-being and offer any assistance or support they may need.
 - **Directly Address the Individual**
 - If possible, speak with the person engaging in concerning behavior privately, at a time and place where a constructive conversation is feasible.
 - **Distract, Redirect or De-escalate the Situation**
 - Politely interrupt or change the topic to help defuse the situation if the behavior occurs publicly.
 - **Delegate the Concern if Needed**
 - If the behavior requires further action, report it to an appropriate resource, such as a supervisor, Human Resources, the IEX Office (Title IX Office), or campus police. For bias-related incidents, consider contacting the **Campus Climate and Bias Reporting Protocol (CCBRP)** team.
 - **Address the Behavior Publicly but Respectfully**
 - Sometimes, “calling in” rather than “calling out” can be effective. This involves acknowledging the inappropriateness of the behavior in a respectful manner without assuming negative intent, which can lead to constructive discussion and awareness.

Note for Faculty: As mandatory reporters, you are required to report any instances of observed or suspected sex-based harassment or misconduct to the IEX Office. For incidents related to bias that may not qualify as policy violations, you may also report to the **CCBRP** team, which provides non-punitive, educational responses to bias-related incidents.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SOMEONE TELLS ME THAT I DID SOMETHING THAT WAS OFFENSIVE?

Thank Them for Sharing

- Express appreciation that they took the time to tell you. Acknowledging their effort shows respect and openness to feedback.

Seek Clarification if Needed

- If you're unsure what was concerning, gently ask if they could provide more details. Recognize that they may not feel comfortable or obligated to explain further, so avoid pressing for an explanation.

Acknowledge and Take Responsibility

- Accept responsibility for your actions without using qualifiers such as "if" or "but." Acknowledge how your actions may have affected them.

Commit to Improvement

- Assure them that you'll be more mindful in the future and aim to do better.

Avoid Retaliation or Adverse Reactions

- Do not respond with threats, harassment, humiliation, or any other adverse actions against the person. Retaliation, including verbal or non-verbal aggression, is strictly prohibited under university policy.

WHAT ARE BEST PRACTICES TO AVOID ENGAGING IN SEX-BASED DISCRIMINATION OR SEX-BASED HARASSMENT?

Set Professional Boundaries with Scheduled Office Hours

- Establish and communicate specific office hours, encouraging students to schedule appointments during these times.

Maintain Professional Boundaries in Physical Settings

- Avoid being alone with a student behind closed doors or in private spaces, such as vehicles, whenever possible.

Limit Personal Disclosure

- Keep discussions about your personal life to a minimum, especially with students, to maintain a professional relationship.

Avoid Personal Jokes or Comments

- Refrain from making jokes or comments about a student's personal life, appearance, or other non-academic matters.

Be Mindful of Physical Contact

- Avoid initiating physical contact, except for professional gestures like a handshake, if appropriate.
- If physical contact is necessary for educational purposes (e.g., helping a student with posture in a performance class):
 - Explain your intent and why the contact is necessary.
 - Obtain the student's consent, being mindful of power dynamics or potential discomfort.
 - Offer alternatives, such as demonstrating on yourself, using a video, or providing verbal guidance.

Use Inclusive Language

- Avoid assumptions about gender, sexual orientation, or relationship status. Use language that respects all identities (e.g., avoid assuming an individual is male or that a couple is heterosexual).

Avoid Suggestive or Flirtatious Language

- Refrain from using language with double meanings, innuendos, or flirtatious undertones.

Do Not Pursue Personal Relationships with Students

- Do not ask students out or pressure them to engage in personal or romantic relationships.

Keep Discussions of Sexual Topics Professional

- If sex or sexuality is relevant to an academic discussion, maintain a professional and academic tone, avoiding any personal references.

Ensure Equal Treatment and Attention

- Reflect on your interactions to ensure you are treating all students equitably:
 - Do you call on students equally?
 - Do you avoid interrupting students or prevent others from interrupting?
 - Are your responses and opportunities offered fairly across all student groups (e.g., mentoring, TA/Research roles)?

Apply Standards Consistently

- Ask yourself, "Would I make this comment or take this action if the student were of a different sex or gender?"

Compliment on Achievements, Not Appearance

- Focus on acknowledging academic or professional accomplishments rather than physical appearance.

Consider the Public Perspective

- Before acting, consider how the interaction might be perceived if recorded or observed by others.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A STUDENT OR COLLEAGUE DISCLOSES A CONCERN ABOUT SEX-BASED HARASSMENT OR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT?

Thank Them for Sharing and Check on Their Safety

- Acknowledge the courage it took for them to come forward and express appreciation for their trust. Make sure they feel safe in the current moment and ask if they need any immediate support to ensure their well-being.

Ask How You Can Support Them

- Ask how you can assist or support them, while being mindful that they may have specific needs. Demonstrate empathy and let them know that there are resources available to help.

Connect Them with the IEX Office or Another Appropriate Resource

- As a faculty member, you are a **mandatory reporter*** under CMU policy. This means you are required to report disclosures of sex-based harassment or sexual misconduct to the IEX Office (Institutional Equity and Title IX Office).
- Inform the individual of your reporting obligation before they share further details. Offer to assist them in contacting the IEX Office directly, if they feel comfortable. This might involve a “warm handoff,” such as saying, “Would it be helpful if we reached out to the IEX Office together?”
- The IEX Office can provide them with supportive measures, resources, and information on options for addressing their concerns.

*** Note for Faculty:** As mandatory reporters, faculty members are obligated under university policy to report disclosures of potential sex-based harassment or sexual misconduct. Familiarize yourself with CMU’s reporting process and resources to ensure you respond appropriately and comply with reporting requirements.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF A STUDENT DISCLOSES A PREGNANCY
OR PREGNANCY-RELATED CONDITION TO ME?**

Ensure Non-Discrimination

- Pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions are protected under Title IX, meaning students are entitled to an environment free from discrimination. Faculty should reassure the student that they will receive fair treatment, and no academic or personal opportunities will be negatively impacted due to their condition.

Inform the Student of Available Resources and Accommodations

- Let the student know that the university offers supportive measures, such as modified attendance policies, extended deadlines, and flexible scheduling, to support their academic participation. Encourage the student to reach out to the IEX Office or the Office of Disability Resources for formal accommodations as needed.

Offer to Connect Them with the IEX Office

- If students are seeking further assistance, offer a warm handoff to the IEX Office by helping them make contact or by providing the contact information directly.

Consult the IEX Office if You Have Questions

- If you're uncertain about your role in providing adjustments or need further clarification, consult the IEX Office for guidance. Remember to respect the student's privacy and share details only with those directly involved in supporting their needs.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I AM BEING HARASSED?

Document the Incident

- Keep a record of specific details, including the date, time, location, and nature of the behavior. Include any witnesses or related communications.

Seek Support

- Consider reaching out to the **Employee Assistance Program** for confidential support and counseling: 1-844-744-1370.

Address the Behavior if You Feel Comfortable

- If you feel safe and comfortable, consider informing the person that their behavior is unwelcome and makes you uncomfortable. This step is optional and should only be taken if you feel it is safe to do so.

Carnegie Mellon University

Office for Institutional Equity and Title IX

Report the Behavior

- As a CMU employee, you have multiple options for reporting:
 - **IEX Office:** 412-268-7125 | institutionalequity@cmu.edu
 - **Online Reporting:** <https://www.cmu.edu/title-ix/>
 - **Supervisor or HR Professional:** Contact a supervisor or HR representative if they can assist or advocate on your behalf.
 - **Someone You Trust:** If you need initial guidance, you may also confide in someone you trust before making a formal report.

Note: Reporting to the IEX Office, whether by phone, email, or online, provides access to supportive measures and resources while helping ensure your concerns are addressed in alignment with university policies.

Helpful Links:

- [Office for Institutional Equity and Title IX Webpage](#)
- [Office for Institutional Equity and Title IX Report Form](#)
- [Ethics Reporting Hotline](#)
- [Campus Climate and Bias Reporting Protocol](#)
- [Employee Obligations Wallet Card](#)
- [Confidential Employee Wallet Card](#)
- [Title IX & Pregnancy Wallet Card](#)