Carnegie Mellon University
Office for Institutional Equity and Title IX

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is a form of sex-based discrimination, which means treating a person worse because of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.   It includes a range of behaviors, comments and cues of a sexual nature that create an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or learning environment.

There are two categories of sexual harassment: (1) quid pro quo and (2) hostile environment.

1. **Quid Pro Quo** (Latin for "this for that") means that a person in a position of power is abusing that power to force someone to engage in sexual or dating relationships or behaviors. One example would be a professor offering a good grade for engaging in sexual acts, or threatening a failing grade for refusing to do so. Another example would be a supervisor who offers a promotion to a subordinate for going on a date, or threatening a demotion for refusing to do so.
2. **Hostile Environment** means that there are offensive sexual cues (verbal, visual and physical) occurring that are interfering with a person's education or employment status. This form of harassment can be committed by anyone in a variety of settings (classroom, office, lab, residence hall, in public, etc.). Examples of such behaviors can include:
   a. **Verbal:** noises such as whistling and kissy noises; sexualized comments and jokes; asking someone out after they've declined; talking about a person's body parts, sexual life or sexual preferences; sexist, homophobic and transphobic names and slurs
   b. **Visual:** sending sexual material or images by email, text, social media or other means; posting or displaying sexual material or images on a wall, door, surface or electronic device
   c. **Physical:** flashing or exposing genitals; purposefully touching or brushing up against someone in a sexual manner; unwanted physical contact; sexual violence

What should I do if I observe harassing/inappropriate behaviors?

- Document it
- Intervene if you are able to do so. This can include:
  - Directly talking to the person engaging in the concerning behavior (consider time and location)
  - Checking in with the target of the behavior to see if they are ok and/or if you can offer assistance
  - Interrupting or changing the subject
  - Delegating the concern to someone better able to handle (supervisor, HR, Title IX, police, etc.)
  - Calling out problematic behaviors in front of others (oftentimes, it is appropriate to consider "calling in" – acknowledging that the behavior is inappropriate in a respectful manner which assumes no ill intent – using the Golden Rule)

Sexual Harassment Resource for Faculty & Instructors. Prepared by CMU IEX Office (last updated March 2023)

> ## What should I do if someone tells me that I did or said something that was offensive?

- Thank them for telling you
- Ask them if they can provide more detail about what was concerning, if you do not know (recognize that the person may not feel comfortable articulating *why* something is problematic – don't force them to educate you)
- Take responsibility and acknowledge (avoid ifs and buts)
- Commit to doing better
- Do not threaten, harass, attack, humiliate or take other adverse actions against the person

> ## What are best practices to avoid engaging in sex-based discrimination or harassment?

- Schedule set office hours and encourage students to make appointments during those hours
- Avoid being alone with a student, particularly behind closed doors or in a vehicle
- Impose limits on how much information you share about your personal life with students
- Don't make personal jokes or comments about a student
- Avoid physical contact, except handshakes where appropriate, *especially* if you are initiating
  - If physical contact is necessary or helpful for educational purposes (e.g. assisting with position or posture for a student in a theater or music course):
    - Explain what you would like to do and why it would be helpful
    - Seek the student's permission (keep in mind factors that may limit their ability to respond meaningfully to the request, including power imbalances, embarrassment in front of peers, etc.)
    - Offer the student reasonable alternatives (demonstrating on yourself, showing a video, etc.)
- Try to use inclusive language (i.e. don't assume an individual is male, a couple is heterosexual etc.)
- Avoid suggestive or flirtatious language/double entendres
- Do not ask students out or pressure them to date, engage in sexual relations, etc.
- If sex comes up and is relevant to the discussion, keep it professional and definitely do not make it personal
- Pay attention to how you treat students
  - Do you call on students equally?
  - Do you interrupt (or allow others to interrupt) certain student groups?
  - Do you respond equally to students?
  - Do you offer same opportunities to different groups of students (mentoring, TA/Research, etc.)?
- Use the same standards regardless of sex: "Would I make this comment to someone if they were a different sex or gender?"
- Try to give compliments on achievements rather than on appearance
- Think about how the interaction would appear to others if captured on tape or in writing

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> ### *What should I do if a student or colleague discloses a concern about sexual harassment or sexual misconduct?*

- Thank them for sharing
- Ask how you can support them
- Connect them with IEX Office or other appropriate resource (consider a "warm handoff" such as "can we call the Title IX office together?" versus a "cold handoff") 412-268-7125/institutionalequity@cmu.edu
- Feel free to consult with the IEX Office yourself – even hypothetically or without disclosing identities

> ### *What should I do if I think I am being harassed?*

- Document it
- Seek support (Employee Assistance Program: 1-844-744-1370)
- If (and only if) you feel comfortable: let the person know that their conduct is making you uncomfortable and is unwelcome
- Report it to IEX Office (412-268-7125/institutionalequity@cmu.edu), your supervisor, HR professional, or someone you trust