

Preventing, Reporting and Responding to Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Education Institutions¹

What is sexual harassment?

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when either:

- The conduct is made as a term or condition of an individual's employment, education, living environment or participation in a community;
- The acceptance or refusal of such behavior is used in decisions affecting an individual's employment, education, living environment, or participation in a community;
- The conduct impacts an individual's employment or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for that individual.²

Evidence has shown that sexual harassment is primarily aimed at women and it can cause enduring psychological harm.³

What is sexual assault?

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.⁴

Why should tertiary education institutions focus on this?

Eliminating all forms of violence at work and in education is not only the right thing to do, but it also is the smart thing to do in terms of efficiency and productivity. Importantly, sexual harassment is one of the leading causes of high turnover and absenteeism at school and work.⁵

¹ For more information, contact World Bank Education Events at wbeducation@worldbank.org

² University of Michigan, Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center

³ Quick & McFadyen (2017)

⁴ World Health Organization (2011)

⁵ Merkin & Shah (2014)

What can be done? Good practices

1 Develop an anti-sexual harassment policy and code of conduct. *clearly defined, strongly worded and readily accessible*

- **The anti-sexual harassment policy** is a statement from the institution's leadership that sexual assault and sexual harassment are unacceptable.
- **The code of conduct** should define the types of unacceptable behavior, provide examples, and indicate how seriously different acts will be treated. It should apply to all students and affiliated personnel, including on campus vendors.

2 Establish a complaints mechanism. *fair, accessible and transparent while ensuring confidentiality and security when reporting an incident*

- **Appoint at least one counselor** (aware of ethical and safety guidelines) outside the management structure to be the single point of contact to all formal reports.
- **Offer multiple ways to file a report**, such as safety apps and online reporting. There should always be an option to make a formal report in person.
- **Acknowledge the receipt of formal reports** and provide information on next steps, including information on support services. The process should be driven by survivors' preferences.
- **Define consequences and measures** tailored to the nature of the case.
- **Monitor anti-sexual harassment efforts**, record the number of complaints by department, gender, outcome, and remedies.

3 Prevent, educate and raise awareness. *comprehensive approach to reach students and staff at all levels*

- **Integrate sexual harassment content into the organization's core trainings**, including orientation programs. Include information on the complaints procedure and details about point of contact.
- **Post harassment policies and resources in accessible locations** such as the intranet, email communications, and messages in cafeterias or bathrooms.
- **Include modules on the prevention of sexual harassment** and gender discrimination in staff training.

Other promising practices

Tackle gender norms

- Employ edutainment to promote changes in attitudes and behavior, including radio, TV or online awareness campaigns.
- Hire more female staff and increase female participation among students in institutions with unbalanced sex ratios.

Improve safety

- Map hotspots and unsafe areas.
- Ensure greater visibility (maximize number of windows and doors).
- Provide separate and adequate sanitation facilities.
- Improve lighting, remove bushes.
- Use perimeter and access point fencing and monitoring.
- Place security phones in hotspots or consider a CCTV system.