

# WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

## What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is not tolerated at the University of Prince Edward Island. Indeed, the University is committed to the provision of a campus free from sexual harassment. The University's *Policy and Procedures: Sexual Harassment*, defines sexual harassment as:

- unwanted sexual attention of a persistent or abusive nature, made by a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwanted; and/or
- an actual, implied or expressed promise of reward for complying with a sexually-oriented request; and/or
- an actual, implied or expressed threat of reprisal for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request; and/or
- an actual, implied, or expressed threat of denial of opportunity for refusal to comply with a sexual-oriented request; and/or sexually-oriented behaviour and remarks where such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment in any University related context; and/or
- any conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offense or humiliation to any member of the University community to whom such conduct, comment, gesture or contact is directed; and/or
- any conduct, comment, gesture or contact of a sexual nature that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by a member of the University community, to whom it is directed, as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment, or any opportunity for training, promotion, advancement or other reward.

*Sexual harassment may include, but may not be limited to, behaviour such as:*

- unwarranted touching;
- suggestive remarks or other verbal abuse in a sexual context;
- leering;
- unwanted and unsolicited sexual advances;
- demands for sexual favours;
- coerced sexual relations.

Sexual harassment may be based on gender or sexual orientation.

*Sexual harassment is not, for example:*

- a relationship of mutual consent
- a hug between friends
- mutual flirtation

Sexual harassment can happen to anyone, female or male. Although women are more often sexually harassed by men, the reverse can occur. Same-sex harassment also occurs.

Students, staff and faculty can be either the victims or the perpetrators of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can also occur between two students.

*Examples of sexual harassment:*

- A fellow student or professor hugs, pats or otherwise touches you in a sexual way that upsets you or makes you feel uncomfortable. As a result, you may think about dropping that course.
- An instructor promises you a better grade or academic opportunity in return for sexual favours or implies that your academic record will suffer if you refuse.
- Another student or staff-member persistently asks you out (despite your refusal), follows you, and won't leave you alone.
- Your professor persistently uses sexually-oriented language which you find offensive, demeaning and inappropriate in a learning environment.
- You have become involved in a sexual relationship with one of your instructors. You are thinking of ending the relationship, but your instructor has implied there might be academic consequences if you do.

*Students can be harassers*

Although students are more frequently the victims of sexual harassment, they can also be harassers. You can avoid being accused of harassment by being sensitive to others' feelings and by listening carefully to what they say. Remember that sexist and homophobic lan-

guage is offensive and try not to use it. Remember that physical contact you mean as friendly and affectionate may not seem that way to someone else. Remember that "no" means "no" and that persistent advances constitute harassment.

## If You Are Being Harassed

*What you can do on your own:*

- Don't pretend it isn't happening. It most likely will not go away.
- Refuse to blame yourself; someone else's behaviour is NOT your responsibility or fault.
- Write down what is happening. Carefully document the dates, times, locations, witnesses (if any) and details of all incidents.
- Tell the person as clearly, firmly and directly as you can that his or her behaviour is offensive and that you want it to stop immediately. This communication can be in person or through a letter.
- If saying 'no' does not stop the offensive behaviour or if you cannot say 'no' because you fear the consequences (such as for your grades, references, a promotion), it is time to seek help.
- If you have felt unable to confront the person harassing you, it is time to seek help.

## More Help if You Need It

The University of Prince Edward Island has a six-member Sexual Harassment Committee with student, staff, and faculty representation. You are invited to contact the Chair or any member of the Committee to discuss your concerns confidentially. Reports can also be made by you to your supervisor or department head. If you have felt unable to confront the person harassing you, the Committee member may be able to help you identify a safe way to do so. If you have already tried confronting the person harassing you, or if you decide it is not safe for you to do so, then you can make a complaint of sexual harassment to the Committee. The deci-

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