A Matter of Respect

Sexual Harassment Prevention and Awareness

Ashland University
A Matter of Respect

Consistent with its heritage as a liberal arts institution, Ashland University strives to maintain an academic and social environment based upon the principles of human dignity and respect. The basic values of a liberal arts education, particularly respect for other individuals and the ability to treat others in a civil manner, are implicit in the relationships among all members of the campus community.

It is the policy of Ashland University that all students, faculty, and staff shall be able to learn, work and interact in an environment free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a violation of Ashland University policy as well as Title VII of the United States Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. This publication is provided to help prevent sexual harassment as we work together to build a community of respect.

What Is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment or academic advancement, or

2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment.

Sexual harassment may also manifest itself in conduct that is not blatantly sexual in its content. That is, patterned and pervasive conduct which is clearly offensive, degrading, harassing, or inhibiting and is based on the recipient’s sex may also qualify as sexual harassment if it meets either of the two criteria above.

Unwelcome sexual harassment or offensive conduct is prohibited. This policy applies to students, faculty, staff, and others on or off University property or participating in a University-sponsored event or activity. Prohibited conduct includes but is not limited to:

a) Sexual flirtations, touching, advances, or propositions

b) Sexually explicit language or gestures

c) Sexually graphic or suggestive comments about an individual’s dress or body

d) Contributing to an offensive overall environment, including the use of vulgar or sexist language, the presence of sexually explicit photographs or other materials, and the telling of sexual or sexist jokes or stories.
e) Explicit or implicit threats or comments that an individual may be affected in a tangible way in exchange for engaging (or not engaging) in sexually-related conduct (quid pro quo).

**Examples of Sexual Harassment**

The examples below illustrate the range of behavior that could be considered sexual harassment, depending on the circumstances of each case. These examples are intended as illustrations only; they are by no means exclusive.

**Part 1 of the Definition:** Certain behavior constitutes sexual harassment when “submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment or academic advancement.”

Kevin, an instructor for an introductory level class, uses gender-stereotyped references and depictions and often makes jokes about sex. He has suggested that the better looking a woman is the more help she will get. Tonya is a student in Kevin’s class who needs extra help. She is deeply offended by the instructor’s attitude and refuses to see him outside of class.

**Part 2 of the Definition:** Certain behavior constitutes sexual harassment when “submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions or academic decisions affecting such individual.”

Randy is struggling in class. When he approached his instructor for assistance, she advised Randy that she would be inclined to look favorably upon his borderline grade if he agreed to do some work in her yard—with his shirt off. Randy explained to the professor that this proposition made him uncomfortable and declined her invitation. After studying hard and doing what he thought was B work on the final exam, Randy was surprised to see that he received a D- on the test and failed the course.

**Part 3 of the Definition:** Certain behavior constitutes sexual harassment when “such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work or academic performance or creating an intimidating hostile, or offensive working or academic environment.”

1. Jacqui is one of three women in a study group of 20. She asked a question but the session ended before the student tutor could answer. When he said he’d talk to her later, most of the men in the room snickered. The tutor raised his eyebrows and made a suggestive joke. Jacqui felt humiliated and never had her question answered.

2. Erin is set to graduate in May. In her senior seminar course, Erin, her classmates, and her professor typically discuss their graduate school applications and their plans for after graduation. When Erin gives her an update, her male classmates regularly make jokes like, “I don’t even understand why you waste your time with the applications. You know women aren’t smart enough to go to graduate school!” The men in the room—including the professor—laugh every time. On more than one occasion, Erin has confronted her
professor after class and told him that the class’s joking is offensive to her, but the joking continues.

Who’s at Risk?

Sexual harassment can occur in situations where one person has power over another, but it can also occur among equals. Both men and women can be sexually harassed, though women are most often victimized. There are four categories of students who can be especially vulnerable to sexual harassment.

1. Women or men (especially first year and international students) whose youth, inexperience, unassertive manner, and social isolation are detected by the harasser who then entices the victim into an exploitive relationship.
2. Women or men in non-traditional fields who may be perceived as “barging into” an area where they do not belong and may be in competition for jobs.
3. Women or men in graduate school who may be nearer in age to professors, and involved in close working relationships that could be misinterpreted by faculty as sexual interest.
4. Minority women or men who may be sexually harassed as a form of racism.
5. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students are more likely than homosexual students to be targets of sexual harassment, with nearly three-quarters of LGBT college students reporting incidents (AAUW, 2006)

Myths and Facts

Myth: If people don’t speak up about sexual harassment, then it is not happening.
Fact: Sexual harassment sometimes goes unreported because people feel guilty, isolated, and may fear the results of their comments. Sixty-two percent of college students who participated in an American Association of University Women 2006 study indicated they had been subjected to sexual harassment while at college.

Myth: Women invite sexual harassment.
Fact: As with rape, sexual harassment is not necessarily a sexually motivated act. It is primarily an assertion of hostility and/or power expressed in a sexual manner.

Myth: It is harmless to harass a person. People who object have no sense of humor.
Fact: Harassment is humiliating and degrading. The recipient suffers emotionally and physically. No one needs to endure degradation with a smile.

Myth: Sexual harassment is inevitable. We can’t do anything about it.
Fact: It is our educational responsibility to confront sexual harassment when it is reported or seen and to strive to create an environment in which it is not tolerated.

Myth: Sexual harassment only happens to women.
Fact: Sexual harassment occurs with both sexes and is equally inappropriate and threatening in terms of unwanted sexual attention. One third of the female university
students who participated in the AAUW study in sexual harassment on campus admitted to sexually harassing other students.

Myth: All men are harassers.
Fact: Few men harass. Usually there is a pattern of harassment: One man harasses a number of women either sequentially or simultaneously or both.

Myth: Sexual harassment affects only a few people.
Fact: Surveys show that many female college students experience some form of sexual harassment.

**Complaint Procedures**

If you believe that the actions or words of a member of the University community or at an experiential learning site (internship, community service, etc.) constitute unwelcome harassment of you or another, you have a responsibility to immediately report the suspected harassment to either of the following administrators: Sue Heimann, Vice President for Student Affairs/Dean of Students, second floor, Student Center, 419-289-5304, or Human Resources, 106 Founders Hall, 419-289-5033.

Ashland University will investigate complaints of sexual harassment promptly and impartially. The University will not tolerate adverse treatment of students or other individuals because they report sexual harassment or provide information related to such complaints. While the University will protect the confidentiality of sexual harassment complaints to the extent possible, it also has a legal responsibility to formally investigate any and all complaints. Depending on the specific circumstances, it is the University’s general practice that students who allege sexual harassment will be kept informed of the investigation process and the ultimate outcome of their complaint. Any individual who is found to have engaged in sexual harassment will be subject to appropriate corrective action up to and including dismissal.

**Other Harassment**

Ashland University also prohibits the use of racial or ethnic slurs, threats, violence and statements directed toward a person’s religion, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnic or national origin that are intended to demean or diminish that person and that have the effect of creating a hostile environment.

**What You Should Not Do**

1. **Don’t Blame Yourself.** It is not your fault. Blaming yourself turns your anger inward and can lead to emotional problems. Use your emotions effectively through the complaint procedures.
2. **Don’t Delay.** If someone harasses you once, they are likely to continue. Do not accept sexual harassment as the way things are or treat it lightly in a joking manner. Sexual harassment is against the law. No one needs to put up with it. Take action immediately by following the complaint procedures outlined above.
How Can You Help?

Be supportive of someone who may be having a problem with harassment. Encourage the person to take action. Put yourself in the victim’s place and remember that you would need the support of a friend if this ever happened to you. Do not accept sexual harassment as the way things are or treat it lightly in a joking manner. Sexual harassment is against the law. No one needs to put up with it. Share the information in this brochure with others to help prevent harassment on campus.

Who to Contact

The Student Affairs Staff recognizes the need to provide support and confidentiality to victims of sexual harassment. **Ashland University prohibits retaliation against individuals for truthfully reporting what they believe to be sexual harassment.**

If you are in need of advice or assistance contact:

Sue Heimann, Vice President for Student Affairs ....................................419-289-5304
Human Resources........................................................................................419-289-5033
Personal Counseling Services....................................................................419-289-5307
Student Conduct ..........................................................................................419-289-5303
Safety Services .............................................................................................419-207-5555
Student Development, Mansfield Campus..............................................419-521-6878
Student Health Center..................................................................................419-289-5200
Your family, friends, advisor, RA, FM, ARD or RD


*This pamphlet is intended to be informative in nature and does not attempt to provide any legal advice and cannot be construed as an admission to legal liability.*