

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are some examples of sexual harassment:

Sexual harassment is a form of illegal sex discrimination. Northwestern's policy protects men and women equally from harassment, including same-sex harassment. Staff, faculty, and students are protected from harassment by any other staff, faculty student, or contractor. Prohibited acts that constitute sexual harassment may take a variety of forms. Examples of the kinds of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Offering or implying an employment-related reward (such as a promotion, raise, or different work assignment) or an education-related reward (such as a better grade, a letter of recommendation, favorable treatment in the classroom, assistance in obtaining employment, grants or fellowships, or admission to any education program or activity) in exchange for sexual favors or submission to sexual conduct;
- Making threats or insinuations that a person's employment, wages, grade, promotional opportunities, classroom or work assignments or other conditions of employment or educational life may be adversely affected by not submitting to sexual advances;
- Engaging in unwelcome sexual propositions, invitations, solicitations, and flirtation;
- Leering, staring at someone, or looking at someone with "elevator eyes" (i.e. looking someone up and down);
- Using sexually degrading language, sexual jokes, innuendos, or gestures;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, videotapes, graffiti and/or visuals that are not germane to any business or academic purpose;
- Displaying or transmitting sexually suggestive electronic content, including inappropriate e-mails;
- Making unnecessary and unwanted physical contact, such as hugging, rubbing, touching, patting, pinching, or massages;

- Engaging in sexual assault or pressure for sexual activity, including requesting sexual favors;
- Making unwelcome suggestive or insulting sounds, such as whistling and cat calls;
- Giving unwelcomed personal gifts, such as flowers;
- Asking about a person's sexual fantasies, sexual preferences, or sexual activities;
- Commenting on a person's body, dress, appearance, gender, sexual relationships, activities, or experience; or
- Repeatedly asking someone for a date after the person has expressed disinterest.

2. What should I do if I feel I have been sexually harassed?

Please let someone know right away. You have several options available if you are a member of the Northwestern community and feel that you have been sexually harassed. You may contact the [Sexual Harassment Prevention Office](#), one of the [Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Advisors](#), or any other individual listed under "[Where To Get Advice And Help](#)." You can also discuss the situation and explore your options on a confidential bases by contacting a [Confidential Counselor](#). Whatever path you choose, it is vital that you let someone know so that measures can be taken to address the situation. Unfortunately, ignoring sexual harassment does not make it go away.

In some situations, individuals who are experiencing unwelcome behavior feel comfortable approaching the individual who is causing the problem and letting him or her know that the conduct is inappropriate and must stop. Sometimes, individuals are not aware that their behavior is offensive, and quickly apologize and change their behavior once they are aware that their conduct is unwelcome. However, you are not required or expected to confront your harasser prior to reporting a harassment-related concern.

3. What should I do if I feel I have been discriminated against or harassed, but I don't think it is sexual harassment?

Please let someone know right away. Northwestern's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship, or veteran status. If you believe that you have been discriminated against or harassed on the basis of any of these protected categories, please contact the [Office for Equal Opportunity and Access](#). You may also bring your concerns to your supervisor, the Sexual Harassment Prevention Office, or any other individual listed under "[Where To Get Advice And Help](#)." It is important that you seek assistance immediately; individuals in each of these offices are able to assist you in addressing the situation.

4. I'm being harassed by someone who is not a Northwestern employee, but who comes on Northwestern's campus to conduct business. Is there anything I can do?

Northwestern's Sexual Harassment Policy protects you from sexual harassment by vendors, contractors, and third parties you encounter in your University employment, living, and learning environment. If you believe that you have been subjected to conduct that violates the policy, please contact the [Sexual Harassment Prevention Office](#) or any of the individuals listed under "[Where To Get Advice And Help](#)" as soon as possible.

5. Will my complaint be treated confidentially?

The University cannot promise complete confidentiality in its handling of harassment complaints. Northwestern makes every reasonable effort to handle inquiries, complaints and related proceedings in a manner that protects the confidentiality of all parties. Each situation is resolved as discreetly as possible, with information shared only with those who need to know in order to investigate and resolve the matter. In certain circumstances, the University may be able to address your concerns and stop the behavior without revealing your identity to the alleged harasser. However, this is not possible in every matter, as some situations require the disclosure of the complainant's identity in order to fully investigate the matter and/or to enable the accused harasser to fully respond to the allegations against him or her.

In its investigation, the University will be sensitive to the feelings and situation of the alleged victim and/or reporter of sexual harassment. Nonetheless, the University has a compelling interest to address all allegations of sexual harassment brought to its attention. Northwestern reserves the right to take

appropriate action in such circumstances, even in cases when the complainant is reluctant to proceed.

Confidential Counselors are available to discuss harassment issues with you on a confidential basis. After consulting with a Confidential Counselor, you may decide to take no further action; such a decision is completely within your discretion. Because of the confidential nature of the counselor/patient relationship, seeking advice from a Confidential Counselor does not constitute reporting an incident of harassment. To find a Confidential Counselor click [here](#).

6. Who is typically involved in an investigation?

Investigations involving allegations of sexual harassment by one student against another student are generally handled through the Division of Student Affairs. All other investigations of sexual harassment are coordinated by the Sexual Harassment Prevention Office, working in conjunction with Human Resources and the Dean and Departmental offices involved in the particular issue as appropriate. In keeping with the goal of maintaining as confidential a process as possible, investigations involve only those individuals and offices that need to be involved in order to investigate and respond to the issue.

7. May I have a support person with me during the investigation process?

During the course of the investigation process, both the complainant (the individual who complains of harassment) and the respondent (the accused harasser) may have a friend or colleague present with them during the investigatory interview to support them during the process. The support person must be a member of the Northwestern community and cannot be potential witness in the matter or a lawyer in any jurisdiction. In cases involving multiple complainants or respondents, the support person cannot be another respondent or complainant. The support person does not serve as an advocate on behalf of the complainant or respondent, and he or she must agree to maintain the confidentiality of the process. Witnesses to harassing conduct and others involved in an investigation are not entitled to have a support person present at investigatory interviews.

8. What are possible outcomes from a sexual harassment investigation?

At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will provide her or his conclusions and recommended actions to the appropriate office based on the staff, student, or faculty status of the respondent. For staff, the appropriate office is the

Office of Human Resources in collaboration with the respondent's manager(s). For students, the appropriate office is the Office of the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs. For faculty, the appropriate office is the faculty member's Chair or Dean. The Sexual Harassment Prevention Office and, where appropriate, the Office of Human Resources, will make a decision concerning the resolution of the complaint and any corrective action that will be imposed.

The University's response is based upon the seriousness of the conduct. In some circumstances, an investigation may result in a written or verbal apology from the harasser, harassment education for the affected school or department, and other measures designed to prevent problems from recurring. When appropriate, violators of the policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or separation from the University. Disciplinary action will be in accordance with relevant policies and/or procedures and other requirements stated in the Staff Handbook, Faculty Handbook, or Student Handbook.

9. What if I am retaliated against for complaining about harassment or participating in a investigation?

The University's Policy on Sexual Harassment expressly and strictly forbids retaliation against anyone for inquiring about a suspected harassment situation, making a good-faith harassment complaint, or participating in a harassment investigation. Retaliation is a serious violation that can subject the offender to sanctions independent of the merits of the sexual harassment allegation. Anyone experiencing any conduct that he or she believes to be retaliatory should immediately report it to one of the individuals listed under "[Where To Get Advice And Help.](#)"

10. How does the University handle false allegations of sexual harassment?

A false allegation occurs when someone intentionally reports information or incidents that they know to be untrue. Failure to prove a claim of harassment is not equivalent to a false allegation. Sanctions may be imposed on individuals who knowingly or with reckless disregard for the truth make false allegations of sexual harassment.

11. What is the role of the Sexual Harassment Prevention Office?

The Sexual Harassment Prevention Office is charged with publishing and distributing the University's sexual harassment policy and related procedures;

educating members of the Northwestern community about sexual harassment and the University's policies; investigating complaints of violations of the University's harassment policies, and working with relevant other offices to resolve harassment complaints.

12. What is a Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Advisor?

The [Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Advisors](#) form a network of faculty, staff, and administrators throughout the University who have received special training on the University's policies and procedures regarding discrimination and harassment. The Advisors are available to answer questions about the University's policies and procedures, respond to complaints, and assist you in identifying other resources available to aid in your situation.

13. What is the University's policy regarding romantic relationships among students, faculty, and/or staff?

The University's policies regarding such relationships can be found in its [Policy Regarding Evaluative Authority over Faculty and Staff](#) and in its [Policy Regarding Evaluative Authority over Students](#). In addition to these policies, other schools and departments may have more stringent requirements regarding relationships between students and individuals in supervisory or authority positions. For example, [The Graduate School prohibits](#) Teaching Assistants from having instructional authority over student with whom they are having or have recently had a romantic or sexual relationship. For additional information, please contact the Sexual Harassment Prevention Office, the Office of the Provost, your respective Dean's Office, or the Dean of Students.

14. Where can I obtain additional information?

For more information, please contact the [Sexual Harassment Prevention Office](#) or any of the individuals listed under "[Where to Get Advice and Help](#)." All inquiries will be handled as confidentially as possible.