Sexual harassment may be more subtle – requests for sex in exchange for grades or promotions, sexual gestures or comments, or sexual advances in business or academic settings. People who experience sexual harassment often blame themselves rather than holding the harasser responsible for the problem, may feel powerless to say “no,” verbal refusals are frequently ineffective. People may also fear retaliation for their refusals.

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual attention that is a form of illegal sex discrimination under federal and state law. It is usually repeated behavior, but could be a single incident. Sexual harassment may be blatant, as in
- deliberate touching, pinching, caressing,
- attempts to fondle or kiss,
- pressure for dates or sex,
- requests for sex in exchange for grades or promotions.

Or sexual harassment may be more subtle – like staring, sexual jokes, or teasing, sexually demeaning remarks.

Although such forms of harassment may be unintentional, persistent or offensive behavior and words are harassing if a reasonable person would find them intimidating, hostile, or offensive, or if they unreasonably interfere with a person’s academic or work performance. The key element is what a reasonable person would find intimidating, hostile, or offensive.

The University of Maine System is committed to providing a positive education and work environment for all who can learn and work in an environment free of sexual harassment. The Board of Trustees has adopted this policy.

Relate to Sexual Harassment?

People who are subjected to sexual harassment often feel powerless to say “no.” Verbal refusals are frequently ineffective. People may also fear “yes,” verbal refusals are frequently ineffective. People may also fear retaliation for their refusals.

Non-Discrimination Notice

In complying with the letter and spirit of applicable laws and in pursuing its own goals of diversity, the University of Maine System shall not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation including transgender status or gender expression, national origin or citizenship status, age, disability, or veteran status in employment, education, and other areas of the University. The University provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities upon request. Questions and complaints about discrimination in any area of the University should be directed to the campus Equal Opportunity Director.

OHR, 2007

This brochure is available in alternate formats upon request.
What About “Consenting” Relationships?

As someone who has experienced or may experience sexual harassment—

What Can You Do About Sexual Harassment?

How Are Complaints Handled?

How Can I Avoid Behavior That May Be Seen as Harassing?

Salt Lake City

As a faculty member and student if the faculty or staff member is in a position to evaluate or otherwise influence the student’s education, employment, housing, or participation in athletics or any other University activity (staff members include, for example, graduate assistants, administrators, coaches, advisor, program directors, counselors, health center staff, and residential life staff);

As a student, report sexual harassment contact:

The University of Maine at Farmington

An employee and that person’s supervisor; a department chair and a faculty member in the same department;

A faculty or staff member and student if the person is romantically involved with a subordinate student or employee, the faculty or staff member must remove himself or herself from any decisions affecting the other person as soon as practicable. This is necessary to avoid a conflict of interest regarding either the complainant or the person accused.

An untutored faculty member and a tenured faculty member who participates in peer recommendations about the untutored person.

What Are Complaints Handled?

The University has an Equal Opportunity Complaint Procedure to deal promptly and fairly with concerns and complaints about discrimination or harassment. Any student or employee who feels that he or she has experienced sexual harassment, and anyone with knowledge of an incident, may contact the Equal Opportunity Officer (if the alleged harasser is an employee), or Student Judicial Officer (if the alleged harasser is a student) as soon as possible after the incident. Any supervisor who becomes aware of a problem should promptly contact the Equal Opportunity Officer. If the Equal Opportunity Officer has a substantial conflict of interest regarding either the complainant or the person accused, he or she will request an alternate individual to investigate.

If the Equal Opportunity Officer is unable to resolve the matter informally, the complainant may request a formal investigation. When the person accused of sexual harassment is a student and a formal complaint is filed, the Student Judicial Officer conducts the investigation according to the procedure in the Student Conduct Code.

As a faculty member and student it is difficult for them to freely reject sexual advances. Because faculty and staff have the power to give or withhold rewards such as praise, grades, and recommendations, this further limits the extent to which a sexual relationship by force must be considered truly consensual. There are similar problems with an apparently consenting relationship between supervi sor and employee. Even if a subordinate student or employee is romantically involved with a staff member, the faculty or staff member must remove himself or herself from any decisions affecting the other person as soon as practicable. This is necessary to avoid a conflict of interest regarding either the complainant or the person accused.

Complaints are handled as confidentially as possible to protect the rights of both the complainant and the person accused. Retaliation against anyone who makes a complaint or participates in a complaint process is not tolerat ed. The complainant and the person accused have certain rights to representation during the complaint process.

The Equal Opportunity Officer discusses informal and formal options for resolving the problem. The goal of the informal process is to seek a resolution acceptable to everyone involved. Many concerns can be addressed through the informal process, which provides the maximum privacy and an opportunity for the earliest possible resolution.

If the complaint chooses or if a problem cannot be resolved informally, the complainant may request a formal investigation. When the person accused is an employee or a person from outside the University, the University’s goal is to prevent or, if not possible, to respond appropriately to the sexual harassment.

Consultations may be held with any faculty member, administrator, staff member with whom you feel most comfortable, including your supervisor, the harasser’s supervisor, or your resident assistant. If you need personal help in dealing with the effects of sexual harassment, contact the campus counseling center (students) or employee assistance program (employees).

What Are Sexual Harassment?

As a student, respect the rights and preferences of all members of the University community. Support another student or employee who feels that he or she has experienced sexual harassment, and anyone with knowledge of an incident, may contact the Equal Opportunity Officer (if the alleged harasser is an employee), or Student Judicial Officer (if the alleged harasser is a student) as soon as possible after the incident. Any supervisor who becomes aware of a problem should promptly contact the Equal Opportunity Officer. If the Equal Opportunity Officer has a substantial conflict of interest regarding either the complainant or the person accused, he or she will request an alternate individual to investigate.

If the Equal Opportunity Officer is unable to resolve the matter informally, the complainant may request a formal investigation. When the person accused of sexual harassment is a student and a formal complaint is filed, the Student Judicial Officer conducts the investigation according to the procedure in the Student Conduct Code.

If you are about to become aware of, and report sexual harassment. If you are the only one harassed by this person, report the harasser and apply the University staff. Do not blame yourself and do not delay.

Ask yourself if:

• Do you feel embarrassed or hurt by the incident, or do you feel guilty about the way you acted?

• Do you feel like someone is blaming you for the harassment?

• Does the harassment make you feel unsafe or threatened?

• Do you feel like the person is targeting you?

• Do you feel like the person is trying to control you?

• Do you feel like the person is trying to punish you?

• Do you feel like the person is trying to get revenge on you?

• Do you feel like the person is trying to make you feel bad about yourself?

If the Equal Opportunity Officer is unable to resolve the matter informally, the complainant may request a formal investigation. When the person accused of sexual harassment is a student and a formal complaint is filed, the Student Judicial Officer conducts the investigation according to the procedure in the Student Conduct Code.

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