

Support for students regarding harassment

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Support for students regarding harassment

Safe Space

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Contact person in case of harassment
Åbo Akademi University



Aim & Purpose

- Help you be aware and recognize harassment, discrimination and violence when you witness or experience it.
- Prevent instances of harassment, discrimination and violence related to students.
- Empower students to react and speak up in situations of harassment, discrimination and violence, and know who to contact.
- Create an atmosphere of respect and understanding that different peoples' experiences of harassments & discrimination can differ.



**One ÅA, one community
where everyone is safe and supported**



Harassment & discrimination definitions in Finnish law

Law on Discrimination

8.1 No one may be discriminated against on the basis of age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. Discrimination is prohibited, regardless of whether it is based on a fact or assumption concerning the person him/herself or another.

Law on Harassment

14.1 The deliberate or de facto infringement of the dignity of a person is harassment, if the infringing behavior relates to a reason referred to in section 8(1) and as a result of the reason, a degrading or humiliating, intimidating, hostile or offensive environment towards the person is created by the behavior.



Definition at ÅAU

Åbo Akademi University does not accept any kind of harassment, discrimination or bullying within the university (or in situations related to the university like evening events, parties etc.) among anyone (students, staff, visitors, etc.) and strive to make the university environment a **safe space for all**.

Harassment violates the individual's right to personal freedom and integrity, as well as creates a threatening, violent, humiliating or aggressive atmosphere.

Harassment can be defined as unwelcome, unwanted and one-sided physical or verbal behavior towards someone for whom the impact always is negative. **What is viewed as harassment, depends on the own perception of the one who is subjected to unwanted behavior.**



Who's concern & responsibility?

- We all share the responsibility of everyone feeling safe



Examples of direct harassment

Harassments can be expressed in the following ways

- Physical abuse
- Rape or attempted rape
- Unwanted physical contact
- Demands for sexual intercourse or other kinds of sexual activity
- Sexually, racially etc. suggestive gestures or expressions
- Indecent talk, suggestive jokes, and unwelcome comments or questions concerning the body, race, gender, clothing or private life etc.
- Biased or inappropriate materials, messages or phone calls



Examples of indirect harassment

- Hearing a comment not explicitly directed to you ex. racist or sexist jokes
- Saying bad things about someone in the room but in another language so it may not be directed at them but to degrade them
- Being part of the harassment or supporting it, but not being the main offender. Ex. letting friends' cat-call women on the streets or tell inappropriate jokes that you laugh along with
- Staying silent when knowing about harassment



Examples on discrimination

- Exclusion from certain activities
- Unfair behavior/discriminatory treatment of others
- Stereotyping due to race, religion, gender etc.
- Microaggressions



If an event or situation you experience feels unpleasant

- Being harassed or discriminated against can be confusing, but if you feel that something happened that made you uncomfortable – go and talk to someone. It could be a friend, ÅA's contact persons, another ÅA staff member, the Student Union, the police or another relevant authority.
- Think about what you would like to do and what options you have, your safety is priority #1.
- Whatever experience you have/have had, it is real. Your well-being is central, and it is important you try to preserve your well-being in the best possible way.
- You can always contact ÅA's contact persons.



What to do if you are witnessing harassment or discrimination?

- Assess the situation – review your own safety and if possible, also alert someone else who is present.
- Look at the context – who can help, the degree of harassment, external circumstances.
- Above all, if the harassment is ongoing and serious – always try to stop the harassment if possible and contact the organizer/responsible person/police immediately.
- Follow up to ensure that the person(s) affected receive the help they need.
- You can always contact one of ÅA's contact persons afterwards to discuss the situation and your thoughts about it.



What to do if someone tells you they are being harassed or discriminated

- Listen & express empathy!
- Believe them, or, at least, do not question the story of the person who is telling it to you.
 - It is not up to you to judge whether their experience is valid.
 - Direct them or go with them to the relevant points of contact.
 - Respect their decisions on what to do.
- Confidentiality! Being the target of unwanted behavior can be a very personal experience so respect the persons whishes regarding confidentiality.
- Take care of yourself. Being a support to someone or hearing their experience can be hard so make sure you find a suitable person who can support you if needed.



ÅAU contact persons in case of harassment or discrimination



Åbo Akademi

Coordinator Jan Kraufvelin
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<https://abofi.sharepoint.com/sites/intra-en-study/SitePages/Support-in-cases-of-harassment.aspx>

<https://www.abo.fi/en/study/already-in/student-wellbeing/harassment/>

Kåren / Student Union

The Students Rights Expert: ?
The Service Expert: Amanda Ehn (Vasa, Havtornen)

E-mail: trakkasseriombud@studentkaren.fi



Harassment investigation process



Support and advice

Contact one of ÅA's representatives who:

- Listens under confidentiality to what you have experienced
- Provides information about alternatives and their implications
- Can assist with support services outside of ÅA
- Can support you if you want to file a police report

Throughout the process and after the decision, you can receive support from the representatives or assistance in finding external support

If necessary, ÅA's person in charge of early intervention may be included:

- Can urge individuals involved in the matter to cease unwanted behavior.

OFFICIAL COMPLAINT

Independent investigation

Investigator appointed

- The internal auditor, the leading lawyer, and/or if necessary another independent person

Collection of materials

- The investigator requests or retrieves material that may be relevant to the case

Hearings

- The parties are heard separately
- Possibility of joint hearing
- The parties can comment on the summary of their own hearing
- Possibility of mediation if the parties agree

a) Violation of ÅA's rules
b) No violation of ÅA's rules

Investigator's report with decision proposal

What happens then?

- We discuss
- Your decision if you report or not
- If not > it is okay
- If yes > investigation: request for materials, hearings
- Possible mediation
- Report. Rule violations?
yes > disciplinary proceedings
no > case closed

Decision based on the report

If rule violations according to ÅA's rules:

The matter is brought to disciplinary proceedings (the principal, the board):

- The behavior is prohibited, but no disciplinary measures are taken
- Disciplinary measures are taken (written warning or suspension for up to 1 year)

If no rule violation according to ÅA's rules:

- The matter is closed. ÅA assesses whether measures are needed to support a safe study environment

More information

