



Safe Space

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Contact person in case of harassment
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A screenshot of a web browser showing a page from Åbo Akademi University. The page title is 'Support for students regarding harassment'. It features a photograph of a person in a red raincoat, yellow boots, and a yellow backpack, holding a dark umbrella, standing in front of a city skyline. The university's logo and name are in the top left, and a search bar is in the top right. The URL in the address bar is https://www.abo.fi/en/study/already-in-...

Support for students regarding harassment



Introduction

- One community & one ÅAU where everyone are safe, heard and supported

Session's topics

- Harassments & Discrimination definitions
- Examples of Harassments & Discrimination
- What to do & who can help
- Who's concern?

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.



Harassments & 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**.

Non-discrimination Act <https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2014/20141325>



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 could be viewed as harassment, depends on the perception of the one who is subjected to unwanted behavior.**

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
- Being silent when knowing about harassment



Examples of discrimination

- Exclusion from certain activities
- Unfair behavior/discriminatory treatment
- 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 feel 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, realize that it is real. Your well-being is the central thing and it is important that you try to preserve your well-being in the best possible way.
- You can always, if you wish, contact ÅA's contact persons.



What to do if you are witnessing harassments or discrimination?

- Assess the situation – review your own safety and if possible, also alert someone else who is present.
- See 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 at the moment.
- 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 what they have experienced 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.



Who's concerned & responsibility?

Everyone's



Things to remember!

- We should all strive to make our lives safe, inclusive and respectful for everyone – “safe space”!
- Do not accept harassment or discrimination against yourself or others!
- But do not be too cautious in interacting with other people for fear of “doing wrong” but react if you notice that your behavior is not appreciated or perceived differently than you intended.
- Have fun & take care of each other!



ÅAU contact persons in case of harassment or discrimination



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"We are here for you"

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

