

Student Sexual Harassment Policy

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is unacceptable behaviour which, in some circumstances, is unlawful. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated at UWC Maastricht.

Sexual harassment is when someone treats you in a way that makes you feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, afraid, and angry or upset because of how he or she feels about you being of a particular sex. Sexual harassment is against the law.

Examples of Sexual Harassment

- Teasing, calling names or making rude signs.
- Making suggestive comments or telling smutty jokes.
- Pestering someone to go out or asking for sexual favours.
- Sending offensive messages, SMS messages and emails.
- Displaying offensive pictures, posters or graffiti.
- Spreading rumours about someone's private life or sex life.
- Ridiculing, leering, wolf-whistling or making sexual comments.
- Patting, brushing or touching in a sexual manner.

Is paying someone a compliment sexual harassment?

Generally speaking, being kind and courteous to one another in a school environment is not harassment; it is part of community building and a display of good manners. However, under certain circumstances, compliments can be misinterpreted or used to make other people feel uncomfortable. Even if it is meant in a kind way, some comments are unwarranted and inappropriate. For example:

- A teacher or staff member commenting on the appearance of a student, particularly in relation to their body:
 - e.g. "You have nice legs."
- A comment that is meant to be complimentary but conveys some form of judgement
 - e.g. "You are clever for a girl."
- A comment that lifts one person up while putting others down
 - "You are the best student in the class"
- Compliments that are used to persuade or entice students to do inappropriate things
- Continuous compliments that might convey flirting or favouritism
- Continuous compliments after someone has set a boundary

There are sometimes grey areas and members of the UWC Maastricht community must use their judgement wisely.

Impacts of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can have many negative effects on people. It can affect the way a person feels about themselves - their self-confidence and their self-esteem. And for students, their ability to study and do their best at school can also be harmed. Every student has a right to an education and life free from harassment. **SEXUAL HARASSMENT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE IN A SCHOOL**

It can involve students, staff or other people such as those who visit the school. Sexual harassment can also happen when students are off campus in other activities. Anyone can be sexually harassed. It can happen to both males, females and non-binary.

Some common myths about sexual harassment

- MYTH: Nice girls don't get harassed. FACT: Girls and women of all types get sexually harassed - young and old, married and single, fat and thin and from all backgrounds.
- MYTH: People who complain are prudes. FACT: To complain of sexual harassment is not being a prude; it's simply a matter of protecting your basic human rights.
- MYTH: She asks for it by the way she dresses. FACT: There's no excuse for sexual harassment. We are all responsible for our own actions; we can't blame other people or their clothes for our unacceptable behaviour.
- MYTH: But it's all good fun. FACT: If everybody is enjoying it then it is good fun. But sexual harassment is not fun for the victim.
- MYTH: Sexual harassment doesn't impact boys and men. FACT: Sexual harassment can happen to anyone, regardless of gender.
- MYTH: It doesn't count if you are in a relationship or love that person. FACT: If someone does something to you that you have asked them to, it may be considered harassment, regardless of who they are.

How do you know if your behaviour is causing offence?

Sometimes sexual harassment isn't intended. If you're not sure about your behaviour you can:

- Apologise if you seem to have upset someone. And remember not to behave that way in the future.
- Always treat other people as equals; not as possible subjects of sexual attention.
- Carefully watch the effects of your words and actions on other people. Are people really happy with your behaviour or just pretending to be because they are embarrassed?
- Discuss your behaviour with someone who has an understanding of the issue.
- Check your behaviour and language by asking if it's offensive to anyone. Remember, every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. And everyone has the right to an education free from harassment.

What can you do if you're being sexually harassed?

It's important that you take action to make sure the harassment stops. Harassment won't stop by itself. If you feel confident enough, you can tell the person that you don't like their behaviour and you want it to stop.

If you find that difficult, or if the behaviour doesn't stop, there are a number of people you can contact at UWC Maastricht. You can contact:

- Your tutor.
- Any teacher or staff member you feel comfortable talking with.
- The Heads of Year.
- The school counsellor.
- Your Resident Mentor.
- The school nurse.
- The external Trust Person.

If you do tell someone in your school that you're being harassed, you can be sure that:

- You will be listened to;
- Your complaint will be treated seriously;
- What you say will be confidential; and
- You won't suffer worse problems because you've told someone.

What if sexual harassment happens outside the school?

Sexual harassment is against the law. If you feel like you are being harassed whilst at a partner organisation, or while participating in an outside activity, then please report it to the school so we can support you and take action.

(Please note that the text for this policy has been taken from the Student information on Sexual Harassment booklet from the Department of Education and Training in the Government of Western Australia and adapted for use at UWC Maastricht).

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