

Equal Opportunities Commission

Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong

Leaflet

Sex Discrimination Ordinance

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment targeting an individual:

A person engages in unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to you, in circumstances in which a reasonable third party would have anticipated that you would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Examples:

- A classmate behaved intimately with you, such as touching your thigh, hugging around your waist or pressing close to you, without your consent.
- A classmate sexts you and wants you to be a sex partner.
- A lecturer offers you assistance to get the scholarship in exchange for sex.

Creating a sexually hostile environment:

A person engages in conduct of a sexual nature which does not target at you, but creates a hostile or intimidating environment for you.

Examples:

- In the orientation camp, students play games involving inappropriate physical contact in front of you, even though you are not playing the game.
- Someone shares obscene videos in the message group of classmates.
- Some students make dirty jokes in group discussion, making you feel uncomfortable.

Applicable fields:

Provisions on sexual harassment are applicable to specific public domains: education, employment, provision of services, etc. For example, the law forbids:

- Sexual harassment between students;
- Sexual harassment between university teaching staff and students;
- Sexual harassment between coaches and students;
- Sexual harassment between university staff members (including student part-timers).

What should I do when encountering sexual harassment?

If you are sexually harassed, you should:

- Speak up at the time. Tell the harasser the behaviour is unwelcome and must be stopped;
- Record the date, time, location, witness, what the harasser said and did, and your reaction;
- Tell counsellors or the people you trust what has happened, and let them provide you with

emotional support and suggestions on handling the incident;

- Lodge a complaint with your university;
- Lodge a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission (within 12 months after the incident);
- Report to the Police (if criminal offence involved);
- File a lawsuit in the District Court (within 24 months after the incident).

Step forward:

If you witness a sexual harassment incident or the victim tells you about it, you can step forward and help, for example:

- Listen to the victim, find out his/her needs and respect his/her decision;
- Provide emotional support and advise on the ways of reporting sexual harassment;
- Intervene, under safe circumstances, by telling the harasser his/her behaviour is inappropriate and the act must be stopped immediately;
- Rectify the harasser's misunderstanding of sex or relationship, if circumstances allow;
- Assist the victim to take action, support and accompany him/her to report to the university or law enforcement agencies; and/or
- Testify for the victim as a witness.

Helplines:

Sexual harassment is an unlawful act. You have a right to take action. Contact numbers for complaints and support services are:

City University of Hong Kong 3442-8478, 3442-9000

Hong Kong Baptist University 3411-7435, 3411-5082

Lingnan University 2616-7024, 2616-8943

The Chinese University of Hong Kong 3943-7208, 3943-8716

The Education University of Hong Kong 2948-6245, 2948-6012

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University 2766-6800, 3400-2602

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology 2358-6696, 2358-6652

The Open University of Hong Kong 2768-6856, 2768-6335

The University of Hong Kong 3917-8388, 3917-5115

You can also seek help from the following organisations:

CEASE Crisis Centre (support service for victims of sexual violence) 18281 (24 hours)

RainLily (one-stop rape crisis centre) 2375-5322

Caritas – Sexuality Zone (supportive & counseling service on sexual behavior of youth)
6188-5555

Suicide Prevention Services 2382-0000 (24 hours)
Equal Opportunities Commission Complaint Hotline 2511-8211
eoc@eoc.org.hk | www.eoc.org.hk
16/F., 41 Heung Yip Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong
SMS enquiry service for people with hearing impairment/speech difficulties: 697-2566-6165-38

The Equal Opportunities Commission is a statutory body set up in 1996. We are committed to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination and sexual harassment. We are also responsible for implementing the anti-discrimination legislation.

Infographics

What is this Research about?

This research, conducted by the Equal Opportunities Commission, is the very first territory-wide study examining the issue of sexual harassment of university students in Hong Kong. The findings provide solid evidence on the prevalence and causes of sexual harassment at universities, as well as students' awareness and views on this issue. Through this study, it is hoped that the universities and other stakeholders can formulate a better strategy to tackle the problem. It is also hoped that you too will be more aware of the issue and speak up against it. Together, let's break the silence and stamp out sexual harassment!

A total of 14,442 university students completed and submitted the online questionnaire. In this study, 9 universities collaborated with the EOC, 13 university representatives participated in a focus group discussion, and 28 students took part in in-depth interviews to share their experience of sexual harassment.

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment:

In total, nearly one-fourth of university students (23%) were sexually harassed in 2016-17. If the data is disaggregated by sex, 27.0% of female students and 18.4% of male students were sexually harassed.

Prevalence of sexual harassment on and off campus and online:

15.6% of students were sexually harassed on campus,
3.8% of students were sexually harassed off campus by university students or staff,
11.5% of students were sexually harassed online.

The most common forms of sexual harassment on campus include:

38.0% said someone had made sexually suggestive comments or jokes to third parties in front of them,

34.7% said someone had made sexually suggestive comments or jokes directly to them,

20.2% said someone had made inappropriate physical contact with them, such as forcible kiss or touching

6.6% said someone had exposed him/herself in front of them,

5.1% said someone had made sexual advances repeatedly regardless of rejection,

2.8% said someone had sexually bullied them,

2.8% said someone had offered good academic results, money or other benefits for sexual favours.

Among students who were sexually harassed:

72.7% were harassed by university classmates,

7.2% were harassed by students of other universities,

4.4% were harassed by lecturers or professors,

4.4% were harassed by non-teaching staff.

Awareness of university anti-sexual harassment policy:

58.6% of student did not know university has anti-sexual harassment policy.

Only 2.5% of victims lodged complaints with their university.

Student Experience:

Case 1

I was wearing a suit that day. After my presentation, the male professor suggested, “ Next time if you wear less, maybe you’ll get higher marks … ” I feel very uneasy ...

Case 2

There’s a muscular guy ... a female student touched his chest saying “nice pecs!”... The guy probably didn’t take it as sexual harassment because of gender stereotype.

Case 3

(After sports training, I shared a taxi with a guy from another team) All of a sudden he touched my breast and exclaimed, “Wow! Your boobs are so much bigger!” I pushed his hand aside and said, “What are you doing? Don’t do that ...”