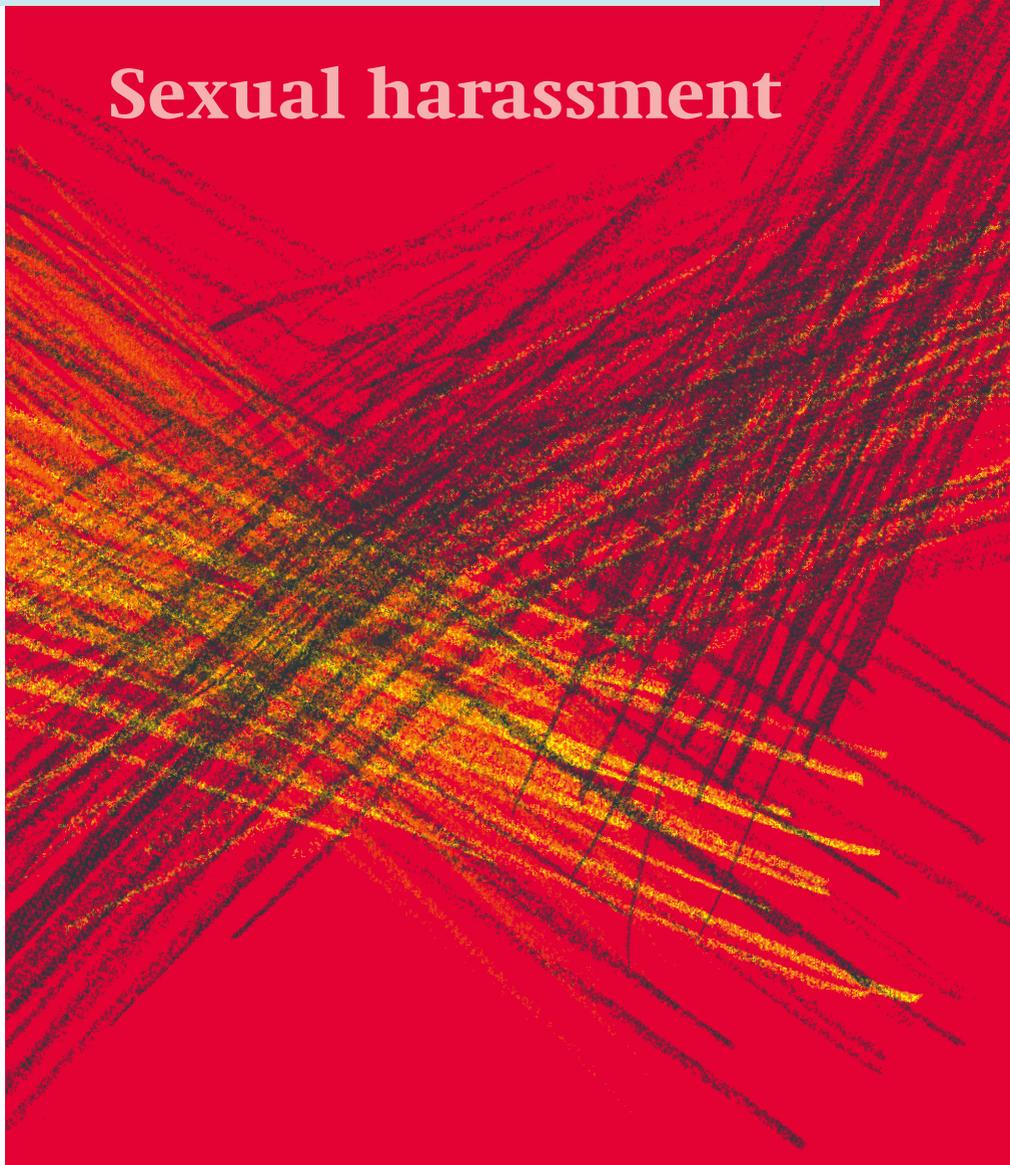




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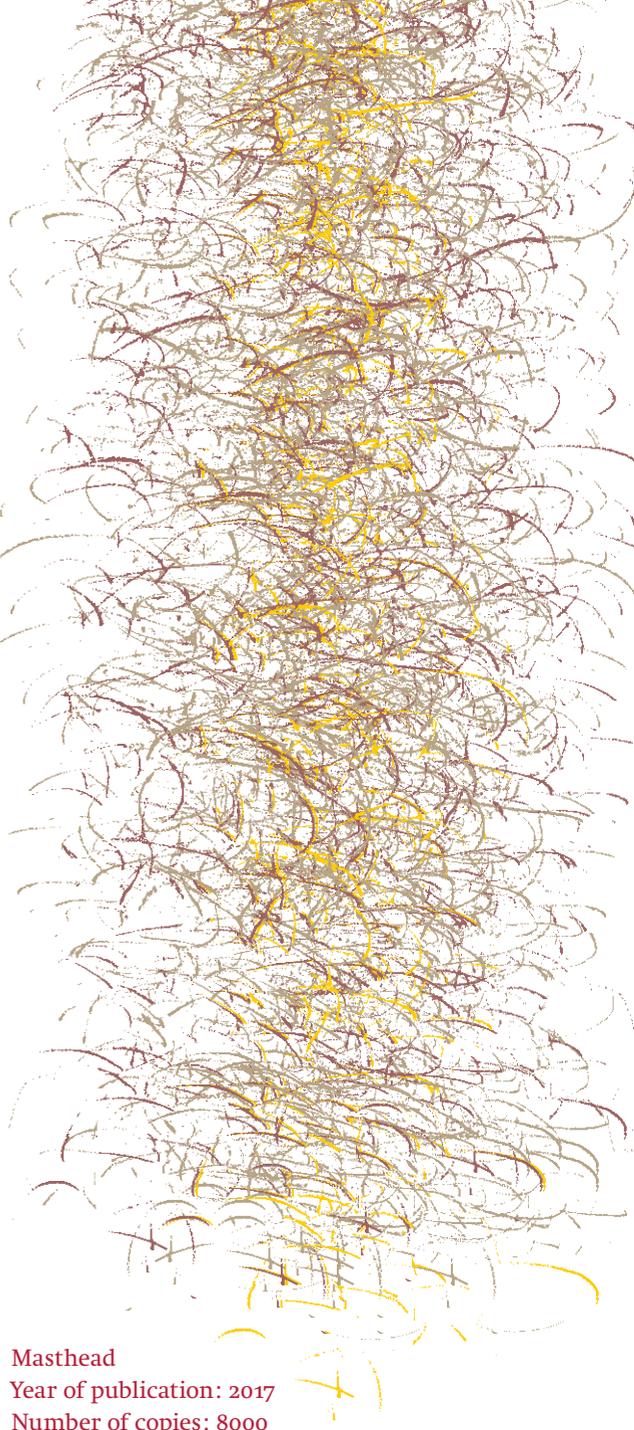
# Sexual harassment



## Acknowledgements

There are already various resources available throughout Switzerland about the prevention of sexual harassment. A selection of this informational material is available at [www.unibas.ch/harassment](http://www.unibas.ch/harassment).

These materials provide an excellent foundation for addressing this issue specifically in relation to the University of Basel. We would particularly like to thank the teams behind the following publications on sexual harassment (both available in German only): “lustig – lästig – stopp! Umgang mit sexueller Belästigung am Arbeitsplatz im Kanton Basel-Landschaft” (Department of Equal Opportunity for Women and Men, Canton of Basel-Landschaft), and “Fingerle. Sexuelle Belästigung am Arbeitsplatz. Ein Wegweiser für Führungskräfte und Personalverantwortliche” (Department of Human Resources, Canton of Bern). For their countless suggestions and valuable support, many thanks also to the employees of the Office for Gender Equality at the University of Bern, as well as Professor Brigitte Tag, investigator in cases of sexual harassment at the University of Zurich and president of the associated committee.



## Masthead

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## Dear staff and students

The University of Basel is actively engaged at various levels to ensure an optimal work environment for students and staff, as this is essential to members of the university being able to develop their potential. This includes a culture of respect and dignity. Sexual harassment goes against this kind of culture, and creates a climate of degradation and intimidation. It is the opposite of the cooperative, open exchange for which we, at the University of Basel, stand. Sexual harassment begins when personal boundaries are not respected and power is exerted over others.

The University of Basel does not tolerate any form of sexual harassment. We take seriously our responsibility as an employer to ensure a harassment-free work and learning environment for all staff and students. For this purpose the regulations established in “Protection against sexual harassment in the workplace and in studies at the University of Basel” were completely revised and improved.

Through this, pre-requisites were established to protect the dignity and integrity of all members of the university. Anyone who is subjected to harassment or derogatory conduct at the University of Basel will receive confidential, prompt and professional support.

This brochure provides you with information about and options for dealing with harassment, and encourages an open discussion of this issue.

Sexual harassment has no place at the University of Basel. I encourage all of us, staff and students alike, to play an active role in maintaining our respectful working environment.

Professor Andrea Schenker-Wicki  
President of the University of Basel

## **Sexual harassment? Not at our university!**

A casual work and study environment, an easy-going and lively community in which friendly interactions or mutual flirting are possible, and where there is also room for a good-natured joke – none of this has anything to do with sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is behavior that consciously or unconsciously violates another person's dignity. It starts when personal boundaries are not respected. These individual boundaries are vital. Where the boundaries lie is irrelevant – they must be respected without exception.

### **Sexual harassment is much more widespread than one would think**

Anyone can be the subject of sexual harassment, regardless of their age, appearance, sex, or position within a company or institution. In Switzerland, almost half of all working women and men have either experienced or witnessed sexual harassment during their careers. Sexual harassment begins well before it manifests in forms which are criminal offenses such as sexual assault or rape.

Both men and women are capable of perpetrating harassment, and harassment is not something experienced by only a few; almost one in three women and one in ten men in German-speaking Switzerland have felt sexually harassed in the workplace at least once.

“

**Sexual harassment laws give women power over men! By making false accusations they can ruin the lives of their colleagues or supervisors. It happens time and time again.**

”

“

**If he chooses to wear such tight jeans, then it's his own fault if someone stares!**

”

“

**Am I not allowed to make jokes anymore, or what?!**

”

“

**There will always be a few sickos who grope women. But at an educational institution like the university it's not an issue!**

”

# Sexism and sexual harassment

Sexism or sexist behavior is understood as any kind of discrimination based on a person's sex. For example, when women and men are denigrated due to their appearance or sexual orientation, that is sexist behavior. Sexism is a form of sexual harassment. The term sexual harassment refers to any kind of conduct with sexual connotations, which is unwanted by one of the people involved and is demeaning to that person.

Harassment can take place during work, at evening events hosted by the university, during office hours or in a lecture hall. Sexual harassment can take the form of words, gestures or acts and be perpetrated by individuals or groups. The effects of sexual harassment on a person's psychological and physical health can be serious.



**The key factor is not the perpetrator's intention, but rather how their behavior affects the other person and whether it is perceived as welcome or not.**



Forms of sexual harassment include:

- Salacious, suggestive or derogatory comments
- Sexist comments or jokes about sexual attributes, sexual behavior or sexual orientation
- Obscene signs or gestures
- Intrusive stares
- Confrontation with pornographic material or nude imagery
- Unwanted invitations with clearly sexual intentions
- Unwanted telephone calls, letters or emails with sexual references
- Sexual advances linked with the promise of rewards or the threat of adverse consequences
- Unwanted bodily contact
- Sexual assault, coercion or rape

## What is behind sexual harassment?

The main motive behind sexual harassment is to exercise power and dominance. It has nothing to do with eroticism or sexual attraction. The sexual aspect lends itself to this kind of bullying behavior, because it is an area where victims are especially vulnerable. This crossing of personal boundaries serves, among other things, to keep victims in a subordinate position or to hinder their professional development and career.

## Flirting or sexual harassment:

### What's the difference?

It might seem like there's only a fine line between flirting and sexual harassment, but in fact there are clear differences.

#### Flirting ...

- is a mutual development
- is constructive and encouraging
- is desired by both people
- respects personal boundaries

#### Sexual harassment ...

- is a one-sided approach
- is degrading and insulting
- is not desired by the other person
- violates personal boundaries

## What can I do if I am being harassed?

Have the courage to say no if you feel that you are being sexually harassed. Whether it's to your supervisor, lecturer, colleague or fellow student, it is your right to say no. This is about respecting your personal boundaries and your protection in the workplace and during your studies. There are various ways to defend yourself against unwanted behavior.

### React immediately

Let the person or people know immediately and unequivocally that their behavior is unwelcome. The longer you wait, the harder it becomes to react. If you feel they are not taking you seriously, inform them that you will get in touch with the relevant contacts at the university.

### React afterwards

If you would prefer not to confront the person directly, write to them. Explain in writing what is bothering you and ask them to stop their inappropriate behavior.



**Don't blame yourself – you are not responsible for other people's inappropriate behavior.**



### Document the incidents

It is difficult to prove sexual harassment has taken place. Often it is your word against theirs, so it's a good idea to make a note of what has happened. Include the names of the person/people harassing you, the date, time, place and type of harassment, what actions you took, as well as any witnesses. Save any sexually inappropriate emails or text messages.

### Talk to others

Share your concerns with people you trust, and talk to those around you. Maybe you aren't the only person being harassed and you can take action together.

### Take advantage of support services

Consult with the relevant people at the University of Basel. They will address your concerns confidentially and provide support throughout subsequent steps and discussions.

## What can I do if I notice that one of my colleagues is being sexually harassed?

As a witness, you can help the victim avoid a lot of pain and suffering. Don't look away – have the courage to take action; the university relies on staff and students who help to make sure people treat each other with respect.

### While harassment is happening

Don't laugh along at typically sexist remarks; stand up for the respectful treatment of others. Make the harassing person aware that their behavior has crossed the line and is inappropriate.

### Show support for those affected

If you feel that someone is being sexually harassed, talk to them about it. Inform them about the relevant contact people at the university, and if necessary, offer support. This could be in the form of accompanying them to meetings with their supervisors.

### Options within a team or larger context

Inform your supervisors or lecturers about uncomfortable situations. Do not, however, take any further action on your own without the agreement of the person who you feel is experiencing harassment.

## What can I do if I am a lecturer or supervisor and would like to actively prevent sexual harassment?

As someone in a leadership role, you represent your employer, the University of Basel, and are – in accordance with the Gender Equality Act – obligated to ensure a work and study environment free of harassment. Taking preventive measures and fostering a culture of open and respectful interaction are the most effective ways to ensure a harassment-free climate.

### **Set an example**

Demonstrate best practices when it comes to respectful interactions with your team or seminar participants. Discuss the issue of harassment and actively take a stand. Stress that while open and tolerant interaction prevails at the University of Basel, there is absolutely no tolerance for harassment of any kind. Make people aware of the relevant contact points, or let people know you are available for confidential conversations.

### **Raise awareness, provide information, foster team building**

Raise awareness about the issue and related services by making this brochure available in your area, and by linking to the corresponding pages on the university website. Get in touch with the relevant contact people if you would like to receive further information regarding sexual harassment, and inquire about specific training sessions or workshops.

## What can I do if I am a lecturer or supervisor and am confronted with instances of sexual harassment?

As someone in a leadership role, you will have to strike a fine balance between your duty to protect the victim and ensuring that the accused person is presumed innocent until proven otherwise. In addition, direct supervisors often find out about concrete cases of harassment quite late, yet are still required to act quickly.

### **Appropriate behavior**

Immediately put a stop to any obvious sexual harassment in your working environment. Take any reports of harassment seriously. Immediately find out more about the situation. You must initially remain absolutely neutral.

### **Seek out support**

Take advantage of the University of Basel's confidential support services. Don't hesitate to get the relevant persons on board if you notice there is a problem and you would like more information about your responsibilities, options and scope of action.

For further information,  
visit [www.unibas.ch/harassment](http://www.unibas.ch/harassment)

## What can I do if I have the feeling I've crossed the line myself?

Have you been confronted and told that you have not respected another's boundaries? Are you not entirely sure if your conduct has been appropriate? Sexual harassment has serious consequences for everyone involved. Actively seek to change your behavior, and take advantage of the available support services. Reflecting briefly on your own actions and their effect is worthwhile in every case.

### **Reflect on your own behavior**

If you are not sure whether your behavior might be interpreted as harassment, ask yourself whether you would like to see yourself or someone close to you in a similar situation. Share your concerns with people you trust.

### **Treatment of others**

If you are not sure whether you have accidentally crossed a line in your interaction with another person, talk to them about it. If the person does feel they have been harassed, apologize for your behavior.

### **Seek support**

Find the courage to reflect on your behavior and deal with the issue. The relevant contacts at the University of Basel will handle your concerns confidentially, and can direct you to the appropriate support services.

## Support services at the University of Basel

Is there something you would like to report? Do you require advice or support? Are you a lecturer, supervisor, or team leader who would like to find out more about preventative measures or receive advice on how to deal with an incident? The contacts at the University of Basel will treat your concerns confidentially and professionally, and respond immediately to your request.

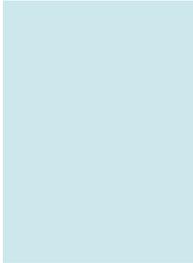
### **Contacts**

There are several contacts at the University of Basel who provide general information and deal confidentially with any concerns and requests related to sexual harassment. They provide assistance to those directly affected as well as to anyone who has witnessed harassment at the university. Contact details for the current confidants can be found at [www.unibas.ch/harassment](http://www.unibas.ch/harassment).

### **Investigator**

Kathrin Bichsel is a licensed, qualified lawyer, and is the university's external and independent investigator. She provides advice and information regarding all matters and inquiries related to sexual harassment. Ms Bichsel supports those affected by harassment, as well as anyone who comes to see her, and investigates their concerns in close consultation with them.

Kathrin Bichsel  
[k.bichsel@bbwbasel.ch](mailto:k.bichsel@bbwbasel.ch)  
+41 61 269 98 00



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Talents**  
since 1460.

Universität Basel  
Petersplatz 1  
Postfach 2148  
4001 Basel

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