

## Information for Graduate Students about Harassment and Harassment Protocols at Queen's University

### Introduction

Queen's University is committed to a working and learning environment that is free from harassment and discrimination. This document provides information and advice for graduate students who perceive they have experienced harassment or discrimination by academic faculty or by staff. Graduate students seeking advice about harassment issues where they perceive they have been harassed by another student(s) should refer to the Student Code of Conduct.<sup>1</sup>

The information provided here is not aimed at graduate students who perceive they have experienced harassment or discrimination in their capacity as employees, but at graduate students who are engaged in research or other academic activities. Graduate students who perceive they have experienced harassment or discrimination in an employment capacity should follow the provisions of their collective agreement (where applicable) and the Interim Workplace Harassment & Discrimination Policy.<sup>2</sup>

The Senate and Board of Trustees have developed a Harassment/Discrimination Complaint Policy and Procedure.<sup>3</sup> This policy deals with sexual harassment, harassment based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, creed and sexual orientation and other grounds covered by the Ontario Human Rights Code. These types of harassment and discrimination have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's or a group's work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working, living or academic environment .

The Harassment/Discrimination Complaint policy mentioned above does not cover "personal harassment" in the workplace or learning environment. "Personal harassment" is defined by the Ontario Human Rights Commission as a course of vexatious comment or conduct against another person or persons that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.<sup>4</sup> The comments or conduct typically happen more than once. They could occur over a relatively short period of time (for example, during the course of one day) or over a longer period of time (weeks, months or years). Not all interpersonal conflict constitutes harassment. While there is a subjective element to harassment, there is also an objective element, and context is important. Workplace or learning-environment harassment does not include a supervisor or staff member's properly exercised responsibilities such as evaluation of research progress or day-to-day management of the research operation. Allegations of harassment are taken seriously and can have serious consequences. Students are encouraged to seek appropriate advice as soon as possible.

## How to address concerns about discrimination or harassment by staff or academic faculty

Graduate students who have concerns about discrimination or harassment from a faculty or staff member should report the situation to the graduate coordinator or head of their academic unit, to an associate dean in the School of Graduate Studies, or to the Office of the University Ombudsman. They will help the student to assess the threat level, the type of complaint and the severity and will explain the applicable process and next steps that may be required as well as circumstances in which confidentiality can be preserved and when it cannot. These discussions will be kept confidential unless there is a compelling reason to divulge them (e.g., a threat to health or safety) or the student gives specific permission to discuss the issue with someone else. Where appropriate, the graduate coordinator, head, associate dean or ombudsman may engage in discussions with the faculty or staff member who is the subject of concern in an effort to informally resolve the issue. To be consistent with the Senate Harassment Complaint Policy and Procedure, “the emphasis is on informal resolution, using facilitation/negotiation, save where the nature of the matter necessitates a more formal process”.<sup>5</sup>

When the issue is such that it cannot be satisfactorily addressed by informal discussion, the next step depends on the type of harassment. Campus Security is contacted if there is a threat to health and safety of any person. The Human Rights office is contacted if the concern involves sexual harassment or discriminatory harassment related to human rights. The Department of Environmental Health & Safety is contacted if the concern is about personal harassment and the conduct complained of is non-violent but hostile, belligerent, abusive or invasive in nature. The graduate coordinator, head, associate dean in the School of Graduate Studies or ombudsman will then work with the student and representatives of other campus resources involved to develop and implement a plan of action. Additional individuals, who might be called upon, depending on the nature of the complaint, include representatives from Faculty Relations or Employee and Labour Relations and the faculty dean. Monitoring the effectiveness of the process will involve ongoing communication and follow up with the graduate student.

Graduate students who are involved in or witness activities that constitute an **immediate threat to health or safety** of any person should **call 911 or Campus Security (ext. 36111 or 533-6111)** to report the immediate threat before reporting the situation to a graduate coordinator, unit head or associate dean.

## How to obtain information or advice about harassment policies and processes

Graduate students who want to obtain information about harassment and sexual-violence<sup>6</sup> policies and procedures can contact a graduate coordinator, head, associate dean of graduate studies, or the Office of the Ombudsman. Another source of confidential advice regarding harassment and discrimination policies and procedures is the Student Advisor Program of the Society for Graduate and Professional Students.

1. [Student Code of Conduct](#)
2. [Interim Workplace & Discrimination Policy](#)
3. [Harassment/Discrimination Complaint Policy and Procedure](#)
4. [Ontario Human Rights Commission definition of harassment](#)
5. [Harassment/Discrimination Complaint Policy and Procedure](#)
6. [Policy on Sexual Violence Involving Queen's University Students](#)