

The **student guide** to
**Discrimination &
Harassment**

**If you experience human-rights
based discrimination or harassment,
contact us.**

We're here to help!

**Call the Equity Office (Vancouver)
604-822-6353**

or

**Human Rights &
Equity Services (HES) (Okanagan)
250-807-9291**

UBC's Equity Office and Human Rights & Equity Services (HES)

work to prevent human-rights based discrimination and harassment on campus and to provide a process for handling complaints, when they do occur. If you have a problem, come and see us.

We'll listen, help you assess your situation, and discuss possible solutions.

The Equity Office is in Brock Hall 2306 on the 2nd floor. HES is at SSC 119F Okanagan Campus. Pay us a visit. We're here to help.

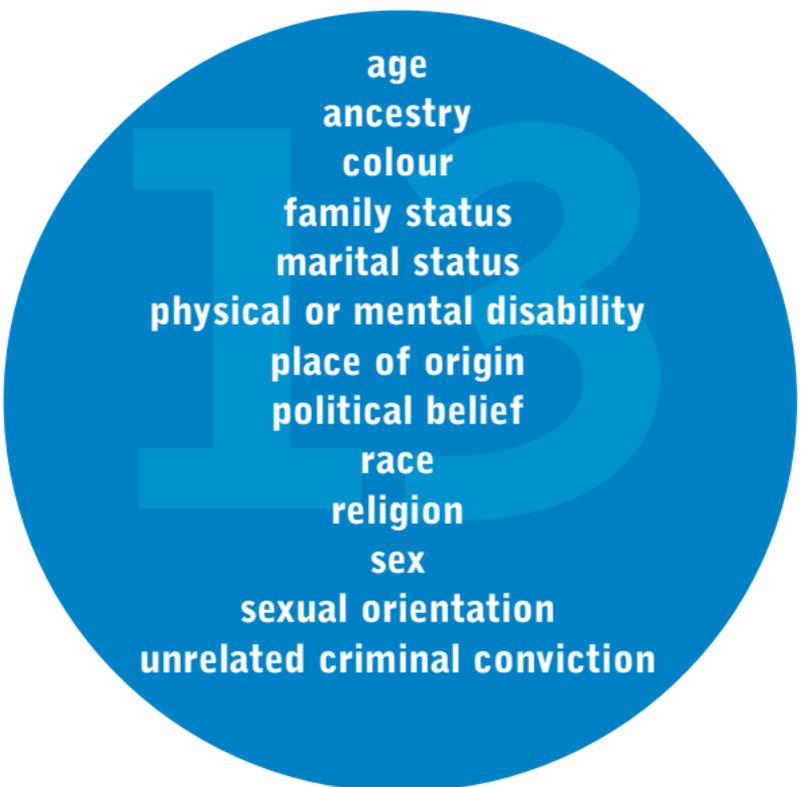


What is discrimination?

Here are some examples:

- students who organize monthly residence parties exclude gay residents
- a professor sets a mid-term exam on a religious holiday and refuses to allow students to sit the exam earlier or later
- a teaching assistant refuses extra time on a quiz for a student who writes slowly due to a physical disability

Everyone at UBC is protected from discrimination on any of the following 13 prohibited human rights grounds by the University's Policy on Discrimination and Harassment and by the BC Human Rights Code:



DISCRIMINATION involves treating individuals and groups unfairly based on prejudice, ignorance, fear, and stereotypes. It denies people opportunities and excludes, hurts, or isolates them for reasons unrelated to their academic or employment capability.

Discrimination on any of the 13 prohibited grounds violates UBC's Policy and is illegal.

What is harassment?

Here are some examples:

- a professor makes unwelcome sexual comments to a student
- a student keeps pressuring a classmate for dates even though the classmate repeatedly refuses him
- sexist, racist, and homophobic cartoons are posted on a lab bulletin board

HARASSMENT, a form of discrimination, is unwelcome comment or behaviour that humiliates, intimidates, excludes, or isolates an individual or group based on one of the thirteen human rights prohibited grounds. Harassment can be either a single, serious incident or a pattern of related, repeated incidents. It can range from written or spoken comments to physical or sexual assault. Harassment adversely impacts individuals or groups, often involves an abuse of power, and has negative job or study consequences.

Key elements of harassment

1 • It is discriminatory. The behaviour violates one of the 13 prohibited grounds of discrimination.

• The behaviour or comments are unwelcome. **2**

3 • It has a negative impact that hinders the target's ability to study or work effectively. The impact on the target is considered to be more important than the harasser's intent.

- It often involves an abuse of power.

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- It is not necessary for the target of the harassment to protest verbally. The harasser is responsible for determining whether or not his or her behaviour is welcome.

- One incident is enough. Although harassment often occurs as a pattern of behaviour, a single, serious incident can be considered harassment.

6

Personal harassment

Students sometimes can experience a form of harassment that humiliates, intimidates, or excludes but does not violate the thirteen prohibited grounds. This behaviour, termed personal harassment, is not covered by the Policy, but is still hurtful and harmful, and can have a negative impact on the student's work, study or living arrangements.

Bullying is a form of personal harassment which may include physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. Typically, bullying occurs as a pattern of behaviour in which the bully attempts to control, humiliate, belittle or injure the target. Often there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the target so that the target is unsure how to defend him/herself.

In some situations of personal harassment or bullying, you may be able to manage the situation on your own. In other cases, it may be best to get some advice. Talk to your Dean, Department Head, or Student Ombuds Office to help deal with the situation.

If you witness discrimination or harassment, we want to know.

Discrimination and harassment affect everyone, not only the person experiencing the harassment. All members of the UBC community can help build a fair and respectful environment so, if you see a problem, speak out! If you want advice, contact an Equity Advisor. We take your concerns seriously and we're here to help.

The UBC community speaks many languages. We encourage students, staff, and faculty requiring English translation assistance to bring translators with them when visiting the Equity Office and HES.

For more information or to make an appointment, contact:

THE EQUITY OFFICE

University of British Columbia —
Vancouver

Room 2306 Brock Hall
1874 East Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Tel: 604-822-6353

Fax: 604-822-3260

Web: www.equity.ubc.ca

Email: equity@equity.ubc.ca

HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUITY SERVICES (HES)

University of British Columbia —
Okanagan

3333 University Way, SSC 119F
Kelowna, BC V1V 1V7

Tel: 250-807-9291

Web: www.ubc.ca/okanagan/hes

Sample situations

Scenario 1

“I work as a research assistant. Whenever I meet with my boss, he tells me I look great and asks about my sex life. I haven’t answered his personal questions and have tried to ignore him, but I feel anxious and angry about our meetings. And they seem to be getting more frequent! Am I reading too much into this?”

EQUITY OFFICE ADVICE:

Your supervisor’s personal questions do not belong in a professional relationship and are creating a negative work environment for you. His comments are inappropriate, unwelcome, and constitute sexual harassment, a form of sex discrimination. This conduct violates the University Policy on Discrimination and Harassment so call us for advice and assistance.

Scenario 2

“I’m a gay student on a UBC team. Everything was fine... until I introduced my teammates to my partner. Now lots of players are whispering and acting strange around me and somebody even stuck an obscene, homophobic drawing in my locker. I talked to my coach, who doesn’t seem to want to get involved. I don’t want to quit the team, but I don’t know how much more of this I can take. Can you give me some advice?”

EQUITY OFFICE ADVICE:

Your teammates’ behaviour is harassment based on sexual orientation and your coach’s failure to act supports that harassment. As a UBC student, you’re protected by UBC’s policy from this kind of discrimination and harassment. Call us to arrange an appointment and we’ll help you with your complaint.

Scenario 3

“I’m a teaching assistant from South Africa. In one of my classes, three students challenged my abilities because of my accent and even complained to the professor in charge of the course. These students have been disruptive in class, refused to participate and, most galling of all, they mimic my pronunciation. I know I can’t evaluate them fairly and now I am uncomfortable teaching the class. What can I do?”

EQUITY OFFICE ADVICE:

It sounds as if you’re experiencing racial harassment. Ridiculing a person’s language skill or accent is not acceptable at UBC. You should consult with an Equity Advisor, together with your department head, to work out a satisfying solution to this problem. Make sure you arrange to have the professor in charge of the course evaluate those three students.

Scenario 4

“I’m in residence, in a quad with three other people. When I first got here, one of the students asked me to switch rooms because she liked my view better. I turned her down, but she won’t let up! Recently she started to leave nasty notes complaining that I spend too long in the shower or on the telephone or watching TV. My other roommates are great, but this person is driving me nuts. I hate coming home. Can you help me?”

EQUITY OFFICE ADVICE:

Your roommate’s behaviour is unpleasant, stressful, and interferes with your ability to live and study in a harmonious environment. It doesn’t seem, though, that she’s singling you out on the basis of one of the thirteen prohibited grounds of discrimination. This means that what you are experiencing may be a form of personal harassment. Because it is not covered by the policy, we cannot handle this as a formal complaint. However, if you meet with us, we can discuss other options with you such as asking your residence advisor to mediate this conflict.

“I’m being harassed... what should I do?”

TAKE ACTION Don’t pretend that it isn’t happening. Harassment is unlikely to go away if you ignore it. In fact, harassing behaviours may escalate if the harasser feels that he or she can get away with it. The most efficient way to stop harassment is to confront it immediately and directly. If it is safe to do so, clearly and firmly tell the person who is harassing you to stop and describe the way you expect to be treated.

KEEP RECORDS Do not rely on your memory. Carefully record the details of the harassment as soon as it occurs. Record your attempts to tell the person that the behaviour is unwelcome. Keep all letters, gifts, emails, answering machine messages etc. that you receive.

SEEK ADVICE Talk to people who will listen carefully and offer constructive support. Speak with your dean, department head or call the Equity Office or HES for information and advice.

If you believe you or others are in physical danger, contact the Equity Office, HES, the Community Relations Manager, Campus Security or the police.



“I’m being accused of harassment...help me!”

TAKE IT SERIOUSLY If someone tells you that your actions or comments are unwanted, offensive or harassing, listen closely. Remember that people with different values or backgrounds may experience as humiliating, threatening, or insulting what you intend to be funny.

If you believe the allegations could be true, you may wish to acknowledge and apologize for any discomfort or offence you may have caused.

AVOID RETALIATION Don’t act in a way that could be seen as confronting or “getting back” at the complainant. Avoid any behaviours that could be embarrassing or intimidating to him/her.

REVIEW YOUR RIGHTS AND SEEK ADVICE Contact the Equity Office or HES for information and advice. You may also wish to contact the Alma Mater Society Ombuds or other AMS, Graduate Student Society or UBC Student Union Okanagan representatives for support and assistance. Read the UBC Policy on Discrimination and Harassment to learn about the rights and responsibilities of complainants and respondents.

