

## Responsible interaction in the University of Helsinki community

### Prevention of inappropriate behaviour

The University of Helsinki is committed to promoting equality and preventing discrimination in all its operations. The University wishes to be a forerunner in the promotion of equality and the creation of an atmosphere of respect for diversity. It recognises and eliminates any practices and structures that create and sustain inequality. We value diversity and wish to ensure that everyone can work, study and participate in our work and study communities regardless of background or personal characteristics. We promote equality, diversity and inclusivity in our community through the systematic measures found in our equality and diversity plans.

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It is imperative for everyone to feel welcome in the University community just as they are. Each community member is responsible for creating a safer space for others. This is why we have outlined and follow our shared principles whenever we meet and interact with one another.

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**Be sensitive.** The University community consists of diverse individuals. Do not, based on external appearances, make assumptions or generalisations about someone's first language, origin, religion or lack thereof, beliefs, health, functional ability, gender, sexual orientation or other background. Respect everyone's right to self-determination and non-determination, i.e., the right to decide and tell others how they identify and experience themselves.

**Respect others and be kind.** Respect other community members and their experiences. Respect other people's boundaries. Don't make offensive remarks or touch other people without their permission. If your actions cause offence, apologise and discuss the matter openly. Don't judge other people for their erroneous behaviour but do bring up the issue with them.

**Be courageous, and give and receive feedback.** Some of us have long been practising sensitivity towards others in our speech and behaviour, while others are just getting started. What counts the most are our mindset and willingness to be sensitive to others. Together we can build trust and a culture of open, courageous discussion, in which we can address issues and learn about sensitivity together. If someone uses an offensive term or describes a situation incorrectly, correct them gently. If you make a mistake, acknowledge it and apologise: "I'm sorry. Thank you for correcting me". Try not to repeat the mistake.

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**We don't accept harassment, racism, ableism or discrimination** based on personal characteristics or background, such as gender, physical features, age, origin, nationality, language, religion or lack thereof, belief, opinions, political activity, trade union activity, family relations, health, disability or sexual orientation.

**Call it out.** If you observe harassment or other inappropriate behaviour, don't be a bystander. Defend the person being harassed and tell the perpetrator that what's happening is not okay.

**If you experience or observe harassment, discrimination or inappropriate behaviour,** contact a supervisor, teacher, event organiser, head of human resources, occupational safety delegate, shop steward or harassment contact person.

## Guidelines

### Staff, doctoral researchers and grant-funded researchers

If you are treated inappropriately, talk to the person in question and ask them to stop. They may not realise that their behaviour is offensive. If the inappropriate behaviour continues, contact your own supervisor or, if necessary, the perpetrator's supervisor. The supervisor is obliged to use all available means to stop inappropriate behaviour or harassment. Doctoral researchers can contact their supervisor or doctoral program officer. On Flamma intranet: [Problems in PhD supervision -instructions.](#)

If the situation cannot be addressed in your unit, seek help from outside your work or study community. You can contact an occupational safety delegate, shop steward, head of human resources, harassment contact person, the HR Development and Occupational Wellbeing unit or occupational health. Contact whoever feels the most natural person for you to approach.

If you experience harassment on social media, consult the [University's social media guidelines.](#)

The best way to investigate the matter is to involve the relevant persons in the proceedings. When addressing inappropriate behaviour, it is important to ask how the person who has experienced discrimination or harassment wishes external parties to proceed. To respect the person and their experiences, start by establishing their wishes. Employees can bring a support person with them to meetings.

## Students

If you are treated inappropriately, talk to the person in question and ask them to stop. They may not realise that their behaviour is offensive.

If you feel another student is treating you inappropriately, you should contact the course teacher, as they have primary responsibility for all teaching situations, including those in which problems occur.

If you experience inappropriate behaviour in student social activities, you should first contact the University of Helsinki Student Union's harassment contact persons or the harassment contact persons of your student nation, association or organisation.

If a member of staff treats you inappropriately, you can contact the head of academic affairs, the degree programme director or the University harassment contact person.

The best way to investigate the matter is to involve the relevant persons in the proceedings. When addressing inappropriate behaviour, it is important to ask how the person who has experienced discrimination or harassment wishes external parties to proceed. To respect the person and their experiences, start by establishing their wishes. Students can bring a support person with them to any proceedings.

## Supervisors

Supervisors are obliged to monitor their work community and support staff in any challenging situations identified. If informed about inappropriate behaviour through any channel, the supervisor must investigate the situation and take any necessary action. When addressing inappropriate behaviour, it is important to ask how the person who has experienced discrimination or harassment wishes external parties to proceed. To respect the person and their experiences, start by establishing their wishes.

The supervisor is responsible for investigating the situation. They can obtain support from a head of human resources or the HR Development and Occupational Wellbeing unit. The supervisor must consult the parties impartially and determine the course of events. The supervisor invites the parties to meetings where relevant information can be recorded. Measures and follow-up actions are agreed as part of these discussions. The supervisor must ensure that the agreed measures and follow-up actions are taken.

Teachers, heads of academic affairs and degree programme directors

If a student contacts a teacher, head of academic affairs or degree programme director and reports having been treated inappropriately, the person contacted is obliged to investigate the matter. See [further information on Flamma intranet on the Instructions for Teachers website](#).

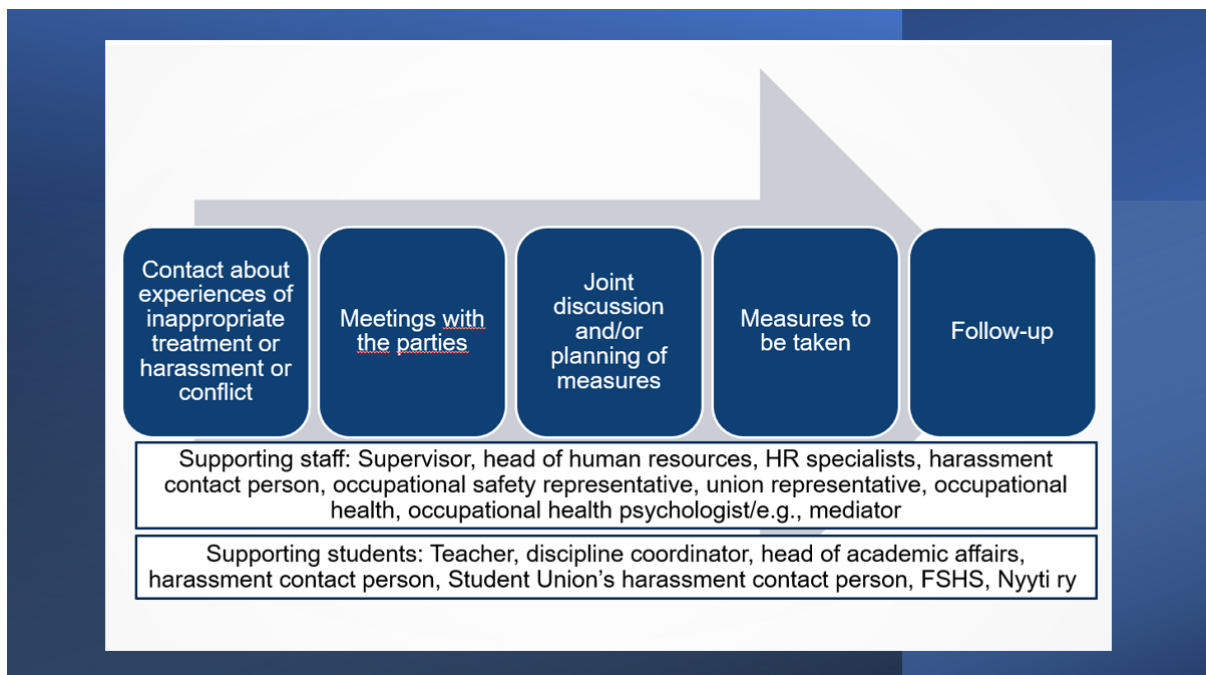
If you are accused of inappropriate behaviour

Even if you feel that you have not bullied or harassed anyone, do not trivialise the other person's feelings. Immediately stop the behaviour they have described as inappropriate. If necessary, inform your supervisor. You can discuss the situation with an occupational safety representative as well. If you are a student, you can, if necessary, discuss the matter with the harassment contact persons of the Student Union or a student organisation.

## The role of the University harassment contact persons

The University harassment contact persons provide advice and support for resolving various challenging situations. Their goal is to help both parties find a solution to the situation and ensure that it will not be repeated. The contact persons are impartial.

## Process description



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Caption: When a person reports an experience of inappropriate treatment or harassment or a conflict, the person is met and discussed about the situation. The next step is to meet the other party or parties. If possible, a joint debate will be held and/or measures planned. The planned measures will be implemented. The situation will be monitored as agreed in the meetings. Support can be provided by your own supervisor, teacher, personnel services and student services. The harassment contact persons of the university and Student Union help and give advice. Occupational safety and health delegates and shop stewards are also assisting. Other sources of assistance include study psychologists, occupational health care and university chaplains.

## Links

On Flamma intranet: [Workplace mediation](#)

[Social media guidelines](#)

[Equality and diversity plan](#)

[Ethical guidelines](#)

On Flamma intranet: [University of Helsinki Rules of Conduct](#)

## Definitions

Responsible behaviour in work and learning situations

Responsible behaviour in work and learning situations is based on good manners, including consideration of others, and greeting, thanking and, when necessary, apologising. Such behaviour enhances collaboration and cultivates a good atmosphere, thereby making work and study feel more meaningful.

Responsible behaviour includes:

- Being fair and considerate
- Interacting openly, honestly and effectively with administrative and academic supervisors, teachers and other members of the work and learning community
- Having the courage to address difficult issues openly and constructively with the persons involved
- Giving and receiving feedback constructively
- Understanding and accepting diversity
- Building and earning trust by keeping promises

## Inappropriate behaviour, bullying, discrimination and harassment

Every community occasionally experiences interpersonal controversy, but not all conflicts or disputes constitute inappropriate behaviour or harassment. The difference between inappropriate behaviour and the conflicts occurring in all work communities may be difficult to perceive.

**Inappropriate behaviour** involves repetitive bullying, harassment, emotional invalidation or other negative behaviour which results in feelings of defencelessness in the targeted individual. Even a single act may amount to inappropriate behaviour or bullying.

Inappropriate behaviour may take place between coworkers or students, employees and their supervisors, or students and teachers. Persons from any of these groups may experience bullying or bully others. The targeted individual may find it difficult to address the negative behaviour, particularly if the perpetrator is in a position of power over them.

This is **bullying**:

- A person is repeatedly humiliated or insulted.
- A person's social relations are restricted: they are not talked to or greeted.
- A person's reputation is tarnished, rumours are circulated about them or they are ridiculed.
- A person is not assigned tasks.

This is not bullying:

- The employer exercises managerial prerogative appropriately and for justified reasons.
- Conflicts arise about work- or study-related decisions or interpretations.
- Employees discuss problems related to duties or work.
- The supervisor refers an employee to an assessment of fitness for work.
- An employee's duties are amended after the amendments have been discussed with them.
- Studies are assessed and a student is given appropriate, corrective feedback.
- The University instructs a student appropriately and for justified reasons on appropriate behaviour or exercises disciplinary power over the student.

**Harassment** means infringing on the integrity or human value of an individual or group in a way that creates a threatening, derogatory or hostile atmosphere. Harassment is a form of

discrimination. Both purposeful harassment and behaviour which can cause offence are forbidden. Examples of harassment include racist jokes or calling a colleague or fellow student derogatory names based on their sexual minority status.

**Gender-based harassment** is unwelcome conduct based on a person's gender which *de jure* or *de facto* violates their human value and creates a threatening, hostile, derogatory, humiliating or confrontational atmosphere. Gender-based harassment is not necessarily sexual in nature. In contrast, sexual harassment is unwelcome physical, verbal or other behaviour of a sexual nature.

**Discrimination** means the unjust treatment of an individual or group differently from others in the same position on grounds of race, nationality, ethnicity, skin colour, language, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, political activity, trade union activity, family relations, health, religion, opinion or other personal characteristics. An example of discrimination is a teacher refusing to guide or supervise students of a specific nationality. Indirect discrimination occurs when an ostensibly neutral rule or practice places certain people at a disadvantage in relation to others. An instruction or order to discriminate is also a form of discrimination.

## Racism

Racism may take different forms such as hate speech, discrimination, violence or ostensibly neutral practices that actually exclude certain individuals. Anti-racist efforts at the University require that the experiences of members of minorities are heard and structural deficiencies addressed. The promotion of anti-racism means that the University recognises, identifies and strives actively to change discriminating attitudes and operating models manifested at the University.

## Contact details

To request help and talk about your experiences, you can contact any of the persons below.

- Your supervisor
- Your unit head of human resources
- The occupational safety officer
- Occupational safety representatives
- Union representatives

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- [Occupational health](#)
- The HR Development and Occupational Wellbeing unit ([hrd@helsinki.fi](mailto:hrd@helsinki.fi))
- The legal counsel for academic affairs
- Study psychologists
- [The Student Union harassment contact persons](#) or the harassment contact persons of your student nation, association or organisation
- [Finnish Student Health Service \(FSHS\)](#)
- [Nyyti](#),
- University chaplains

University's harassment contact persons

- Timo Valtonen, [timo.valtonen@helsinki.fi](mailto:timo.valtonen@helsinki.fi), phone 23553
- Terhi Somerkallio, [terhi.somerkallio@helsinki.fi](mailto:terhi.somerkallio@helsinki.fi), phone 24292