
Sexual harassment

Charles University attaches the utmost importance to prevention and a safe environment for everyone. It does not accept any form of sexual and gender-based harassment or violence and expects all individuals in the university community, its visitors, and contracting partners to treat each other with mutual respect, consideration, and dignity.

Charles University makes every effort to provide a working, educational, and social environment that respects the rights and dignity of all members of the academic community.

The objectives of Charles University in this area are:

- To support a safe environment in which people are treated fairly and with respect;
- To declare that harassment is unacceptable and that everyone who is a part of the university will contribute to the creation of an environment without any form of harassment;
- To provide support to students and employees who believe they are a victim of harassment;
- To provide a clearly defined mechanism for resolving any complaints.

Every employee and student has the right to expect professional conduct from others and are also responsible themselves for their conduct towards others. Thus, everyone has personal responsibility for upholding the following principles and guidelines:

- To treat others with dignity and respect,
- To not tolerate any form of harassment, and if witness to this, to express that the unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated,
- To support anyone who feels they have been a victim of harassment, including offering outside assistance and psychological support for filing formal complaints if the need arises.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment can be generally defined as inappropriate or unwelcome behaviour with sexual overtones. **The essence of sexual harassment (similar to other forms of harassment) is an attempt to acquire, increase, or maintain dominance over another person.** Hence, we can divide sexual harassment into two categories:

1. Unwelcome sexual attention,
2. Sexual blackmail and coercion.

Specifically, this could involve **sexual advances, offering benefits in exchange for intimacy, or on the contrary, making threats when a person refuses advances or offers** (e.g. offering credits, exams, or good grades, promotions, financial rewards, or other advantages), **various forms of psychological coercion, such as different behaviour based on gender, materials depicting women or men as sexual objects, displaying and distributing pornographic material, or degrading remarks.** These also include **bullying and threatening and hostile behaviour, offensive, unwanted, and unreciprocated verbal and non-verbal behaviour** (intimate touching, even in the form of pats or strokes) and **physical assault.**

All of this can create an unpleasant school or work environment as well as an uncomfortable atmosphere between students and teachers or employees and superiors or among students or employees themselves. **This can take place in class or out of class during consultations, internships, or various excursions outside the school premises. For employees, this occurs most often during working hours and at the workplace.**

How to react

First of all, you should know that such behaviour is unacceptable, and you must establish some boundaries in relation to it. Tolerating or taking the blame for such behaviour, dropping a class or ending your studies, or quitting your job does not help matters.

If you are not sure whether you have fallen victim to sexual harassment, you can contact [counselling services](#) (Charles University psychological services) or an outside non-profit organization. The services are also available to those accused of harassment. You can find other sources of assistance and advice using the links provided below.

- As a part of CU Point and the Carolina Centre, you can contact independent experts who will provide the maximum level of assistance for resolving this problem using the e-mail address obtezovani@ruk.cuni.cz (one authorized person has access to it). All initiatives will be treated in a serious and confidential manner. Both the authorized person and, where appropriate, other persons who have seen you or heard from you are bound by strict confidentiality.
- If you would like to handle the situation yourself, we recommend written communication. It would be good to start by writing an e-mail or another type of message to the person in question explaining that their behaviour bothers you and that you consider it to be inappropriate and not tolerable. You should include in the message what specifically bothers you and why and a proposal for further action. If nothing changes, you can contact us for additional steps.
- If a student harasses you during your studies, you may contact the dean, who is able to commence disciplinary measures. If an employee harasses you, you can file a complaint to the [Ethics Commission](#). As a rule, the committee responds to each legitimate written submission within a period of nine months. In serious cases, the Czech Police may also be contacted.

If there is proof that the submitting party was aware that the complaint was unfounded, the allegation of harassment may be considered harassing or harmful and disciplinary action may be commenced against them or a complaint may be filed against them to the Ethics Committee.

Useful links

[Code of Ethics of Charles University](#)

[Code of Procedure for the Ethics Commission](#)