

Preventing sexual harassment

Guidance on completing a preventative departmental/team risk assessment

Introduction

This guidance is designed to help managers complete a preventative work-related sexual harassment risk assessment. The assessment can cover both large or small groups of staff for example a small team or a whole department. The risk assessment should be undertaken within the context and definitions set out in the University's [Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy](#).

Overview

There are four main stages to completing a sexual harassment stress risk assessment:

Consider the risks for sexual harassment happening across area/team

Complete the template risk assessment, adding local controls

Complete the action plan

Review the risk assessment and action plan regularly

Completing the risk assessment and action plan

Step one: Consider the risks of sexual harassment happening

Anticipate risk factors specific to your team/department when staff may be subject to sexual harassment in the course of their employment. You should also include situations where you are aware that sexual harassment has taken place.

Risk factors include, but are not limited to:

- lone/out of hours working
- an environment where people are drinking alcohol
- work-related social events
- social media contact between staff
- power imbalances between staff
- travelling for work, including overnight stays
- cultural norms in the workplace

This step should also include risks of students, contractors and other third parties sexually harassing staff.

Step two: Complete the risk assessment adding in local control measures specific to your team

Use the partially completed risk assessment template, which includes organisational-level control measures, and add your own more specific local control measures.

Local control measures to help manage risk could include:

- making it clear to all members of your team/department (including students as appropriate) that you will not tolerate sexual harassment
- encouraging staff to report any incidents of sexual harassment
- encouraging staff to report situations where they felt at risk, even if nothing happened
- setting standards of behaviour for work social events

Remember to involve the wider team in this risk assessment process.

Step three: Complete the action plan

Once your risk assessment is complete, think about what 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment are required. Do you need to introduce extra control measures? Add these to your action plan. Prioritise the areas you feel have a higher level of risk; focusing on these will have the greatest impact.

What is reasonable is dependent on the facts and circumstances of each situation. Some examples of potentially relevant factors in determining what is reasonable are:

- the size and resources of the employer
- the nature of the working environment
- the sector the employer operates in
- the risks present in that workplace
- the nature of any contact with third parties, for example, type of third party, frequency, environment
- the likely effect of taking a particular step and whether an alternative step could be more effective

- the time, cost and potential disruption of taking a particular step, weighed against the benefit it could achieve
- whether concerns have been raised with an employer that sexual harassment has taken place (it would likely be reasonable for the employer to take steps to investigate and ensure it does not happen again)
- compliance with any relevant regulatory standards (for example, standards set by the Financial Conduct Authority or General Medical Council)
- whether steps taken appear to have been effective or ineffective, for example, if a further incident of sexual harassment occurs after steps have taken, this may indicate that additional and / or alternative action should be considered

Both the risk assessment and action plan should be discussed with the team being assessed, as they may be able to offer valuable insights and suggestions for additional controls or the actions required.

Step four: Review the risk assessment and action plan

We recommend that you review your risk assessment every 12 months. However, some circumstances will require a review sooner. These could include:

- increasing numbers of staff experiencing sexual harassment
- increasing staff absence
- staff survey/exit interviews results indicating concern or an area requiring investigation

Summary

Remember to:

- Involve the team in developing the preventative risk assessment and action plan. Staff involved in the work are well placed to understand the risk areas and identify the most appropriate measures to control these.
- Communicate the risk assessment and action plan once complete.
- Use the action plan, responsible, and date columns in the risk assessment template to record additional measures needed, assign responsibility and track progress.
- Review the local preventative risk assessment and action plan in 12 months (or sooner).
- Contact your [HR Business Partnering Team](#) if you need further advice.

Preventative department/team work-related sexual harassment risk assessment and action plan

Area covered:
Date completed:
Completed by

Risk factors	Institutional control measures in place	Local control measures in place	Action plan	Responsible	Target date	Status
<p>Lone working</p> <p><i>Staff may face increased risks of sexual harassment due to limited supervision or support.</i></p>	<p>Lone working after hours or at weekends discouraged by the Director of Health and Safety.</p> <p>Specific guidance on risk assessment for lone working in place</p>					
<p>Power imbalance</p> <p><i>Staff who are in subordinate positions, including early career researchers and apprentices, may be at higher risk of experiencing sexual harassment. This is because the power</i></p>	<p>The university has adopted a robust Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy that includes clear examples of sexual harassment and a comprehensive reporting procedure. The policy contains multiple reporting channels to ensure that staff can safely report incidents of sexual harassment, even</p>					

<p><i>imbalances that exist in such in such relationships can create opportunities for exploitation. It may also be more difficult for individuals in these subordinate positions to speak up due to fear of negative consequences or retaliation.</i></p>	<p>if the harasser is in a position of power. The inclusion of multiple reporting channels ensures impartiality and protection against negative consequences or retaliation. The policy is accessible to all staff.</p> <p>Essential EDI Training module includes how to recognise and prevent sexual harassment.</p> <p>Stand Up Speak Out workshops cover bystander interventions for staff.</p>					
<p>Presence of alcohol</p> <p><i>Staff attending work-related social events/conferences where alcohol is consumed may be more vulnerable to sexual harassment. Alcohol consumption can impair judgement and lower inhibitions, potentially leading individuals to</i></p>	<p>The University has adopted a robust Prevention of Sexual Harassment policy. This policy includes clear examples of sexual harassment, and a comprehensive reporting procedure.</p> <p>University Conduct Procedure includes sexual harassment as behaviour</p>					

<p><i>behave in ways that they would not in a sober state.</i></p>	<p>that may constitute misconduct.</p> <p>The University has adopted a Policy on Alcohol and Substance Misuse. This Policy relates to all members of staff during hours undertaking work and when undertaking activities on behalf of the University or attending University-related social events. Employees should always be aware that they are representing the University at such events and behave in a responsible manner.</p>					
<p>Third party contact</p> <p><i>Staff working who regularly come into contact with students, visitors, members of the public, suppliers and contractors, may be more vulnerable to sexual harassment due to a higher frequency of interactions.</i></p>	<p>University policy on sexual harassment explicitly addresses third party sexual harassment.</p> <p>Guidance and risk assessments on field trips require consideration of sexual harassment of staff.</p>					

<p>Cultural norms in the workplace</p> <p><i>A workplace culture that tolerates certain attitudes, inappropriate behaviours and stereotypical views where employees are not treated with dignity and respect may make staff more vulnerable to sexual harassment.</i></p>	<p>The University has a robust policy framework covering acceptable behaviours, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. This includes clear examples of sexual harassment and a comprehensive reporting procedure.</p> <p>There is a range of support for those affected or involved in sexual harassment, including access to an employee assistance programme, workplace mediation and/or staff counselling.</p> <p>The University also has strategy and policy around equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).</p> <p>Training for staff on EDI including recognising and reporting sexual harassment is in place.</p> <p>Workshops on bystander interventions are provided to staff and students.</p>					
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	Workplace culture is monitored through annual staff surveys.					
<p>Social media contact between staff</p> <p><i>Staff may engage in unwanted and inappropriate contact with colleagues via online interactive communication platforms such as Facebook, X, and LinkedIn.</i></p>	<p>University Acceptable Behaviour at Work Policy includes email communication and social media.</p> <p>Social Media Policy and Guidelines require the same standards of behaviour and conduct should be adhered to when airing views or interacting with other people on social media as would be applied in offline scenarios.</p>					
<p>Lack of diversity</p> <p><i>A lack of diversity in senior leadership and managerial roles can result in a significant power imbalance, which may lead to women and groups from other underrepresented backgrounds throughout the organisation feeling</i></p>	<p>The University has a robust policy framework covering acceptable behaviours, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. This includes clear examples of sexual harassment and a comprehensive reporting procedure. There are multiple reporting channels to ensure that staff can safely report incidents of</p>					

<p><i>marginalised, more vulnerable to sexual harassment and less empowered to speak up due to fear of retaliation.</i></p>	<p>sexual harassment, even if the harasser is in a position of power. The inclusion of multiple reporting channels ensures impartiality and protection against negative consequences or retaliation. The University has an EDI Policy statement and a range of supporting policies.</p>					
<p>Failure to respond appropriately to reports of sexual harassment</p>	<p>Guidance on responding to complaints included in relevant policies on Preventing Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Acceptable Behaviour.</p> <p>HRBP Teams equipped to advise managers on how to respond to complaints.</p>					

