

**Office of Employment Equity**

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The Office of Employment Equity (OEE) serves faculty, staff, and students from all Rutgers campuses who believe that they have been subjected to harassment or discrimination. As an office within University Human Resources, we coordinate prevention, education, and the harassment complaint process.

Contact us at:

Phone: 732-932-3020, ext. 4030

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Web: <http://uhr.rutgers.edu/equity>

# RUTGERS

## Office of Employment Equity

## Harassment on Campus:

### *A Guide for Faculty*

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 University Human Resources  
 Administrative Services Building II  
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Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is dedicated by law and by purpose to serving all people on an equal and nondiscriminatory basis.

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Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is an exciting place, and we want you to be able to do your job here without the fear or intimidation of harassment. Rutgers has a policy against harassment and a process to resolve accusations of harassment swiftly and fairly.

If you feel that you are being harassed because of your

- race
- religion
- color
- national origin
- ancestry
- age
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender identity and expression
- disability
- atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait
- marital status
- civil union status
- domestic partnership status
- military service
- veteran status
- any other category protected by law

this brochure will guide you to the resources you need to resolve the issue.

Copies of the complete Policy Prohibiting Discrimination and Harassment and the Harassment Complaint Process are available on request through the Office of Employment Equity, or on the office's website at <http://uhr.rutgers.edu/equity>.

**What is harassment?**

Harassment is any conduct directed toward an individual or group based on one or more of the traits covered by the university's nondiscrimination policy that creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment and is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter an individual's employment conditions, educational environment, living environment, or participation in a university activity. The university's policy against harassment also prohibits retaliation against anyone who complains of harassment, is accused of harassment, or assists in an investigation of harassment.

Harassment strikes at the core of academic values, which are founded on the free expression of ideas and opinions. It is particularly inappropriate in an academic setting because it silences opinion, curtails the expression of ideas, and reduces the opportunity for students and others to learn and to grow.

Rutgers takes harassment very seriously. It has dedicated substantial resources to investigate and resolve claims of harassment and to protect victims of harassment. The Office of Employment Equity was created to coordinate the university's response to harassment complaints on campus.

**What if someone is offended by the way I covered controversial topics in class?**

Rutgers supports your academic freedom. If your material is germane to the subject matter being taught and your goal is to teach, not to intimidate, shock, or obtain special favors from your students, then you should have no concern about tackling the most controversial topics, even in creative or dramatic ways.

If you are accused of harassment in the classroom, or if you have concerns about teaching sensitive material, you are encouraged to call the Office of Employment Equity to discuss your situation.

### What behaviors constitute harassment?

Harassment takes many different forms, from inappropriate comments to the display of offensive material. A harasser can be a colleague, a supervisor, or a total stranger. Harassing behavior can be subtle or overt, frequent or a one-time occurrence. Key elements of harassment include:

**Power:** At its core, harassment is an effort to gain power over someone else. People who use harassment tactics usually have more power or status than their victims, and they generally use this power to gain control of, maintain their power over, or obtain favors from their victims. If you feel demeaned because of someone else's behavior, or find yourself acting against your own best interests, you may be the target of harassment.

**Frequency and/or severity:** Harassment is intimidating behavior that is severe enough, or happens often enough, to alter an individual's employment, educational, or living conditions. For example, if a department member calls a teaching assistant by an epithet day after day, so that the victim avoids passing that professor's office, that might very well be harassment.

### What should I do if I suspect I am being harassed?

- Take careful notes of any harassing behavior so that you can remember exactly what happened, when, and who else was there.
- If you feel it is safe to confront the harasser, tell him or her that you find the behavior disturbing. Sometimes people do not know their behavior is offensive to you, or they want to believe that you welcome the behavior.
- If you want to confront the harasser, you may find it helpful to rehearse a phrase ahead of time so that it will automatically spring to mind when you need it. "Don't use that word in my presence," or "Please don't stand so close; it makes me uncomfortable," is easier to say if you have practiced.
- Call the Office of Employment Equity at 732-932-3020, ext. 4030, to get a list of trained harassment advisers throughout campus. (The list is also available on the office's website at <http://uhr.rutgers.edu/equity>.) Then choose an adviser and make an appointment to talk with her or him.
- If you do not feel safe confronting the harasser, the adviser can tell you about other steps you can take.

There are many reasons why it is important to act as soon as possible. Most importantly, the sooner you take action, the sooner you will be able to change a situation that is unpleasant or possibly dangerous for you. The sooner you act, the more useful detail you will remember. If there are witnesses, they will be easier to find and will remember what happened more clearly.

### What should I do if I am accused of harassment?

Make an appointment as soon as possible with a harassment adviser. The adviser will explain your rights and, if you wish, help you determine what course of action you want to take.

### Why should I call an adviser?

The harassment adviser has been specifically trained to work through harassment issues. The adviser also has lists of resources available to you. He or she will listen to your situation, discuss the available resources, and can coordinate the complaint process for you.

### Should I report harassment even if I'm not the target?

Yes. Victims are often afraid to report harassment themselves. You can help to create a safe and open atmosphere for everyone by reporting any incident of harassment you witness, whether you're involved or not.

### What options does the university process provide?

Depending on your situation, there are different ways to address the issue of harassment.

**Informal:** You may choose to handle the problem informally, by letting the person whose behavior is hurting you know about it and asking that the person stop. An adviser can help you do this, or even do it for you so you can remain anonymous.

**Formal:** You may want to pursue a formal charge by filing a complaint with the Office of Employment Equity, which may result in disciplinary action against the alleged harasser, if appropriate.

**University action:** The university has an obligation to address harassment swiftly and effectively. The university may use informal or formal means to address harassment once it is aware that harassment may have occurred.

### Is the complaint process confidential?

Only those who have a need to know will be told about your complaint. Meetings with advisers and investigators will be as confidential as possible. If the issue is resolved informally, all identifying information may be kept confidential. However, in a formal complaint, because the accused person might be subject to discipline, he or she will normally be given a chance to respond to a written complaint signed by the accuser. Investigators will advise witnesses to be discreet.

### How quickly are harassment complaints resolved?

If safety is an issue, the university will take immediate action. In all cases, the university will act as quickly as possible to resolve the issue. However, resolving harassment issues can take time. In some cases, interim steps can be taken to separate the parties while the problem is being resolved.