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# Sexual and gender based violence

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## What is sexual and gender-based violence/sexual harassment?

In general, such behaviour can be defined as inappropriate and unwelcome behaviour with a sexual undertone, **the essence of which is** (similar to other types of harassment) **an effort to gain, increase, or confirm one's superiority over another person.**

**Gender-based violence** includes all acts of physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or other forms of violence that target women because they happen to be women or men because they happen to be men or acts of violence that disproportionately affect women or men.

**Sexual violence** is an attempt to gain, increase, or confirm one's superiority over another person using sexuality as a tool of power. This includes, for example, unwelcome sexual attention or sexual blackmail and coercion.

In other words, this is inappropriate and unsolicited behaviour with sexual undertones, whether verbal, non-verbal, or physical. On a university campus, this can occur between students, between teachers, teachers towards students or students towards teachers, and among members of staff.

This may involve the following in particular:

- Sexual advances,
- Offering benefits for intimate contact or, on the contrary, threatening someone if they refuse (e.g. credits, exams or good grades, promotions, financial rewards, or other benefits),
- Intimate touching,
- Sharing intimate photos,
- Various forms of psychological pressure, such as different treatment based on gender,
- Materials depicting persons as sexual objects,
- Exhibiting and distributing pornographic materials,
- Inappropriate comments relating to a person's body and appearance,
- Suggestive jokes,
- Humiliating or embarrassing remarks,
- Attention in the form of harassing e-mails,
- Expressing an offensive, hostile, and degrading stance towards a certain gender,
- Cursing, mocking, and gestures with sexual undertones,
- Bullying and threatening and hostile behaviour,
- Offensive, unwanted, and unrequited verbal and non-verbal behaviour,
- Physical assault.

All of these circumstances can create an unpleasant academic or work environment and atmosphere between students and teachers or employees and superiors, or between students or employees. They can take place during class and outside class during consultations, internships, or various excursions outside the school premises. In the case of employees, this can happen during working hours, at the workplace, but also in other circumstances.

## Have you experienced inappropriate sexual behaviour as a victim or a witness and are not sure how to handle the whole situation?

You can contact the [ombudswoman](#) of Charles University [PhDr. Kateřina Šámalová, Ph.D.](#)  
Anonymous notifications are dealt with in the scope of their disclosure.

## What should I do if I feel that I have been harmed by sexual or gender-based violence?

First of all, you must understand that such behaviour is unacceptable, and it is necessary to protect yourself against such behaviour. Tolerating such behaviour or blaming yourself, quitting a course, or abandoning your studies completely or resigning from your position as an employee will not help the situation.

If you are not sure whether you are the object of sexual harassment or whether you witnessed the harassment of someone else, you can contact the [counselling service](#) (CU psychological/legal counselling) or an external non-profit organization. The service is also available to those who have been accused of harassment.

Your options:

? Contact [ombudswoman](#) of Charles University [PhDr. Kateřina Šámalová, Ph.D.](#)

? If you would like to resolve the situation yourself, we recommend that you start by writing an e-mail or other message to the person concerned stating that you are troubled by their behaviour and that you find it inappropriate and intolerable. The message should state what specifically bothers you and why and a suggestion for the next course of action. If nothing happens, you can come to us and we can handle the next steps together.

? Some faculties have an ombudsman (these faculties are: the 2<sup>nd</sup> Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Pharmacy, and the Faculty of Law). You can contact the ombudsman directly. It is also possible to contact the dean, who can initiate disciplinary proceedings (in the case of being harassed by a student), or in serious cases, the Czech Police. The initiative can also be submitted to the [Ethics Committee](#) (if an employee is harassing you). The committee will respond to all substantively discussed submissions in writing, usually within a period of nine months.

If it is demonstrated that the notifying party was aware that their complaint was unjustified, the harassment allegation may be considered harassment itself or harmful and may result in disciplinary action being taken against them. No action will be taken if a complaint found to be unjustified is deemed to have been made in good faith.

## What should I do if I am a witness to sexual or gender-based harassment?

Thank you for not being indifferent to your surroundings. We can propose the following steps depending on the situation:

- Ask the person you consider a victim if they feel comfortable in the situation or if they need your assistance.
- Express disagreement. It is often difficult for the victim to understand that they are being harassed. Hence, it might be good if you explain the situation yourself, even if you feel that it does not concern you personally. You are indicating to those persons that they are not alone in defending their rights.
- If it is difficult to discuss at the moment, ask at a later time and offer your assistance if you feel it is appropriate to do so.
- Advise the person to contact the [ombudswoman](#) of Charles University [PhDr. Kateřina Šámalová, Ph.D.](#) . If you have any doubts or questions, you can contact us directly yourself or the Carolina Centre's [counselling service](#)

If someone confides in you that they feel harmed by sexual or gender-based harassment, you can:

- Reassure the person that you believe them and that you appreciate the trust they have shown.
- Reassure the person that what happened is not their fault.
- Think about the fact that everyone reacts differently (rationally or irrationally).
- Ask the person in question if they want help resolving the situation and possibly contact us.
- Don't ask too much. Some people may find it helpful to talk about their experience, but others may find it traumatic to share the details.
- Let the person choose for themselves. There is no obligation to report the situation or resolve it in any way. It may be good to formulate your sentences as an offer.
- Seek help for yourself if the whole process is difficult for you, e.g. contact [CU Point's counselling services](#)

If the harassed person requests an investigation, let them contact us themselves. If you do not want this or if you want advice on the next steps, please contact the counselling service of the Carolina Centre or the Carolina Centre directly. Do not do anything against the will of the person who has confided in you.

## How does Charles University deal with cases of sexual and gender-based violence?

Charles University places great emphasis on the prevention of negative phenomena and a safe environment for everyone. It does not accept any form of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence (often simply referred to as sexual harassment) and expects all individuals from the university community, its visitors, and contractual partners to treat each other with respect and consideration.

Charles University strives for a working, educational, and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all members of the university community are respected.

Charles University's goals in this area are:

- To promote a safe environment in which people are treated fairly and with respect;
- To declare that harassment is unacceptable and that everyone who is part of the university is involved in creating an environment free of any form of harassment;
- To provide support to students and staff members who feel harassed;
- To provide a clearly defined mechanism through which complaints can be resolved

Every employee and every student has the right to expect professional behaviour from others and is also responsible for their own behaviour towards others. Thus, everyone has a personal responsibility to comply with the following rules and principles:

- Treat others with respect,
- Do not tolerate any form of harassment and, if witnessed, point out the unacceptable behaviour,
- Support anyone who feels they have been a victim of harassment, including connections to external assistance and psychological support to make a formal complaint, if needed.

## Where can I find more information?

[Ombudsman PhDr. Kateřina Šámalová, Ph.D.](#)

[Carolina Centre Counselling Services](#)

Ombudsman at some faculties – (2<sup>nd</sup> Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Pharmacy, Faculty of Law)

Consultation at the Carolina Centre (arranged in advance): [centrumcarolina@cuni.cz](mailto:centrumcarolina@cuni.cz)

Comprehensive information at the European level on gender-based violence can be found here:

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence>

Organizations dealing with this topic:

[Konsent](#) – deals with the issue of sexual violence and prevention


[Persefona](#) – resolves the issue of domestic and sexual violence, including assistance to its victims

[Bílý kruh bezpečí](#) – helps victims of crimes, including sexual violence

[proFem](#) – helps victims of sexual violence, educational events

[Rosa centre](#) – helps women – victims of domestic violence

[Iniciativa nahlas](#) – a student initiative at Charles University dealing with the problem of sexual violence

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If you are looking for information about sexual harassment click [here](#)