

What is unlawful harassment?

- Unlawful harassment is any unwelcome conduct, verbal or physical, which has the intent or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational, or work environment, and which happens because of a person's sex, pregnancy, race or ethno-religious background, marital status, age, sexual preference, transgender status or disability.
- Unlawful harassment can include:
 - verbal abuse or comments that put down or stereotype people
 - derogatory or demeaning jokes intended to offend on the basis of stereotyped characteristics
 - offensive communications (such as posters, letters, e-mails, faxes, screen savers, web sites)
 - offensive telephone or electronic mail or other computer system communications
 - insults, taunting, name calling, innuendo or bullying
 - persistent or intrusive questions or comments about an individual's personal life
 - unwelcome invitations especially after prior refusal
 - orientation activities that involve sexual, sexist, racist or other discriminatory behaviour
 - non verbal behaviour such as whistling, staring and leering
 - uninvited sexual or physical contact such as embracing, kissing or touching
 - promises, propositions or threats in return for sexual favours
 - engaging in behaviour which is embarrassing, humiliating or intimidating
 - derogatory comments about race, religion and customs;
 - teasing or offensive language and racist behaviours, and mocking customs or cultures.
- The offensive behaviour does not have to take place a number of times: a single incident can constitute harassment.
- What is important is how the behaviour affects the person it is directed against. Unlawful harassment can occur even if the behaviour is not intended to offend.
- Students should be aware that differing social and cultural standards may mean that behaviour that is acceptable to some may be perceived as offensive by others.
- As a guide, ask yourself: "would a reasonable person be intimidated, offended or humiliated by the behaviour?"