



Fact Sheet: Preventing & Responding to Sexual Harassment in the Classroom

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission education providers have a legal duty to prevent occurrences of and respond to students' allegations of sexual harassment. In the Ontario Human Rights Code (1990), sexual harassment is defined as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Sexual harassment can include unnecessary physical contact, for example an unwanted hug, or the telling of sexual jokes.

Humber College is committed to ensuring the safety of all its students and employees. Humber's Human Rights Policy and the Charter of Student's Responsibilities and Rights set out guidelines that aim towards protecting students and all members of the College community from sexual harassment. The Ontario Human Rights Commission strongly encourages education providers to monitor and control their environments regularly ensuring they are free from sexual harassment.

Tips to responding and preventing incidences of sexual harassment in the classroom:

1. Humber's Human Rights Policy strongly encourages all faculty and staff to maintain a professional relationship with students in and out of the classroom. Romantic relationships between faculty and students remove all professional boundaries between them and create a perception of bias, a violation of trust, thus distorting and damaging the learning environment.
2. Respond to allegations of sexual harassment promptly and in a serious, confidential manner. Humber's Human Rights Policy outlines that education providers are required to prevent, report and discourage incidences of harassment.
3. Be mindful of all inappropriate verbal and written comments and conduct displayed in the classroom. Examples of inappropriate comments and conduct are: offensive jokes/remarks about women or men, and the display of sexually offensive pictures.
4. Familiarize yourself with [Humber's Complaint Resolution Procedure](#).
5. Attend ongoing professional training and education on increasing safety in the classroom.

“Sexual harassment in schools is unwanted and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that interferes with the right to receive an equal educational opportunity.”

– **Nan Stein**, (2000) Ed.D, Senior Research Scientist, Wellesley Centers for Women

Sources:

The information in this fact sheet has been developed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission and Human Rights & Diversity | HR Services, and can be found at the following websites:

1. Sexual Harassment in Education (brochure). (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/factsheets/sexharedu>
2. Human Rights and Diversity Sexual Harassment Fact Sheet. (2011). Retrieved from http://hrs.humber.ca/downloads/HR%26D_Sexual_Harassment_Fact_Sheet.pdf
3. Stein, N. (2000). Sexual Harassment in Schools. Retrieved from <https://mainweb-v.musc.edu/vawprevention/research/sexharass.shtml>