Sexual harassment can also occur between equals. Both men and women are most often victimized. Sexual harassment can also occur between members of the same sex.

When the harassing conduct is not sexual, but is based on someone's gender, it can also contribute to creating a hostile environment. People who are affected by gender harassment often blame themselves. People who feel like they are powerless to stop the situation often blame them for the problem.

All effects are harmful. Sexual harassment is not funny; it is degradating. It could be one serious step on the road to the other extreme. It harms one's self-esteem. It could create lifelong scars. People who experience sexual harassment often feel themselves. They blame themselves for the problem. They blame the harassment themselves.
Sexual harassment usually occurs in situations that are professional or academic in nature. It includes verbal conduct if it is words or statements (including visual images) of sexual nature that are intimidating, humiliating, offensive, or threatening and are directed at an individual. Sexual harassment may include not only sexual behavior and attempts to fondle, but also actions such as stalking, sexual assault, sexual groping, and sexual threats. Sexual harassment may also include nonverbal conduct, such as leering, patting, indecent propositions, and physical contact. Sexual harassment can be manifested in various forms, such as requesting sex in exchange for grades or promotions, harassment can also occur between members of the same sex. Although such forms of harassment may be unintended, they are still considered harassment if the conduct is offensive, intimidating, or otherwise creates a hostile environment.

Sexual harassment is not limited to the workplace. It can also occur in educational settings, such as classrooms, laboratories, dormitories, and residence halls. It can also be found in social settings, such as parties, events, and gatherings. It is not limited to any particular age group or gender. It can affect anyone, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, or race.

The University of Maine System prohibits any form of sexual harassment. This includes sexual harassment that occurs on campus, in the workplace, or in any other setting. The University encourages employees and students to report any sexual harassment they may experience or witness. The University will take all necessary steps to investigate and respond to such reports. The University will not retaliate against anyone who reports sexual harassment.

If you experience sexual harassment, you should report it to the appropriate authority. You can do this by speaking to a trusted friend, family member, or counselor. You can also report it to the University's Equal Opportunity Director or your campus Equity & Diversity Office. The University will provide you with additional support and resources, such as counseling, legal aid, and academic accommodation.

The University's policies and procedures are designed to ensure that all participants feel free to express their opinions and ideas. Sexual harassment hampers academic freedom and may violate University policy. Verbal expression that is relevant to course content or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment is not protected. The University's policies and procedures are designed to protect the rights of all participants.

The University of Maine System prohibits the abuse of power in romantic or sexual relationships. To assure that power is not abused and to maintain an environment free of sexual harassment, a faculty or staff member must eliminate any current or potential conflict of interest by removing himself or herself from decisions affecting another person in the relationship. Decisions affecting the other person include grading, evaluating, supervising, or otherwise influencing that person's education, employment, housing, or participation in athletics or any other University System activity.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when: 1. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for academic decisions affecting the individual; or 2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a condition of employment or an educational opportunity or benefit available to the individual; or 3. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluating the individual; or 4. the harassing conduct is not so severe or pervasive that it affects the individual's ability to participate in or benefit from the educational process.

If you experience any form of sexual harassment, you should report it to the appropriate authority. The University will take all necessary steps to investigate and respond to such reports. The University will not retaliate against anyone who reports sexual harassment. The University has established a process for handling sexual harassment complaints. This process is designed to protect the rights of all participants. The University will ensure that all participants feel free to express their opinions and ideas. The University will not retaliate against anyone who reports sexual harassment.

The University of Maine System will provide a fair and impartial investigation to protect the rights of the person(s) filing sexual harassment complaints. The University will protect the rights of the person(s) filing sexual harassment complaints, the person(s) complained against, and the institution or unit. Retaliation against anyone who makes a complaint of sexual harassment or who is involved in a complaint process will not be tolerated.

Consenting relationships may constitute sexual harassment under this policy. When a professional power differential exists between members of the University of Maine System and a romantic or sexual relationship develops, there is a potential for abuse of that power, even in relationships of apparent mutual consent. Faculty and staff members are strongly advised not to engage in such relationships. Further, the University of Maine System prohibits the abuse of power in romantic or sexual relationships.

What Are The Effects Of Sexual Harassment? 
People who are subjected to sexual harassment often feel powerless to stop the situation. Especially in this culture, where “no” is often heard as “yes,” verbal refusals are frequently ineffective. People may also fear retaliation if they say “no.” 

People who experience sexual harassment often blame themselves. Others may also blame them for the problem, rather than holding the harasser responsible for the behavior. All effects are harmful. Sexual harassment is not funny; it is degrading and upsetting. It is not “just the way things are.” People who feel harassed have decided courses, changed majors, avoided advisors, even quit jobs or school.
The University has an Equal Opportunity Complaint Procedure to deal promptly and fairly with concerns and complaints about sexual harassment. A student or employee who feels that he or she has experienced sexual harassment, and anyone with knowledge of an incident, can file a complaint. To file a complaint, the Equal Opportunity Officer (if the alleged harasser is an employee), or Student Judicial Officer (if the alleged harasser is a student) as soon as possible after the incident.

Any supervisor who becomes aware of a problem must promptly contact the Equal Opportunity Officer or Student Conduct Officer. If the Equal Opportunity Officer or Student Conduct Officer has a substantial conflict of interest regarding either the complainant or the person accused, an alternative investigator will be assigned.

Complaints are handled as confidentially as possible to protect the rights of both the complainant and the person accused. Retaliation against anyone who makes a complaint or participates in a complaint process is not tolerated. The complaint and the person accused have certain rights to representation during the complaint process.

The Equal Opportunity Officer or Student Conduct Officer discuss informal and formal options for resolving the problem. The goal of the informal process is to seek a resolution acceptable to everyone involved. Many concerns can be addressed through an informal process, which provides the maximum privacy and an opportunity for the earliest possible resolution.

If the complainant chooses or if a problem cannot be resolved informally, the complainant may request a formal investigation. When the person accused of sexual harassment is an employee, a formal complaint is filed, an investigator external to the campus conducts the investigation under the procedures in the Equal Opportunity Complaint Procedure. When the person accused of sexual harassment is a student and a formal complaint is filed, the Student Conduct Officer conducts the investigation according to the procedures in the Student Conduct Code.

When the person accused is an employee or a person from outside the University, the Investigations Coordinator conducts the investigation. An appropriate administrator then decides whether the complaint has been substantiated and what corrective action will be taken. When charges of sexual harassment are filed by a student of the same gender, the severe discipline may result, up to and including termination for an employee or dismissal for a student.

The Equal Opportunity Complaint Procedure is available online at http://www.main.edu/system/hr/eo/sp.php and in the Equal Opportunity, Human Resources, and Student Affairs Offices. All members of the University community are encouraged to use this procedure. Sexual harassment complaints may also be filed with the Maine Human Rights Commission or the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Remember, the University’s goal is to prevent or, at the least possible, to respond to and handle sexual harassment complaints, or any other type of complaints, in a manner which respects the rights of both the complainant and the person accused, and which is fair and equitable.

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

University policy strongly discourages consensual romantic or sexual relationships between members of the University community when one person has power or authority over the other. The trust and respect that students have for faculty and other staff can make it difficult for them to freely reject sexual advances. Because faculty and staff have the power to give or withhold rewards such as praise, grades, and recommendations, this further exacerbates the potential for sexual relationships between supervi sor and employee. Even if a subordinate student or employee does not appear to object to a sexual relationship, this does not mean that the person welcomes the relationship. Moreover, someone else may claim that the participant in a consenting relationship received prefer ence or advantage, or was at a disadvantage. The University community when one person has power or authority over another student and should be alerted to the risks of consenting relationships.

What About romantic or sexual relationships between members of the University community when one person has power or authority over the other?

There are many resources directed toward these situations, including your supervisor, the human resources office, and the Equal Opportunity Office. The Equal Opportunity Office has a substantial conflict of interest regarding either the complainant or the person accused, an alternative investigator will be assigned.

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