

Human Rights Office

Human Rights-Related Discrimination & Harassment

This fact sheet provides general information about human rights to the University of Ottawa community and should not be construed as legal advice.

Rights and Responsibilities

All members of the university community, including students, staff and faculty members, have a right to a learning and workplace environment that is respectful, safe, healthy and free from harassment and discrimination pursuant to the University of Ottawa *Policy 67a – Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination (Policy 67a)*. Concurrently, each member of the university community has a responsibility to maintain this environment and adhere to the university policy.

The Human Rights Office (HRO)

The HRO is a neutral and impartial office responsible for receiving and responding to human rights-related discrimination and harassment, personal and workplace harassment, and sexual violence concerns and complaints, from all members of the university community. The HRO also provides education and training on these matters as well as offers guidance and consultation to all members of the community on these issues. This pamphlet provides information regarding human rights-related discrimination and harassment. For more information about personal and workplace-related harassment and sexual violence, please contact the HRO.

The Human Rights Code

Through *Policy 67a*, the university recognizes its obligations under the legal framework set out in the Ontario *Human Rights Code (Code)*. The *Code* is a provincial anti-discrimination law that applies to workplaces, housing, services, goods and facilities, as well as to contracts or agreements and to membership in trade or vocational associations.

The *Code* prohibits actions that discriminate against and/harass people on the following grounds:

- Age
- Ancestry, colour, race
- Citizenship
- Ethnic origin
- Place of origin
- Creed
- Disability
- Family status
- Marital status (including single status)
- Gender identity, Gender expression
- Receipt of public assistance (in housing only)
- Record of offences (in employment only)
- Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)
- Sexual orientation.

... it is public policy in Ontario to recognize the dignity and worth of every person and to provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination that is contrary to law, and having as its aim the creation of a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of each person so that each person feels a part of the community and able to contribute fully to the development and well-being of the community and the Province.

Preamble – *The Human Rights Code*

Contact the Human Rights Office if:

- *You have questions or concerns about human rights-related discrimination or harassment on campus*
- *Are seeking education on human rights-related discrimination or harassment*
- *To submit a human rights complaint*

What is discrimination?

Discrimination means unfair, unequal or differential treatment of an individual or a group, whether intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect, it has to have had a negative impact on that person or group. For the negative differential treatment to be discriminatory, it must be tied to one of the protected personal characteristics set out in the *Code*.

Examples:

- Refusing to allow a student to reschedule an exam because the date conflicts with their religious high holy day
- Denying appropriate accommodations to persons with a medically certified disability.
- A supervisor assigns her employees to weekend shifts without recognizing that some employees observe the Sabbath and cannot work on those days

Harassment, related to one or more of the protected personal characteristics set out in the *Code*, is also a form of discrimination. The term used is Human Rights Harassment and it's defined as follows:

Human Rights Harassment means a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome and that is based on any of the personal characteristics listed in the definition of discrimination. A single unwelcome incident of sufficient severity may meet the definition of human rights harassment.

Examples when repeated or one single severe incident:

- Making unwelcome remarks or jokes about your race, religion, sex, age, disability or any other of the grounds of discrimination
- Threatening or intimidating you because of your race, religion, sex, age, disability or any other of the grounds of discrimination.