



# Sexual Harassment: What You Need to Know at George Brown College

## POLICY STATEMENT

Everyone at George Brown College has the right to study and work in an environment that is free of sexual harassment. This right is supported by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *George Brown College Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment Policy*.

## WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Someone is bothering you or making you uncomfortable by saying or doing things related to your sex or gender or of a sexual nature that are unwanted or unwelcomed.

## DO I HAVE TO SAY “NO” FOR IT TO BE SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sometimes a person cannot say “no” to stop a harasser’s behaviour. If a reasonable person would know that the behaviour may be unwanted or unwelcomed, it can still be sexual harassment.

We all have a responsibility to make sure that our actions are not unwelcomed by others and to try to avoid potential misinterpretations. It’s not up to the target to stop sexual harassment.

## IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT ALWAYS OVERTLY SEXUAL?

No. This type of harassment can include unfair or unequal treatment based on perceived gender or sex. So it is wrong for someone to be treated differently or negatively because they are thought to be a specific gender, whether they identify that way or not.

## DOES SEXUAL HARASSMENT ONLY HAPPEN TO WOMEN?

Sexual harassment can happen to women, men, persons who are trans-identified (including those who identify as transsexual or transgender), persons who are two-spirit, or other persons who do not identify with traditional masculine/feminine roles.

## IS IT SEXUAL HARASSMENT IF IT'S JUST A JOKE?

Sexual harassment does not need to be intentional. Comments or actions related to sex, gender, or sexuality can still have a negative impact on individuals in a study- or work-environment. This is often called a negative or “poisoned” environment.

## WHAT DOES SEXUAL HARASSMENT LOOK LIKE?

Sexual harassment in the college can exist in many forms such as:

- verbal – name calling; insults; threats; slurs; degrading or unwelcomed remarks; jokes or innuendos; sexual invitations or demands; implied or expressed promise of reward or benefit in return for sexual favours; implied or expressed threat or reprisals for refusing sexual favours
- non-verbal – avoidance; exclusion
- physical – leering; touching; kissing; patting; pinching; threatening or rude gestures; physical intimidation insulting actions or practical jokes
- written material – graffiti; displaying or distributing sexist derogatory or offensive materials; such as jokes, pictures or cartoons

A complainant does not have to be the direct target to be adversely affected by these behaviours.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment may cause persons to experience disgust, fear, anger, or shame. Sometimes individuals may blame themselves for the situation.

Persons may become emotionally or physically ill or suffer economically from the stress of dealing with sexual harassment.

Physical or emotional consequences can include:

- insomnia
- anxiety
- depression
- trouble concentrating
- low self-esteem
- headaches
- nausea
- disruption of personal/family life

In a college environment, this can lead to absenteeism, dropping out of class or program, quitting a job, disruption of career plans, or loss of income.

## CAN SEXUAL HARASSMENT OCCUR ONLINE?

Yes, and it does. Any form of electronic communication, including text messages, emails, shared digital photos, and social media sites, that is related to sex, gender, or of a sexual nature that should reasonably be known to be unwanted or unwelcome may be sexual harassment. See, as well, the *Student Acceptable Use of Technology Policy*.

## DOES IT HAVE TO HAPPEN MORE THAN ONCE TO BE SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

No. One event can be considered sexual harassment if it should reasonably be known to be unwanted or unwelcome.

## IS FLIRTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Consensual flirting is not sexual harassment. If flirting continues but is known or should be known by a reasonable person to be unwanted or unwelcome, then it can be sexual harassment.

## WHAT IS STALKING?

Stalking is a form of criminal harassment. It is a course of conduct that makes a person feel fearful or unsafe and can include: repeatedly following someone; repeatedly communicating with someone in-person, through telephone, text, email or other forms of communication; watching the place where someone lives, works, studies, or spends time. These behaviours can escalate to violence and should be reported to Campus Security (see below) or Toronto Police.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO STOP SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Speak up and speak out against sexual harassment in all its forms. Help create awareness that this behaviour is unacceptable and promote a culture at George Brown College that is free of sexual harassment. Speak up when you witness or experience sexual harassment where you feel safe to do so. Seek assistance from George Brown College resources when you need support.

If the sexual harassment is directed at you:

- know your rights. Talk to someone. Get more information.
- record the incident, including place, time, witnesses, and any details that you can recall. Be clear, concise, and chronological.
- talk to Diversity, Equity & Human Rights Services or a counsellor in Student Affairs for support and options.
- tell the harasser that the behaviour is unwelcome and ask that it stop. This can be done in person, through a letter, or with the assistance of college resources.

The goal is to stop the behaviour and to create a more positive relationship or environment to move forward. This is an informal approach and is encouraged whenever possible.

A formal complaint process may be necessary in cases where a person is unable to approach the offending party, or if the informal approach does not work or is inappropriate.

For more information on formal complaints process, please see the prevention of discrimination and harassment policy under the about – policies section of the George Brown College website. Also, you may speak with Diversity, Equity & Human Rights Services, a department chair, a manager, or your union representative.

Resolutions to these behaviours and situations may range from a frank discussion with the responsible parties all the way up to involving the police in situations that include sexual assault and stalking incidents. Sexual harassment can lead to criminal charges.

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[georgebrown.ca/diversity](http://georgebrown.ca/diversity)

## USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Diversity, Equity & Human Rights Services:**

*Casa Loma*  
500 MacPherson, Room 102

*St. James*  
200 King St E, Room 126

*Waterfront*  
51 Dockside Drive, Room 230

416-415-5000 ext 3450  
[dehrs@georgebrown.ca](mailto:dehrs@georgebrown.ca)

**Counselling:**  
[georgebrown.ca/counselling](http://georgebrown.ca/counselling)

**OPSEU:**  
*Local 556 (Faculty):*  
416-415-5000 ext. 2200

*Local 557 (Support staff):*  
416-415-5000 ext. 4600

**Human Resources:**

[georgebrown.ca/hr](http://georgebrown.ca/hr)

**Campus Security:**

416-415-4000 (Urgent)

416-415-8000 (Non-urgent)