What is harassment?

Sexual misconduct is a public health problem. We need to be able to recognize it, in order to prevent it from happening to us, and our community. Sometimes seemingly “friendly” gestures can go too far. But at what point is something considered sexual harassment, or sexual violence?

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment comes in two forms: Quid Pro Quo and Hostile Environment. Quid Pro Quo is when decisions, such as evaluations, grades, advancement, affecting your participation in the University are made on the basis of your submission to sexual conduct that you find unwelcome.

Hostile Environment is when there is unwelcome sexual or sex-based conduct that unreasonably denies, adversely limits, or interferes with your participation in, or benefit from, the education, employment or other programs or activities of the University. It’s an atmosphere where unwelcome sexual or sex-based conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive AND creates an environment that a reasonable person would find intimidating or offensive. Harassment does not have to be of a physical sexual nature, however, and can include verbal offensive remarks about a person's sex. For example, it sexual harassment could include severe, persistent, or pervasive offensive comments, in general, about men, women, or the LGBTQ+ community. Both individuals can be of any gender, and the parties can be of the same sex.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence includes sexual assault (either through penetration or contact), relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation. Sexual assault occurs without someone’s consent and comes in two forms: Penetration or Contact. Relationship violence includes physical violence, or intentional or reckless physical or non-physical conduct with people who have close relationships with each other and that causes fear of physical violence. Stalking is the repeated conduct of a sexual, romantic, or other sex-based nature or motivation that causes fear for someone’s safety, or of others, or substantial emotional distress. Sexual exploitation is taking advantage of another, where there is trafficking or prostituting, knowingly lying about sexually transmitted infection, birth control, or prophylactics, providing alcohol or drugs or actively helping someone else commit sexual harassment or sexual violence. It includes inducing others to perform commercial sex acts, through force, fraud, or coercion or when the Complainant is under the age of 18.

Consent

Sexual assault involves a lack of consent, which is defined as affirmative, conscious, voluntary, and revocable at any time. This means that sexual activity must include agreement before engaging in it, confirmation that the other person was not asleep or unconscious or unable to understand due to being under the influence, or a mental or physical condition. In addition, this consent can be revoked at any time during sexual activity.

Conclusion

This is why it’s important for you to be able to recognize sexual harassment and sexual violence so that you can prevent it from happening, respond when it occurs, and help maintain a community where all people can participate, work, and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation.
Overview
How can you make sure you’re not creating an environment that encourages harassment and discrimination? Here are eight healthy behaviors you can adapt to help create a positive environment.

Courtesy
Rely on courtesy rather than contact. If you want to congratulate someone, use verbal praise and encouragement, instead of hugs or pats on the back. Words are just as effective as touch.

Candid camera
Try the candid camera test. How comfortable would it be if your significant others, or co-workers, watched a recording of what you said or did?

Merit
Compliment on merit, not appearance. Say, “I appreciated the way you did that,” instead of, “You look great today.” Praise the work someone did, not their physical looks or appearance.

Media
Think of how it would look in the media. Before telling a joke or story, imagine it printed in a magazine, or posted on social media. Does it have offensive content related to gender, ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, or other protected categories?

Space
Create space. Imagine a physical barrier between you and others. Avoid invading other people’s personal space by leaning over their desks or standing too close.

Responsibility
Take responsibility for your behavior. Say, “I’m glad you told me so I can do better next time.” Realize that saying “I’m sorry” may not be enough. An apology may not make up for offensive language or behavior. You should also add, “It won’t happen again,” and then make sure it doesn’t.

Communicate
Communicate. If you are offended, find a way to tell the person that the behavior bothers you. If you feel comfortable and safe, ask them to stop. Be specific, and focus on what they did, rather than who they are.

Empathy
Empathize with others by putting yourself in the other person’s shoes. Imagine you were in another group and think, “How would this make me feel?”

Conclusion
You can adapt healthy behaviors, and create a positive environment for those around you and is an important stop to preventing harassment and discrimination.
Overview
As an overview, the procedures for responding to prohibited conduct begin with filing a report with your local Title IX Office. Thereafter, the Title IX office conducts an Initial Assessment, which results in either Closure or initiation of the Resolution process.

The Resolution process may include:
1. Alternative Resolution
2. Formal Investigation or the DOE Grievance process
3. Employee Grievance or Complaints, and/or
4. Other inquiry

Investigations result in a written Investigation report. The report is then forwarded to the appropriate administrator, who may recommend discipline if the report has found that prohibited conduct occurred.
Overview
If you’re involved in a DOE-covered or formal investigation, you can expect these steps.

Written Notice
Written notice will be sent to parties summarizing the allegations, rights, procedures, resources, and policy involved. The parties involved have the right to identify evidence and witnesses.

Review
Review of disclosures (from interviews) and evidence will occur. Information will be shared with witnesses only as reasonably necessary to conduct a fair and thorough investigation. Witnesses will also be counseled about keeping information private, as well as their identities and directly related information which will likely be disclosed to the Complainant and Respondent.

Completion
Completion within 60-90 business days of notification (which can be extended for good cause), with updates provided on the investigation status and projected timelines. In some cases, Administrative Closure may be warranted if there are significant changes in circumstances.

Report
A written report will be issued that describes:
1. allegations and policy violations,
2. statements of parties,
3. evidence summary,
4. explanation of why any proffered evidence was not relied upon,
5. credibility determinations when appropriate,
6. findings (of fact), and
7. analysis of whether UC policy was violated, using a Preponderance of Evidence standard.

Notifications
The written report will be provided to the parties involved, with information redacted to protect privacy. The Title IX Officer will also inform parties of the investigation outcomes, rationale, and any appeal rights available.
Scene begins in a dark room. As the camera pans around, human voices can be heard softly.

People are either standing or sitting on couches and chairs. As their voices become audible, it is clear there is a private party occurring in someone’s living room. There are bottles and cans of what looks like alcohol on the table and in people’s hands. Two men are talking on the couch, smiling. Two women are talking. One puts her hand on her head, and seems tired or dizzy. She tries to shake off the feeling, as she laughs.

A man is looking at the two women. The woman takes a breath and turns around. She starts walking slowly toward the hallway, where the man is standing. There is an entrance to a bedroom behind him. A man watches the woman as she passes by him. He begins asking where she is going.

Man: "Hey, where are you going?"
Woman: "I think I just need to lie down."
Man: "That's ok, we can find somewhere."
Woman: "No I, I just need to go home."
Man: "Trust me, you'll feel better after a lie down."

He puts his arm on her back, and follows her. He motions her to go to the bedroom. She is too confused to think about what he is doing, or that he is following her.

Words on the screen appear and say, “Sexual assault can be prevented. You can change the outcome.”

(new scene)

The scene rewinds to the beginning of the conversation between the man and woman. While they are speaking, another person across the room notices the man put his arm around the woman. The person realizes the woman could be in danger. She makes her way to the confused woman. In her hand is an open cup with a drink. The person accidentally spills their drink onto the woman.

Bystander 1: "Sorry, excuse me, could I?"
Bystander 1: "Ah, I'm so sorry. Do you... I think I've just spilt water on you. Do you want to go to the toilet and sort it out? Yeah come on."

The woman is pulled aside. The person takes the woman away from the man. The man looks at the person, upset. The person looks back at the man.

The words, “Distract” appear on the screen. The words, “If she hadn’t stepped in, someone could have...” appears on the screen.

(new scene)

The scene rewinds to the beginning of the conversation between the man and woman. While they are speaking, another person across the room notices the man put his arm around the woman. The person realizes the woman could be in danger. He talks to the woman, and walks toward her.

Bystander 2: "Freya we’re about to get a cab, do you want to get an uber with us?"
He and other friends put their arms around the woman, and motion her toward safety as a group. The word, "Remove" appears on the screen.

(new scene)

The scene rewinds to the beginning of the conversation between the man and woman. While they are speaking, another person across the room notices the man put his arm around the woman. He makes his way to the man and confronts him.

Bystander 3: "Mate, it's time for your to leave. Do you need a cab?"

He puts his hand on the man's shoulder, addressing him directly.

Man: "I'm good, thanks. I'm going to walk."

The man pushes Bystander's hand away and turns to leave.

The word, "Confront" appears on the screen.
The scene fades to black.
The words, "You don't need to be a hero to make a difference" appear on the screen.
The words, "There are many ways to prevent sexual violence" appear on the screen.
The words, "Be an active bystander" appear on the screen.
The word, "Respect" appears on the screen, along with the University of Bristol logo, and Bristol SU logo.