

ANTIHARASSMENT and ANTIBULLYING policy

Department of Environmental Science



**Policy to prevent offensive behaviour,
including bullying, violence,
harassment and sexual harassment at
the Department of Environmental Science**

Prepared on 21 March 2014
Updated March 2021

1 Preface

Offensive behaviour is an overall term for bullying, harassment (incl. sexual harassment), violence (or threats of violence), discrimination and other ways in which offensive behaviour may happen in work related situations. The purpose of this policy is to prevent offensive behaviour of all kinds. The policy has been made with the purpose to *i)* prevent offensive behaviour at the department of Environmental Science, *ii)* to outline clear procedures in connection with the handling of offensive behaviour, *iii)* to outline the opportunities you have as a victim, and *iv)* to support all involved parties with the necessary help.

Bullying, harassment (incl. sexual harassment), violence (or threats of violence), discrimination and other ways of offensive behaviour are damaging for the individual and for the department. To be exposed to any kind of offensive behaviour can be a very stressful experience, and the victim may end up developing serious symptoms, both physically and mentally. Similarly, a culture where any kind of offensive behaviour is accepted or ignored, may also result in a negative work environment - also for those not exposed or involved in the offensive behaviour.

The department of Environmental Science must be a safe, healthy and comfortable workplace. All employees of the department have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Offensive behaviour of any kind is therefore unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Preventing any kind of offensive behaviour is a common responsibility of both the management team as well as the employees. This specific policy to prevent offensive behaviour has thus been prepared in collaboration between the management team and a number of employee representatives. The Local Liaison Committee (LSU) and the Local Working Environment Committee (LAMU) have approved the policy. For additional information, including description on how to handle offensive behaviour, please visit the AU website [Offensive behaviour \(au.dk\)](https://au.dk/offensive-behaviour). For specific information aimed at students, please see [Zero tolerance \(au.dk\)](https://au.dk/zero-tolerance). You can also find information at the Danish Working Environment Authority website (*in Danish only*) <https://at.dk/arbejdsmiljoeproblemer/psykisk-arbejdsmiljo/kraenkende-handlinger/>

2 What is offensive behaviour?

Offensive behaviour is, when one or more persons rudely or several times expose another person to a degrading and humiliating behaviour, which is perceived as insulting and/or humiliating by the offended person.

Bullying and harassment is defined as one or more persons regularly or repeatedly over a period of time and in a rude manner exposes one or several persons to actions that are perceived as hurtful or degrading. Teasing with good intentions between friends or isolated conflicts between equals are not considered bullying or harassment. Any act turns into bullying/harassment the moment the exposed person is unable to cope with or defend him/herself effectively against the offensive acts.

Sexual harassment. Offensive acts may also occur as sexual harassment and are defined as all kind of unwanted sexual attention, including unwanted touches or unwanted verbal

There may be a great deal of difference in what an individual perceives as bullying, harassment or sexual harassment. For instance, with your body language and the way you address a colleague, you may unknowingly and accidentally do or say something, which the receiving person perceives as being insulting, bullying and harassing.

Actions against a person:

- Social isolation:**

- Sexual harassment:**

- Both men and women may perform sexual harassment, and it may occasionally occur in quite a rude manner. The determining factor to decide whether sexual harassment has taken place is that the victim has experience an unpleasant and transgressive behaviour.

Should an employee repeatedly experience negative actions, he/she may perceive it as being offensive. As a leading university, AU embraces competitive activities, which may lead to situations in which a colleague may feel neglected or overlooked, which again, in the case of repeated experiences may lead to the colleague feeling he/she is being exposed to offensive behaviour. Examples of this could be:

- It is vital that we all contribute to a healthy culture, which includes open dialog to prevent repeating previous negative behaviour. A healthy work environment, in which people show respect and trust each other, is the best remedy against any kind of offensive behaviour. A good starting point is to treat your colleagues as you wish to be

treated yourself, and that you respect other people's views and limits.

3 What should you do if exposed offensive behaviour?

If you are exposed to any kind of offensive behaviour, or find a conflict unsolvable, it is important that you try to address it. This can be done by e.g. contacting your union representative, your occupational health representative or a colleague you trust. These persons can help you to address the matter to either the management, the HR department or the AU psychological counselling service [Psychological Counselling Service \(au.dk\)](https://www.au.dk/psychological-counselling-service).

You may of course, also contact e.g. the HR department, your head of section, or the head of department directly. In case of incidents with behaviour of a particular gross and rude character, and according to law, the management (incl. HR) are obligated to act on your approach and thus they must take action ([How managers and directors of studies/degree programme directors deal with offensive behaviour – a short guide \(au.dk\)](https://www.au.dk/how-managers-and-directors-of-studies/degree-programme-directors-deal-with-offensive-behaviour-a-short-guide)

Therefore, the extent to which and how the anonymity must be annulled must be agreed upon in each individual situation. Should you not want the anonymity to be annulled, the management can guide you to either your union representative or your occupational health representative.

To stop offensive behaviour, it is important to contact the person(s) performing the inappropriate and insulting behaviour. Good behaviour can only be encouraged if the persons involved dare to address the problems.

All managers have a duty to participate in solving the problems, should it be desired. The immediate manager of the victimised person is not necessarily the 'natural' candidate to enter a case. Who should enter the case, will depend on a concrete assessment in consultation with the victimised person.

Paragraph 8 presents a list of people who can be contacted in case of offensive behaviour.

4 What should you do if you witness a colleague being exposed to offensive behaviour?

Offensive behaviour of any kind never takes place in a vacuum and must be resolved in the context in which it takes place. There will usually be witnesses who have seen or heard something, or who have knowledge of an underlying conflict or dispute. As good colleagues, we have a responsibility to help each other and make efforts to stop all kinds of offensive behaviour. If you have knowledge of a colleague who is exposed to any kind of offensive behaviour, you have a responsibility to act on your knowledge. If you do not do anything, you are actually an active participant to the offensive behaviour.

- a. **Offer your help to the colleague who is exposed to offensive behaviour.** As an employee exposed to offensive behaviour, it can seem very difficult to see a way out. Therefore, help your colleague to contact the relevant person (see paragraph 8).
- b. **Do not accept colleagues exercising offensive behaviour.** Use speech and body language to express that you do not accept offensive behaviour.
- c. **If you are in doubt whether a colleague is being exposed to offensive behaviour then ask him/her.** If you witness a situation where a colleague is being exposed to offensive behaviour, but you are unsure if the colleague regards this as offensive behaviour, then ask your colleague about the incident. If your colleague perceives the situation as offensive behaviour, then offer your help.
- d. **Contact your union, occupational health representative, manager or the HR department.** Inform them about your knowledge that offensive behaviour is taking place at the workplace and under which circumstances. If you contact a union or occupational health representative, this person can help you contact the department management or HR.

5 Procedures for handling of any kind of offensive behaviour

Cases of offensive behaviour are often very complex. Offensive behaviour often begins in the hidden, and thus it is often difficult for the victimised person and for witnesses to find

out what is happening. Similarly, there may be situations where a person has felt as if he/she was treated in an offensive manner by another person, even though this person did not have any intentions of doing so.

By contacting a manager, you can get help to clarify whether an incident can be characterised as offensive behaviour. The dialogue will be based on the victims perception of the acts to which he/she are exposed. If the dialogue reveals that the acts cannot be characterised as offensive behaviour, no further intervention will take place, except that the manager, should the victim desire, will offer help to clarify why the victimised person felt exposed to offensive behaviour. On the other hand, if the acts are characterised as offensive behaviour, an investigation will be initiated.

The investigation is conducted by means of interviews with the involved parties and possible witnesses. A third party (typically an employee from HR) will, in agreement with the involved parties conduct the investigation. Both parties have a right to bring a lay representative to participate during all interviews/meetings throughout in the entire process. Minutes of all dialogues and meetings will be taken to document the investigation. The involved parties are ensured confidentiality but not anonymity since both parties should have a possibility of being heard and getting acquainted with the case. Regarding anonymity, each case agrees individually in which way and in relation to whom, the anonymity shall not apply.

Based on the investigation in which all the involved parties have been heard, the immediate manager must be informed of the outcome of the investigation, after which he or she prepares a plan of action to the specific problem in consultancy with the parties and possible observers. A plan of action can be aimed at the victim or the person who behaved offensively, or it may be aimed at both of them if, for instance, the case is suited for conflict resolution. A plan of action directed towards the victimised person in question may, e.g. contain a specific offer of rehabilitation; likewise, if the plan of action is directed towards the person who behaved offensively, it could include e.g. coaching in appreciative and non-offensive communication and behaviour. All involved parties have a duty to cooperate and contribute positively to solve any issues related to offensive behaviour.

6 Disciplinary sanctions

It may have consequences employment wise for anyone who exerts offensive behaviour. In serious cases, offensive behaviour may lead to direct employee termination. Cases of documented violence will lead to immediate dismissal.

7 Treatment/rehabilitation

As a victim of offensive behaviour, you are offered expert help to restore your well-being at the workplace. If necessary, and if it is possible, you may be offered a new place of work at the university.

The experience of being accused of offensive behaviour can be very stressful. Thus, there may be cases in which it is necessary to make efforts to ensure that the person accused of offensive behaviour restores his or her mental well-being again, e.g. by means of psychological counselling or coaching.

The department supports the involved parties and recommends both the victim and the person accused of exerting the offensive behaviour to receive expert help, e.g. by seeking psychological counselling through Dansk Krisekorps, which is the counselling firm that AU has signed a contract with regarding psychological counselling. The employee can have up to three free consultations with a registered psychologist (or other therapist/advisor). If you need further consultations, you have to contact your immediate manager or the HR department. The head of department or HR can also help establish the first contact to Dansk Krisekorps.

8 List of useful names and contact information

Also see [Working Environment Committee - LAMU \(au.dk\)](#)

Union representatives:

- Ole-Kenneth Nielsen, okn@envs.au.dk
- Lise Lotte Frederiksen, lfr@envs.au.dk
- Kaj Mantzius Hansen, kmh@envs.au.dk
- Anders Branth Pedersen, abp@envs.au.dk
-

Also see <http://envs.medarbejdere.au.dk/udvalg-raad-mv/lamu-arbejdsmiljoedvalg/>

Occupational health and safety representatives:

- Carsten Suhr Jacobsen, csj@envs.au.dk
- Mette Hjorth Mikkelsen mhm@envs.au.dk
- Patrik Fauser, paf@envs.au.dk
- Tina Thane, tth@envs.au.dk
- Birgit Groth, big@envs.au.dk
- Anders Johansen, ajo@envs.au.dk
- Martin Hansen, martin.hansen@envs.au.dk
- Susanne Lind, suli@envs.au.dk
- Bjarne Jensen, bj@envs.au.dk
- Martin Ole Bjært Sørensen, mbs@envs.au.dk
- Stephan Bernberg (Head of daily occupational health and safety) stib@envs.au.dk

Psychological counselling company Dansk Krisekorps. [Psychological Counselling Service \(au.dk\)](#)

Phones are open 24 hours a day, tel. +45 70227610 (urgent) or +45 70227612 between 9 a.m. -3 p.m., or by email: info@danskkrisekorps.dk.

The Danish Working Environment: Call tel. +45 70121288. The phone is open Monday to Thursday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., or by email at@at.dk. Offers consultancy regarding how to handle a specific situation regarding offensive behaviour, both if you are the victim, if you witness offensive behaviour or if you and your organisation have problems regarding offensive behaviour.

9 Efforts to prevent offensive behaviour

It is our aim that this policy will contribute to the prevention of offensive behaviour at the department of Environmental Science by focussing on what offensive behaviour actually is and by encouraging witnesses to not accept any kind of offensive behaviour.

This policy paper describes what you can do yourself if you are exposed to offensive behaviour or if you experience that one of your colleagues have been victimised. It is our hope that this paper will help create a culture at our department where any kind of offensive behaviour is not accepted, regardless of gender, religion or position.

However, the policy cannot stand alone and thus we will continue to work on developing a positive and appreciative culture at the department. This will happen e.g. with initiatives based on the results from regular psychological work place assessments (WPAs), social activities, departments seminars and workshops, debates of acceptable behaviour and the necessity to display and perform tolerance at all times.