



**DEALING WITH SEXUALIZED
HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION
AND VIOLENCE**

Information, options for action and contact points

● About the Cover

The inspiration for the design of the cover was the Venus Pudica. The Venus Pudica is a pose from Western art in which a naked female figure covers her genitals with her hands. Venus, the Roman goddess of love, is a synonym for the depiction of a naked female body (female nude), while Pudica (Latin) describes a feeling of shame or humiliation. The covering of the genitals automatically draws the viewer's focus to the hidden parts of the body. When dealing with this type, I had to think of the following types of statements: „He wanted it that way“, „She wants everyone to stare at her breasts when she presents them like that“ or „You should be ashamed of a body like that“. As if the mere existence of a body gives others a reason to judge and to rule over it. As if this would justify violence, sexualization and discrimination.

As an artist, I chose the Venus Pudica pose to depict this very assault. However, this does not mean that one should accept the assaults. Just like the Venus of the cover, we do not remain in a victim role. We stand up, take back the control that has been taken from us and confront violence by actively addressing the problem. Through education, help and advice we take action against sexualized violence, discrimination and harassment so that those affected receive the necessary support they need and further assaults can be stopped.

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● **What is sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence?**

Sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence (SHDV) includes all physical and psychological acts that occur against the will of a person and are experienced as degrading. They violate the principle of equal treatment and violate the dignity and personal rights of a person. Since it is not about sexuality, but about power and control, we speak of “sexualized” instead of “sexual” harassment and violence. SHDV is an expression of sexism (gender discrimination), often heterosexism (standardization of heterosexuality) and LGBTQIA+ hostility. In addition, some people are affected by multiple discrimination, e.g. due to racialized characteristics or disability.

SHDV refers to unwanted sexualized comments and actions such as:

- **sexually degrading language**
especially comments about a person’s appearance, body, sexuality and intimate life, also in the form of unwanted „compliments“ /“jokes“
- **sexually degrading (non-verbal) communication**
for example through appraising glances/“staring“
- **showing, posting and sending sexual and/or pornographic acts and/or depictions**
in any way (image, sound, video)
- **unsolicited messages with a sexual reference**
(text message, e-mail)
- **unwanted touching**
especially if the touching is seemingly accidental and/or frequent (hugging, patting)
- **unwanted advances and intrusiveness**
- **personally perceived crossing of boundaries**
- **serious offenses such as stalking, coercion or rape, and physical violence**

Extensive explanations can be found in the UP’s Anti-Discrimination Guidelines.

¹ LGBTQIA* = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or agender people

● **Sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence in the context of university**

In the context of university there are dependencies and hierarchies that can encourage sexual harassment, for example in cases of examinations and assessments. Unwanted demands and actions can be accompanied by promises of advantages or the threat of disadvantages in studies, research, teaching and work. In such cases, we speak of abuse of power, e.g. when a professor exploits and abuses his position towards a doctoral student. Also the offer of supervisors or lecturers for common leisure activities can be a form of sexual harassment.

● **Legal basis**

According to the German Criminal Code (Strafgesetzbuch), §184i StGB harassing touching in a sexually specific way, as well as stalking (§ 238) and coercion (§ 240) is criminal. A rape will be prosecuted according to § 177 StGB. The university has committed itself to the reduction and prevention of discrimination, (cyber-)bullying and (cyber-)stalking and has therefore passed the Anti-Discrimination Guidelines of the University of Potsdam.



www.uni-potsdam.de/en/discrimination-free-university/anti-discrimination/anti-discrimination-guidelines-of-the-university-of-potsdam

Whether criteria for sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence are met, always decides the affected person themselves! The own subjective feeling is the relevant indicator for this. No means no! Even if no clear setting of boundaries is possible, affected people are not guilty. The responsibility always lies with the person who commits the assault - regardless of whether it was intentional or not!

Sexualized harassment, discrimination and violence cannot be justified!

● What to do as an affected person?



express rejection

if possible speak loudly and clearly and draw attention to the action



seek for attention and help

fellow human beings, security personnel, police



talk to people you trust

family, friends, fellow students, colleagues



document the experience and keep the correspondence

memory protocol



seek consulting and support services

● Further Options



students and employees can file a complaint at the complaints office of the University of Potsdam



employees can take legal action against sexualized harassment and discrimination, on the basis of the General Equal Treatment Act

(§§ 3 Abs. 4, 15 AGG)

● Prevention




If possible, adhere to a formal setting


e.g. do not talk to supervisors/professors in cafés and/or private apartments - meet at the university or in online meetings


Ignoring the situation does not change it, therefore it is important to get active! Affected people can and should trust their own perception and act!

● What to do as an observing person?

For witnesses or superiors there are various possibilities for action:

 depending on the situation, contact the affected person, offer help, get help

 written documentation/logging of the incident (short protocol with date, place, time, names of the parties involved)

 visit advice centers and/or accompany the affected person

Always act in agreement with the affected person and accept their decisions! They decide if and which steps to take!

Further material



UniSAFE: Gender-based violence and its consequences in European Academia 2022

 unisafe-gbv.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/UniSAFE-survey_prevalence-results_2022.pdf

Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency: Sexual harassment at university 2015

 www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/forschungsprojekte/EN/Studie_sex_Belaestig_im_Hochschulkontext_en.html

Dealing with Sexual Discrimination and Violence in German Universities 2022

 www.opengenderjournal.de/article/download/219/106


Support and counselling

Support and advice on this topic is provided by the Equal Opportunities Officers (at both centralised and decentralised level) of the University of Potsdam - always confidential and anonymously if desired. In an initial counselling session, you can be informed about possible steps and, if necessary, referral counselling to other centers.


Internal contact and advice centers

University of Potsdam


Centrale Equality Opportunity Officer of University of Potsdam

 www.uni-potsdam.de/en/equality/equal-opportunity-commissioner/central-equal-opportunity-commissioner

Decentrale Equality Opportunity Officer of each faculties

 www.uni-potsdam.de/en/equality/equal-opportunity-commissioner/decentral-equal-opportunity-commissioners

Psychological counselling

 www.uni-potsdam.de/en/studium/advising-and-services/mental-health-counseling

Nightline Potsdam

 www.nightline-potsdam.de

Internal Complaints Office

University of Potsdam

Complaints offices against discrimination, bullying and stalking

 www.uni-potsdam.de/en/discrimination-free-university/consulting-and-support/beschwerdestelle

External contact and advice centers

Help hotline „Violence against women“

 www.hilfetelefon.de/en.html

Ernst von Bergmann Hospital Potsdam –

immediate medical assistance and anonymous forensics after rape

 www.evb-gesundheit.de/klinikumevb/soforthilfe-nach-vergewaltigung

Violence Protection Outpatient Clinic Berlin –

immediate medical assistance and anonymous securing of evidence after rape

 gewaltschutzambulanz.charite.de/

Autonomous Women's Centre e.V –

Women's and girls' advice centre counselling centre for girls

 frauenzentrum-potsdam.de/frauenberatung/

Lara –

Specialist centre against sexualised violence against women*

 www.lara-berlin.de/en/home

Tauwetter e.V. –

Contact point for men* and trans*, inter* and non-binary people

 www.tauwetter.de/en/

Landesverband andersARTIG –

Counselling for LGBTIQ people

 www.andersartig.info

Stop Stalking –

Counselling centre for victims and people who stalk

 www.stop-stalking-berlin.de/en/home_en/



Police 110



Fire Department 112