

Department of Human Geography

Policy to counteract victimisation and discrimination at the Department of Human Geography

Introduction

The aim of the present policy is threefold: 1. to clarify the rules that apply to employees at the Department of Human Geography, 2. to clarify how conflicts and situations involving victimisation and discrimination or bullying, harassment/sexual harassment are to be dealt with, and 3. to counteract the occurrence of victimisation and discrimination or bullying, harassment/sexual harassment. Victimisation refers to “actions directed against one or more employees in an abusive manner, which could lead to ill health or their being placed outside the community of the workplace” (AFS 2015:4). Discrimination means when “... someone is disadvantaged or offended, if this disadvantaging is associated with one of the seven grounds on which discrimination is based: sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age” (Blomberg, 2016, p. 41).

Communication at our department

The department’s mission is to conduct research, teaching and external engagement with wider society. The high requirements for quality at a university department and the academic freedom of teaching staff and researchers, along with the fundamental significance of critical thinking, mean that discussion and debate are basic conditions for the organisation’s development. Our work duties therefore place great demands on good communication and the ability both to give and take feedback in a constructive way. Conflicts arise at all workplaces and sometimes result from misunderstandings that can be addressed through better communication. Conflicts may also be related to differences of opinion on factual matters, in which case they can be seen as a constructive part of open debate and a natural process for arriving at good quality decisions. Disagreements can, however escalate and become personal conflicts in which the factual matter is no longer the central issue; but the other person is perceived as the problem.

All communication at our workplace is to be characterised by dignity and respect for the equal value of all people. Victimisation or sexual harassment are never to occur at the Department of Human Geography.

Every individual is responsible for speaking up if they are treated or addressed in a way they find inappropriate. Personal feedback is part of good communication and is to be a natural element in our workplace. Feedback should be factual, descriptive and as concrete as possible, it should also address things that can be changed (behaviour); if possible, feedback should be requested, and given not long after the events in question. Communication skills and constructive criticism are capacities that can continuously be improved upon. We shall therefore be open to receiving criticism and see it as a learning opportunity, while having a generous attitude allowing people their differences and occasional mistakes.

Responsibilities and resources

Each employee has a responsibility never to take part in victimisation, to be aware of and to comply with regulations, and to clarify what constitutes unwanted behaviour. Information on rules and regulations is available on Lund University's Staff Pages. The head of department is responsible for investigating any suspected cases of victimisation. Those in management positions within administration, education and research are to be offered in-depth training and opportunities for support.

When something happens

In conflict situations, you are primarily to strive to give feedback directly to those involved. The next step is to discuss the situation with the head of department who is responsible for the work environment. This can lead to solutions being discussed or a meeting with all those involved to clarify the situation or to mediate. Other resources are the health and safety representative, the occupational health service and the employee organisations who can contribute in various ways and provide support.

If you are subjected to treatment which may constitute victimisation, bullying, discrimination or harassment, you are to contact the head of department. The head of department is obliged to investigate the situation without delay. The head of department is also obliged to initiate an investigation if he or she becomes aware of such events even in the absence of a report by the alleged victim.

The head of department's investigation may initially consist of discussions with the parties concerned and a subsequent proposal for measures based on a comprehensive assessment. The head of department and the employee may involve the occupational health service as a support in this process. Where necessary, external HR specialists can also be assigned to investigate a situation or to provide support to victimised employees.

If it is not possible to turn to the head of department, you should go to the dean who is the head at the next level. It is also possible to raise the issue with the health and safety representative and the union representatives.

In difficult situations, it may be necessary to extend the investigative procedure by involving an external, impartial investigator who can elucidate the course of events and the responsibilities of the various parties. An investigation may lead to further

action by the department, for instance a report to Lund University's staff disciplinary board.

Consequences

The investigation is to identify causes and lead to proposals for changes to the workplace that can counteract and prevent similar events, such as resources, clarification of roles and procedures.

It is important that all those involved receive information on what is being done and on the outcome of the investigation. Employees subjected to victimisation are to be given necessary support through initiatives from the occupational health service or other appropriate resources.

Other possible consequences include reprimands or labour law measures for individuals in the form of warnings, transfers or dismissal.

References

AFS 2015:4, Organisational and social work environment
<https://www.av.se/globalassets/filer/publikationer/foreskrifter/engelska/organisational-and-social-work-environment-afs2015-4.pdf>

Lund University Work Environment Policy 2014-2017
<https://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/sites/www.lunduniversity.lu.se/files/2014-2017-work-environment-policy-lund-university.pdf>

Blomberg, S. (2016). Mobbning på jobbet. Uttryck och åtgärder. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Discrimination Act <https://www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/20080567.htm>