



Harassment at University and TAFE

Some gay men and lesbians may experience homophobic harassment when they are studying at university or TAFE. You have the right to be free from harassment when you are studying.

Examples of homophobic harassment at university and TAFE include:

- Verbal abuse, bullying or teasing such as making demeaning, belittling or abusive comments, or otherwise 'putting you down' because you are gay or lesbian.
- Ignoring or leaving you out of activities on the basis of your sexuality.
- Threats of physical violence or threats to out you as gay or lesbian.
- Physical violence such as pushing, punching and kicking.
- Stealing your belongings.
- Damaging your property such as books, clothes or bag.
- Displaying homophobic material, including in colleges of residence. This could include graffiti, posters, email etc.

"There were a group of people in my tutorial that would always snicker behind my back. When it came to group assignments they would leave me out of the group. One of the guys once pushed me up against a wall and threatened to punch me." Scott, 24, Kensington.

Remember that homophobic violence is wrong and is against the law. It is a crime that can be reported to the Police. Some other types of harassment such as threats and property damage may be considered crimes too.

TAFE



Here are some tips for dealing with harassment at TAFE

TAFE NSW is obliged to provide all students an opportunity to study, learn and develop skills in a safe and supportive environment. In NSW the anti-discrimination laws say TAFE colleges must be environments that are free from harassment and discrimination. It is against the law for a TAFE or teacher to treat you unfairly because

- You are gay or lesbian (or thought to be gay or lesbian), or
- Your parents, friends or other family members are gay or lesbian.
- Being harassed can be a very stressful experience. You may need to draw support from close family and friends. For more information on how to look after yourself see the *'Finding help and support'* fact sheet.
- Approach a supportive person at your TAFE. This could be your teacher, head teacher or campus manager. You could also talk to a TAFE NSW Counsellor, Institute Multicultural Education Coordinator, Harassment Contact Officer or someone else within the school that you trust.

"I went to see the campus counsellor and they helped me think of some strategies to deal with the harassment. They referred me to the Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence Project where I found out about how to make a report to Police." Mei, 35, Chatswood.

- You can also contact your Student Association on campus. They are able to provide a range of support services, referrals and advocacy for all students at TAFE.
- You can contact the Anti-Discrimination Board on 02 92685555 or 1800 670 812 or go to www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb

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STOPPING HOMOPHOBIC HARASSMENT



- Remember that some forms of harassment and physical violence are against the law. If you fear for your physical safety you should contact the Police. In an emergency call 000 otherwise call (02) 9281 0000 for the Police Switchboard. See the factsheet on 'Making a Report to Police'.
- Before you contact anyone, remember to make notes about
 - what happened
 - when and where it happened
 - who did what
 - who saw it, if anyone
 - how it made you feel, and
 - what action you would like to be taken.

For more information on this see the factsheet on 'Keeping an Harassment Diary'.

University



Here are some tips for dealing with harassment at university

Students and staff at universities have a number of options available if they are being harassed or abused. Universities fall under a combination of federal and state anti-discrimination laws and are obliged to investigate and to deal with any complaints of homophobic harassment sensitively, confidentially and speedily.

Universities should have a *Code of Conduct* or *Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Policy and Procedures* that outline the university's commitment to providing a safe space for all students and staff. These documents should also provide instructions for students and staff to deal with experiences of homophobic harassment.

- Being harassed can be a very stressful experience. You may need to draw support from close family and friends. For more information on how to look after yourself see the 'Finding help and support' fact sheet.
- Approach a supportive person at your university. This could be someone at the University Equity and Diversity Unit or University Counselling Service. If you are in a residential college you could speak to the staff member in charge of resident's welfare.

"I was living in a University college so I wasn't sure if the University grievance procedures would apply. I went to the Campus Equity and Diversity unit and they helped me file a grievance report with the college about the harassment." Ben, 23, Ryde.

- Find out about the university's internal policy and procedure on discrimination and harassment. Contact the relevant campus unit, such as Student Services or Equity and Diversity for advice.
- You can also contact your student representative organisation (the Student Guild, Students' Association, or the Postgraduate Association) on campus. They are able to provide a range of support services, referrals and advocacy for all students at TAFE.
- You can contact the Anti-Discrimination Board on (02) 9268 5555, or 1800 670 812 (toll free – NSW only), TTY (02) 9268 5522, fax (02) 9268 5500 or <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb>. Or the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission on (02) 9284 9600, or 1300 656 419, TTY 1800 620 241, fax (02) 9284 9611 or <http://www.hreoc.gov.au>.
- Remember that some forms of harassment and physical violence are against the law. If you fear for your physical safety you should contact the Police. In an emergency call 000 otherwise call (02) 9281 0000 for the Police Switchboard. See the factsheet on 'Making a Report to Police'.
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