

Harassment in any form is unacceptable behavior at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

Our Policy

The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution is committed to maintaining a positive working and learning environment, and an environment free of illegal discrimination and harassment. As a matter of policy, the Institution expressly endorses the principle of equal employment opportunity and explicitly prohibits all forms of harassment, even when such conduct may not violate the law (see the Harassment Policy at www.whoi.edu/services/HR/ppp/102.htm for guidance). Institution scientists, administrators, managers and supervisors ashore, at sea or in the field are obligated to strongly support this effort; all shore-based and at-sea employees, postdocs and students of the Institution are expected to support this goal.

What is harassment?

Harassment includes verbal or physical conduct, whether on or off the premises, which has the intent or effect of unreasonably interfering with any individual's or group's academic or work performance, which significantly affects an individual's ability to participate in the activities of the vessel or field expedition (whether on or off duty), or which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational or work environment, when such conduct is based upon age, race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, creed, disability or status as a Veteran.

What types of behavior constitute harassment?

Harassment can take many forms. It can be blatant or subtle, verbal or physical, printed on paper or communicated electronically. Examples of conduct that can constitute harassment are:

- Outright propositions/improper suggestions or requests for sexual favors
- Threats or promises regarding compliance with sexual behavior
- Sexist, racial or ethnic jokes, slurs or cartoons; lewd or obscene remarks; disparaging remarks relating to gender, race, ethnicity, etc.

- Abuse, insults or jokes concerning sexual orientation, including insinuations or offensive comments about private life or lifestyle
- Sexual or racial innuendoes or offensive sexual or racial statements disguised or presented as humorous
- Unwanted physical contact, including touching, pats, hugs, squeezes, brushing against, putting arm around another person
- Unwelcome advances such as repeatedly asking someone out on a date in spite of past refusals
- Actions or sounds – whistling, cat-calls, suggestive sounds, obscene gestures, display of offensive pictures or graffiti that would be found offensive by a reasonable colleague
- Stalking or following someone in an unacceptably unprofessional fashion
- Imbalance of attention, whether it be positive or negative, towards one employee or student based upon gender or race that has the intent or effect of providing an inequitable work or educational environment
- Any form of assault—sexual or otherwise

Why does harassment occur at sea or at other remote field sites?

Social conditions in remote locations such as at sea or at an ice camp are very different from those typically faced at work. The close quarters demand utmost consideration of others at all times. Privacy is greatly reduced, and as a result, interactions can become more intense, intentionally or not. When in these situations, anyone may be subject to more excessive personal attention, welcomed or unwelcomed, than might be experienced in a more typical work situation. Sexual awareness and tensions may be heightened, especially if people feel lonely, overtired or homesick and the resulting behavior may be so disruptive as to constitute harassment.

What should you do if you witness or experience an inappropriate or uncomfortable incident or situation?

- **Speak up:** If you believe you may have experienced or witnessed harassment, do not hesitate to speak with the offender. Many situations can be resolved very simply by directly and promptly telling the offending party that his/her behavior is making you feel uncomfortable and asking the person to stop. If you do not feel comfortable speaking with the person privately, approach the individual with a trusted friend or colleague.
- **Tell someone:** In addition or alternatively, it is your right and, especially in the area of sexual harassment, you are strongly encouraged to report the matter to the ship's Captain and/or the Chief Scientist. They are responsible for maintaining a safe working and learning environment, free of harassment and discrimination.
- **Keep records:** Keep notes describing the incidents noting the date, place, time and any witnesses to the behavior.
- **Seek advice:** While speaking directly to the offender or reporting your concerns to the Captain or Chief Scientist are the first options to consider, there may be instances when neither of those is appropriate. In that case, you should seek advice from someone else who is in a position to help. There are complaint mechanisms available at both WHOI and MIT.

It cannot be emphasized enough that if you are the recipient of unwanted or unwelcome attention or harassment and have not resolved or cannot resolve the situation yourself, you need to speak with someone.

Resources

For overall or general support, you may want to speak with a friend, colleague, peer or member of the clergy, but to address your specific concern, it is important that you speak with someone in a position to help. All personnel including those at sea (such as crewmembers, *Alvin* crew and SSSG technicians as well as members of the science party) or in remote field locations, whether they are employees, postdocs or students can access the following resource personnel:

At Sea:

Supervisor or Chief Scientist
Captain or Chief Mate
Via Email: Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)
Officer at eeo@whoi.edu

At WHOI:

For crewmembers, *Alvin* crew and SSSG techs:

Ship Operations Manager (508-289-2624)
Marine Personnel Coordinator (508-289-3220)
SSSG Manager (508-289-3777)
EEO Officer (508-289-2704; eeo@whoi.edu)
Employee and Student Assistance Program
(508-548-7119 or 800-649-8115)

For science party employees & students:

Supervisor or Academic Advisor
Department Chair or Administrator
Education Coordinator
Dean or Associate Dean (508-289-2200)
EEO Officer (508-289-2704; eeo@whoi.edu)
Employee and Student Assistance Program
(508-548-7119 or 800-649-8115)
Academic Programs Office Staff—for referrals
(508-289-2219)

At MIT (For Joint Program Students):

Supervisor or Academic Advisor
Department Head or Administrative Officer
Dean or Associate Dean (617-253-4860)
EEO Officer (617-253-1594)
Medical Department Personal Assistance
Program (617-253-4911)
Ombudsperson (617-253-5921; web.mit.edu/ombud)
MIT/WHOI Joint Program Office—
for referrals (617-253-7544)

Any of the resources may be contacted via email from the ship, or contacted by phone or in person upon return to shore. It should be remembered that although they are typically private, email communications cannot be guaranteed to be confidential.

Please Note:

At WHOI: A hotline [designated the Open Line at 508-566-6736 (OPEN)] is an alternative, outside, independent resource for employees and students available for reporting serious instances of improper or unethical conduct, including issues concerning sexual harassment. Reports made to the Open Line will be forwarded in writing to the appropriate Institution official or manager and, to the extent possible, will be kept anonymous. In the event that anonymity cannot be maintained, the Open Line advisor will attempt to inform the individual making the report in advance of disclosing the information to WHOI.

At MIT: The Ombuds Office at MIT is a neutral, confidential resource available to MIT/WHOI Joint Program students. Speaking with the Ombudsperson is an informal route to follow and does not put the organization on official or legal notice with regard to harassment, but can be helpful to you in defining your options and deciding what, if any, further action you may want to take. The Ombudsperson will not take any action without your permission, unless there is imminent risk of serious harm and no other responsible course of action is available.

Whether at WHOI or MIT: The EEO Office handles formal discrimination and harassment related complaints and is always one of the options to consider. Notice to the EEO Officer constitutes legal notice to the organization; and reports of inappropriate behavior made to this office will be handled and investigated as privately and with as much confidentiality as is reasonably possible.

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HARASSMENT

*What is it and what can
be done about it?*

