

Dealing with discrimination in courses for teachers

Since cases of discrimination and sexual harassment according to § 3 para. 4 AGG (unwanted sexual or gender-related behaviour that violates the dignity of the person concerned) can occur in courses and you as teachers are often the first point of contact. For this, we have compiled this information to help you deal with the situations properly¹.

Content

- a. [Examples of gender-based discrimination](#)
- b. [Recommendations for action](#)
- c. ["Subliminal" forms of gender-based discrimination](#)
- d. [Prevention measures](#)
- e. [Contact points at the Faculty VII/ TU Berlin](#)
- f. [Sources](#)

¹ As women's and gender equality officers, we limit ourselves in this recommendation for action to gender-related forms of discrimination. At the same time, we would like to invite you to take a closer look at the intersection the keyword "intersectionality" with the interweaving of gender with other dimensions of social inequality - in particular social class, race, cultural background, rejectionism or sexual orientation play a major role in the intersection of forms of discrimination. The approach to discrimination, which is recommended below, applies to every form of inequality experience.

a. Examples of gender-based discrimination

In order to intervene or counteract discrimination as a teacher, it is important to try to recognize different forms of discrimination on your own.

Here are some examples of gender-based discrimination that may occur in your courses:

- *Students' self-selected names and pronouns are not recognized by others, thereby misgendering individuals.*
- *Degrading and stereotypical statements or jokes are made about genders or sexual orientations.*
- *Touching or sexualized comments are made without consensus.*

b. Recommendations for action

Here it is particularly important that you as a teacher take the initiative or become active when students affected by discrimination contact you. The following points should clarify how you can react to such a conflict:

- *If you observe direct discrimination, approach the person affected by it to see if he or she needs support or help.*
- *Allow affected individuals to talk about discrimination.*
- *Listen first and do not judge the reported experience.*
- *Take the person seriously in everything they tell you and take your time to listen to their concerns.*
- *Do not question the experience, but acknowledge it as such.*
- *Signal that your focus is on the person's assessment of the situation.*
- *Make it clear to what extent the conversation can be confidential and where your obligations to act lie.*
- *Also name discrimination as such if it becomes known to you.*
- *Clarify what kind of support the person wants from you. This should be the focus. Do not do anything against the person's will. Especially when it comes to legal action.*
- *Consider whether you are the right point of contact for the concern and make it transparent if you are not. It can take a lot of effort for the person seeking advice to tell what has happened, so avoid sending him or her unnecessarily to various offices to tell them what has happened.*
- *Find out which office is responsible and, if necessary, offer to accompany the person seeking advice to this office or to make an appointment for them.*
- *Give those affected orientation in the university's counselling network as well as in Berlin.*
- *Clarify open questions and possible hurdles with the person concerned when referring them to other counselling centres.*
- *Inform the person seeking advice transparently about possible next steps and, if applicable, the consequences.*
 - *The counselling centres at TU can be found further down in the document, external centres can also be found on the Women's and Gender Equality Officers page.*
- *Only give out information you are sure about and make your own knowledge gaps transparent. You can also offer to get the information that is currently missing until a next meeting date.*

- *If possible, offer to make further appointments.*
- *Offer information materials. A selection of important materials can be found, for example, on the pages of the [Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency](#) and also, freely available via the [Support Hotline](#) website.*

c. "Subliminal" forms of gender-based discrimination

However, discrimination is not always obvious to those who discriminate against others. Many forms of discrimination happen subliminally and often without malicious intent. Responsible for this is the concept of "doing gender", which refers to the (unconscious) production of gender in everyday actions. In interactions, we automatically divide our counterpart into a certain gender category, which is usually associated with an assignment of social status and specific expectations with regard to characteristics and behaviours of individuals, i.e. "gender stereotypes". Most often, stereotyping is associated with hierarchization. This involves, in the case of gender stereotypes, a valorisation of the masculine and a devaluation of the feminine. Common contents of stereotypes are, for example, relationship orientation, which is assigned to women, and factual orientation, which is assigned to men. Functions that are highly valued in our culture, such as factual competence and expertise, are correspondingly coded as male. The unconscious doing gender is quite normal, but not conducive to good teaching. As a teacher, you can counteract this by considering the diversity of your students, reflecting on your own behaviour and that of your students, and thus challenging gender stereotypes.

Here are a few selected scenarios of subliminal discrimination and what you as a teacher can do about it:

- *Be sure to attribute the same competencies and potential to students of all genders. This may seem obvious to you, but it is not. For example:*
 - *Communication: The same behaviour is rated as confident in a male student and aggressive in a female student.*
 - *Attribution of competence: You consider a student to be competent even if he never speaks out in the course; in contrast, you doubt the competence of a female student who does not speak up.*
- *In group work, students may fall back on gender-stereotypical divisions of labour, so that, for example, women write minutes and men present the results. You can counteract this with simple intervention options such as distributing tasks by lot, rotating tasks in fixed work sequences, or even explicitly addressing such observations.*
- *The behaviour of students towards each other can also be influenced by gender stereotypes. Some examples of gender-typical behaviours in communication:*
 - *Male students take the floor more often than others do and take longer to speak, so make sure the same people don't always get to speak;*
 - *Female students are more likely to wait until they are given the floor before speaking;*
 - *Women are more likely to be interrupted;*
 - *Men are more likely to be appointed to represent their group.*

d. Prevention measures

To prevent discrimination incidents from occurring in your events in the first place, if possible, you can follow these preventive measures:

- Incorporate the [Code of Conduct](#) of the Faculty VII Women's and Gender Equality Officers into your ISIS course and announce this in your first session.
- Use gender-sensitive language in your presentations and when you speak, if possible.
- Designing an open course for TIN (trans, inter, non-binary) people.
 - Signal a supportive, sensitive approach and allow TIN students to contact you about this, e.g., by indicating this in your event announcement.
 - Allow individuals to communicate their desired first names and pronouns so that you and other participants can address them properly. For example, you can combine the attendance check with a round of introductions: All participants state their names and pronouns and, for example, their specific interest in the course. Meanwhile, you can check off the people on your list and make a note of the correct names and pronouns. It is important that all people then introduce themselves with pronouns and not just those who do not match their physical appearance.
 - If sanitation permits, you can also simply pass around a blank list for students to sign themselves in.
 - Use only names and gender designations (e.g., pronouns, salutations) that match the person's gender identity. If you are unsure, simply ask nicely.
 - Avoid exposing TIN individuals at all costs, as this can be an additional burden or even forced outing.
 - Allow TIN individuals to submit academic records without having to provide their legal first name. Unique identification is ensured by providing the student's matriculation number.
- Take time regularly to self-reflect on your teaching. The openly accessible Moodle course of the University of Freiburg "[Gender-equitable university teaching - self-evaluation teaching](#)" can help you with this. Here you can check various aspects of your courses for gender equity with little time effort and also look up further information on gender-equitable teaching in the glossary. (Only in German or French)

e. Contact points at the Faculty VII/ TU Berlin

- [Women and Gender Equality Officer of Faculty VII](#)
- [Central Women and Gender Equality Officer](#)
- [Anti-discrimination officer](#)
- [Psychological Counseling for students](#) (in German for now)
- [Social Counseling for employees](#) (in German for now)
- [Family Services Office](#) (Family and care of relatives, in German for now)
- [Studying with disabilities and chronic illnesses](#)

f. Sources

- „Wegweiser: Umgang mit Diskriminierung an der Universität Göttingen“: [Wegweiser zum Umgang mit Diskriminierung - Georg-August-Universität Göttingen \(uni-goettingen.de\)](#)
- „Was kann ich tun, wenn etwas passiert ist“ der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg: [Was kann ich tun, wenn etwas passiert ist? \(uni-halle.de\)](#)

- „Geschlechtergerechte Hochschullehre - Selbstevaluation Lehre“ Ein Moodle-Kurs der Universität Freiburg <https://moodle.unifr.ch/mod/page/view.php?id=611299> [Stand: 05.12.2022].