

Report on Addressing Sexual Harassment at the University and Summary of Complaints Filed in Academic Year 2023–2024

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Introduction

Tel Aviv University is committed to fight sexual harassment. Therefore, it invests time and resources to address cases that have already occurred and operates a range of training and prevention programs aimed at preventing harassment and raising awareness.

As part of this effort, the Commissioner for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment publishes an annual report summarizing all cases investigated by the office.

Legal Framework

By law, a complainant of sexual harassment may approach three authorities—either all or some of them—simultaneously or consecutively:

- The Commissioner for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Work, to initiate an inquiry that may lead to disciplinary action against the harasser
- The Court, when harassment occurs in the context of employment, to sue the harasser and employer and claim financial compensation
- The Police, to file a criminal complaint

Law for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment:

https://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/Law01/245_001.htm

Tel Aviv University's Sexual Harassment Prevention Procedure:

https://www.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/media_server/General/yoets/01-015.pdf

Complaints Requiring In-Depth Handling

Against Academic Staff

- A student filed a complaint against a lecturer, claiming the lecturer spoke to her in an offensive manner. After investigation, it was found that the statements were not made as alleged and did not constitute sexual harassment.

- An administrative employee complained against an academic staff member who employed her, claiming he engaged in inappropriate conversations, tried to "fix" her with his friend and colleague, and held intrusive personal discussions while exploiting his position. The inquiry concluded that although this did not amount to sexual harassment, the behavior was inappropriate and crossed professional boundaries. The staff member was summoned for a hearing with the Rector.

Against Administrative Staff / Contractors / Other Employees

- A cleaning worker complained against a building supervisor, alleging sexual remarks and unwanted physical contact. The investigation confirmed the events, and since this was a repeated complaint, the case was referred to disciplinary proceedings. Under a plea agreement, the employee's employment was terminated, he was fined one month's salary, and paid compensation to the complainant.
- Another cleaning worker complained against a building supervisor, claiming he sent her inappropriate messages, worked too closely with her, and hugged her. The inquiry found that while he did accompany her excessively, he did not hug her. Therefore, it was deemed inappropriate conduct rather than sexual harassment. A clarification meeting was held with the VP of HR.
- A cleaning worker complained against a building supervisor for inappropriate remarks and behavior. The investigation revealed cultural differences rather than harassment, so the complaint was dismissed. However, a conversation was held with the supervisor to provide tools for culturally sensitive work.
- Another cleaning worker complained against a building supervisor for late-night conversations, inappropriate suggestions, and excessive interest in her private life. The inquiry found this was not sexual harassment but inappropriate behavior. The employee received a formal reprimand after a meeting with the VP of HR.
- A student complained against a contractor, claiming he complimented her in a disrespectful manner. The statement was found not to constitute sexual harassment. The contractor was reminded of proper conduct, expressed remorse, and apologized. Following the incident, a sexual harassment awareness workshop was held for the unit.
- A student complained against a building supervisor, claiming he offered her a ride on his cart, commented on her 'energy,' and made an inappropriate suggestion. The inquiry concluded this was not sexual harassment but inappropriate behavior, as such conversations are unacceptable between staff and students. The employee was summoned for a hearing with the VP of HR.

Between Students

- A student complained that another student entered the women's restroom in and harassing manner. The investigation found the entry was accidental, and the complaint was closed.
- Several students complained against an international student who sent pornographic images without consent on multiple occasions. The student was summoned for a hearing but did not attend. The case was classified as sexual harassment. Since the student left the university, it was decided that his return would be conditional upon disciplinary proceedings.

Complaints Requiring Minimal Handling

- Students emailed a complaint about their grades, claiming the teaching assistant made a harassing remark and discriminated against them. The faculty review confirmed the grades were correct. A clarification meeting was held with the assistant, who strongly denied the allegations. The students did not respond to requests for a formal meeting, so the complaint was closed.
- An anonymous complaint alleged that a building supervisor touched a student's buttocks. The student could not be identified, and video footage did not confirm the event, so the complaint was closed.

Before concluding, we reiterate that the responsibility to report sexual harassment lies with the entire university community. Without cooperation, meaningful change cannot be achieved.

The Commissioner's office is available for any complaint, question, consultation, or suggestion.

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Commissioner for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment