

February 6, 2022

Dear TAU community,

The 2021-22 academic year is in progress and we are about to open the second semester. TAU constantly works to address and eliminate sexual harassment under its jurisdiction. The University has appointed two Commissioners for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment, and all complaints related to this issue should be addressed to them. We assure you that we, as Commissioners, and every other authority involved, do everything in our ability to handle each complaint in the best possible manner.

A disrespectful work or study environment can humiliate, objectify, or demean anyone, female or male, and generate situations that can be construed as sexual harassment.

In light of our experience, and especially last year's unusual situation, we now emphasize that **a respectful environment, totally free of sexual insinuations or harassment** must be strictly maintained in both online and physical spaces – between faculty and students, among the students, and in chat correspondence during lessons. Moreover, no photos of disrespectful or sexual nature may be shared or uploaded at any time.

Study materials must be delivered only through platforms supplied by the university, and not via external platforms such as Facebook.

For any related questions or complaints please contact the Commissioners for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment.

A detailed list of the complaints and how they were handled can be found ahead.

We wish you all a beneficial and fruitful academic year,

Prof. Tamar Brosh, Dr. Naama Scheftelowitz

Commissioners for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment

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<https://harassment-prevention.tau.ac.il/safe-campus/main>

Treatment of sexual harassment at the University and summary of complaints submitted in the 2020-2021 (תשפ"א) academic year

Inquiries regarding sexual harassment

The law stipulates that any person complaining of sexual harassment can file a complaint to one or more of the following parties, either simultaneously or sequentially: the **Commissioner for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace**, who will initiate an inquest and decide whether to put the alleged offender on trial at a disciplinary court; the **National Labor Court** - if the complaint refers to sexual harassment within a work relationship both the alleged offender and the employer can be charged and sued for damages; or a **Civil Court** in case of sexual harassment in other circumstances; the **Police**.

Inquiring sexual harassment at university

Upon receiving a complaint, the Commissioner at TAU explains the above options to the complainant. The Commissioner summons the alleged offender and collects testimonies and evidence, as far as possible.

Following the inquest, the Commissioner writes a report which includes a summary of the information, as well as her recommendations, and sends it to the relevant employer: The Rector if the alleged offender is a faculty member; the Vice Director General of Human Resources, if the alleged offender is an administrative worker; or the Academic Secretary if the alleged offender is a student.

The employer must decide within 7 workdays whether to accept the Commissioner's recommendations.

Following the employer's decision, a letter is sent to the alleged offender, informing him/her of the decision and explaining the reasons.

The Commissioner may recommend intermediate remedies to separate between the complainant and the alleged offender. When this happens, the alleged offender must be allowed to present his/her case before the employer makes a decision. The complainant will be informed in writing of any decision to implement intermediate remedies.

If the complaint is rejected, the complainant may appeal the decision before the President of TAU within 15 days of receiving the employer's message.

If the employer decides to charge the alleged offender, he/she will be tried by the relevant disciplinary court (faculty, administration, or students). It must be clarified that the disciplinary courts are independent entities, authorized to determine the punishment in any particular case. Punishments are listed in the various disciplinary bylaws (faculty, administration, students) posted on the TAU website. Please note that in disciplinary procedures TAU itself is the plaintiff, demanding punishment as it sees fit, but the final decision regarding punishment is made by the court following conviction.

Following is the link to the [Sexual Harassment Prevention Law](#)

Following is the link to [the Tel Aviv University Regulation for Sexual Harassment Prevention](#):

Summary of complaints and inquiries received and handled by the commissioner in the 2020-2021 academic year:

Against academic faculty:

1. A student (woman) complained about an inappropriate statement by a lecturer during a class. It was found that the statement does not constitute sexual harassment according to the law. Nevertheless, it was decided that the inappropriate statement would be deleted from the lecture. The commissioner spoke with the lecturer in order to clarify the importance of a respectful environment in any University discourse.
2. An anonymous complaint regarding homophobic statements in a course, conducted by Zoom, in a private chat. It was found that the claims do not amount to sexual harassment in accordance with the law. It was clarified that a respectful study environment must be maintained.
3. An inquiry by various parties regarding media publicity about sexual harassment by a teacher in the past. The employment of the teacher was not extended. The inquiry was archived.
4. A complaint was received about inappropriate expressions of a former academic tutor on social media. It was decided that the University is not a party to social media and does not supervise what occurs there.
5. An anonymous inquiry was received for information about disciplinary procedures against an academic faculty member. The response was that the University is not authorized to report on disciplinary procedures prior to their termination. Upon completion of the disciplinary proceedings, the verdict and the sentence will be published in accordance with the decision of the tribunal.
6. A repeat inquiry by a woman student regarding harassment on social media by a faculty member. No basis for the complaint was found.
7. An inquiry regarding alleged sexual harassment by a teacher towards a female student several years ago. The procedures of the teaching staff were clearly clarified by the faculty.
8. A student (man) complained that he was "forced" to listen to sexist and insulting comments during a course, and therefore decided not to participate in the course and failed it. The matter was checked and it was found that this was not a matter of sexual harassment and that there is a concern that the student tried to connect his failure to statements by the lecturer for ulterior motives. Note was made to the lecturer that gender-related statements not related to the material being studied should be avoided.
9. An anonymous (woman) student claimed that sexual statements were made by a (woman) lecturer during a course that caused discomfort. The student did not want to submit a complaint. The student approached the lecturer to clarify the matter.
10. A student (woman) complained about ostensible sexual harassment by a researcher from abroad during a University activity off campus. Evidence was collected and transferred to the academic institute employing the researcher abroad for its treatment. The researcher was dismissed from his work.
11. A student (woman) complained about sexual harassment by a former lecturer. The investigation has not yet been completed.

Against administrative employees:

1. An inappropriate statement was made by an administrative employee to a student (woman). An apology was made.
2. An inquiry was made by a third party regarding conduct of administrative employees of the University visiting the dorms. The matter was checked and no cause for concern regarding sexual harassment was found.
3. An administrative employee (man) harassed a contractor's employee (woman). After investigating the complaint, the following measures were decided upon: conducting a discussion with the Head of the Faculty Administration, documentation in writing, and implementing software for sexual harassment prevention.
4. An inquiry about email notices sent to officeholders at the University regarding harassment which is not sexual that ostensibly occurred in 2006, by a student of the University towards an employee of another institution. The officeholders were instructed to check the details with the student.

Against students/among students:

1. A (woman) patient in a faculty that deals in teaching a therapeutic profession, complained about a (woman) student who treated her. The incident was investigated. It was found that the authority relations between the patient and the student were not relationship of authority, and therefore there was no sexual harassment according to the law. Nevertheless, there was a deviation from the field of ethics which was handled in the framework of the School and academic steps were taken against the student.
2. A graduate student (man) of the University complained that private pictures of another graduate student (woman) were distributed by a student in a lab WhatsApp group. The woman graduate did not submit a complaint. Beyond what the circumstances necessitate, the picture was checked and was not found to be harassing. The complaint was rejected.
3. A complaint about advertising and impersonation while publicizing offensive pictures and statements in a WhatsApp group for a course in a context that does not belong to studies, and is therefore not in the field of the University. It was suggested to that complaint to turn to the police. The complaint was archived.
4. An inquiry by a student (man) regarding an objectifying song played by the Students Association at an event. The commissioner contacted the Students Association which announced that the song would no longer be played at Association events.
5. A complaint by students (women) regarding ostensive verbal sexual harassment by a student (man). An investigation was conducted at the conclusion of which it was decided that the student should face a disciplinary tribunal for offenses of sexual harassment and behavior which is not suitable to a student.
6. An inquiry by an officeholder at the University regarding information received about a student (man) who sent harassing messages to a woman student: The students' identity information was not received, as the woman student refused to complain. The officeholder was instructed to encourage the woman student to contact the commissioner. The file was archived.
7. An inquiry regarding a foreign student who asked to be accepted for graduate degree studies, although by his own reporting of his being responsible for offenses of sexual harassment at an

- institution where he previously studied abroad. It was decided by the University administration, after investigating, not to accept him as a student.
8. A woman student complained that a male student cursed her. It was found that these were common curse words and not sexual harassment. The matter was submitted for disciplinary treatment.
 9. An inquiry by an officeholder (woman) about the sending of a message including an offer for a sexual relationship by a student (man) to a lecturer (man). It was not possible to identify the student. The lecturer was instructed how to respond to the student and there was no recurrence of the matter. The case remains under tracking.
 10. A student (woman) complained about inappropriate dress in shared space in an apartment in the dorms. Letters were sent to all dorm residents to clarify the rules in the dorms.
 11. An anonymous inquiry regarding the publication of pictures of women students and blatant reference in a private WhatsApp group of students from the same academic year. The commissioner believed that a number of students behaved inappropriately as a university student, due to their active participation in the WhatsApp group. It has however held that this conduct does not amount to an offense of sexual harassment as defined by law. The active students in the group were called for a hearing by the Academic Secretary. It was also decided to conduct training on the subject for the relevant class cycles.
 12. A woman student complained about men sleeping in a shared apartment in the dorms. The case was referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.
 13. A woman student claimed that a former student (male) threatens, harasses, and makes propositions of a sexual character. Decision: preventing him from entering the dorms. Because he is a former student, if he should register again for the University, his request will be considered in light of the complaint. It was suggested to the student to submit a complaint to the police.

Against contractors' employees:

1. A woman student complained that a guard (man) in the parking lot harassed her. The complaint was referred to the guard's employer and the case was handled by the employer. It was not found to be a case of sexual harassment. Nevertheless, the employee was transferred to a different workplace that is not connected with the University. The student was provided with supervision by a social worker and a referral to the psychological services.
2. An inappropriate comment by a contractor's employee (man) during an exam. The investigation was conducted by the employing company. The employee apologized and was asked to refrain from any comments to those taking exams.
3. A student (woman) complained about harassment and threats on social media from a contractor's employee (man). The complaint was referred to the employee's employer. An investigation of the contractor's employee was conducted and the employee was dismissed.

An unknown defendant:

1. A person reported that his girlfriend was raped on the campus. A report was transmitted by Security and the police was called. Two police patrol vehicles arrived. It was not reported to the commissioner who the offender or the victim were, and no details regarding the incident

- were provided. As long as we are referring to rape, the commissioner has no authority regarding an investigation; rather that is a matter for the police.
2. A complaint by a third party according to whom, during a class on Zoom, a statement was made in a private chat to a woman student by an unfamiliar man, perhaps an auditing student. The student chose not to contact the commissioner. There were no screenshots and there was no reasonable way to identify the offender; therefore, the complaint was archived.
 3. A report that an older man sits in a computer lab on campus and performs indecent acts upon himself while observing women students: The case was handled by the Security Department at the University. The students were asked to submit a complaint to the police. The complaint was archived.
 4. A complaint in the framework of a study program that does not belong to the University, regarding a woman student teaching in the program who was ostensibly harassed by one of the students (man), who is also not a student of the University. The complainant asked for academic help with her studies at the University and that help was provided for her. The sexual harassment was handled in the context of the study program.
 5. A complaint by a University employee (woman) regarding students (women) who complained that harassing text messages were sent during a class from an unknown number. After an investigation by the Cyber Unit of the University it was found that the sender could not be identified. The students were referred to submit a complaint to the police. The file was archived.
 6. An inquiry about women students in a Faculty that deals with teaching a therapeutic profession who were ostensibly harassed by counselors (men) while gaining experience outside of the University. The complaint was made without any identifying details. An email was sent to all of the students and the faculty with a request for details. No additional details were received, and therefore the file was archived.
 7. An inquiry by an officeholder (woman) at the University that a woman student was ostensibly harassed by a counselor (man) while gaining experience outside of the University. The counselor is employed by the Ministry of Education, and therefore the treatment was referred to the ministry for treatment. A consultation discussion was conducted with the student. At the time of the writing of this document, the Ministry of Education has yet to update that the treatment of the case has been completed.
 8. An inquiry by an officeholder at the University regarding a patient (man) who ostensibly harassed a woman student in a Faculty dealing with teaching a therapeutic profession. The explanation sheet for the recuperating patient and his/her obligations were updated and the instructions were clarified.
 9. A woman student from another academic institution claimed that intimate questions were sent to her during a survey and the woman conducting the survey identified herself as being from Tel Aviv University. It was not possible to identify the surveyor. The complaint was archived.
 10. Someone stripped in the area of the dorms outside of the area of the University. The matter was referred to the police for handling. Academic assistance was offered to the student (woman).
 11. A student (man) claimed that statements were made about him, regarding his sexuality by a third-party employee. The matter was treated by the employer's Sexual Harassment Prevention Officer who decided that the matter did not constitute sexual harassment, but an apology was made to the student.

Inquiries for investigation or updating:

1. An inquiry from another institution for higher education regarding a student (man) studying at Tel Aviv University and another institution, about whom a complaint was submitted to the police. It is unclear whether the complaint dealt with sexual harassment.
2. An academic tutor (man) complained that a lecturer (man) sent him a picture and its background was unclear and could be harassing. The academic tutor did not authorize inquiring of the lecturer, and under these circumstances, the complaint was archived.
3. An inquiry regarding treatment by the police of an incident that happened a number of years ago: A discussion was held with the inquirer after which it was decided to archive the inquiry.
4. An inquiry regarding media publicity regarding a teaching faculty person suspected of pedophilia: The subject of the publicity is not employed by the University. The inquiry was archived.
5. A student (man) reported a case that occurred, according to him, three years ago when a strange man filmed a woman student during a class. It was not possible to investigate the case which was therefore archived.
6. A woman student staying abroad, not on behalf of the University, reported that a party in the program abroad behaved in an inappropriate manner (it is unclear if this has a sexual context) towards her and others. Help was offered to the student. The student did not provide additional details and did not make contact despite the commissioner reaching out to her.
7. An inquiry to get details regarding the manner of handling a complaint against an academic faculty member. The procedure was explained. The inquirer decided that she did not want to complain despite the referrals of the commissioner. Details regarding the faculty member were not provided.
8. A woman lecturer reported that a former woman student has been harassing her (not in a sexual manner). The complaint was for the purpose of documenting the incident as the University does not have the authority to handle the matter. The report was archived.
9. In an inquiry, it was claimed that a doctoral candidate (without details) ended her studies subsequent to sexual harassment by her advisor. After identifying the former student, the commissioner contacted her. The former student absolutely denied the claim. The complaint was archived. The duration of the investigation/handling – three weeks.

In addition, during the year, one case of a romance subject to authority relations was arbitrated.

At this time, two disciplinary procedures are being conducted. One is an appeal of decisions made by the tribunal.

We hereby assure that we, the commissioners, and the other parties involved in handling the matters, are doing everything in their capacity to optimally handle every complaint and inquiry.

Cooperation, personal example by each and every individual, as well as putting faith in the system, and submitting complaints in cases in which that is necessary are of the highest importance in order to maintain an ethical, respectful, and safe community.

With best wishes for a continued productive academic year,

Prof. Tamar Brosh

Dr. Na'ama Scheftelowitz

Commissioners for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment