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Guidelines on Matters that Okayama University Staff, etc. Should Understand for the Prevention of Harassment, etc.

Section 1. Matters that the Staff, etc. Should Understand to Prevent Harassment from Occurring

1. Importance of awareness

To prevent harassment from occurring, officers and staff members of the University (the “staff, etc.”) must sufficiently understand the importance of the following points when dealing with other staff, etc., students, etc., and people concerned with the University.

- (1) Be aware that prejudice and discriminatory sentiments underlie harassment.
- (2) Be aware that a person of a higher position tends to develop a sense of superiority or control over a person of a lower position.
- (3) Drop the mindset of seeing someone as an object of sexual interest or a person of the inferior sex.
- (4) Develop a sense of respecting another person’s dignity regardless of differences in position, age, or sex.
- (5) Understand that workers have the rights to take leave and use a system and that you cannot unreasonably interfere with such rights.

2. Basic stance

The staff, etc. must be sufficiently aware of the following points concerning harassment.

- (1) How a person receives specific language or behavior in interpersonal relations depends on the individual, gender, position, etc. Whether specific language or behavior constitutes harassment is largely determined by how the target of said language or behavior receives it.

Specifically, one needs to keep the following points in mind.

- (1) Be aware that even language or behavior meant to express a sense of intimacy may make the target of said language or behavior uncomfortable regardless of your intention.
- (2) Keep in mind that whether a person feels uncomfortable about something or not depends on that person.
- (3) Do not unilaterally presume that another person will tolerate language or behavior of a certain extent.
- (4) Do not unilaterally assume that you have developed a good human relationship with another person.
- (5) Closely communicate with students, staff, etc. on a regular basis to develop and maintain a strong trust-based relationship with them.

(2) Do not repeat the same language or behavior if the other party rejects it or if you find that the other party does not like it.

(3) A person suffering harassment does not necessarily show his or her true feelings.

Harassment victims do not always clearly show how they truly feel because they find it difficult to raise an objection, considering human relations with their higher-ups, academic supervisors, etc. Though victims often cannot say "No," do not thoughtlessly take it as a sign of their agreement or approval.

When giving an instruction or caution to your junior staff members or students, be sure to give specific reasons for what you are doing, because they are in positions in which they find it difficult to talk back to you or ask a question of you.

(4) It is not enough to avoid committing harassment only during your work hours or at your workplace. Be careful of your language and behavior outside your work hours or workplace as well.

For example, be sure to prevent the staff, etc. from harassing other staff members, students, etc. in such situations as welcome and farewell parties, where participants are bound by workplace human relations, seminar drinking parties, and get-togethers with people from the same laboratory.

(5) Do not tolerate or overlook harassment. If you notice harassment, give a caution to the perpetrator or encourage the victim to consult a harassment counselor.

When giving a caution to the perpetrator, do not use subjective or vague language. Clearly state your opinion about an observable "act."

(6) Familiarize yourself with the Okayama University Guidelines for Harassment Prevention and acquire accurate knowledge about harassment.

3. Language and behavior that may constitute harassment

Examples of language or behavior that may constitute harassment are contained in the Okayama University Guidelines for Harassment Prevention. Be sure to thoroughly understand the Guidelines and avoid using language or behavior that may constitute harassment.

4. Background of harassment

Some of Okayama University staff, etc. have a substantial influence over such matters as graduation certification, degree conferment, decision and implementation of education and research plans, and decisions concerning personnel affairs. Because the organization that such staff, etc. belong to may accept their words and behavior as they are, students, etc. suffering harassment hesitate to speak out on what they are experiencing because of the difficulty of being understood by the organization or for fear of being subject to even more disadvantageous treatment. As a result, harassment actually prevails in situations like these that are marked by the concentration of power, the exclusive and closed atmosphere of classrooms and laboratories, and the lack of oversight functions.

There is nothing wrong with teaching students earnestly. On the contrary, any university recommends it as a good thing. Still, note that the act of teaching students enthusiastically may border on harassment if it lacks due consideration for students, etc. It may constitute harassment regardless of the perpetrator's intention.

5. Disciplinary action

Be fully aware that some cases of harassment may be subject to disciplinary

action, depending on the mode of the harassment.

Section 2. Matters that the Staff, etc. Should Understand to Ensure an Appropriate Work or Education Environment

Since it requires cooperative relations among the staff, etc., students, etc. and people concerned with the University to create a work or education environment, the staff etc. must proactively give due consideration to the following points, thereby preventing harassment from deteriorating a work or education environment. Among staff members, professors, etc. are in positions to play a leading role in the management of laboratories. Therefore, they must be aware of their great responsibility for maintaining an appropriate education and research environment and do their utmost to prevent harassment, etc. in their laboratories.

1. Do not view the staff, etc., students, etc., and people concerned with the University who speak out about harassment as "troublemakers." Also, do not shelve harassment problems as personal affairs between the individuals concerned.

Some problems may be solved through such opportunities as meetings. Stay ready to tackle such problems together whenever such problems are pointed out, thereby ensuring an appropriate work or education environment.

2. Pay due attention to the situation and people around you and take necessary action so as not to let anyone become a victim or perpetrator of harassment. Specifically, keep the following points in mind and take necessary action.

(1) Give a caution when harassment is recognized.

It is necessary to take the opportunity to give a caution or take other action against harassment before the harassment has a serious adverse effect on the work or education environment.

(2) If you see or hear someone being harassed, speak to that person and listen to what he or she has to say.

Victims sometimes hesitate to share their experiences with others because

they are “embarrassed,” “afraid to be called a troublemaker,” or “afraid of retaliation.” However, if you notice something is going on, it is important to speak to them and listen to what they have to say and, in some cases, encourage them to consult a harassment counselor.

3. If you recognize harassment in your workplace, do not hesitate to take such steps as a third party as consulting your supervisor, etc., so as to create a comfortable work or education environment.

Section 3. Matters Expected of the Staff, etc. in Cases where Problems Resulting from Harassment Occur

1. Basic stance

When they have suffered harassment, the staff, etc. are expected to understand the following points to prevent the damage of harassment from aggravating.

(1) The problem will not be solved if you suffer alone.

It is important to realize that the situation will not necessarily improve simply by ignoring or fending off the harassment.

(2) Do not hesitate to take action against harassment.

Based on an understanding that combating harassment is not only your personal issue but also important for the creation of an appropriate work or education environment, you are expected to act courageously to prevent the damage of harassment from aggravating.

2. Actions to take when they think they have suffered harassment

When they have suffered harassment, the staff, etc. are expected to take the following actions.

(1) If the offending party does something you feel uncomfortable with, clearly communicate your feelings to the offending party.

If you have suffered harassment, clearly communicate your feelings to the offending party with a firm attitude. However, there may be cases in which you find it difficult to tell your feelings directly to the offending party, because of your power relationship with that party. In such cases, you may take other alternatives, such as writing a letter to the offending party.

(2) Consult someone you trust

Another alternative is to consult a person around you whom you can trust, such as a co-worker or friend. Or you may prefer to consult one of the harassment counselors of the University.

Before seeking consultation, it is desirable to record the date, time, content, etc. of the harassment or obtain testimony from third parties.

Section 4. Instruction to Students, etc.

Acts of harassment will not be tolerated not only between faculty members and students, etc. but also between senior and junior students or between students of the same school year in laboratories or clubs.

For the prevention of harassment, etc. targeted at students, etc., students, etc. need to try to understand the essence of these Guidelines. Be sure to give students instruction of the kind that suits their current situation by considering the timing of their graduation, advancement to higher education, etc. and the stages of their physical and mental development, etc., thereby ensuring necessary and appropriate educational activities for them.