

This is a translation of the original German text and is intended for your information only. Only the official German version of the “Richtlinie zum Schutz vor Diskriminierung und Gewalt an der Universität Münster” is binding. It was published in the Amtliche Bekanntmachungen (Official Announcements – AB Uni) on 20 February 2026, pp. 1841-1849.

Protection against discrimination and violence at the University of Münster

Part A

Preventive measures and Counselling services

In accordance with its Code of Conduct and mission statement, 'Living.Knowledge.Diversity', the University of Münster is committed to being a discrimination-free, safe and non-violent place of study, teaching and work, where fair, appreciative and respectful interaction is encouraged.

All students and employees of the University of Münster can promote a working and academic environment characterised by mutual respect. Respectful behavior can be practised, for example, by:

- expressing mutual appreciation in daily interactions and engaging in fair forms of communication and conflict resolution,
- taking a stand against discrimination, violence at the University and attempts to exploit relationships of dependency, and being sensitive to these forms of misconduct,
- affirming and supporting the rights of harassed or disadvantaged persons,
- especially in the case of supervisors and those with responsibility for staff, actively defending the dignity of those who work and study at the University and ensuring an atmosphere of mutual appreciation and openness.

1. Preventive Measures of the University of Münster

The University of Münster has established comprehensive preventive and structural measures to prevent or eliminate discrimination and abuse of power, harassment and violence, stalking and bullying, and is continuing to develop these measures. The measures currently include, amongst other things:

- affirming the values held by the University of Münster by publishing them in the University's strategic documents,
- publishing and actively communicating these Documents on Protection against Discrimination and Violence at the University of Münster to all members and affiliates of the University,
- offering inclusive and multilingual information and counselling services,
- communicating contact details of counselling services, complaints offices and complaints procedures in a transparent and easy-to-find manner,
- recommending the use of gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory language,

- integrating the content of these “Documents on Protection against Discrimination and Violence at the University of Münster” and discussing conflict resolution procedures in teaching and training courses as well as in various empowerment initiatives,
- considering potential risks of discrimination and safety concepts in planning and development projects, or when making changes to the University’s infrastructure (e.g. construction measures, digital information and communication technologies),
- measures to ensure that study, teaching, apprenticeship and work are inclusive
- as well as measures to facilitate inclusive participation.

2. Individuals with teaching, managerial, leadership and/or supervisory roles, or those with responsibility for staff

Individuals with teaching, managerial, leadership and/or supervisory roles, or those with responsibility for staff at the University of Münster, must ensure that these Documents on Protection against Discrimination and Violence are implemented within their areas of responsibility, in accordance with their duty of care, by

- promoting respectful and non-discriminatory interaction with one another and to respect the dignity of all persons working and studying at and for the University by the example of their own behavior and implementing suitable preventive measures (e.g. addressing behavioral expectations and the consequences of non-compliance in courses or team meetings, and informing colleagues about additional teaching and training opportunities at the University),
- drawing attention to the relevant documents on protection against discrimination and violence, in particular the policy for dealing with misconduct in cases of discrimination and violence at the University of Münster and highlighting the available counselling and complaints procedures, when hiring new staff or as the situation requires as well as
- ensuring, within their capabilities, that relationships of dependency are not exploited in study and teaching, in apprenticeships or at the workplace, and taking steps to ensure inclusive participation measures in studies.

3. Rights of affected Persons

Members and affiliates of the University, as well as other individuals working at or on behalf of the University who are not bound to it by employment or service contracts (e.g. scholarship holders, lecturers or visiting researchers), who have been victims of violence, abuse of power, bullying or stalking at work or in the context of their studies (hereinafter: affected persons) may seek confidential counselling from various offices and/or lodge a complaint.

Affected persons are entitled to lodge a non-formal complaint (see Part B – Policy for Dealing with Misconduct in Cases of Discrimination and Violence at the University of Münster), either personally or through a third party, even without a prior initial consultation with a designated contact in their respective faculties or a counselling and advice office. Employees are not required to follow the chain of command in doing so and must not be disadvantaged for exercising their right to complain. The same applies to supporters and witnesses.

If a student is suspected of having violated University rules, it is also possible to initiate proceedings before the Disciplinary Committee to impose disciplinary measures on the basis of

the Disciplinary Procedure Rules (see *Ordnung zur Regelung des Verfahrens zur Verhängung von Ordnungsmaßnahmen bei Ordnungsverstößen durch Studierende an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster* resp. *Universität Münster* hereinafter *Ordnungsverfahrensordnung*), as amended.

4. Contacts and Counselling Offices

Contacts

Affected parties can seek initial consultation from the designated contacts in their respective faculties or their own organisational units (e.g. departmental student bodies, Dean's Offices, ombudspersons or persons of trust; diversity officers, inclusion officers, sexual violence liaison officers etc.). Details on contacts and support services can be found on the respective faculty or departmental websites.

Counselling and advice offices

Those affected may also choose to contact the counselling and advice offices. The University's counselling and advice offices support affected parties with handling their personal situation, safeguarding their interests and getting them in contact with a responsible staff member (see 2.) or lodging a formal complaint (see Part B – Policy for Dealing with Misconduct in Cases of Discrimination and Violence at the University of Münster). Advisory staff will clearly describe the counselling process and, if necessary, refer the affected party to other (more suitable) internal and/or external counselling services.

Counsellors and advisory staff are obliged to maintain confidentiality. All measures are subject to data protection regulations and are to be taken in agreement with the affected party and, if applicable, those supporting the affected person.

For students:

- the [General Students' Committee \(AStA\)](#)
- the [Equal Opportunity Office](#), in particular the Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer (student group)
- the [Senate Representative for Students with a Disability or Chronic Illness](#)
- the [Representative for the Concerns of Student Assistants](#)
- the [Student Advice and Counselling Centre \(ZSB\)](#)

For employees:

- the [Counselling Service for Staff and Management](#)
- the [Equal Opportunity Office](#) and [faculty-level equal opportunity representatives](#)
- the [Staff Councils](#)
- the [Representative for People with Substantial, Long-term Impairments](#)

5. Reporting, Data Collection, Evaluation

All central counselling and complaints offices at the University of Münster offer the affected parties the option of receiving feedback. They document the counselling services and complaints processed in compliance with the applicable data protection regulations, collect case numbers and categorise the counselling services and complaints in anonymised form. The case numbers

are collated and submitted to the Rectorate on an annual basis. The Rectorate identifies important and overarching areas for action and initiates appropriate measures, and evaluates this document as well as the Policy for Dealing with Misconduct in Cases of Discrimination and Violence at the University of Münster.

Part B

Policy for Dealing with Misconduct in Cases of Discrimination and Violence at the University of Münster

On the basis of § 2 (4) sent. 1, § 22 (1) sent. 1 no. 3 of the Higher Education Act of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia [*Hochschulgesetz* – HG] as amended by the Act on the Future of Higher Education [*Hochschulzukunftsgesetz* – HZG NRW] of 16 September 2014 (GV.NRW. p. 574), as amended most recently by the Act of 5 December 2023 (GV. NRW. p. 1278), the University of Münster has issued the following guidelines:

Discrimination, abuse of power, harassment, violence, bullying and stalking are prohibited.¹ Such behavior in the course of activities carried out at or on behalf of the University may result in consequences under employment, civil service, public sector or higher education law. Everyone covered by this policy is required to comply with it and promote respectful interaction.

The policy explains the options available in the event of discrimination and abuse of power, harassment and violence, stalking and bullying, and sets out clear procedures to follow in the event of an incident, as well as the potential sanctions for breaches.

1. Scope of Application

The following guidelines are binding for all members and affiliates of the University of Münster (cf. § 9 HG NRW). They also apply to persons who are not bound to the University under labour or public service laws, as well as those who are not employed by the University under contract, but nonetheless work at, in or on behalf of the University (e.g. scholarship holders, lecturers or visiting researchers).

The policy applies to discrimination, abuse of power, harassment, violence, bullying and stalking by or against the persons named in paragraph 1. The policy therefore applies on the University premises (including outdoor properties), in virtual spaces with a University connection and/or at University events, if at least one person involved belongs to the group of persons named. Furthermore, the guidelines extend to all University facilities.

2. Individuals with teaching, managerial, leadership and/or supervisory roles, or those with responsibility for staff

Individuals with teaching, managerial, leadership and/or supervisory roles, or those with responsibility for staff at the University of Münster, must ensure that these Documents on Protection against Discrimination and Violence are implemented within their areas of responsibility, in accordance with their duty of care, by

¹ The civil liberties designed to protect individuals against sexual harassment, bullying, stalking and discrimination are primarily defined in the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany and the General Act on Equal Treatment (GETA). In cases of stalking and (sexual) violence, criminal law may also apply. In addition, the Higher Education Act of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia defines certain types of student behavior as regulatory offences. For example, the significant impairment of a member of the University of Münster through the use of violence by a student may constitute a regulatory offence.

- immediately responding to complaints about and reports of discrimination, harassment, violence, abuse of power, bullying or stalking,
- reaching out to those affected by offering to discuss the matter and directing them to the responsible staff, counselling offices (see Part A Preventive measures and Counselling services) and formal complaints procedures,
- if necessary, taking appropriate general measures to remedy the situation and/or reviewing potential measures provided under labour and public service law,
- raising awareness of the possibility of imposing disciplinary measures if a student is suspected of having violated University rules, in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure Rules (*Ordnungsverfahrensordnung*) of the University of Münster, as amended.

3. Rights of affected Persons

Members and affiliates of the University, as well as other individuals working at or on behalf of the University who are not bound to it by employment or service contracts (e.g. scholarship holders, lecturers or visiting researchers), who feel discriminated against or harassed, or who have been victims of violence, abuse of power, bullying or stalking in the workplace or in an academic context (hereinafter: affected persons), have the option of seeking confidential advice from various contacts, counselling and advice offices and/or lodging a complaint .

Affected persons are entitled to lodge a non-formal complaint, either personally or through a third party, even without a prior initial consultation or counselling session (see Part B – Guidelines for Dealing with Misconduct in Cases of Discrimination and Violence at the University of Münster). Employees are not required to follow the chain of command in doing so and must not be disadvantaged for exercising their right to complain. The same applies to supporters and witnesses.

If a student is suspected of having violated University rules, it is also possible to initiate proceedings before the Disciplinary Committee to impose disciplinary measures on the basis of the Disciplinary Procedure Rules (*Ordnungsverfahrensordnung*), as amended.

4. Complaints Procedure

Complaints may be lodged with the complaints offices listed below without any formal or time requirement. When asserting claims for damages or compensation under GETA, the time limits set out in GETA must be observed. Upon receipt of a complaint, it is the responsibility of the complaints bodies to assess whether there has been a breach of the statutory prohibition of discrimination under GETA or of the provisions of this policy.

For students:

- the [Central Student Complaints Office](#)

For employees:

- the [\(internal link\) GETA Complaints Office](#) in accordance with § 13 of the General Equal Treatment Act [*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* – AGG]
- for staff of the Faculty of Medicine: the GETA Complaints Office in accordance with § 13 AGG in the HR and Legal Division of Münster University Hospital (UKM)

All other persons may report misconduct by persons mentioned under (1.) to the [central internal reporting office](#) of the University of Münster.

The complaints bodies operate in strict confidence. The identity of the complainant will only be disclosed to third parties during a complaints procedure if this is absolutely necessary to establish the facts of the case and the complainant has given their consent. However, anonymity cannot generally be guaranteed, as the complaints bodies must hear from all parties involved in order to investigate the matter impartially.

A complaint may be withdrawn at any stage of the proceedings. However, this does not automatically lead to the proceedings being discontinued in all cases. If there are indications that there are structural reasons for misconduct that go beyond the individual case, or that there is a risk of recurrence, the university may be obliged to investigate the matter and take the necessary measures.

Once the investigation has been completed, the complaints bodies issue recommendations for appropriate organizational and supporting measures and, where necessary, initiate further steps, such as investigating the implications under labor and service law, or, if there is suspicion of a breach of regulations by a student, inform the chair of the Disciplinary Committee.

5. Possible Measures and Sanctions

In the event of a violation of these guidelines, the University of Münster shall implement suitable, necessary and appropriate measures in individual cases to protect the affected person. Measures and sanctions depend on the applicable public service, labour or University regulations to which the defendant is subject.

If, in a dispute, one party presents prima facie evidence suggesting discrimination under the AGG, the other party bears the burden of proving that there has been no breach of the provisions on protection against discrimination.

If the legal requirements are met, a variety of measures and sanctions may be considered depending on the severity of the offence.

Examples of measures against employees:

General measures

- oral or written instructions or admonition to change behavior
- obligation to participate in training events
- threat of labour or disciplinary legal measures
- restriction or withdrawal of authorisations
- criminal charges to be brought by the Rector

Labour/disciplinary measures

- written warning
- initiation of disciplinary proceedings
- transfer or reassignment to a different workplace
- dismissal

Examples of measures against students:

- formal reprimand
- threat of de-registration
- exclusion from using University facilities
- exclusion from participating in specific courses for up to one semester
- de-registration (with possibility of re-enrolment after a period of two years)
- criminal charges to be brought by the Rector

Examples of measures against other groups:

- oral or written instructions or admonition to change behavior
- revocation of authorisations
- withdrawal of a teaching assignment
- (threat of) ban from the premises
- (threat of) cancellation of an existing contractual relationship
- criminal charges to be brought by the Rector

6. Entry into Force

These guidelines (in their original German version) are to be published in the *Amtliche Bekanntmachungen* (Official Announcements – AB Uni) of the University of Münster. They enter into force on the day after publication. Concurrently, the Agreement on Respectful Behavior at the University of Münster (Vereinbarung Partnerschaftliches Verhalten an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster) of 30 July 2013 will cease to apply.

Issued (in the original German version) upon resolution by the Senate of the University of Münster on 10 December 2025.

Please note that in accordance with § 12 (5) of the Higher Education Act of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia [*Hochschulgesetz* – HG NRW], violations of procedural or formal requirements of the University's regulations or other legal provisions pertaining to university autonomy can no longer be asserted more than one year after this announcement, unless

1. the regulations were not properly published,
2. the Rectorate previously raised an objection to the resolution passed by the deciding committee,
3. the University had already been given notice of a formal or procedural defect and had been informed of the legal provision that has been violated and of the fact giving rise to the defect, or
4. the legal consequence of a deadline for violation notifications was not included in the public announcement of the regulations.

Münster, 09 January 2026

The Rector

Professor Dr Johannes Wessels

Appendix

The following definitions are based on and augment the terms provided in the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), including established case law. Although not exhaustive, the list is intended to provide a better description of the types of misconduct to which these guidelines refer.

This covers all acts that result in direct or indirect **unjustified unequal treatment** on the grounds of racist, anti-Semitic or ethnic attributions, gender, religion or belief, a disability, age, sexual identity, marital status, family responsibilities, social origin, social status or appearance (see Section 7 of the GETA). What is perceived as harassment or discrimination may be largely determined by the subjective perception of the person concerned. When examining a complaint, it is determined whether, from an objective point of view, there is a preponderance of probability suggesting that unjustified discrimination on the basis of one of the aforementioned characteristics has taken place.

Direct discrimination occurs where a person is treated less favorably than another person in a comparable situation is, has been, or would be treated, on the grounds set out above. Direct discrimination on the grounds of sex also occurs when a woman is treated less favorably because she is pregnant or has given birth.

Indirect discrimination occurs where apparently neutral provisions, criteria or practices may place persons at a particular disadvantage compared with others on any of the grounds referred to in paragraph 1, unless those provisions, criteria or practices are objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

Harassment occurs when unwanted behavior violates the dignity of the affected person and creates a hostile working environment. Such behavior is defined as sexual harassment if the harassment is driven by sexual motives. In such cases, even a single act is sufficient grounds for taking putative action, as the intrusion into one's personal sphere represents a serious violation.

Violence at the workplace or during the course of study refers to any form of unacceptable behavior, practice or threat thereof that is intended to exert physical, sexual or economic coercion in order to overcome actual or anticipated resistance.

Bullying is defined as systematic and repeated hostility, harassment and exclusion with the aim or consequence of making the bullied person(s) feel insecure and humiliated and excluding them from their study or work environment.

Abuse of power is understood as the exploitation of a position of power (which may be merely perceived as such) to harm, harass or disadvantage other people over whom one has power, or to secure personal advantages for oneself or third parties.

An **instruction to discriminate** a person for any of the reasons stated in (1) shall be deemed to constitute discrimination. Such an instruction shall be deemed to have occurred, in particular, if

a person instigates another to engage in conduct that discriminates or may discriminate against a person for any of the reasons stated in (1).

Stalking – also referred to as ‘Nachstellung in German law– is defined as the intentional and repeated following, pursuing or harassing of a person in such that their lifestyle is seriously impaired or their safety is threatened (see Section 238 of the German Criminal Code/StGB).