

24 April 2018

HRK recommendation:

Against sexual discrimination and sexual abuse at universities

Every university must do its utmost to protect its members against sexual discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence. This was the clear message of a recommendation adopted by the General Assembly of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) today in Mannheim.

"Due to the large number of supervisory and dependency relationships, we need wide recognition of this issue at universities as well as concrete preventative measures," HRK President Prof Dr Horst Hippler said after the meeting. "The General Assembly has sent the unequivocal signal that sexually discriminatory and degrading treatment and conduct cannot be tolerated."

"Some universities already have university-wide guidelines requiring respectful interactions. That is an exemplary approach," said HRK Vice-President, Professor Dr Ulrike Beisiegel, who is responsible for this area. She added that universities must heighten members' awareness of this issue, clearly sanction breaches and create and publicise a point of contact for people affected. "We provide specific suggestions for prevention – from management training, mentoring and coaching services through to appropriate facilities for consultation hours or individual instruction."

The HRK recommendation stresses the importance of a culture of respect and esteem for students, early career researchers and academic and non-academic staff as an integral part of everyday activities. The dangers of abuse of power at universities will be addressed in more detail in a later statement.

Text of the recommendation