

## *Guidelines for JETs Dealing with Sexual Harassment*

### A definition of sexual harassment in the workplace:

Any speech and/or conduct of a sexual nature, which was neither welcomed nor encouraged, committed by or permitted by a superior or other staff member, and which would be offensive to a reasonable person, creates an abusive working environment, and/or impairs a person's job performance.

### Examples of sexual harassment (may apply to the workplace or elsewhere; may apply to either gender):

- Discussing physical characteristics, including bust, waist, hip or penis size
- Asking if a woman is feeling unwell due to her period or menopause
- Telling obscene jokes that cause discomfort
- Asking about sexual experience or preferences
- Making sexual jokes, or making someone into a sexual object
- Putting up nude posters in the workplace
- Reading or showing obscene articles or vulgar pictures from magazines or other reading materials in the workplace
- Staring in a sexual manner
- Inviting another out to dinner or a date in a persistent manner
- Writing letters, e-mails or making phone calls containing sexual content
- Touching unnecessarily
- Groping
- Peeping into the washroom or changing room
- Forcing another to have a sexual relationship (this is also assault)

Sexual harassment (*seku hara*) can be a fairly simple or a very difficult and complex matter depending on: what actually happens; the context of the situation; the people involved and the power relationships between them; the willingness to help on the part of other people; the knowledge or lack thereof on the part of the harasser that what they are doing actually constitutes sexual harassment; and probably many other factors too. The feelings of the victim can also differ from situation to situation and from individual to individual, ranging from anger to shock to embarrassment.

However, one thing is pretty simple. If you are experiencing sexual harassment ,it is **not your fault**, need not be tolerated and it certainly should not be suffered in silence. If you are experiencing sexual harassment, you do not have to go through it alone. You may be anxious about bringing the subject up with someone else, but talking to someone is the first and most important step toward solving the problem. The strategies for dealing with sexual harassment below all centre on this step. When other people are aware of the problem and are working towards preventing it, the harasser becomes vulnerable and more likely to stop, or is forced to stop – hopefully – while the harassed gains valuable help or at least an outlet. Dealing with sexual harassment effectively often comes down to the power relationships involved, which is why bringing in more people is so important.

This may be quite daunting or scary to you because you are worried about what might happen, but talking to someone need not necessarily cause an avalanche. They are more likely to listen

and sympathise. That does of course depend on the person though, which is why someone being harassed inevitably thinks carefully about who they might speak to.

### Types of Harasser

As can be seen above, there are many kinds of harassment. There are also different kinds of harasser, which determines what might be effective in trying to deal with them. The relationship between you and the harasser is perhaps the most important factor in the situation:

#### **Harassers outside of work**

This is not easy to deal with, but it is somewhat less complicated because you do not have to work with the harasser, they are not your boss, and there is no professional expectation of you. In this case, you can feel free to talk to your colleagues immediately, who will be concerned for your welfare. *Kocho-senseis/Kachos* command a lot of respect and influence in the community and should want to help you. If safety is a concern, you must speak to other people. Your colleagues can also speak to the police on your behalf if necessary. They will probably see it as their responsibility to protect a colleague in need. You may want to discuss it with your PA first, which is fine.

#### **Grab 'n' runs**

There have been occasions on which a JET is groped in their community by someone who then runs away as quickly as possible. Different people have reacted to this in different ways, ranging from bemusement to sheer bafflement to nervousness. It is a very strange experience indeed and one that understandably causes great concern for the person harassed. Some seem to have 'humourised' the phenomenon, hence the name, perhaps due to a perceived lack of real danger with regard to a one-off occurrence. However, it is always best to be on the safe side. If the perpetrator's identity is unknown, perhaps the best you can do in the situation is speak to others just so they know. It is also a good idea to notify the police, with the help of a Japanese speaker if necessary, though with that alone, the police are unable to actually do anything. Despite that, it is best to let them know for the record, in case the harassment is repeated, in which case the concern becomes greater. If the identity of the harasser is known, perhaps someone at your workplace would be willing to communicate with them on your behalf to ensure that they stop. You should also take extra care for your own safety, as you would back home.

#### **Culture-gap harassers / Non-deliberate harassers**

Sexual harassment can sometimes occur without the harasser even knowing because they are simply not aware that what they are doing constitutes sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is taken far more seriously in Japan than it used to be, but established social rules are slightly different here to what we are used to, so asking someone their measurements for example, may not seem like such an unreasonable thing to do for some. There may also be some who do not take sexual harassment as seriously as others, perhaps due to a generation gap. Others may simply be 'star-struck' by the foreigner and can't stop staring. Nevertheless, there is a good chance that if these people were just made aware that what they are doing makes you feel uncomfortable, they would feel embarrassed and put an immediate stop to it. If you do not feel you can do this by yourself, getting the help of another member of staff to do it tactfully in Japanese may help. Feel free to talk to your PA first, too.

## **Student harassers**

If you are sexually harassed by a student, whether that is just out of curiosity on their part, or in more serious circumstances, there are two options available to you: 1) You can tell them yourself that their behaviour is not acceptable to you. How you phrase it is down to your judgment of the situation. 2) You can speak to another member of staff about it and have them explain to the student that their behaviour is not acceptable. You do not have to accept the behaviour, just because it comes from a student, but also be aware that they are students and it may need to be handled differently. For example, if an adult grabs a female ALT's breasts or a male ALT's genitalia for sexual gratification or amusement, there is absolutely no justification. However, it is more common for this to be done by students (most likely of the same sex as the ALT) out of sheer curiosity, perhaps related to size. They shouldn't do it, but at the same time, they do not necessarily have immoral reasons for doing it. If there are more untoward reasons involved, you should alert another member of staff. Shouting at the student may make things worse and you are not allowed to strike a student.

## **Colleague harassers**

This is both more difficult and more complicated because this is the point at which power relations become difficult. You should speak to your PA to discuss the situation in depth and you should also think about talking to staff members who you feel you can trust. Your PA will most likely want to clarify the situation with you as much as possible before discussing with you ways of dealing with that individual situation. Another staff member may be able to bring the subject up with a higher authority, e.g. your *Kocho-sensei* or *Kacho* who may speak to the harasser privately. Do not cope with this alone.

## **Harassment by superiors**

If you are harassed by one of your bosses, speak to your PA and/or a member of staff who you can trust. A caring colleague may be able to address the problem with others and let the harasser know that what they are doing is unacceptable, while avoiding a conflict. Also, power relations are such that, if the need arises, the issue can be dealt with at a prefectural level via your PA. Your PA will want to discuss the situation with their colleagues and bosses to receive help on working towards a solution. The way this is done may differ from situation to situation. Do not cope with this alone.

## **Harassment by other JETs**

If you are harassed by another JET, many of the same principles apply. The two most important points are to 1) speak to someone else about the problem and 2) clearly communicate your discomfort to the harasser and ask them to stop. In a case where the harassment is repeated, you might consider speaking to your PA about the problem who, depending on the extent of the problem, may offer to speak to the harasser on your behalf. Remember though, there is a chance that your PA knows the harasser, in which case their ability to help you might be compromised (or bolstered). If this is the case, they should first tell you and second offer to refer you to someone else, usually another PA. You could also speak to a CLAIR Programme Co-ordinator, via the JETline. Either way, the resulting pressure that the harasser could experience is probably enough to force them to stop, one would hope.

## A Summary of Strategies:

### **Keep written records**

If you are subjected to sexual harassment, whether it occurs just once, or **especially if it recurs**, it is highly advisable to make a written record. You should be as specific as possible and include the date, time, place, the person(s) involved, what actually happened, witnesses and anything else you can remember. This information would be extremely helpful when addressing the problem; for example, explaining to your supervisor, PA, *Kocho-sensei* or *Kacho*, or even taking legal action. Record-keeping empowers you to deal with the problem better because it enables you to recall events accurately and provides something tangible for the people who can help you. Memory alone is far less reliable.

### **Talk to friends**

Talking to friends can help, but only in a limited way, and depending on who you speak to. Your friends can help by lending a listening ear and support to you, as they would during any difficult time. This is invaluable. However, your friends probably cannot and perhaps should not help you to deal with the situation or work towards a resolution because they are simply not able to. Also, as your friends care about your well-being a great deal, they can tend to react to the situation rather than just listen to you, perhaps getting angry or upset. This is not going to help you and can perhaps make things more stressful for you. So, by all means speak to your friends, as that kind of support is important, but you might want to think about which of your friends you can really confide in and trust to be mature about it.

### **Talk to your PA(s)**

Your PA can help you in a number of ways. Perhaps most important at first is that they can listen to you compassionately, impartially and **confidentially**. Your PA will not tell anyone else about the problem without your permission. Getting the problem off your chest and sharing it with someone who will listen can relieve a lot of stress just by itself.

Your PAs can also act as a 'sounding board' for you to bounce your ideas and opinions off and gain a different perspective. Your PAs can work with you to identify the best options open to you regarding your specific problem.

Your PAs, with your permission, can work with their Japanese counterparts in the International Affairs Division and the Prefectural Board of Education to identify possible solutions and/or in some circumstances to address the harasser directly. Consulting your PA is probably the best way to have the problem addressed at a prefectural level. This will only happen though, if you and your PA(s) decide that it actually is the best course of action.

### **Call the JETline**

The JET line is another way of discussing your problem and seeking advice with someone who understands the factors involved and will listen to your point of view and your situation. CLAIR is well aware of the issues involved with sexual harassment, and offers the same kind of help a PA can, the Programme Co-ordinators who answer the line being made up of mostly ex-CIRs and ex-PAs. They are also people you don't know and who don't know you and so, in some cases, you may find them easier to talk to than people in your prefecture. Programme Co-ordinators are

also represented by both genders equally and by a cross-section of the nationalities that make up JET participants.

### **Talk to colleagues**

Talking to others at work who you can trust, hopefully your supervisor, is sometimes the most effective way to deal with sexual harassment. Depending on the situation, they may be able to: speak to the harasser; get more help by speaking to your *Kocho-sensei* or others; help to ensure your safety at work, *enkai* or elsewhere. Just having someone at work on your side can be a big help, even if it's just temporary while you try other options. It is important that someone else knows what is going on. It is also very helpful to have someone else who can confirm the situation at a later date if necessary.

### **Confront the harasser**

How this is done depends on the situation and, as you can see above, who the harasser is. The main thing though, is that the harasser should be told, in no uncertain terms, that what they are doing makes you uncomfortable and that you want them to stop. This is essential. It may be enough. If not, bringing other people into the equation to confront the harasser is a way of using power relations to put a stop to the harassment. Either way, if the harasser is not asked/told to stop, they probably won't, and in some cases they may not know that you do not like it.

Confronting the harasser does not necessarily mean fronting up to them and shouting or any other aggressive action. It means telling them clearly that what they are doing is unacceptable and it can be done with the help of others in an appropriate and non-threatening way. Either way, it must be done. It is essential to clearly communicate your discomfort.

### **Involve higher authorities**

As has been said, power relations are key to dealing with sexual harassment. If possible, it is best that the problem can be dealt with without involving outsiders. Your colleagues will try to achieve this. However, the issue can be raised at a prefectural level via your PA if the situation requires it. This would mean informing the Prefectural Board of Education and/or the International Affairs Division, who will then try to work to achieve an acceptable outcome where possible. This may or may not be the best way forward, depending on your situation and how you feel. Also, different authorities will respond in different ways. It is up to you and your PA(s) to decide together the best course of action from what is available.

### **Contact the Police / Take Action**

These are possible options, but must be weighed up fully before deciding upon them, as they could bring you extra stress and jeopardize your relations at work. That is not to say don't do it, but it's better to discuss this option fully with your PA and others in a position to help before going ahead. Other, less stressful options are probably also more effective in the long run for protecting **your** interests. Also, be sure to see other materials provided on addressing crimes (forthcoming).

### **In an emergency**

If you are put in a situation where you fear for your safety, the only thing you should worry about is making yourself safe, whatever else may be going on or is expected of you at the time. This

may involve leaving the situation immediately, gaining the attention of others (extremely loudly if necessary), calling the police or calling your supervisor or your PA. It is up to you to judge the situation and decide the best course of action, but remember that your only responsibility is to yourself. If you are sexually assaulted, contact your PA and/or a friend/someone else who can help as soon as possible. You should also think about contacting your supervisor or another colleague, and the police.

## **'Coping' Strategies**

While the advice above concentrates on actually confronting the problem, it is not that easy to do and if the people around you are unwilling to help, it can prove frustrating to try to address it. JETs who experience sexual harassment or stalkers also adopt day to day coping strategies that, while not necessarily confronting the problem, have been found to alleviate it. The following is a collection of advice from a number of JETs and other sources. It is slightly female-oriented:

- Be polite but firm if someone is being rude. Point it out. Often, people are unaware they are being offensive. If they know it's wrong, then they shouldn't do it, and you are perfectly justified in telling them that.
- Look harassers (teachers in work looking at you in a sexual way etc) straight in the eye letting them know you are aware of what they're doing and you're not happy about it.
- Go to female members of staff for advice but beware of cultural differences. What we perceive as sexual harassment can be flattery/no big deal to them.
- Work clothes: wear Japan-appropriate clothes to work, even if it is not what you would wear to work at home. It's easier in the long run. Remember, what we might think is appropriate is different to what Japanese might. Our bodies are different to Japanese and so anything tight that shows our bodies may be considered sexy to them. Showing your midriff/the small of your back (even if only when sitting down) is a serious no-no. Showing your upper arms is also not a good idea. Do not wear low-cut tops or short skirts (your definition of 'low cut' or 'short' may be different to that of your colleagues). We are teachers, not students, and when in work we should always be professional. Professional attire here is slightly different to back home.
- At enkais, don't get too drunk. Beware of your surroundings/drunken staff members etc. Try to keep a distance/your own personal space, for example, by putting your glass between you and the colleague you are speaking to, or by folding your arms over your chest/putting your elbows on the table in front of you. This is not polite enkaï etiquette, but neither is harassment. Besides, this usually occurs when everybody is drunk, so etiquette is not necessarily that closely followed. If you feel uncomfortable, make it known to a sober/not so drunk member of staff. Move away from the harasser. This can be as easy as making excuses to go and pour someone else's drink, preferably someone who sympathises, or going to the toilet. These are all things that can protect you.
- Outside of work, follow your instincts. If you feel in danger, run/scream/get to safety by whatever means. The best option if possible is to go straight to a public space where there are other people. If you're being followed/stalked, don't be nice or try to be "Japanese" about it. Be rude and loud. Shout "fire" (*kaji da!*) as, unfortunately, this is often said to attract more attention than "help!" Back home, rape crisis centres say that an attacker will often not bother with women who will cause trouble/ be loud/ be able to identify them. Also, apparently women with pony tails/ loose clothing/hoods etc are targets as they are easy to grab. People carrying a lot of bags etc. are also less able to defend themselves. Avoid walking down dark streets, but if you have to, walk briskly with your head up. It's also a good idea to vary your route home.

- An umbrella can be used to protect yourself (it doesn't have to be raining to carry one). When walking home, some girls carry their keys in their hand. If in danger, do whatever you have to do. Rules go out the window. Trust your instinct.

## Useful Expressions

Leave me alone/Stop it.

Stop following me!

You shouldn't do that!

Don't touch me!

I'll call the police!

That's sexual harassment.

I don't want to answer (polite)

None of your business!

Pervert!

Please help!

Fire!

*Yamete (kudasai)*

*Tsuite konai de (kudasai)*

*Dame yo!*

*Sawaranaide (kudasai)*

*Keisatsu o yobu yo!*

*Seku hara desu yo.*

*Noo comento desu.*

*Kankei nai desho!*

*Chikan!*

*Tasukete kudasai!*

*Kaji da!*