

Guidelines for Handling Offensive Actions in GEUS

- including bullying, sexual harassment, and other offensive actions

Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to outline how GEUS, as a workplace, acts in cases of offensive actions, including bullying and harassment. These guidelines aim to create clear frameworks for handling offensive actions, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment where all employees can feel secure.

Based on GEUS's goals and values, the focus is on how to prevent offensive actions in GEUS.

The guidelines clarify:

- The responsibilities of employees, managers, and representatives in preventing offensive actions when experienced
- How offensive actions are addressed if they occur
- Who to approach when experiencing offensive actions

With these guidelines, the hope is to break down and eliminate taboos about offensive actions, including bullying and sexual harassment.

Definition of Offensive Actions in GEUS

GEUS follows the Danish Working Environment Authority's definition of offensive actions: Offensive actions occur when one or more persons in the workplace subject one or more others to bullying, sexual harassment, or other degrading behavior at work. The behavior must be perceived as degrading by the affected individuals. It is irrelevant whether the actions stem from thoughtlessness or an intentional desire to offend. The perception of the affected person is central.

Offensive actions at the workplace can occur between employees, between employees and their leaders, or between employees and external parties. Offensive actions can involve active behavior or omissions and may include:

- withholding essential work-related information
- hurtful remarks or unpleasant teasing
- unjustified removal or reduction of responsibilities and tasks
- gossip or exclusion from social and professional communities
- hostility or silence in response to questions or attempts to engage in conversation

- demeaning of job roles, work efforts, or competencies
- offensive conversations or written messages
- excessive monitoring of work

For full details, please refer to the [Danish Working Environment Authority's guidelines on offensive actions, including bullying and sexual harassment \(in Danish\)](#).

Offensive actions are not limited to physical occurrences but can also happen via electronic media, such as SMS or social platforms.

On Bullying

Bullying occurs when one or more persons in the workplace repeatedly and over time—or grossly and repeatedly—subject one or more others to offensive actions. The actions must be perceived as degrading by the affected individuals. Bullying occurs when the targeted individuals cannot effectively defend themselves against the behavior.

On Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature intended to or resulting in violating a person's dignity, especially by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or uncomfortable atmosphere.

Sexual harassment may include:

- unwanted touching
- unsolicited verbal advances to engage in sexual relations
- inappropriate jokes and comments
- intrusive questions on sexual matters
- displaying pornographic material

Offensive Behavior is Unacceptable at GEUS

In accordance with GEUS' Work Environment Policy, offensive behavior is deemed unacceptable, and no form of offensive behavior, including bullying and sexual harassment, is tolerated in the workplace.

At GEUS, it is expected that everyone works to stop offensive actions immediately after they occur for the first time. If offensive actions are experienced, both management and employees are obligated to address them.

How to Prevent Offensive Behavior at GEUS

Preventing offensive behavior—including bullying and sexual harassment—is a shared responsibility.

At the individual and group level:

All employees—individually and as a group—are responsible for ensuring that offensive behavior does not occur at GEUS. You can help prevent offensive actions by following these tips:

- Do not talk behind the backs of your colleagues or managers.
- Be aware that actions are perceived differently by each individual. What one considers a joke, a “tough but friendly” tone, or humor, may be perceived as hurtful by another.
- Stop rumors, gossip, and backbiting.
- Resolve conflicts in a constructive manner.
- Know and follow GEUS’ guidelines against offensive behavior.
- Participate in activities that promote well-being.

Management:

Management at GEUS also has a responsibility to prevent offensive actions in departments or across the organization. This can be done by:

- Taking responsibility for creating a good work environment.
- Addressing offensive behavior as a topic of importance.
- Clearly opposing offensive actions, both generally and specifically.
- Taking responsibility for clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities.
- Ensuring clear and effective communication.
- Resolving conflicts immediately and constructively.
- Being attentive to any signals of offensive behavior.

If You Experience Offensive Behavior - Clearly address offensive actions!

Everyone has an obligation to intervene and oppose offensive behavior when they observe it from a colleague, manager, or partner, or when personal boundaries are crossed.

All must respect when a colleague or anyone else objects to an unwanted action—even if the person committing the action considers it harmless.

Employee:

- As an employee, you are responsible for taking action if you experience offensive behavior, including bullying and sexual harassment. If you feel your personal

boundaries have been crossed, you should immediately object and inform your manager about the incident.

- If you find it difficult to object or no action is taken after reporting, you should involve your manager, HR, a union representative, safety representative, or someone else you trust. They are responsible for addressing and resolving the issue.

It is a good idea to document your experiences related to offensive actions to help you remember what was said or what occurred. This can also aid in processing the situation. Speak with those close to you and consider using GEUS' crisis assistance services if needed.

Colleague:

- If you witness offensive actions as a colleague, you should assist by intervening in the situation.
- It is also important to listen to the person who feels offended, helping them process the issue and/or addressing it with the person responsible for the behavior.
- If you feel unable to resolve the problem or stop the offensive actions, involve a manager, HR, or a union/safety representative.

Manager:

- As a manager, if you become aware of offensive actions, you must take the matter seriously, intervene immediately, and signal that offensive behavior will not be tolerated.
- You are obligated to conduct a thorough investigation of the situation, including dialogues with both the offender and the affected individual.
- Managers can seek help and guidance from HR if deemed necessary.

Union/Safety Representatives/HR:

- Union representatives are required to offer advice, guidance, and support to those who have experienced offensive actions, as well as to those accused of such behavior.
- Union representatives should notify management—potentially in an anonymized form.

Who Can You Approach?

If you feel offended or witness offensive behavior—whether it is a new occurrence or ongoing—you can contact:

- Your manager
- HR
- A union representative
- A safety representative
- Someone you trust

The person you approach will ensure the department manager becomes involved, who will then take over the process. If a manager is responsible for the offensive behavior, HR will handle the further process.

How Cases of Offensive Actions Are Handled

It is essential to respond when offensive actions occur. Only by bringing it to light can management address the specific case. Cases of offensive behavior vary, and each case must be handled individually. Depending on the nature of the case, the handling may differ, but overall, management will address it as follows:

1. If it is deemed that the case can be resolved through dialogue between the two parties, the manager will meet with each party to clarify the situation and issues.
2. If this is not sufficient, a formal process may be necessary, following employment-related guidelines. These guidelines ensure both the victim and the accused have the opportunity to present their side during the process and can appeal any decision made.

Formal Process:

If a formal process is initiated:

- The manager will discuss the situation with the complainant to obtain a detailed account of the events, including who, where, and when the offensive behavior occurred.
- The manager will present the details to the accused to determine whether they share the same understanding of the situation.
- The manager must ensure both parties feel heard and that fair treatment is given.
- After the investigation, management will decide whether to involve union representatives further. In some cases, witnesses may be called to provide their account of the incident.
- Management will subsequently decide whether to issue a formal warning or implement employment-related consequences.

The manager must document the sequence of events and ensure all steps of the process are recorded.

Consequences of Offensive Actions

Depending on the severity and nature of the offense, employment-related consequences may include reassignment, warning, dismissal, or, in severe cases, immediate termination.

False accusations of offensive behavior are also unacceptable and may result in employment-related consequences.

Those affected by offensive behavior may be offered reassignment or psychological support if needed.