



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## What is a bias-related incident?

Bias-related incidents refer to language, images or behaviors that demonstrate bias against another person based on but not limited to his or her membership in a group, based on race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, or an individual's particular characteristics, role, or behavior.

Expression of ideas or points of view that may be offensive or inflammatory to some, may not necessarily be a bias-related incident. The College does value freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas. This value of openness protects controversial ideas, but it does not protect harassment or expression of bias or harassment aimed at individuals that violate college policy.

## What is harassment?

When these acts are intended to harm an individual or have the purpose or effect of unreasonably or substantially interfering with an individual's safety and security by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or working environment they can be defined as harassment. These acts defined as harassment may be based on a person's identity characteristics or they may not.

## What are some examples of bias-related incidents or harassment?

Depending on the totality of the circumstances, writing a racial epithet in erasable marker on someone's dry-erase board, making fun of another person because of his or her language or accent, or making insulting comments about someone's traditional manner of dress or geographic origin are hypothetical examples of a bias-related incident. Additional examples include stalking or threatening a person, sending unwanted or intimidating packages, letters, computer messages, text messages, telegrams, or phone calls, particularly if the intent is to harm or intimidate.

## **What is the difference between discrimination and bias-related incidents?**

Unlawful discrimination refers to specific conduct prohibited by law that unfairly treats people differently because of their characteristic or perceived characteristics that the law deems to be unrelated to merit. An example of unlawful discrimination would be to deny membership into a group because a person is Muslim.

Bias is a preconceived negative opinion or attitude about a group of people who possess common physical characteristic or cultural experiences. An example of a bias incident, would be writing racist or homophobic graffiti on the door of a student's room.

Unlawful discrimination often results from bias. Bias-related incidents, however, do not always result in unfair treatment that violates nondiscrimination laws.

**If you are not sure if you experienced bias/harassment and/or would like to discuss the incident, please contact one of the following:**

\* Student Affairs Office [696-6220](tel:696-6220)

\* Department of Multicultural Life [696-6243](tel:696-6243)

\* Counseling Center [696-6275](tel:696-6275)

\* Center for Religious and Spiritual Life – [696-6298](tel:696-6298)

\* a trusted member of the Macalester staff or faculty

# What will the Macalester College Harassment Committee (MCHC) do if I report an intolerant act?

- \* Meet with you promptly
- \* Treat you and your concern with respect and sensitivity
- \* Discuss your options
- \* Provide campus and community resources and support
- \* Communicate alert and information as appropriate
- \* Gather and preserve evidence
- \* Investigate case as appropriate
- \* Make a recommendation for appropriate action

# What can I do to create a culture of inclusion and respect at Macalester?

- \* Speak out when jokes or comments are made that are hateful or demean others
- \* If you witness or experience discrimination, harassment, bias motivated incidents, report the behavior
- \* Examine your own behavior and consider how it may affect others in the community. Take steps to understand what motivates you and how you can help create an affirming, supportive environment for all people.
- \* Attend programs, lectures, workshops, etc. that increase your knowledge and understanding of people different from you.
- \* Educate yourself on bias motivated incidents by visiting resources such as <http://www.stophate.org/> or the Southern Poverty Law Center at <http://www.splcenter.org/>

# How can I arrange an educational program on this topic for my campus department or student organization?

Student Affairs Office – [696-6220](tel:696-6220)

Center for Religious and Spiritual Life – [696-6298](tel:696-6298)

Campus Programs – [696-6644](tel:696-6644)

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