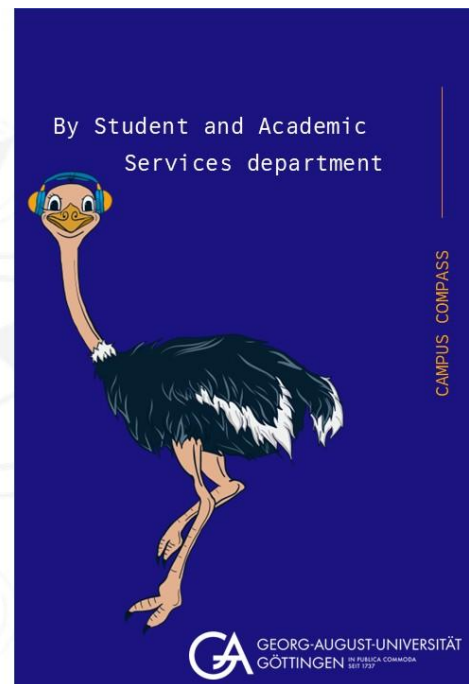
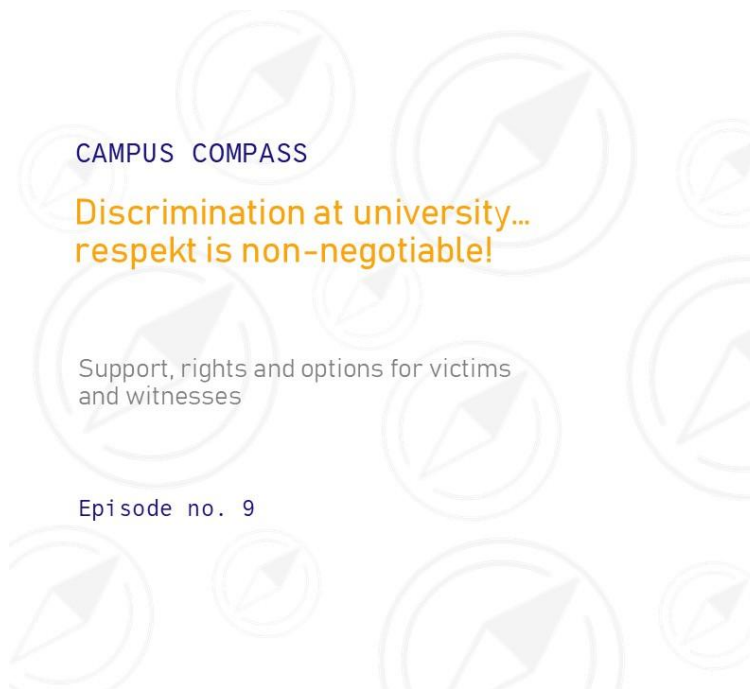


Campus Compass – Episode 09 – Discrimination at university – respect is non-negotiable



Welcome to Campus Compass - your guide to university life.

Hello and welcome back. I'm your host, Paulina, and today we're talking about an important topic: discrimination at university. Because one thing is definite: respect is non-negotiable.

Before we get started, if this topic might be emotionally charged or triggering, listen to this episode with a trusted person. And remember: you are not alone! There is support out there and I'm introducing you to it today in this episode.

Have you ever observed discrimination at university or have you even been affected yourself? In 2022, a study by the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW) found that around a quarter of students have experienced discrimination during their studies and almost half have observed discrimination against others. Disheartening, isn't it?

That's why we want to dedicate this episode to the topic of discrimination and, above all, look at what we can all do to make the university a largely discrimination-free space where we treat each other with respect and do not allow discrimination.

Discrimination – what exactly is it?

Discrimination is understood to mean direct or indirect disadvantage based on the attribution of a protected characteristic and not objectively justified.

- Protected characteristics according to the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG): ethnic origin, gender, religion/belief, disability, age, sexual identity
- University of Göttingen adds: nationality, language, socio-economic status, marital status, care responsibilities, physical appearance

Let's start with a definition of the term: what exactly is discrimination?

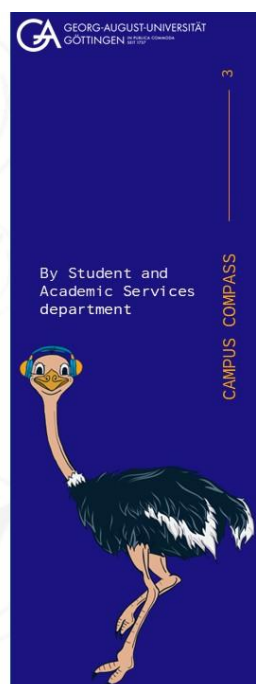
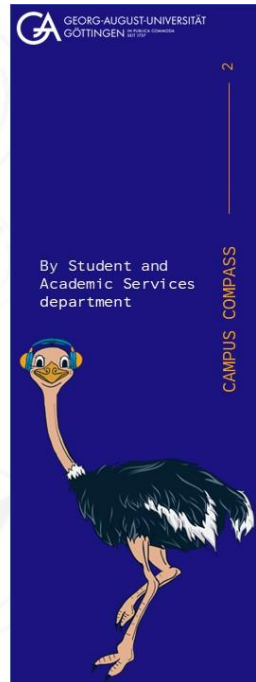
Discrimination is defined as direct or indirect disadvantage that is based on the attribution of a protected characteristic and is not objectively justified.

The General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) lists ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual identity or orientation as protected characteristics. These characteristics are considered particularly worthy of protection as they are an important part of the personality and are often used to maintain social inequality and power structures.

The University's understanding of discrimination is even broader and also includes, for example, nationality, language, socio-economic status, marital status, caring responsibilities and physical appearance.

Discrimination – what exactly is it?

- Attribution of a protected characteristic is sufficient; whether it is objectively true is secondary
- **Direct discrimination:** a person is treated worse in concrete terms
- **Indirect discrimination:** a supposedly neutral rule has a disadvantageous effect on certain groups
- Intent is irrelevant; the decisive factor is the disadvantageous effect

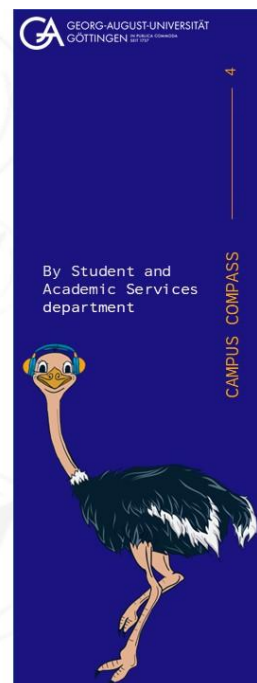


Attribution of a protected characteristic means that it is not a question of whether the characteristic is actually fulfilled, but rather that the disadvantage occurs because the characteristic is assumed or attributed.

Direct discrimination means that one person or group is treated worse than another person or group. With indirect discrimination, on the other hand, we look at structures such as rules or regulations that are formulated neutrally, but nevertheless disadvantage groups or individuals in their application. And: No distinction is made as to whether discrimination is intentional. The decisive factor is that a disadvantageous effect occurs for those affected.

Forms of discrimination

- According to Section 3 (3) AGG, harassment also counts as discrimination if the dignity of the person concerned is violated
 - e.g. through a hostile, humiliating or intimidating environment
- Discrimination manifests itself in the form of insults, verbal abuse, threats, hostility, sexual harassment, bullying, exclusion, physical violence, stalking, disadvantageous grading/assessment or damage to property
- Instructions to discriminate are also considered discrimination



Discrimination is not always easily recognisable and can take many different forms.

According to the AGG (Section 3 (3)), harassment also constitutes discrimination if it is aimed at violating the dignity of those affected and creates an environment characterised by intimidation, hostility, humiliation, degradation or insults.

Discrimination can therefore also manifest itself as insults, verbal abuse, threats, hostility, sexualised harassment, bullying, exclusion, physical violence, stalking, less favourable grading/assessment or damage to property. And the instruction to discriminate by third parties is therefore also discrimination.

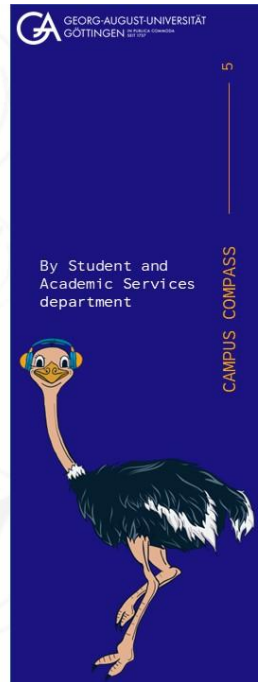
That was quite a lot of terms. So here are some examples to make everything a little easier to understand.

EXAMPLE 1 – Language or origin

- A student's language skills are not sufficient to enable them to perform to their full potential in an examination, even though they have understood the content
- Is it discriminatory if the examination cannot be taken in English?
- The language of instruction in the degree programme and in the module is German → there is no discrimination because it is objectively justified that the examination is conducted in German
- The language of instruction is specified as German and English, but the teacher does not want to take on the extra work of conducting two examinations → the disadvantage is not justified

Let's move on to the first example: If a student's German language skills are not sufficient to pass an examination in the specified examination language, then one could discuss whether there is discrimination on the basis of the person's origin. After all, language skills say nothing about whether the examination material has been understood. However, it is objectively justified not to take the examination in English instead if the language of instruction in the degree programme and the corresponding module is German. There is therefore no discrimination in this example.

The situation is different if the language of instruction is German and English, but the teacher refuses to offer an examination or support in English if there are many German-speaking students and only two international students. It is not an objective justification that international students are only a minority or that it makes more work for lecturers - if a module is explicitly offered in English, this must also be implemented. There would therefore be unjustified discrimination if the teacher only offered the examination or support in German.



EXAMPLE 2 – Gender

- Teacher repeatedly makes derogatory comments about women in lectures and afterwards to individual students
- The mere denigration on the basis of gender already constitutes discrimination in this case
- Objective assessment must be ensured for academic performance and examinations; assessment may have to be carried out by an objective third party

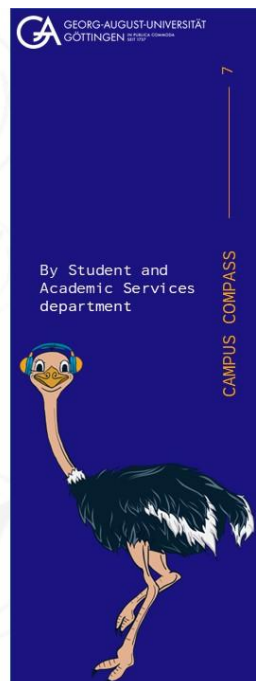
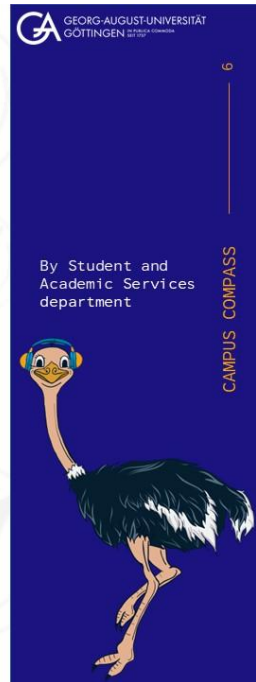
Example 2: A teacher repeatedly makes derogatory comments about women during the course of the semester in their lectures and afterwards to individual students.

Disparagement on the basis of gender alone constitutes discrimination. In the case of subsequent coursework or examinations, emphasis should be placed on ensuring that the assessments are nevertheless objective. If necessary, the assessment could be carried out by an objective third party. Appropriate regulations would have to be made for this.

EXAMPLE 3 – Religion

- Exams can take place from Monday to Saturday
- In Judaism, Saturday (Sabbath) is a day of rest → For Jewish students who actively practise their religion, attending exams on a Saturday poses a problem.
- If no alternative date is offered even upon request, this could constitute indirect discrimination on the basis of religion.

And the third example: Examinations can take place from Mondays to Saturdays. For Jewish students who actively practise their religion, attendance on a Saturday poses a problem. If no alternative date is offered upon request, this could constitute indirect discrimination on the basis of religion.



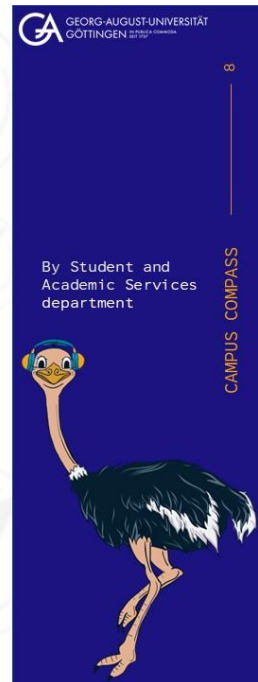
I could give many more examples, but discrimination is sometimes difficult to recognise, the issue remains complex and experiences of discrimination are individual, so we cannot anticipate everything with examples. Have you experienced or observed discrimination? Do you have questions? Or are you unsure? Then get some advice!

Anti-discrimination counselling at the University of Göttingen

- University offers independent counselling for anyone who has experienced or witnessed discrimination, or who has been accused of discrimination
- Available to: students (including UMG), teaching staff, employees
- Service is free of charge, confidential and, if desired, anonymous
- Counselling is offered by Meike Gottschlich

Contact and information:

www.uni-goettingen.de/antidiskriminierungsberatung



Because the University does not tolerate discrimination and because experiencing discrimination can sometimes have serious consequences for those affected and is not always easy for observers to process, the University has instituted an anti-discrimination counselling service. Students, lecturers and administrative staff can seek advice there if they have experienced discrimination themselves or observed it in others, or if they simply have questions about it.

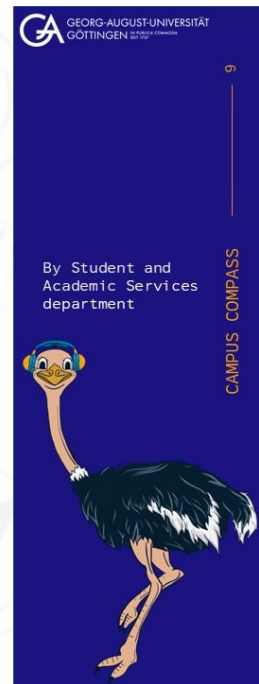
And: the anti-discrimination counselling service also advises people who have been accused of discriminatory behaviour in order to help them deal with the situation professionally.

Anti-discrimination counselling is offered by Meike Gottschlich since 2025 and is part of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Office. Information and contact details can be found on the website: www.uni-goettingen.de/antidiskriminierungsberatung

The counselling service is free of charge, impartial and confidential. Anonymous counselling is also possible. Counselling is available by appointment: in person, online or for a phone call - whatever you prefer.

Options for action by anti-discrimination counselling service

- The counselling supports you in...
 - ...putting your experiences into perspective
 - ...developing possible courses of action
 - ...dealing with stressful feelings
- Together, we will discuss...
 - ...what further steps you would like to take, or not take
 - ...whether, for example, discussions, complaints or clarification procedures are appropriate
- The decision is entirely yours; you will not be pressured into anything
- The consultation is confidential, open-ended and impartial for those seeking advice... even if you are unsure whether it was discrimination.



The counselling focuses primarily on the individual needs of those seeking advice. Anti-discrimination counselling provides support in classifying what has happened and advises on possible ways of dealing with it, including complaint options. Even if you are not sure whether what you experienced was actually discriminatory, you can seek advice.

Individual needs are always taken into account - whether you decide to have a conversation or make an official complaint, or try to get an apology, is entirely up to you. You will not be pressured into anything. If desired, those affected will also be accompanied or even represented. Possible outcomes may include agreements for future meetings or other forms of communication, apologies or further discussions with those responsible to suggest measures. In any case, only what has been agreed beforehand will happen and nothing against your will.

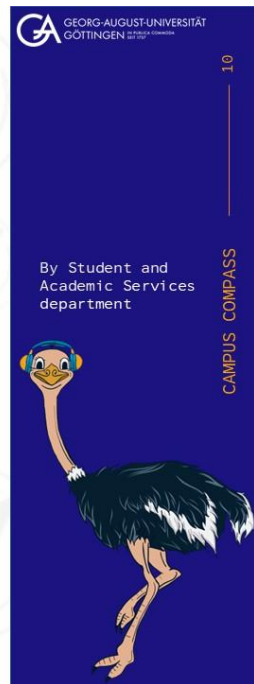
The anti-discrimination counselling service is also connected to important other confidential contact points within and outside the university, so that support from many different experts can be arranged if necessary.

In addition, the anti-discrimination counselling service works preventively and organises information events, workshops and other activities to raise awareness and professionalise respectful and understanding interaction with one another.

Recommendations for action for those affected

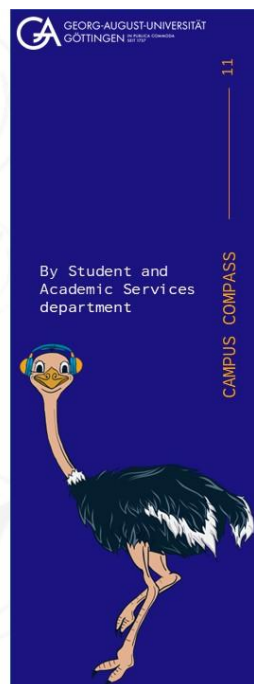
- Talk to people you trust, such as friends, family or teachers.
- Contact a counselling centre.
- Collect and save information about the situation, e.g. by keeping a log of your memories → template available on the anti-discrimination counselling website.
- If necessary, talk to people who have observed something and ask them for support.

If you are affected, seek support and, if possible, talk to people you know, such as friends, family or teachers, about your experiences. Contact a counselling centre. Collect and save information about the situation, e.g. by keeping a memory log. Speak to people who may have witnessed something and ask them for support.



Recommendations for action for observers

- Show moral courage when you feel safe:
 - Address the behaviour, do not attempt to judge the person
 - Clearly state what was not acceptable
- Important: **Do not put yourself in danger!**
 - In the event of aggressive behaviour call security (**0551 39-20000**) or the police (**112**)
- Support the affected person:
 - Be present and offer support
 - Provide your contact details (e.g. as a witness)
- Seek counselling yourself if the incident is affecting you



And what if you observe discrimination?

If you have the confidence to do so, then show civil courage. Firstly, assess the situation and think about what you could do. Intervene, ask those affected if they would like support and name the misbehaviour if it is clear. Try to assess the specific behaviour or statements made, not the people involved.

But never put yourself in danger! If the atmosphere is aggressive, you can also call security or even the police. You can contact the security service via the university's Emergency Helpline and Fault-reporting Service on 0551 39-20000. In case of acute danger to yourself or others, call the police on 110.

Otherwise, speak to the person concerned, offer your support and, if necessary, give them your contact details in case they need help later. Make them aware of the anti-discrimination counselling service and make use of it yourself if you are concerned about the incident.

Contact for individual advice

Anti-discrimination counselling service Equal Opportunities and Diversity Unit

Goßlerstr. 9, 37073 Göttingen

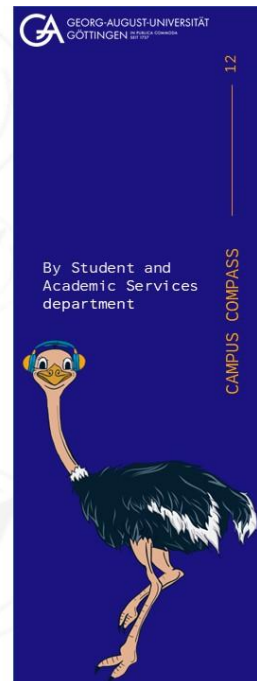
E-mail: adb@uni-goettingen.de

Website: www.uni-goettingen.de/antidiskriminierungsberatung

Phone: +49 (0) 551 39-26665

Arrange a consultation appointment in advance

Many thanks to Ms Gottschlich, responsible for anti-discrimination counselling, for her support with the research.



Finally, here are all the contact details for the anti-discrimination counselling service, which is part of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Office. For counselling, it is best to make an appointment.

Many thanks to Meike Gottschlich, responsible for the anti-discrimination counselling service, for researching this episode.

And remember: respect is non-negotiable, neither today nor tomorrow. So take care of yourselves and each other. Your host Paulina

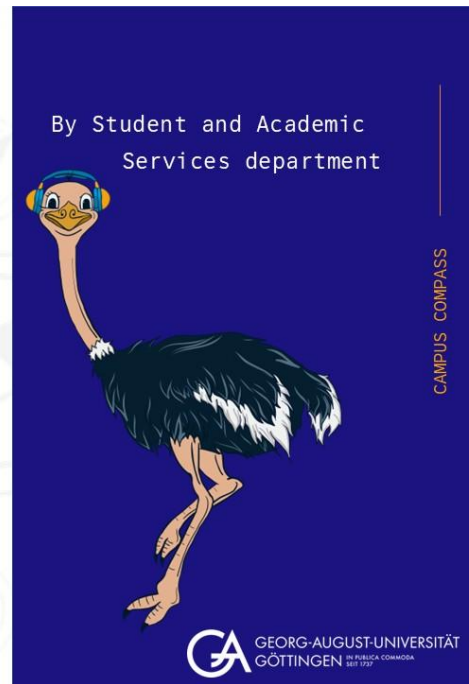
CAMPUS COMPASS

THANKS FOR LISTENING!

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

www.uni-goettingen.de/kritik

OR SIMPLY SCAN THE QR-CODE.



Thank you for listening. I hope this episode was helpful to you. Campus Compass was launched by Silja-Katharina Haufe, the Ombudsperson for students and responsible for complaints management at Göttingen University. If you would like to find out more about her counselling and her work, simply listen to our episode no. 1 or visit the website. Simply scan the QR code or enter <http://www.uni-goettingen.de/kritik>. See you next time - at Campus Compass - your guide to university life.