

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING AMONG STUDENTS



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<p>Summary:</p> <p>This document defines what is expected of all members of the University community in relation to supporting students who feel they are experiencing harassment and/or bullying, and when responding to allegations of harassment or bullying.</p>	

Harassment and bullying among students

Guidelines for Students and Staff

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. RESPONSIBILITIES
2. WHAT IS HARASSMENT AND BULLYING?
3. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH HARASSMENT AND BULLYING
4. CONFIDENTIALITY
5. FOR STAFF
6. IF YOU ARE ACCUSED OF BULLYING OR HARASSMENT

1. RESPONSIBILITIES

The University is committed to ensuring a working and learning environment in which the dignity of individuals is respected. All members of the University community are expected to:

- a. Treat everyone with respect and dignity
- b. Not discriminate against others, or encourage others to do so
- c. Not harass, abuse, bully or intimidate others
- d. Not victimise anyone who has made a complaint of bullying or harassment
- e. Take appropriate action if they become aware of acts of bullying or harassment

2. WHAT IS HARASSMENT AND BULLYING?

2.1 Harassment and bullying can overlap, but the important thing is to address them rather than worry about the precise definitions. As a guide, however, harassment under the Equality Act 2010 is defined as:

- a. unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a person that is related to age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation
- b. unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment)
- c. treating a person less favourably than another person because they have been the subject of, or have reacted to, sexual harassment or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment

2.2 Harassment is therefore often related to discrimination. It can be face to face, on the telephone or in written and electronic communication. It may be unwanted physical contact or verbal remarks, offensive or stereotypical comments, persistent unwanted contact, offensive body language, repeated exclusion from activities and conversations which would normally be inclusive. This is an illustrative rather than exhaustive list.

2.3 Bullying does not have a legal definition but can be similar to harassment in many ways, except that it is not equality-related. Bullying is usually offensive and unwanted behaviour which violates dignity and creates a hostile, intimidating environment or has the effect of humiliating or undermining someone. Bullying can be done by an individual or a group and can involve the abuse of authority.

2.4 Bullying behaviour can include shouting at people, persistently ignoring or excluding them, humiliating or inappropriately criticising them, pressuring someone to behave in ways they do not want to behave, using threatening body language or playing practical jokes in order to cause distress. Persistent harassment and bullying often affect a student's ability to concentrate on study and to function at their full potential, and it can also have a negative effect on health.

3. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

3.1 There is no need to put up with harassment and bullying. Action can be taken formally and informally. At both stages it is helpful to keep a note, including dates and times and a description of the behaviour and its impact on you. You should make a note of any witnesses to what has happened, and keep copies of any relevant information, whether paper or electronic.

3.2 Informal Procedure:

3.2.1 Resolving matters informally is usually the best way to start. This can lead to the behaviour stopping and things being resolved quickly. The perpetrator can be unaware of their behaviour and willing to change if it is pointed out to them.

- a. If you feel you can, tell the person that their behaviour has offended you and explain as clearly as you can why this is the case. You can speak to the person on your own or you can ask someone to support you; a friend, or someone in the Student Union or a Student Adviser in Student Services can help.
- b. You can ask someone to talk to the person on your behalf; as before, this can be a Student Adviser, someone in the Student Union or another member of University staff that you trust.
- c. If you are in Halls or University Managed Accommodation you can seek help and support from your Residential Assistant, Housing Advisors or the Housing Managers on and off campus. They are able to arrange meetings at which they can be present to talk through issues where they are arising with flat/house mates. The Site Stewarding Team is also able to be supportive and Site Stewards will listen, signpost and report as necessary on matters for relevant teams to follow up.
- d. You can seek support and advice from a Student Adviser in Student Services. In most cases they will recommend an informal conversation with the person you feel is bullying you and can help you think through how to do this. They can arrange a meeting with you and the person you feel is bullying you with a member of the Student Advice team also present. They can also talk you through other options such as going through the Formal Procedure (below).

3.2.2 It can often make people anxious to think of talking directly to the person they feel has bullied or harassed them. However, it is often a very positive way of resolving things and well worth trying as a first step. However if you try it and nothing changes, or you feel it is too serious to be dealt with informally, then the Formal Procedure is the next step.

3.3 Formal Procedure:

The formal route to address harassment and/or bullying by another student is through the University's Disciplinary Regulations which can be found on the Website:

<http://www.winchester.ac.uk/Freedomofinformation/Publicdocuments/Documents/Student%20Disciplinary%20Regulations.pdf>).

3.3.1 The University of Winchester takes harassment and bullying very seriously. If a formal

complaint is upheld it can result in sanctions being applied up to and including dismissal or exclusion from the University. Consideration will also be given to how best to manage the continuing work and study needs of the student who had brought the complaint.

3.3.2 In extreme cases the University will take advice from the Police who in cases of harassment may, having taken a statement from the victim, issue a warning notice or injunction, which if disregarded can lead to community service or imprisonment.

3.3.3 If you are unsure whether to take up the informal or the formal procedure you can talk the situation through in confidence with a Student Adviser in Student Services.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

Students or staff involved in the formal or informal procedures are required to keep the information confidential. The other people who need to know are those who need to support or progress the actions necessary to stop the harassment or bullying. Confidentiality at this stage protects both the person making the complaint and the reputation of the person being complained about, prior to any finding. Exceptions to confidentiality may occur if there is a risk of serious harm involved where disclosure may help to keep someone safe.

5. FOR STAFF

5.1 Should you witness harassment or bullying behaviour, or where alleged harassment or bullying is brought to your attention, you should consider taking some action. You are responsible for advising students accused of bullying that their behaviour is considered inappropriate and is causing offence. It is important to establish the facts, particularly as in certain cases disciplinary action may result.

5.2 It is advisable, where possible, to bring the two parties together in order to establish the consequences of bullying and to agree future standards of behaviour and conduct. With the permission of the parties involved, you may request the assistance of Student Services, or refer the matter to them.

6. IF YOU ARE ACCUSED OF BULLYING OR HARASSMENT

The University will also offer support and advice to those accused of harassment and bullying through Student Advisers, the Wellbeing Services and the Student Union. If the person you seek advice or support from is involved in the investigation they will refer you to another source of help.