Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour - Guidance for Students

1. Introduction
The University is committed to providing a positive experience for all students, where individuals are treated with courtesy and consideration, where difference is valued and diversity respected. As members of the University community, we expect the highest standards of behaviour from our students, whether on University premises or elsewhere.

All members of the University should be aware of their own behaviour and how it impacts on others. Any complaints of unacceptable behaviour made by students will be taken seriously and, if substantiated, may provide grounds for action under the Student Disciplinary Regulations or the Conduct Procedure for Members of Staff (Ordinance 28) as appropriate.

2. What constitutes unacceptable behaviour?
Unacceptable behaviour may involve actions, words or physical gestures that could reasonably be perceived to be the cause of another person’s distress or discomfort. This behaviour does not necessarily have to be face-to-face, and may take many forms such as written, telephone, text or e-mail communications, or social media. Some examples are included below, but this list is by no means exhaustive:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour, such as shouting or personal insults
- Spreading malicious rumours or gossip
- Unwanted physical contact, including groping
- Offensive comments or body language
- Displaying offensive material or graffiti relating to an individual
- Making threats or promises in return for sexual favours
- Innuendo or spreading gossip based on sexual orientation
- Inappropriate initiation ceremonies
- Using social or other on-line media to communicate negative, abusive, and harmful statements against students, staff and the University

The Students Union operates a zero tolerance to sexual harassment policy. The University has issued a statement on a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and harassment.

Any allegations of criminal acts – such as physical assault, rape or sexual assault - should be reported to the Police immediately.

Remember that this guidance does not only apply to how people behave whilst on University premises – members of the University are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times. If you begin to feel at any time as if you are being singled out, ganged up on, threatened, or you are feeling uncomfortable or upset at the way somebody is treating you, it’s really important to speak to someone. You should be aware that you are also legally protected against discriminatory language, behaviour or action related to any of the’ protected characteristics’ as set out in the Equality Act 2010 – these characteristics are defined by law as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation.
3. **Confidentiality**
If information is to be kept confidential, you must make this clear to the person to whom any complaint is made. You should understand that in exceptional circumstances it may not be possible for confidentiality to be respected, for instance where a criminal offence has been disclosed. You should also understand that in some circumstances the demand for confidentiality may make it difficult for the University to assist you with your complaint.

4. **What should you do if you experience unacceptable behaviour?**

4.1 **You could try to resolve the situation informally...**
Wherever possible, if you believe that you are being subjected to any form of unacceptable behaviour you should take personal action to resolve the situation in the first instance as follows:

- Try to speak directly to the person responsible for the behaviour – they may genuinely not know that they are acting in a way that’s unacceptable to you. If they don’t respond to this, or if you feel unable to approach them, then it is vital you take the matter further.

- Go and talk to someone in your Students’ Union. The [Just Ask Team](#) in the Students’ Union building offers independent advice and support to students on these issues. Some forms of behaviour can be very subtle and it can often help to talk through your experiences with a third party.

- Discuss the issue with your Personal Tutor, Supervisor, Senior Tutor, Warden (if the issue relates to behaviour in Halls) or other appropriate member of staff – basically anybody who you feel comfortable with – to discuss ways in which the situation can be resolved with their support and/or involvement.

4.2 **Or you could make a formal complaint...**
If you feel unable to take any personal action or if the matter remains unresolved through the informal means outlined above, you can complete the appropriate Student Complaint Form or put your complaint in writing and submit it electronically by email to the Student Complaints Officer based in the University Secretary’s Office who will then determine how your complaint will be progressed. The Student Complaints Officer will contact you as soon as possible, normally within ten working days of receiving your complaint.

Allegations against individuals who are not students or staff at the University – for example, agency or contract workers - may not be able to be dealt with under this policy as they are not subject to discipline under the University’s internal processes. In these circumstances, you will be advised of other possible ways to pursue your complaint. University services such as the Just Ask Team or the [Student Counselling Service](#) can provide support to students in such circumstances.

5. **You’ve made a formal complaint – so what happens next?**

5.1 **If you have complained about the behaviour of a student...** the Student Complaints Officer will consider if reasonable steps have been taken to resolve the issue informally. In some cases, the Student Complaints Officer might find a way to resolve the complaint through informal means that have not yet been explored or through mediation, involving other members of staff as appropriate.
Where informal resolution is not possible or where the matter is deemed suitably serious, the complaint will be referred for consideration under the Student Disciplinary Regulations.

5.2 If you have complained about the behaviour of a member of staff......allegations made against members of staff will normally be passed to the relevant HR Team for action under the Conduct Procedure for Members of Staff (Ordinance 28). The HR Team will explore whether the matter can be resolved by informal means, such as mediation, before taking formal action. Any action taken under this procedure is subject to a high standard of confidentiality as set out in the Procedure itself. However, this shall not preclude information about the outcome of any action taken under this Procedure being given to any person where this is appropriate.

You should be aware that legitimate and constructive criticism of a student’s performance or behaviour, or reasonable requests made of students by members of staff will not constitute unacceptable behaviour under this guidance.