

Policy on dealing with allegations of Bullying/ Harassment of /or by students

1. Introduction

The University is committed to providing a fair, equitable and supportive learning and teaching environment for its students where individuals are equally valued and respected. The University will not tolerate bullying, harassment or victimisation of any individual on any account and will take allegations seriously: investigating them carefully and dealing with them appropriately.

2. Responsibilities

Every student has a personal responsibility to comply with this policy, to behave appropriately and to treat fellow students and staff with dignity and respect and to comply with University regulations on [equal opportunities](#), discrimination, bullying and harassment.

3. Definitions

Bullying may be defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. The behaviour experienced will be unsolicited and unwanted and may involve actions, words or physical gestures which seek to humiliate, patronise, threaten, intimidate, or undermine. While a single incidence of a behaviour may not be significant, the cumulative effect of the behaviour being repeated can make it bullying.

Harassment is defined as unwanted or unwarranted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating the other's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the recipient.

Bullying/ harassment does not have to take place face-to-face, they may take the form of written communications, telephone call, e-mails or text messages.

4. Examples of Bullying/harassment

Bullying and /or harassment is any behaviour that is viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient and may relate to a person's

- Age
- Disability
- Gender or gender reassignment
- Mental ill health
- Nationality, Race or culture
- Personal characteristics
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Socio-economic status

The context of the interaction is obviously a factor when assessing whether there has been bullying /harassment but the following non-exhaustive list of what may be construed as bullying/harassment may help:

- Making aggressive gestures and or verbal threats and intimidation
- Making Inappropriate comments/ personal insults / derogatory remarks or ridiculing based on gender, age background, social status, disability, racial and or cultural differences or accent

- Isolating or deliberately ignoring or socially excluding someone
- Displaying offensive material or graffiti relating to an individual
- Bullying by text messaging, email or internet or other technologies
- Making threats or promises to falsify assessment outcomes in return for sexual favours
- Innuendo or spreading gossip based on sexual orientation
- Inciting others to harass or bully

5. Making an allegation of bullying or harassment against a fellow student

If a student is experiencing behaviour by a fellow student that upsets them or causes them offence, that they believe to be bullying/harassment they are encouraged to attempt to resolve the matter informally at the earliest opportunity with the individual concerned as often the alleged harasser is not aware of the impact of his or her behaviour. Having a direct conversation will give them the opportunity to change their behaviour.

If this informal approach fails or the student feels unable to approach the individual, then, in the first instance they are expected to raise it with an appropriate member of staff, as set out in the University's [Student Complaints Procedure](#). This may be their personal tutor (or Postgraduate supervisor), Head of School, Hall Senior Resident or Hall Warden. They may also channel concerns through student representatives. If the matter cannot not be resolved by the intermediary they are advised to seek the advice of a senior staff member in the School or faculty (such as the Undergraduate or Graduate Education Director), or discuss the circumstances with a member of the [Advice and Support Team](#) in the Students' Union, or contact the [Student Complaints Officer](#) directly. Where appropriate, the matter may be referred to one of the University's Student Mediators through these channels. If these approaches do not result in a fair resolution of the matter the student may request a hearing before a Council Committee, under the Student Complaints Procedure (see <http://www.bris.ac.uk/secretary/studentrulesregs/complaints.html>).

6. Confidentiality

If a student wished the discussion to remain confidential, they have to make this clear to the person they approach for help. However they are also warned that the demand for confidentiality may make it difficult for the person approached to assist effectively and that notwithstanding a confidentiality request, the University may disclose information to those who need to know in order to discharge their responsibilities or where disclosure is necessary in the interests of health and safety at work or the welfare of other staff, students or the public or where disclosure is required by law.

7. Making an allegation of bullying or harassment against a member of staff

An allegation by a student about a staff member should be raised in the first instance with the Student Complaints Officer. Where it is deemed appropriate for an investigation to take place, the Director of Personnel Services will be responsible for this. Any action taken against the member of staff will be taken under the relevant staff procedures as set out in the Staff Policy and Procedure on Bullying and Harassment.

8. If a student is subject to an allegation of bullying or harassment

If a student is alleged to have behaved inappropriately against a fellow student or member of staff they are investigated under the student disciplinary rules and regulations.