

Acceptable Behaviour Policy and Information for Students

1. Policy

1.1 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. In this respect, as members of the University community, we expect the highest standards of behaviour from our staff and students, whether on University premises or elsewhere.

1.2 All members of the University, both staff and students, should be aware of their own behaviour, and how it impacts on others. All are expected to conduct themselves in a reasonable and acceptable manner.

1.3 Unacceptable Behaviour means words, actions or practices that are experienced as inappropriate, unreasonable or offensive. This can include bullying, harassment, demeaning initiation ceremonies, threatening behaviour and malicious posting on social media. It can also include discrimination or abuse relating to, but not exclusive to, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion/beliefs and age.

1.4 The guidance below sets out what to do if you feel that any member of the University has behaved in an unacceptable manner, whether on or off University premises.

2. Informal action

2.1 There are several informal options available to you when you experience behaviour that you find unacceptable. You could consider taking any of the following steps to try and address the behaviour if you feel it would be helpful;

- ✓ Discuss the matter with family and friends. Do they agree that the behaviour is unacceptable?
- ✓ Discuss the matter with a Student Wellbeing Advisor
- ✓ Talk to the advisors 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. The Team can also make referrals to the University Mediation Service which helps people to communicate with each other when a dispute has arisen.
- ✓ Talk about the issue with your Personal Tutor, Supervisor, Senior Tutor, Residential Life Adviser or Senior Resident (if the issue relates to behaviour in Halls) or any other member of staff who you feel comfortable with, to discuss ways in which the situation can be resolved with their support and/or involvement.
- ✓ 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. (Only try this if you feel comfortable taking this step and if you feel that it could resolve the situation).

If you have tried any of the above steps and the situation remains unresolved, or if you consider that informal action is not possible or would not be helpful, then you may submit a formal complaint (see Section 3 below).

3. Making a formal complaint

3.1 To help you provide all the information that the University needs in order to address your complaint please complete and submit the Student Complaint Form: Allegation of Unacceptable Behaviour (Annex A) and send it by email to the Student Complaints Officer (SCO), student-complaints@bristol.ac.uk . The SCO is based in the University Secretary's Office and will decide on any further action. If you would like to discuss your complaint with the SCO before any action is taken please make this known to the SCO in your email. The SCO will contact you as soon as possible, normally within ten working days of receiving your complaint.

3.2 University services such as the Student Wellbeing Service can provide advice and support to students who have experienced unacceptable behaviour and who wish to make a complaint. Independent advice can be sought from Just Ask in the Students' Union and the [Student Counselling Service](#) can offer support to students experiencing difficulties as a result of such behaviour.

3.3 It may not be possible to deal with allegations against third parties who are not students or staff at the University under this policy, as they are not subject to the University's internal procedures. In these circumstances, you will be advised of other possible ways to pursue a complaint.

4. Confidentiality

4.1 Whether your complaint is being dealt with informally or formally, if you want information about your concerns to be kept confidential, you must make this clear to the person you talk to. 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 a request/requirement for confidentiality may make it difficult for the University to help you with your complaint.

4.2 The University recommends that allegations of criminal acts, such as physical assault, rape or sexual assault, are reported to the police immediately. The University may report allegations of criminal activity to the police. The University may not be able to investigate allegations of serious criminal offences; action taken under the Student Disciplinary Regulations can be restricted pending the outcome of a criminal investigation.

5. What happens if you have complained about the behaviour of a student?

5.1 The SCO will determine whether a complaint is sufficiently serious to be dealt with under this policy. The University is limited in what action can be taken in relation to moderate disputes in private sector student houses.

5.2 The SCO will consider if reasonable steps have been taken to resolve the issue informally. In some cases, the SCO might suggest a way to resolve the complaint through informal means that have not yet been explored. The SCO may offer **mediation** to you and the other person (see flowchart Annex B).

5.3 Should you need wellbeing support in relation to your complaint, the SCO will refer you to the Student Wellbeing Service (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/student-services/vulnerablestudents/>).

5.4 If your complaint is about behaviour in an academic setting, the SCO may refer the complaint to the Faculty.

5.5 If the complaint is about behaviour within the University Halls of Residence, the SCO may refer the complaint to the Head of Residential Life.

5.6 If the complaint is about behaviour within a Students' Union (SU) Society or Club then the complaint will be sent to the Chief Executive of the SU to be investigated under the SU Complaints Procedure. If the investigation finds evidence of severe misconduct on the part of individual students, then those students will be referred to the University to be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Regulations.

5.7 Where informal resolution is not possible or where the matter is deemed more serious, the complaint will be referred for consideration under the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#).

6. What happens if you have complained about the behaviour of a member of staff?

6.1 The SCO will refer allegations made against members of staff to the relevant HR Team where the complaint will be considered under the [Conduct Procedure for Members of Staff \(Ordinance 28\)](#), see flowchart Annex B. 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 Ordinance 28 is confidential however, if the complaint is upheld, the SCO and HR will consider what measures may be put in place to resolve the complaint.

6.2 Should you need wellbeing support in relation to your complaint, the SCO will refer you to the Student Wellbeing Service (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/student-services/vulnerablestudents/>).

6.3 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 policy. You can find out more about staff misconduct at the following links:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/hr/policies/conduct-procedure-ordinance-28-main/ordinance28rulesofconduct.html>

7. Anonymous Reporting

The University will shortly launch a Report and Support facility enabling students and members of staff to submit online reports and seek advice for incidents of harassment, assault and discrimination. This facility will give students and staff the opportunity to report experiences anonymously. <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/report-and-support/>

ANNEX A

STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM: ALLEGATION OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Please note – this form will be available to download from the student forms web page:

www.bristol.ac.uk/currentstudents/forms

And on the web as an Annex to this Guidance.

*You can also submit details of your complaint by email to the Student Complaints Officer
Student-Complaints@bristol.ac.uk*

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Full Name:

Student ID No:

Programme and Year of Study:

Address for correspondence in connection with the complaint*:

Postcode:

Telephone number:

Email address:

**In the case of a Group Complaint, please attach a list of complainants and their details on a separate sheet of paper*

The University will communicate with you about your complaint by email (current students will normally be contacted through their University email address only) or by post to the address you have given above. It is important that you keep your contact details up to date and notify the Student Complaints Officer of any changes.

2. NATURE OF COMPLAINT

Are your allegations being made against:

- A member of staff
- A student
- Other (please state)

3. DETAILS **

3.1 Please provide details of your complaint (e.g. racism, bullying, harassment). Provide as much information as possible relating to the allegations you are making in terms of dates, specific incidents, and any supporting evidence, including the names of any witnesses who are willing to come forward. As far as possible, present the events leading up to the incident(s) in chronological order. This will help the person reading your complaint to understand the history and context of the issue.

3.2 Please set out the steps you have taken to address the matter through informal means, including who you have approached to resolve your complaint. If you have been unable to take steps to address the matter please say why this has not been possible.

3.3 Please suggest any outcome or further action you are seeking.

4. DECLARATION

I declare that the information provided in this form is to the best of my knowledge true, and that I would be willing to answer further questions relating to it if necessary.

Signed:

Date:

**** Factors to consider when providing details under Section 3:**

- ✓ *Do not assume that the reader of the complaint will be familiar with the situation you are describing, or the people involved. Make sure that somebody reading it for the first time can immediately understand the issues and when and where they arose. For example, instead of saying 'my tutor', name the individual you are referring to.*
- ✓ *Be specific: if an incident has occurred, try and detail the exact date(s) on which it happened. If an incident has arisen that made you feel uncomfortable or harassed, you should try and describe exactly what happened and why it made you feel that way. It's important to spell out as clearly as possible how you have been affected by the incident(s).*
- ✓ *Provide documentary evidence wherever possible. This can be in the form of copies of emails, written correspondence you have received, screen shots or print outs of comments/messages posted on social media – basically anything that supports the allegations you are making.*
- ✓ *Provide details of any action you have taken to try to resolve the situation yourself through personal action – for example, making the person aware of the impact their behaviour is having on you – and why this was unsuccessful. If you have been unable to take steps yourself to resolve the situation, ensure that you provide details as to why this is the case.*

Once completed, please return your form to Student-Complaints@bristol.ac.uk

Annex B – Formal Complaint.

