

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR AT WORK

POLICY STATEMENT & GUIDANCE

1. Introduction & Policy Statement

The University is committed to building an inclusive environment where opportunities are open to all, diversity is valued, and where everybody can reach their full potential without fear of harassment, prejudice or discrimination. All members of our university community are expected to act in accordance with this policy and to actively support us in providing a highly positive, inclusive, engaged and rewarding experience for our staff and students by:

- Treating each other fairly with courtesy, respect and consideration at all times
- Creating a working, learning and social environment that is open to all regardless of their background or personal circumstances, including but not limited to the following protected characteristics:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership (in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination)
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality)
 - Religion and belief (including lack of belief)
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

We will not tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind including discrimination and victimisation. All staff are required to treat colleagues and students with respect at work. We have a personal responsibility to treat each other in the way we would wish to be treated ourselves and should raise with individuals directly, if possible, where our expectations in terms of their behaviour towards us falls short.

This policy statement & associated guidance therefore aims to:

- Provide you with clarity about your responsibilities to ensure the respect of others;
- Inform you about your rights if you feel you are not being treated with respect by other colleagues and signpost you to the tools you can use in these situations
- To encourage positive behaviour and to use informal approaches to resolve issues where possible
- To emphasise commitment to our values in respect of acceptable behaviours at work

All members of the University should be aware of their own behaviour and how it impacts on others. We recognise that personalities, characters, and management styles are all different, but the

expectation is that the way that we approach our working life must always be acceptable to others through applying principles such as:

- Working co-operatively with others in order to achieve objectives
- Managing performance in an appropriate and fair manner
- Giving and receiving constructive feedback as part of normal day-to-day work activity, that is evidence-based and that is delivered in an appropriate manner
- Using understanding of other people's perspectives to help reach agreement
- Establishing good working relationships

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. Unacceptable behaviour does not necessarily have to be face-to-face, and may take many forms such as written, telephone or e-mail communications or social media.

Some examples of unacceptable behaviour are included below:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour, such as shouting or personal insults
- Spreading malicious rumours or gossip, or insulting someone
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- Unwanted physical contact
- Offensive comments or body language

Issues need to be dealt with promptly and the confidentiality of the matter between the parties will need to be maintained. Guidance has been developed following feedback gathered from the staff survey and the staff mental health and wellbeing consultation and through discussion with the trade unions.

Many people view office or workplace banter as a bit of fun which is good for morale. However, banter may cross the line and become unacceptable harassment and staff need to be aware of the potential impact of this. Equality and diversity awareness training helps to reduce the risk of potentially offensive remarks being made in the first place and to help ensure that 'workplace banter' does not cross an acceptable line. The University requires all staff to complete on-line Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training.

2. Scope

This guidance applies to all employees of the University, including part-time and casual staff along with Honorary staff, alumni and friends of the University. It should be used to deal informally with any alleged incidents of bullying, harassment or intimidation.

The University seeks to resolve such issues as quickly as possible and recommends that, where possible, an informal approach should be adopted. If the behaviour concerned continues or if it is of a more serious nature, you should refer to and follow the grievance procedure.

Issues can also be reported through the University Report & Support Tool including anonymously as we recognise that staff can sometimes feel more comfortable raising concerns in this way. However, it is important to note that it is much harder for the University to respond to anonymous complaints and will

likely only be able to respond to issues if a pattern of behaviour in an area is reported. In such circumstances, HR may instigate an investigation into practices and behaviour in a team or department.

3. Suggestions and Support for Informal Resolution

We are committed to achieving a fair and workable solution quickly and informally to reduce the prospect of matters escalating unnecessarily and thereby increasing the stress for the parties involved. As such, we expect all parties to any dispute to try and resolve issues at the lowest level possible i.e. informally.

Strategies can include referral to an Acceptable Behaviour Supporter; facilitated discussions between both parties, a trained mediator, discussion with a Trade Union representative or use of the University Employee Assistance Programme.

3.1 Informal Resolution Process

If you consider that a breach of Acceptable Behaviour standards has occurred, you should, if practicable, seek to resolve the matter informally with the person who has behaved this way towards you. We also expect the highest standards of behaviour from those who hold management responsibility and we expect our managers to behave in an acceptable way. However, they do need to be able to manage staff and as such need to be able to raise concerns with staff regarding issues of performance, absence or conduct but we expect concerns to be addressed in a fair and reasonable way.

If an informal approach is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you should then raise the matter with your immediate line manager using the grievance procedure. If you make a complaint against an individual with a different line manager from you, the two appropriate line managers will need to agree in consultation with you who should act under the procedure.

3.2 Employee Toolkit – A Guide to help you

How we relate to and interact with our work colleagues will affect our day to day working environment. We may not like everyone with whom we work but we can be assertive in a positive way without being aggressive and thereby enable a positive working environment. The employee toolkit (Appendix 1) may also assist you to take control of the situation and provides examples of appropriate words and phrases to raise the issue with the individual. In relation to matters on social media, employees should also refer to the University's social media policy.

3.2.1 Talk to the Person

Talk to the person concerned to tell them how their behaviour makes you feel, if you feel this is practicable and the situation will not be worsened by doing so. If facing them makes you feel uncomfortable then you may find it easier to make the initial approach by e-mail. The purpose of this discussion is to bring the matter to their attention and to prevent a similar situation arising again through raising awareness.

If you want to discuss the wording of a conversation, you can seek confidential and impartial advice from HR, an Acceptable Behaviour Supporter or a trade union representative. In some cases, taking a direct approach may not be possible, and in these cases, seeking advice and support will be even more important in finding a path to resolution.

4. Formal Resolution

If it has not been possible to resolve the matter informally, you should raise the matter formally and without delay through the grievance procedure.

4.1 If the informal procedure fails to resolve the acceptable behaviour concerns raised, or where because of the serious nature of the alleged behaviour the informal procedure is deemed to be inappropriate, you have the right to bring a formal complaint which will be dealt with as follows:

- i. Issues relating to alleged unacceptable behaviour by staff against staff will be dealt with through either the grievance or the conduct procedure;
- ii. Issues relating to alleged unacceptable behaviour by staff against students will be dealt with through the Student Complaints Procedure.
- iii. Issues relating to alleged unacceptable behaviour by students against staff will be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

5. Training & Awareness

- All new staff will be made aware of this guidance and the standards of behaviour expected in the workplace as part of their induction.
- Training, support, guidance and advice on addressing alleged harassment; bullying and victimisation will be made available to managers and supervisors through line management induction and development programmes and through working in partnership with the HR Department.
- A range of staff are trained in Active Bystander techniques and can be identified through the wearing of the Bystander at Work badge.

6. Monitoring

Statistics on reported cases of bullying, harassment and victimisation will be collected from across the University on an annual basis by the HR Department. These will be anonymised and used to identify trends and patterns and will enable the University to identify areas in which further training or support should be allocated. Reports will be shared with the recognised trade unions via the Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee (JCNC).

7. Links to Other Relevant Policies

Social Media Policy & Guidance

www.bristol.ac.uk/style-guides/web/policies/legal/social-media/

Diversity & Inclusion Policy (currently under review)

[LINK]

Whistleblowing policy (currently under review)

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/legal/whistleblowing-policy/>

APPENDIX 1

Respect at Work Toolkit

The purpose of the following toolkit is to assist you in resolving a scenario that you have experienced using proactive actions to ensure that the situation does not continue.

Type of engagement	Scenario	How did this make you feel? What impact this had.	Possible actions or responses to resolve
1. In Person	<p>Today, a colleague said something to me or a colleague that made me feel uncomfortable.</p> <p>That made me question myself and/or their integrity and professionalism</p> <p>Negative criticism of me</p>	<p>This made me feel unhappy, angry and unvalued.</p> <p>This made me feel devalued and unappreciated.</p>	<p>When you said “....”, I felt uncomfortable because “....” I thought it was a criticism of my work</p> <p>When you said this, I felt as though my integrity was being called into question and I couldn’t understand the reason.</p> <p>When you said this, it sounded as though you didn’t value my contribution.</p> <p>When you said this, I felt uncomfortable and I would prefer it if such conversations or language were kept away from the office</p>
2. Via E-mail	<p>Words in capital letters or in red font for example</p> <p>The content and tone of an email</p>	<p>This made me feel as if I was being shouted at. I felt that the tone of this email was an angry one.</p> <p>This made me feel devalued and/or incompetent.</p>	<p>I don’t feel that the use of capital letters or red font is appropriate for written communication. The tone of this email gave me the impression that you were angry.</p> <p>When I receive an e-mail like this, I feel that I’m not trusted to “....”</p>

<p>3. Via Telephone</p>	<p>Shouted at by a colleague</p> <p>Colleague put down the phone whilst I was speaking.</p> <p>Being put on hands free without being told which puts you in a difficult position due to the nature of the conversation</p>	<p>I felt upset as I did not think I had done anything wrong.</p> <p>I felt uncomfortable.</p> <p>Compromised in terms of advice</p>	<p>I felt that you were angry because of something I hadn't done. I didn't feel able to explain my point of view because you had raised your voice.</p> <p>When you put down the phone, I felt that you weren't listening to my view. It was frustrating because I didn't think you were taking my concerns seriously.</p> <p>I would have preferred it if you had asked me whether I was comfortable with my call being put on hands free at the start of the conversation. It put me in an uncomfortable position because I didn't realise that the conversation was not private.</p>
<p>4. Via Social Media</p>	<p>Derogatory comments made on any social media sites relevant to the workplace.</p>		<p>I didn't feel it was appropriate to post comments about me on this site, because it is linked to the project we are working on together.</p>
<p>5. In a formal meeting</p>	<p>Spoken to in a way that you would not expect in a group environment e.g. professional knowledge challenged or criticised, told too junior to be there</p>	<p>Angry, devalued and embarrassed.</p>	<p>I was surprised that you said "...." I felt undermined because the matter was discussed in front of the group.</p> <p>Raising the matter in front of the group at the time made me feel humiliated. I think it would have been more appropriate/professional to raise this in private first, and I would prefer you do that in the future. I understand that we believe there was a problem here, but I would have preferred to discuss this in private first.</p>
<p>6. In a shared space</p>	<p>A colleague has behaved in an offensive way whilst in a shared space or NWO environment.</p>	<p>This makes me feel irritated and angry or I found it distracting</p>	<p>Explain to the individual how the behaviour has made you feel and ask whether they could consider adapting their behaviour.</p>

	A colleague is not using or treating shared facilities or spaces in an acceptable way		
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