



Dignity and Respect Policy

- Draft 20 May 2019 -

1. Policy Statement

1.1. Dignity and Respect at the University of Sussex is everyone's right and everyone's responsibility. The University has a strong and long-standing commitment to equality and diversity. It is committed to promoting an inclusive culture, which celebrates difference, challenges prejudice and ensures fairness. Our core values are kindness, integrity, inclusion, collaboration and courage and we seek to embody these in all we do so that all members of our community can thrive.

1.2. All members of our University community – staff, students and visitors – are entitled to:

- a campus free from bullying, intimidation, harassment or victimisation
- be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy
- experience no form of unlawful discrimination
- be valued for their skills, abilities and contributions.

1.3. The University has a zero tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination, bullying and harassment. It will regard any reported incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination as a serious matter and will respond promptly and sensitively to all complaints. Where appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken under staff or student disciplinary procedures. Through training and awareness raising, we will ensure that all members of our community know what to do if they experience, witness or are alerted to an alleged incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination, and that they feel safe taking action. We will offer support to those concerned about their own behaviour.

2. Scope and Purpose

2.1. This policy applies to all staff and students of the University and relates to both individual and collective activities and dealings with others in the University. It also extends to those who provide services to us and to visitors to our campus. The purpose of the policy is to:

- Foster a positive culture for working and studying which supports freedom of thought and expression within the law, and within a framework of respect for the rights of other people.
- Promote an enabling and inclusive environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Ensure that allegations of bullying, harassment and discrimination are taken seriously, and dealt with promptly and with due sensitivity.
- Set out the framework for raising, addressing and resolving concerns about individual and/or organisational behaviour.
- Make clear that Dignity and Respect at the University of Sussex is everyone's right and everyone's responsibility.

3. Responsibilities

3.1. Individuals. As members of the University community we all have a responsibility to:

- Demonstrate dignity and respect in our interactions with individuals and groups.
- Work and study collaboratively, collegially and effectively in teams within and across organisational units.
- Identify and challenge unacceptable behaviour when it occurs, even if it is not directed at ourselves.
- Address and resolve matters ourselves, where reasonably possible, in a positive and constructive way.
- Raise more serious concerns with relevant University staff and participate positively in approaches to resolve them.
- Modify our behaviour should we become aware that we have behaved unacceptably in relation to this policy.
- Complete online training on Diversity in the Workplace (for staff) and complete the Respect, Equality, Diversity and Safety (REDS) workshop (for students).

3.2. Managers. In addition, managers of staff and others with responsibility for areas of work or study have:

- A responsibility to take the lead in promoting a culture of dignity and respect.
- A duty to take timely, relevant action to resolve concerns, either informally or formally.
- A responsibility to complete training on Diversity in the Workplace in the workplace.

3.3. University. Expectations of the University as an employer and provider of education will be to ensure that:

- We foster a positive culture for working and studying which permits freedom of thought and expression within a framework of mutual respect.
- We create a framework through which complaints of harassment, bullying or discrimination are treated seriously and with discretion.
- Staff and students feel safe and are listened to when raising concerns about behaviour.
- Malicious or vexatious allegations are dealt with in line with University disciplinary procedures.
- Training opportunities on Dignity and Respect are available to all members of staff and REDS workshops are offered to students.

4. Unacceptable and Acceptable Behaviours

4.1 Unacceptable behaviours. The University expects all its members to treat others with courtesy, dignity and respect and regards bullying, harassment or discrimination as unacceptable

behaviour. The University will respond promptly and sensitively to formal and informal complaints, and where appropriate take disciplinary action.

4.2 Unacceptable behaviours at the University can include, but are not limited to:

- Intimidating or threatening behaviour, language and tone of language. Persons in authority abusing their position by assuming a threatening or intimidating management style (e.g. in a round-table meeting or seminar: ignoring people who are waiting to make a contribution to the meeting, cutting people off whilst they are speaking, aggressive questioning, being dismissive of them and their suggestions, excluding relevant people from departmental plans and communications).
- Unwelcome physical contact ranging from unnecessary touching to serious assault. Sexual harassment, which can include (but is not limited to) unwanted sexual comments or comments about someone's body, unwelcome innuendos, wolf whistling, groping, tugging or lifting someone's clothing, or stalking.
- Disparaging, ridiculing or insulting behaviour, language or gestures. Unwelcome jokes or personal comments. Inappropriate communication or visual display of offensive material
- Harassment on the grounds of race includes offensive comments relating to a person's race, ethnicity or religion as well as micro aggressions directed at a person of colour, for example by requiring ID or questioning their membership of our community.
- Harassment on the grounds of a person's sexual orientation may be aimed at heterosexual people but is more usually experienced by gay men, lesbians and bisexuals. Examples of harassment relating to sexual orientation are homophobic or biphobic remarks or jokes, offensive comments relating to a person's sexual orientation and threats to disclose a person's sexual orientation to others. The response to such harassment may also be complicated by the fact that in order to complain about it or confront it, the people targeted may feel the need to be open about their sexual orientation with work colleagues (perhaps for the first time).
- Harassment on the grounds of gender identity may be aimed at transgender people. An example of demeaning behaviour could be speculating or gossiping about someone's perceived gender identity, refusing to use someone's preferred gendered pronoun (e.g. using 'he' to refer to a trans woman) or continuing to use their former name ('deadnaming')
- Actions which serve to inhibit freedom of speech or expression
- For staff: Undermining of an individual employee through, for example, unfair work allocation, persistent unjustified criticism, public criticism, raising issues in meetings which could or should have been raised more appropriately with the individual directly. Allocating staff unreasonable workloads that require an individual to work excessive hours for sustained periods, or scheduling work without due consideration of the need for meal breaks.
- Not providing equal development opportunities or promotional prospects, being unlawfully discriminatory in recruitment practices or appointing staff in a non-transparent way. Not giving due consideration and/or explanation of refusal to reasonable requests covered by University of Sussex policy, such as flexible working / leave.

- Isolation, non-cooperation, or deliberate exclusion of an individual from a work situation (including work-related social events)
- For students: abusive/threatening behaviour towards a member of staff or a student, for example during teaching or a research meeting; bullying or harassment of a member of staff or a student via any means, including the publishing of offensive material about an individual, for example as part of a 'group chat'.
- The Student Disciplinary Regulation and Student Disciplinary Procedures [link to document] provide examples of unacceptable behaviour/misconduct which will be subject to Disciplinary action. The further examples of unacceptable behaviour provided in this policy also fall within student categories of misconduct.

4.3 Acceptable behaviours at the University can include, but are not limited to:

- 4.3.1 All members of the community are expected to treat each other with respect, dignity, and courtesy. This involves positive communication, building trust, being supportive, understanding different perspectives and working collaboratively.
- 4.3.2 For staff: Sussex's Core Values Framework [link] gives clear reference to the type and range of behaviours that are expected within the workplace.
- 4.3.3 Acceptable behaviour for staff also includes proportionate actions by a manager to support and encourage an employee to perform against key objectives and to manage performance appropriately. Management of performance will always be conducted in line with this policy of dignity and respect.
- 4.3.4 There may be for example legitimate reasons to restrict leave or conference attendance at certain times to ensure staff do not miss more important departmental commitments, and this approach should be applied equally to all staff. It also includes legitimate actions taken within the disciplinary, capability or other formal procedures.
- 4.3.5 For students: expectations of good conduct are set out in the Student Disciplinary Regulation and Student Disciplinary Procedures [link] and focus on due consideration for the rest of the University community. Students are expected to behave considerately at all times as a member of the University and local community and to respect the rights of other students, staff and members of the general public both on and off campus.
- 4.3.6 In all cases the principle of reasonableness by all parties will be used as a relevant guide as to what is acceptable or not.

5. Process of Resolution: Staff

Where an employee believes they are being subjected to treatment which is in breach of this policy, they should seek to address this at the earliest possible stage. There are a number of ways they may wish to approach the matter in an attempt to resolve it, as set out below.

- 5.1 Informal: Staff are encouraged, where possible, to resolve concerns informally.
- 5.2 Individual action: Where they feel able to, the employee should make clear to the person causing the offence that such behaviour is unacceptable to them. In many instances, this can be sufficient to bring an end to that behaviour.
- 5.3 Seeking Informal Assistance: If the employee does not feel able to resolve the matter themselves at an early stage, they may wish to seek advice and support from a manager, HR Business Partner or Trade Union representative. Additionally, the University has a network of trained Dignity Champions who can provide advice and appropriate support to staff.

Information on contacting a Dignity Champion can be found at: [\[insert\]](#) The Dignity Champion will outline and offer support for the different ways of dealing with the matter, which will include:

- Dealing with the situation through further informal discussion or with the assistance of a third party or formal mediation;
- Raising the matter with their manager, a more senior manager or a their HR Business Partner;
- Accessing staff support services [\[link\]](#).

5.4 Whilst Dignity Champions can provide impartial advice, the employee concerned will be expected to make the decision about which route to follow and take responsibility for progressing with their desired actions.

5.5 Raising a Formal Complaint. If the problem has not been resolved by informal means, or the employee feels it cannot be resolved through informal means, then they may submit a formal complaint. If the complaint relates to another member of staff then this should be submitted as a grievance in line with the University's Grievance Policy and procedure, which can be found at: [\[insert\]](#) If the complaint relates to the conduct of a student then this will be taken forward by the University through the Student Disciplinary Regulation [\[link\]](#). Guidance on reporting allegations of student misconduct can be found in: the Student Disciplinary Procedures and Student Disciplinary Guidance for Staff and Students [\[link\]](#)

5.6 Reporting concerns to Police (potential Hate Crime). Where an employee identifies a breach of this policy which may constitute a criminal offence or an immediate threat to safety, they are requested to report the matter to the Office of General Counsel who will determine if the Police will be informed or not. (This is without prejudice to the right of any individual to report a matter directly to the Police). Individuals should also inform the University through the relevant internal route set out in this policy, so that appropriate steps can be taken and support provided.

6. Process of Resolution: Students

Where a student believes they are being subjected to treatment which is in breach of this policy, they should seek to address this at the earliest possible stage. There are a number of ways they may wish to approach the matter in an attempt to resolve it, as set out below.

6.1 Students are encouraged, where possible, to resolve concerns informally.

6.2 Individual action: Where they feel able to, the student should make clear to the person causing the offence that such behaviour is unacceptable to them, regardless of whether the person is a student or a member of staff. In many instances, this can be sufficient to bring an end to that behaviour.

6.3 Seeking Informal Assistance: If the student does not feel able to resolve the matter themselves at an early stage, they may wish to seek advice and support from the Student Union or an independent member of staff. Different ways of dealing with the matter should be considered, such as:

- Dealing with the situation through further informal discussion or with the assistance of a third party, such as using Mediation (for a complaint about the University or staff conduct), or Restorative Justice (for a matter involving another student);
- Raising the matter with an appropriate member of staff, e.g. requesting that the situation is handled as a 'Level 1 complaint' under the University's Student Complaints

Procedures [link] (for matters involving staff conduct for example) Accessing student support services [link]

- Seeking advice and support from the Students' Union Support and Advocacy Service, or a student representative, or an independent member of staff such as [link].

6.4 Whilst the Students' Union can provide impartial advice, the student concerned will make the decision about which route to follow and take responsibility for progressing with their desired actions.

6.5 Raising a Formal Complaint: If the problem has not been resolved by informal means, or the student feels it cannot be resolved through informal means, then they may submit a formal (Level 2) complaint through the Student Complaints Procedure, (for a complaint about the University or staff conduct) which can be found at: [insert]. The Students' Union can advise students on submitting a complaint. A student can formally report an allegation of student misconduct under the Student Disciplinary Procedure [insert link] should the complaint relate to another student.

6.6 Reporting concerns to Police (potential Hate Crime). Where a student identifies behaviour which may constitute a criminal offence or an immediate threat to safety, they are requested to report the matter to the Director for Student Experience, who will then discuss the matter with the Office of General Counsel to decide if the matter should be reported to the Police. (This is without prejudice to the right of any individual to report a matter directly to the Police). Individuals should also inform the University through the relevant internal route set out in this policy, so that appropriate steps can be taken and support provided.

7. Monitoring

The University will monitor and review its performance on promoting dignity and respect, and the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedures on an ongoing basis. An annual assurance report will be provided for Council/SPRC and other relevant committees.

8. Alternative Formats

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact the Human Resources Department or telephone 01273 877769.

Definitions

This Appendix provides definitions of the terms 'discrimination', 'harassment', 'bullying', 'victimisation.'

Discrimination means, treating an individual unfairly because the individual has, or is perceived to have a protected characteristic, or because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic. The legal protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership

Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Indirect discrimination can occur when the University has a policy or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as: "Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual." The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Staff and students need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves but may be subjected to unacceptable behaviour because they are wrongly perceived to have a protected characteristic, or because of their association with a person who has a protected characteristic. In addition, staff and students have the right to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.

Victimisation is a type of harassment. This occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because he/she has, in good faith, made an allegation of harassment, or has assisted another person in bringing forward such an allegation, or participated in an investigation of a complaint or disciplinary hearing.

Bullying is not defined in law but for the purposes of this policy is defined as: “Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which intentionally or unintentionally undermines, humiliates, denigrates or injures the recipient.” Bullying is normally characterised by a pattern of behaviour but a single incident could be considered as bullying behaviour. Bullying is to be distinguished from the legitimate exercise of managerial responsibilities where these responsibilities are carried out in a respectful, reasonable and appropriate manner.

Appendix 2:

List of other relevant policies and resources

Grievance Procedure (Regulation 30)

www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=griev-proc.pdf&site=302

Disciplinary Procedure (Regulation 31)

www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=regulation31.pdf&site=76

Policy on Definitions of Violence

www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=definitions-of-violence.pdf&site=302

Diversity in the Workplace online training

www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development/online