

DIGNITY AND RESPECT POLICY

1. OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 Dignity and Respect at the University of Sussex is everyone's right and everyone's responsibility. We aspire to create a culture of dignity and respect on an everyday basis. 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 make a contribution and thrive.
- 1.2 The University has a strong and long-standing commitment to equality and diversity. It is committed to promoting an inclusive campus, which challenges prejudice, reduces inequality, celebrates diversity and fosters good relations.
- 1.3 All members of our University community – staff, students and visitors – are entitled to:
- be valued for their skills, abilities and contributions
 - be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy
 - study, work and live on a campus free from bullying, harassment or victimisation or violence
 - experience no form of unlawful discrimination.
- 1.4 The University takes a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination, bullying and harassment, and violence which means that all allegations of discrimination, bullying, harassment and violence will be dealt with.
- 1.5 Through training and awareness raising, we will ensure that all members of our community know what behaviours are expected of them and 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, guidance and appropriate training to those concerned about their own behaviour.
- 1.6 The University will regard any reported incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination as a serious matter and will respond promptly and sensitively to all complaints with the aim of resolution. Where appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken under staff or student disciplinary procedures.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 This policy was written in 2019 in response to concerns about bullying and harassment flagged in staff surveys and the Changing University Cultures report. The policy is the product of an extensive a process of consultation with staff May to July 2019. This policy replaces the 'Harassment and Bullying at work - prevention policy'.
- 1.9 The purpose of the policy is to:
- Make clear that Dignity and Respect at the University of Sussex is everyone's right and everyone's responsibility.

- Foster a positive culture for working, studying and living 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. See Annex A and Annex B.

2. SCOPE

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.

2.2 This policy also applies to the behaviour of members of the University of Sussex community when operating in a professional capacity off-campus (e.g. at a conference, at a sporting event) and online (e.g. in email, on [social media](#)).

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Individuals.

3.1.1 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 own behaviour should we become aware that we have behaved unacceptably in relation to this policy.
- Complete online training on [Diversity in the Workplace](#) (for all staff) and [Unconscious Bias](#) (for staff involved in recruitment, reward and promotion) and Recruitment and Selection (for all staff involved in recruitment).
- Complete the [Respect, Equality, Diversity and Safety \(REDS\)](#) workshop (for students).

3.2 Managers.

3.2.1 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.
- Complete [online training on Diversity in the Workplace](#), Unconscious Bias, and Recruitment and Selection.

3.3 The University.

3.3.1 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 dignity and 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. POLICY

4.1 The University takes a zero tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination, bullying and harassment, and violence which means that all allegations of discrimination, bullying, harassment and violence will be dealt with.

4.2 Through training and awareness raising, we will ensure that all members of our community know what behaviours are expected of them and 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, guidance and appropriate training to those concerned about their own behaviour.

4.3 The University will regard any reported incident of bullying, harassment or discrimination as a serious matter and will respond promptly and sensitively to all complaints with the aim of resolution. Where appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken under staff or student disciplinary procedures.

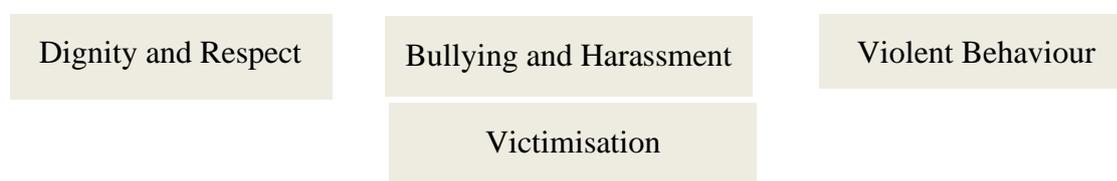
4.4 The University will monitor and review its performance on promoting dignity and respect, and the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedures on an ongoing basis. An annual assurance report will be provided for Council/SPRC and other relevant committees.

4.5 The Dignity and Respect Policy is designed to:

- Make clear that Dignity and Respect at the University of Sussex is everyone’s right and everyone’s responsibility.
- Foster a positive culture for working, studying and living 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. See Annex A and Annex B.

5. LEGISLATION, GOOD PRACTICE AND DEFINITIONS

5.1 At the University of Sussex, we aspire to foster a culture of dignity and respect on an everyday basis. To guide these aspirations, this section sets out some definitions. See Annex C for some examples of expected and unacceptable behaviours.



5.2 Dignity and Respect

- 5.2.1 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 make a contribution and thrive. This involves positive communication, being supportive, and understanding different perspectives.
- 5.2.2 All staff and students and visitors can expect to be treated in a friendly, courteous and dignified manner on an everyday basis. Staff and students should always be mindful of addressing others politely and with sensitivity be that face-to-face, over the phone, via email and online.
- 5.2.3 Staff, students and visitors can expect to be valued for their skills, abilities and the contributions they make to the university community. We undertake to be constructive and kind when we challenge people expressing different viewpoints or when we provide feedback to each other. When managers or tutors make reasonable and appropriate (but perhaps unpopular) requests of their staff or students, or are providing feedback about performance or behaviour, we always expect this to be done in line with the principles of dignity and respect; in return, those staff and students receiving such feedback are expected to treat their managers or tutors with dignity and respect.

5.3 Bullying and Harassment

5.3.1 Bullying refers to the exercise of power over another person through negative acts or behaviours that undermine them personally and/or professionally: it does not have to follow a “top-down” model – bullying can take many forms, all of which are unacceptable to the University. Harassment refers to unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, as defined in the [Equality Act 2010](#), 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.

5.3.2 The defining features of harassment and bullying are that the behaviour is both unacceptable to the recipient and unwarranted by the circumstances of the relationship between the parties.

5.4 Harassment

5.4.1 Harassment is both an offence under the criminal law and behaviour that is prohibited under the civil law. This section is concerned with civil law protections from harassment, but if at any time a victim of harassment (which requires just two incidents), considers that their safety is under threat, they should consider reporting the matter to the Police.

5.4.2 Equality legislation makes harassment on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful. This protection includes people who find the behaviours offensive even if it is not directed at them and even if they do not possess the characteristic.

5.4.3 The [Equality Act 2010](#) offers protection from:

- Unwanted conduct that is related to the protected characteristics of: age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation and that violates the person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or hostile environment for that person
- Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment)
- Less favourable treatment for rejecting/submitting to sexual harassment or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment.

5.4.4 Harassment that is targeted at an individual or group of individuals may occur on the grounds of:

- A person's **actual** personal characteristics – e.g., a person's views are persistently ignored or not sought because they have diagnosis of mental ill health
- A person's **perceived** personal characteristic – e.g., homophobic/derogatory remarks are made to a person assumed to be gay, whether they are or not
- The characteristic of a person with whom someone is **linked** – e.g., a person is harassed because of the religious or philosophical beliefs of a relative or friend

5.4.5 Alternatively, harassment may not be personally targeted **at** an individual at all. For example, if, in a particular team, a culture exists which permits offensive or stereotypical jokes, then a person may have a valid complaint of harassment, even if these do not relate directly to the complainant.

5.4.6 Harassment can take a variety of different forms ranging from repeatedly ignoring a colleague or subjecting them to unwarranted attention, to intimidation, humiliation, ridicule or offence. Harassment may not be deliberate; someone may harass another person unintentionally.

5.4.7 Differences of attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another. People should feel comfortable about explaining why particular words or conduct are unacceptable to them, and should be able to expect that others will treat their views seriously.

5.4.8 People in positions of trust and authority and those with a pastoral role have a particular obligation to ensure that they do not use their power to harass other staff or students of the University.

5.5 Bullying

5.5.1 Bullying is not defined in law: whether a person considers themselves to have been bullied is a subjective assessment – just because one person would not think that the actions complained of amounted to bullying does not mean that another person cannot validly consider themselves to have been bullied. Generally, bullying involves the exercise of power over another person

through negative acts or behaviours that undermine them personally and/or professionally. It is often characterised by inconsistent treatment of people. Bullying can be threatening, insulting, abusive, disparaging or intimidating behaviour; placing inappropriate pressure on the recipient which can affect self-confidence or has the effect of isolating or excluding them.

- 5.5.2 It involves behaviour that is unacceptable to the recipient and creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for work, study or related social activities.
- 5.5.3 Bullying may consist of a single incident, sporadic events or a continuing process. Behaviour that may appear trivial as a single incident can constitute bullying when repeated.
- 5.5.4 As with harassment, bullying is not always deliberate; someone may demonstrate bullying behaviour without intending to. Whichever form it takes it will often cause embarrassment, fear, humiliation or distress to an individual or group of individuals.
- 5.5.5 Bullying may be by an individual against another individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority such as a manager or tutor) or groups of people (perhaps a person will act in a bullying manner towards several colleagues). Similarly, a group of people may also be responsible for bullying behaviour towards an individual (for example, if a group of staff members act in a way that leaves an individual feeling isolated or excluded). People in positions of authority can be bullied by those who are not (for example, staff may be bullied by students).

5.6 Victimisation

- 5.6.1 Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have, in good faith, made an allegation of harassment, or has indicated an intention to make such an allegation, or has assisted or supported another person in bringing forward such an allegation, or participated in an investigation of a complaint, or participated in any disciplinary hearing arising from an investigation.

5.7 Violent Behaviour

- 5.7.1 Violence is the intentional use of physical force, threatened or actual, against another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in death, disability, injury, or harm (physical or psychological).
- 5.7.2 In line with our [Definitions of Violence Policy](#), violence includes: workplace violence, sexual violence and misconduct, domestic violence, coercive or controlling behaviour, stalking, hate crime, cyber abuse, and so-called “honour” based violence.

Annex A - Process of Resolution for 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.

Informally

Staff are encouraged, where possible, to resolve concerns informally. See [Flowchart A](#).

Where they feel able to, the employee should make clear to the person causing the offence that their behaviour is unacceptable to them, making reference to this Dignity and Respect policy. In many instances, this can be sufficient to bring an end to that behaviour.

The employee should keep behaviour under review and make a note of any incidents of concern.

If the employee themselves does not feel able to raise their concerns directly with the person causing the offence, they may wish to seek advice and guidance from another person.

- This could be their manager or another manager, [an HR Business Partner](#), or a Trade Union representative.
- Alternatively, the University has a network of trained [Dignity Champions](#).
- Or the employee could access the [Employee Assistance Programme](#).

This other person will outline and offer advice on the different ways of dealing with the matter informally, which may include:

- Further informal discussion with the person causing offence
- Resolution with the assistance of a third party or formal mediation.

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

Where informal action is taken, resolution might take the form of an apology and / or an undertaking by the person causing offence not to repeat the behaviour.

Formally

Raising a Formal Complaint. See [Flowchart B](#)

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](#)
- If the complaint relates to the conduct of a student then this will be taken forward by the University through the [Student Disciplinary Regulation](#). Guidance on reporting allegations of student misconduct can be found in: the [Student Disciplinary Procedures and Student Disciplinary Guidance for Staff and Students](#).

Reporting concerns to Police (harassment or potential Hate Crime). Where a victim of harassment considers that their safety is at risk, they are advised to report the matter to the Police. Where an employee other than the victim identifies a breach of this policy which may constitute a criminal offence or an immediate threat to safety, they may report the matter to the Police; alternatively, they may prefer to report the matter to the appropriate line manager who will liaise with the Office of the General Counsel to determine the most appropriate course of action. Where an individual reports a matter directly to the Police, they are requested to inform the University through the formal internal route set out in this policy, so that appropriate steps can be taken and support provided.

Annex B - Process of Resolution for Students

Where a student believes they are being subjected to treatment that 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.

Informally

Students are encouraged, where possible, to resolve concerns informally. See [Flowchart C](#).

Where they feel able to, the student should make clear to the person causing the offence that such behaviour is unacceptable to them, making reference to this Dignity and Respect policy. In many instances, this can be sufficient to bring an end to that behaviour.

The student should keep behaviour under review and make a note of any incidents of concern.

If the student does not feel able to resolve the matter themselves at an early stage, they may wish to seek advice and guidance from another person.

- Seeking advice and support from the [Students' Union Support and Advocacy Service](#), or a [student representative](#)
- Accessing [student support services](#)
- Alternatively, it could be an independent member of staff in their School such as the Director of Student Experience (DOSE).

This other person will outline and offer advice on the different ways of dealing with the matter informally, which may include:

- Facilitating further informal discussions
- Mediation with the assistance of a third party (for a complaint about the University or staff conduct)
- Requesting that the situation is handled as a 'Level 1 complaint' under the [University's Student Complaints Procedures](#) (for matters involving staff conduct for example)
- Where a complaint is by one student against another student, informal steps under the Student Discipline procedure.
- Restorative Justice (for a matter involving another student).

Whilst these people 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.

Where informal action is taken, resolution might take the form of an apology and / or an undertaking by the person causing offence not to repeat the behaviour.

Formally

Raising a Formal Complaint. See [Flowchart D](#).

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 complaint.

- If the complaint relates to the conduct of a member of staff, this should be submitted as Level 2 complaint through the [Student Complaints Procedure](#). The Students' Union can advise students on submitting a complaint.
- If the complaint relates to the conduct of another student, a student can formally report an allegation of student misconduct under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#)

Reporting concerns to Police (harassment or potential Hate Crime). Where a student is the victim of harassment and considers that their safety is at risk, they are advised to report the matter to the Police. Where a person other than the victim identifies behaviour, which may constitute a criminal offence or an immediate threat to safety, they may report the matter to the Police; alternatively, they may prefer to report the matter to the Director for the Student Experience, who will liaise with the Office of the General Counsel to determine the most appropriate action. Where Individuals do report matters to the

Police, they are asked to inform the University through the relevant internal route set out in this policy, so that appropriate steps can be taken and support provided.

Annex C – Expected and Unacceptable Behaviours

Expected Behaviours: Promoting Dignity and Respect

All members of the University of Sussex are expected to treat each other with respect, dignity, and courtesy.

This involves positive communication, being supportive, showing appreciation, building trust, understanding different perspectives and working collaboratively.

For staff, the Sussex's Core Values Framework [[link](#)] gives clear reference to the type and range of behaviours that are expected at Sussex.

For students, the [Student Disciplinary Regulation and Student Disciplinary Procedures](#) highlights that 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.

Dignity and Respect: Good Practice Examples

In meetings: we will be polite and respectful of others, listening to others and contributing constructively to the discussion which out cutting across each other. We suggest alternatives for resolution when there is a disagreement. A meeting Chair will ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and that any behavior not in line with the principles of dignity and respect - shouting, swearing, anger, rudeness, interrupting, talking over people – is managed, for example, with the following steps: 1/ polite warning, 2/ break for 5 minutes, termination of meeting (Source: Life Sciences Code of Conduct for Meetings).

On email: Consider whether meeting the person or a phone call would be more appropriate (if it is sensitive, confidential)/ resolve the issue more quickly than an email. Before sending an email, which is critical of someone or admonishing, consider whether email is appropriate and send only to the person involved. Do not send to others / reply all unless there is an exceptionally good reason for doing so. Avoid email arguments wherever possible. Consider the tone you use: how would you feel receiving it? Be courteous. Recheck before sending (Source: LPS Staff Email Guidance).

For managers: 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. Managers are expected to set clear expectations about a job, project or task and communicate clearly what success looks like in that role. When managers make reasonable and appropriate (but perhaps unpopular) requests of their staff, or are providing feedback about performance or behaviour, we always expect this to be done in line with the principles of dignity and respect.

Unacceptable Behaviours. Bullying, Harassment and Violence

Key features of harassment and bullying are that the behaviour is both unacceptable to the recipient and unwarranted by the circumstances of the relationship between the parties. In all cases, the principle of reasonableness by all parties will be used as a relevant guide as to what is acceptable or not.

For staff, the [Disciplinary Procedure](#) (Regulation 31) provides examples of unacceptable behaviour / misconduct that will be subject to disciplinary action.

For students, the [Student Disciplinary Regulation](#) and [Student Disciplinary Procedures](#) provide examples of unacceptable behaviour / misconduct which will be subject to disciplinary action.

Unacceptable Behaviours: Examples of harassment and bullying

We do not allow intimidating or threatening behaviour, language and tone of language. Persons in authority may not abuse their position by assuming a threatening or intimidating style (e.g. ignoring people who are waiting to contribute to the meeting or seminar, cutting people off whilst they are speaking in a disrespectful way, aggressive questioning, being dismissive of them and their suggestions, publically disparaging or criticising performance, excluding relevant people from departmental plans and communications).

It is not acceptable to undermining a member of staff 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 is not acceptable.

Staff must be afforded equal opportunities for development or promotion and be given 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) are examples of unacceptable behaviour.

Students may not display abusive or 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 online or as part of a 'group chat' is not acceptable.

Unwelcome physical contact ranging from unnecessary touching to serious assault is not acceptable. 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 is never OK.

Harassment on the grounds of race includes offensive comments relating to a person's race, ethnicity or religion. A racist culture, which denigrates minority ethnic groups, may create an offensive environment for individuals of all races. People of any race or ethnic background would have a right to complain even where the offensive remarks were aimed only one particular race.

Harassment on the grounds of a person's sexual orientation include 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 fellow students or work colleagues (perhaps for the first time).

We do not allow harassment on the grounds of gender identity, which 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').

Harassment on the grounds of disability includes hostile and intimidating behaviour by colleagues because of a physical or mental impairment. An example is unjustified criticism or unsupported allegations that you are not 'pulling your weight' or pressure on you to take ill-health retirement against your wishes.

Annex D - List of other relevant policies and resources

[Grievance Procedure](#) (Regulation 30)

[Disciplinary Procedure](#) (Regulation 31)

[Harassment and Bullying at Work](#)

[Social Media Guidelines and Tips](#)

[Policy on Definitions of Violence](#)

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

[ACAS Disability discrimination: key points for the workplace](#)

[ACAS case studies of handling Bullying and Harassment](#)

<https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1580><https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1580>

[‘Changing the Culture’](#): Universities UK

Review / Contacts / References	
Policy title:	Dignity and Respect Policy
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Next review date:	
Related internal policies, procedures, guidance:	https://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/dignity-and-respect/
Policy owner:	Human Resources
Lead contact / author:	Assistant Director of HR (OD, Culture and Inclusion)