

Student Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy

1. Policy Statement

1.1 In this Policy, the terms “bullying” and “harassment” have the common meanings given to them. The terms do not refer to the criminal offences of bullying and harassment.

1.2 The Queen’s University of Belfast is committed to creating a working and learning environment which is free from bullying and harassing behaviour and in which no student feels threatened or intimidated. The University recognises that incidents of bullying and/or harassment can affect a person’s morale, health and their ability to study or to work.

1.3 Therefore, allegations of bullying and/or harassment against or by any member of the University will be taken seriously by the University. Any student who makes a false, frivolous, malicious, mischievous or vexatious complaint will be dealt with under the University’s disciplinary procedure.

2. Definition of Bullying/Harassment

2.1 Within this policy, bullying is considered a form of harassment. Harassment includes causing another person alarm or distress. Harassment on grounds of gender (including gender re-assignment), race, religion or belief, political opinion, disability, sexual orientation or age may also breach the University’s Equality and Diversity Policy if it involves discrimination against an individual in the way they are treated in relation to the provision of services, including teaching and supervision, assessment, progression and award and support services. Harassment may also breach other legislation, for example Equality legislation or Health and Safety legislation.

2.2 Although harassment normally implies that there have been several incidents of unwanted behaviour, students may also raise concerns relating to a single incident and should do so if the behaviour of the other person is serious. Harassment may constitute a criminal or civil offence and it may also be possible to obtain an injunction under the Protection from Harassment (NI) Order 1997.

3. Examples of Harassment

Many forms of behaviour can constitute bullying and/or harassment; this list is neither exclusive nor exhaustive and other forms of behaviour may be regarded as harassment:

- i. Oral or written harassment through derogatory remarks, jokes, insults, offensive language, gossip and slander. Written harassment includes, but is not limited to, letters, emails, postings on websites and texts.
- ii. Visual displays of posters, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags, bunting, pictures, emblems or any other offensive material (including the use of email or mobile devices to send or view such material).
- iii. Physical conduct ranging from the invasion of personal space and/or inappropriate touching to serious assaults.

- iv. Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, open aggression, threats, shouting.
- v. Intrusion by pestering, spying, following and/or repeatedly following another person without good reason.
- vi. Subjecting another person to unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating that person’s dignity or humiliating, intimidating or undermining that individual or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- vii. Unjustifiable exclusion e.g. withholding information, isolation or non-co-operation of colleagues, exclusion from classroom and social activities.
- viii. Misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

4. Procedure

4.1 The University will investigate allegations of breaches of the University regulations. In complex cases where more than one procedure may apply, the Director of Academic and Student Affairs will decide which University regulations or procedures will be followed.

4.2 Depending on the nature and facts of the case, the Student Dispute Resolution Policy may be an appropriate mechanism for seeking a solution. Mediation or conciliation may be offered and should be considered by the student.

4.3 The student or member of staff against whom a complaint or allegation of bullying / harassment has been made will normally be informed of the complaint or allegation against them and will be given sufficient detail to enable them properly to understand the case against them and will be given the opportunity to respond to the complaint or allegation.

4.4 Where there is evidence to suggest that a student may have committed a disciplinary offence, the Conduct Regulations may be invoked against the student at any time; if so, the student against whom the allegation has been made will be informed. The person who has made the complaint may also be informed.

4.5 Where the allegation/s against a student are serious, the University may deem it necessary to take an interim step (pending investigation by police or by the University), eg the imposition of a precautionary suspension under Paragraph 5 of the Conduct Regulations. However, such interim measures do not imply any presumption of guilt.

4.6 Where an allegation is made by one registered student against another registered student, the University may carry out a risk assessment and/or seek to reach agreement between the students about the general facts or issues of the case and the students’ future behaviour.

4.7 In the case of students whose programmes of study lead to a professional qualification (eg medicine, dentistry, nursing and midwifery, psychology, teaching, social work, pharmacy), the matter may also be referred for consideration under the Fitness to Practise Procedure.

4.8 Where an allegation of misconduct or inappropriate behaviour is made against a member of staff of the University, the Staff Disciplinary Procedure may be invoked. In such cases, the Director of Human Resources should be informed immediately.

4.9 The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action against a student or member of staff accused of misconduct of its own volition, even if the reporting student does not wish to make a formal complaint.

4.10 Whatever action is taken by the University, it is recommended that the support person should meet with the student after an appropriate period of time to monitor the situation and review possible courses of action if the matter remains unresolved. The Student Wellbeing Manager shall be informed by the support person and the Student Intervention Protocol followed, if appropriate.

5. 5. Sources of Advice and Help

5.1 Students are encouraged to act promptly and should not feel the unwanted behaviour is their fault, or that they have to wait until the situation is intolerable.

5.2 If a student believes they are being harassed, there are a number of options to consider. Every situation is different and the action the student takes depends on their particular circumstances. The student can decide to seek advice or discuss the matter with a member of staff in the School, the Resilience and Wellbeing Service, International Student Support or Students' Union. An appropriate support person will be identified at this time, normally determined in consultation with the Resilience and Wellbeing Manager.

5.3 It may be prudent for the complainant to alert someone else to their concerns before approaching the alleged harasser. This can be done by or with the support of a friend or a member of University staff. Measures should also be taken to protect the personal safety of the complainant and the alleged harasser at all times. Where it is considered that there is a real threat to personal safety of any person, this should be reported to the police or to University staff.