

Dignity & Respect Policy

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1. Introduction

At the University of Strathclyde, we believe that everyone - students, staff, and visitors - plays an important role in our community and we value their contribution. We expect all members of the Strathclyde community to treat the people they engage with at the University with kindness, dignity and respect and they should receive the same treatment in return. We also strive to ensure that Strathclyde is a place that is free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, victimisation and violence (including gender-based violence). You will find the definitions of these terms detailed in section 9 Appendix 1.

The behaviours we expect are outlined in our [Strathclyde Community Commitment](#). We want all those that are part of the University community to understand, respect and behave in line with this commitment to ensure that we all feel safe, secure and able to thrive at work or while studying.

We recognise that there may be times when you feel that you've not been treated with kindness and respect. Or you might witness others experiencing some form of inappropriate behaviour. If this is the case, we want you to feel empowered and encouraged to call this out. We know that might not always feel possible but there are a range of ways that you can raise your concerns and there are services, inside and outside the University, that you can turn to for help.

In this policy you'll find out more about the ways in which you can resolve issues related to inappropriate behaviour either informally or formally. You can also read more about raising complaints, the procedures to follow and find information in relation to support services that can offer you help and advice.

Please note, if this policy refers to additional guidance, FAQs, online forms, or training, these are accessible to University colleagues on our [People Hub](#).

2. Who is Covered by this Policy?

This policy applies to all members of the Strathclyde Community. This includes:

- University colleagues that have a contract of employment, an honorary appointment, are visiting the University or who are at Strathclyde on placement.

- All Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students regardless of their mode and level of learning, or whether they are part-time or full-time. It also includes students that are visiting Strathclyde or those who are on placement from another organisation or institution.
- Contractors working at the University who are employed by an external company.
- Individuals who are working or acting on behalf of Strathclyde for example suppliers of goods and services.

3. Raising an Issue of Inappropriate Behaviour

If you feel that you've experienced or witnessed behaviour that does not align with this policy or our Community Commitment, you are able to raise any concerns or complaints either informally or formally. You will find out more information on the appropriate routes to resolves issues below.

We will always treat any allegations or complaints as confidential. This may mean that if you make a complaint, it might not be possible to fully advise on the outcome of any investigation that may take place.

We will always take matters seriously, particularly those that involve complaints of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation and complaints will be investigated impartially. We also commit to treating all those involved with fairness and sensitivity.

It is important that if you have any concerns around inappropriate behaviour(s), you raise them as early as possible. We recognise that this is not always possible to do, particularly in cases that may involve sexual misconduct. However, coming forward promptly to raise concerns can help with the investigation process because recollections of events may fade over time.

It is important to note that if you raise any form of complaint related to inappropriate behaviour, you will not suffer any disadvantage. We will not tolerate harassment or victimisation of anyone who has chosen to come forward and raise concerns or complaints. This includes any threat, through words or conduct, to influence the learning of a student or career of a staff member. You will not be disciplined for raising a complaint, even if you are mistaken, provided the mistake was genuine. If it becomes clear that your complaint has been made with malicious intent or vexatiously, this will be viewed seriously with the likely outcome of disciplinary action.

4. Resolving Issues Informally

Whenever possible we would encourage matters to be addressed informally as quickly as possible and you are encouraged to consider informal action before progressing to formal action. If the matter is not resolved informally, this will not prevent you from raising a formal complaint at a later stage.

It should be recognised that some instances of unacceptable behaviour are so serious that it is not appropriate for them to be resolved in an informal manner. You might also feel uncomfortable or unable to resolve the matter in an informal manner, for example because the person who has behaved unacceptably is in a senior position.

4.1. Personal Action

If you feel that you are being or have been harassed, bullied, discriminated against or victimised, you are encouraged to make it clear to the person(s) causing offence that this is the case. Sometimes, if you speak to the person causing offence at an early stage this might stop the behaviour. In some cases, the person(s) involved might not recognise that their behaviour is inappropriate, or it is being misinterpreted. Having a conversation with the person might be enough to end the behaviour and resolve any issues.

There are different ways that you can take personal action. Examples that you might want to consider include:

- Have a conversation or send a message, for example via email, explaining the behaviour that you find unacceptable and ask them to stop.

- Make a request to discuss the Dignity and Respect policy or the Community Commitment at a team meeting. This can help to ensure that all team members are aware of the expectations around behaviour and their responsibility to behave appropriately.

We recognise that raising issues around inappropriate behaviour might be more difficult for some people than others. If you feel that you would benefit from advice or support, you might consider talking to:

- A [Dignity and Respect Adviser](#). We have a trained network of volunteer advisers that can offer support in relation to matters of inappropriate behaviour.
- A trusted colleague or friend.
- An HR Manager or a member of your HR team.
- Your line manager or another senior manager for example your Head of Department or Professionals Services Director.
- A trade union representative.
- Another support contact or service as outlined in our Further Information and Support section.

4.2. Mediation

We have a trained network of mediators at the University who can help you to resolve conflict and matters related to the examples of inappropriate behaviour outlined in this policy.

Mediation is a voluntary process where a neutral person helps those involved in the conflict to communicate and work through the issues with the aim of finding a solution. It's about moving forward rather than assigning blame. Given mediation is a voluntary process, you have a choice if you wish to participate or not. If you do agree to take part in mediation, we expect that you engage in the process in a positive and constructive way.

It is important to note that mediation isn't suitable for more serious situations, for example where there is possible criminal activity, gender-based violence or those involved are particularly vulnerable.

If you're a staff member and interested in mediation you should contact a member of your HR Team in the first instance. Students who wish to explore mediation further can reach out to a Dignity and Respect Adviser or their Head of Department. They can also raise this through [Report & Support](#), our online reporting facility to report or raise concerns about problematic behaviour.

4.3. Informal Complaint

If you don't want or feel able to take personal action, or you have and the behaviour has not changed, you might wish to make an informal complaint. If you're a student you might find it helpful to refer to the [Complaints Handling Procedure – Guide for Complainants](#). This may be particularly helpful if you are complaining about a member of staff or a service provider.

Informal complaints are normally made verbally, but you can put them in writing if you'd prefer. If you do put your complaint in writing, you should make it clear that you would like it to be progressed through the informal process. Just so you know, if your complaint raises concerns that seriously breach this policy (for example, threats or use of violence or unwanted sexual advances) your complaint may be dealt with under the formal complaint procedure immediately.

An informal complaint should be made to a relevant person within your department or area. This is referred to as a Local Contact. If you are a member of staff, the Local Contact will normally be your line manager, or it might be the Head of Department or another senior colleague within your area. If you're a student you might prefer to raise your complaint on Report & Support or your Local Contact might be one of the following:

- A Module Leader
- A Programme Director
- Your Research Supervisor
- A member of staff within Accommodation Services or Disability & Wellbeing Services
- A StrathUnion representative

Once you have raised your informal complaint the Local Contact should follow the steps outlined below.

- Review your complaint to make sure that the issue(s) you are raising fall under this policy and not an alternative policy or procedure. They will advise you if another policy or procedure is more appropriate. They will also let you know as early as possible if the complaint needs to follow a formal process.
- Discuss the nature and circumstances of your complaint with you.
- Advise the person(s) you are complaining about of the complaint that you have made. This may be done in your presence or it may be more appropriate to do this separately. They should also explore the nature and circumstances of the complaint with them.
- Take notes of any meetings and store these according to relevant [data protection principles](#).
- Take a view on whether the complaint requires further action. If there are issues that need to be resolved, the Local Contact should discuss ways to address these with both parties (as appropriate). Examples might include attending relevant dignity & respect related training, participating in mediation or talking to a counsellor.
- Ensure that all parties agree to the approach suggested to resolve the situation and agree an appropriate timescale.

At any point in the informal process, you or the Local Contact can contact a member of the relevant HR team and/or Student Experience for guidance and support.

We hope that at the end of an informal process your issues will be resolved. However, if you don't feel that is the case, or the behaviour continues, you should speak to the Local Contact again. It might be appropriate to raise the matter as a formal complaint at this point.

5. Resolving Issues Formally

If you wish to raise a formal complaint related to matters of dignity and respect, the complaint will be heard under the appropriate procedure depending on who you are and who the person(s) you are complaining about. The table below sets out the appropriate procedure to follow.

You (Reporting Person)	Person(s) Concern is With	Relevant Procedure
Student	Student	<u>Student Discipline Procedure</u>
Student	Member of Staff	<u>Complaints Handling Procedure</u>
Student	Service Provider*	<u>Complaints Handling Procedure</u>
Member of Staff	Student	<u>Student Discipline Procedure</u>
Member of Staff	Member of Staff	<u>Grievance Procedure</u>
Member of Staff	Service Provider	Line manager or equivalent will engage with external provider and provide details of the complaint.

*This includes contractors working at the University and individuals working or acting on our behalf including suppliers of goods and services.

If you are a member of staff and wish to raise a formal complaint about a service provider, you should raise the complaint with your line manager or other appropriate manager initially. They should then explore the nature and circumstances of your complaint with you before engaging with the service provider. A copy of the complaint should be shared with the service provider and they should be asked to respond. Estates Services can support managers who receive complaints related to external contractors to identify the appropriate person to contact. Once a response is received the manager involved should take a view on what further action might be required or whether any further investigation is necessary.

If a service provider or third party raises a complaint against a member of our staff or a student, a fact-finding exercise may take place to establish whether the matter should proceed under the staff or student disciplinary procedure or any other appropriate procedure or policy.

There will be occasions when the University will have to use discretion to identify the most appropriate route for dealing with your concerns. This will depend on the circumstances of the situation. For example, if you are making a complaint about a student and a staff member, it might be appropriate to deal with the matter under one single procedure, more than one procedure, or a hybrid of procedures. Similarly, if there are overlapping procedures in relation to a similar matter, for example a complaint regarding bullying and harassment and research misconduct (which may be dealt with under the [Research Code of Practice](#)), then one procedure may be used to deal with all matters, or a hybrid approach may be taken. This can avoid the need for multiple investigations and help to resolve matters more efficiently. You will always be advised of which procedures are being followed and alerted to any changes that may need to take place.

6. What Is Expected of You?

At the University we are committed to ensuring that all members of the Strathclyde community are aware of this policy and that we continue to promote a culture where all members of the community are treated with courtesy and respect and in line with the Community Commitment.

We also have expectations of community members as outlined below.

If you are a member of staff, student of service provider you should:

- Be familiar with this policy, the Strathclyde Community Commitment, and your responsibilities under these.
- Participate in training which supports the implementation of this policy.
- Behave in a positive manner at all times, to ensure the University is a community where all members are treated with courtesy and respect.
- Not participate in, or condone, any acts that could be seen to be discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.
- Change your behaviour if you are made aware that you have behaved unacceptably in relation to this policy.
- Feel able to take action if you witness inappropriate behaviour, such as logging your concerns on Report and Support

If you are a line manager you should:

- Encourage a culture of dignity and respect within your team or area.
- Address any incidents of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation that you witness or observe even if no complaint is made.

7. Further Information and Support

If you feel that that you have been discriminated against, bullied, harassed or victimised or you have been accused of bullying, harassing and/or victimising others, there are a number of contacts and services that you can seek support and advice from.

Departments and services within the University that you can contact for support, regardless of whether you are a member of staff or a student, include:

- [Disability and Wellbeing Service](#)
- [Equality & Diversity Office](#)
- Dignity & Respect Advisers
- Report & Support

If you are a member of staff, you might also find the following University services or contacts helpful:

- [Human Resources](#)
- A relevant Trade Union representative

We also have our free and independent Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider, who can offer confidential support. Visit our [Wellbeing Hub](#) for more information.

If you are a student, you might also benefit from seeking support from:

- [Student Counselling](#)
- [The Advice Hub at the Students Association](#)
- [The University Chaplaincy](#)
- Your Adviser of Studies or Academic Counsellor

There are also a range of external services that you may find helpful. These include:

- [Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

- [Rape Crisis](#)
- [Police](#)

If you have any queries about this policy, please talk to your manager or contact Human Resources. Further information and guidance can also be found on our People Hub.

8. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis.

9. Appendix I: Definitions

This Appendix provides definitions of the terms “discrimination” “harassment”, “bullying” and “victimisation” to help staff and students to make informed judgements about whether particular behaviours may fall under the scope of this Policy. For a definition of “gender based violence”, please refer to the [University’s Gender Based Violence Policy](#).

Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when a person is treated unfairly because they have one or more of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

The protected characteristics which are relevant are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

The following forms of discrimination are forbidden under this policy and are also unlawful:

- **Direct discrimination:** this is treating someone less favourably because they have a protected characteristic. For example, rejecting a job or student applicant because of their religious views or because of their sexual orientation.
- **Indirect discrimination:** a condition, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but negatively affects people with a particular protected characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would negatively affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. This requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.
- **Disability discrimination:** this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified, less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to lessen disadvantages caused by a disability.

Harassment

Harassment occurs when a person engages in unwanted conduct, potentially related to a relevant protected characteristic of another person, with the effect of demeaning, humiliating or intimidating them. It may also include unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Harassment can also create a hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the person.

It is important to note that harassment may be considered to have occurred even where there has been no intent. Members of the University community must be aware that the perception of the person raising a complaint is very important and what might be deemed to be acceptable behaviour by one person might not be acceptable to someone else.

To define the types of behaviour that may be judged as acts of harassment, the key issue is whether the behaviour could reasonably be considered as having the effect defined above, even if others feel they would not be offended by the behaviour. The perception of the person raising the complaint does not automatically mean that the complaint will be upheld. However, anyone responsible for managing or investigating the complaint must make an objective assessment as to whether the behaviour being complained about can reasonably be regarded as harassment.

In some circumstances, where physical or extreme verbal or written violence has occurred, isolated incidents of unwanted behaviour may be considered to be harassment. In other situations, behaviour may be harassment where it is repeated or sustained.

Evidence of harassment can have consequences for employment, study and other contractual arrangements, but types of harassment may also be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and may even be a criminal offence. Individuals who are deemed to have harassed others may be personally named in legal complaints and may be liable to pay compensation to a successful claimant.

It is possible for the harassment to occur in a targeted manner towards an individual or group on the grounds of:

- Someone's actual characteristics (e.g. a person may be harassed because they are disabled.)
- Someone's perceived characteristics (e.g. a person may be harassed because it is considered that they are disabled.)
- Someone's link to one of the personal characteristics via someone else (e.g. a person may be harassed because they have a partner or family member who is disabled.)

It is possible however that harassment is not targeted at a particular individual or group of individuals but instead, within a particular team or group, there is a culture that allows offensive or stereotypical jokes. In these circumstances an individual can make a complaint on the basis that this culture creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment even if no-one within the team or group holds the particular characteristic(s) in question.

Harassment may take place face to face, by writing or in written or electronic communications including, but not limited to, private communications, via social media such as Facebook, X or WhatsApp.

Examples of the types of behaviour that may amount to harassment include:

- Racist language or jokes or offensive comments about national origin.
- Unwelcome sexual advances which may include touching, invasion of personal space or requests for sexual favours.
- Comments which imply that a person's gender impacts their ability to perform a task.
- Excluding people from conversations, meetings or social events because of their sexual orientation.
- Jokes about a person's disability.

- Insensitivity to religious beliefs such as the use of sectarian language
- Homophobic jokes.

Victimisation

Under this policy, victimisation involves treating someone less favourably than another because:

- An individual has made a claim or complaint of discrimination, harassment or bullying under this policy or another relevant policy or procedure.
- An individual has complained that the University's equal opportunities policies have been breached in some way.
- An individual has assisted someone else to make a claim, by providing evidence or some other form of support for the person.

Victimisation is entirely unacceptable behaviour that can have a detrimental effect on a work and study environment and may lead to reluctance to report acts of harassment or discrimination.

Victimisation can have consequences for employment, study and other contractual arrangements, but some types of harassment may also be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and may even be a criminal offence. Individuals who are found to have victimised others may be personally named in legal complaints and may be liable to pay compensation to a successful claimant.

Victimisation may take place face to face, by writing or in written or electronic communications including, but not limited to, private communications, via social media such as Facebook, X or WhatsApp. Examples of the type of behaviour that may amount to victimisation are similar to those contained under the bullying and harassment sections.

Bullying

Bullying occurs when a person acts in an offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting way which intentionally or unintentionally undermines, humiliates, insults or injures the recipient of the behaviour. As with harassment, it is important to note that bullying may be found to have occurred even where there has been no intent.

Bullying is normally characterised by a pattern of behaviour. One-off minor issues of impatience, pre-occupation or lack of courtesy do not constitute bullying. In some circumstances, such as those where physical or extreme verbal violence occurs, isolated incidents of unwanted behaviour may be found to constitute bullying.

Bullying should be recognised as different from management or supervisory responsibility. See 'Acceptable Management Practice' below for more information.

Bullying can have consequences for employment, study and other contractual arrangements, but some types of harassment may also be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and may even be a criminal offence. Individuals who are deemed to have harassed others may be personally named in legal complaints and may be liable to pay compensation to a successful claimant.

Bullying may take place face to face, by writing or in written or electronic communications including, but not limited to, private communications, via social media such as Facebook, X or WhatsApp.

Examples of the types of behaviour that may amount to bullying include:

- Picking on people and unreasonably criticising their performance.
- Unreasonable withdrawal of authority and responsibility from a person.
- Imposing unrealistic objectives and deadlines or changing objectives without good reason.
- Isolation or non-co-operation at work or in class; exclusions from meetings, seminars or work-related social events etc.
- Aggressive behaviour or conduct. This can be physical, verbal or in writing.
- Reacting to a minor issue in the same way as a major one.
- Making a claim of power to influence any student or colleague's academic career for better or worse, whether that claim is true or false.

Acceptable Management Practice

“Discrimination” “bullying”, “harassment” and “victimisation” as defined above are not the same as an acceptably assertive management or supervision style. It is legitimate for a manager or supervisor to provide clear feedback and take action in relation to a member of staff or student’s conduct or performance, provided that this is done in a fair, consistent and reasonable way which is in line with existing University policies. In this case any action taken by a manager or supervisor to address performance or conduct concerns will not be considered as a breach of this policy.

There may also be times where a manager or student supervisor makes a decision or issues an instruction which the member of staff or student does not agree with or considers unreasonable. This may not necessarily fall into the definition of “bullying”, “harassment” or “victimisation” and may best be dealt with under alternative dispute resolution procedures. In these situations, members of staff and students should be aware that even if they do not agree with the decision made or action taken it may be considered to be in the University’s best interests and therefore this needs to be balanced with any individual concerns.