

Dignity and Respect Policy

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Document Version Control

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The Dignity and Respect Policy will be reviewed annually by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee who will approve any necessary amendments.

1. Introduction

We are committed to creating and sustaining a positive and mutually supportive environment where all students and staff are equally valued and respected, and encouraged to thrive. This commitment is at the very heart of our values, based as they are on mutual dignity and respect. We value diversity within our academic community and the huge range of experience and perspective that this brings. An appreciation of diversity and the equitable treatment of all are among our core values, underpinning our success as a community of scholars. For these reasons, we will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment.

We recognise that failure to prevent or correctly manage any alleged cases of bullying or harassment would have serious repercussions for our institution in terms of:

- a negative student experience
- low student continuation rates
- student recruitment
- poor morale and poor employee relations
- loss of respect for managers and supervisors
- poor performance and lost productivity
- staff absences and resignations
- damage to company reputation
- tribunal and other court cases and payment of unlimited compensation.

This policy document¹ is designed to ensure an environment that promotes a culture of respect in which harassment and bullying are recognised as totally unacceptable behaviours. It also aims to reassure students and staff that allegations of harassment or bullying will be dealt with quickly and sensitively with no fear of reprisal.

2. Basic rights

We acknowledge the following basic rights for all members and prospective members of our community:

- to be treated with respect and dignity.
- to be treated fairly and without discrimination with regard to all procedures, assessments and choices.
- to receive support to attain their full potential.
- to disagree and present alternative views.
- to challenge and be assertive.
- to be consulted on decisions that affect their work (for staff only).
- to have their contribution recognised.

¹ The guidance is based, in part, on the CIPD Guide “Bullying at Work: Beyond Policies to a Culture of Respect” and the ECU Guidance “A Good Practice Guide for Higher Education Institutions on Dealing with Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace”.

However, with those rights come the following responsibilities which apply to all members and prospective members of our academic community:

- To treat others with dignity and respect.
- To challenge inappropriate behaviours in others.
- To respect the authority and decisions of others.
- To deal with conflict constructively.
- To recognise the needs of the business and others.
- To thank and recognise the efforts of others.

3. Basic behaviour expectations

There are a number of fundamental behaviours that are expected in the classroom and the workplace. Examples of these include the following:

- Arriving on time for classes and meetings and not leaving early.
- Arriving to classes and meetings having done any necessary preparation for the same.
- Being an inclusive group member through the use of English rather than any other language.
- Being an active listener, making comments or raising questions where appropriate.
- Avoiding distractions such as using mobile phones in a classroom or office or meeting room.

4. Unacceptable behaviour

Bullying and harassment can often be hard to recognise as what one person might consider acceptable behaviour or firm management (either in the classroom or the workplace), might be deemed as completely unacceptable by another. The following are clear examples of unacceptable behaviour:

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour
- sharing information that is critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
- exclusion or victimisation
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
- intimidation e.g. threats of violence, misuse of power or position
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism, or the removal of responsibilities

- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities, or marking their work unfairly.

5. What is bullying, harassment and victimisation?

5.1 Bullying

Bullying is a form of harassment. “Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient”². Bullying can also involve isolating someone, scapegoating someone, victimising them or treating them unfairly, or deliberately undermining a competent student or staff member by overloading them or giving constant criticism.

Bullying normally involves a persistent and repeated pattern of the above behaviours, making the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, undermining their self-confidence and possibly causing them stress. Although unpleasant, being the target of a one-off incident of aggression or occasional aggressive behaviour is not normally defined as bullying unless the severity of the incident or incidents suggests otherwise

5.2 Harassment

Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic³ which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that environment. This behaviour (which does not need to be deliberate) may be persistent or occur as an isolated incident.

Behaviour which one individual may regard as acceptable may be unacceptable to another. However, the key point is that the actions or remarks are regarded as unacceptable by the recipient. It is therefore the effect on the individual that has to be taken into account and not the intention of the “bully”. That said, the perception of the complainant does not automatically mean that the complaint will be upheld; instead those responsible for managing or investigating the complaint must make a judgement as to whether the behaviour being reported can *reasonably* be regarded as harassment.

5.3 Victimisation

Victimisation involves treating someone less favourably than other people because that individual has:

- made, in good faith, a claim of harassment or bullying
- suggested or complained that, in some other way, he/she has, or may have been, discriminated against, bullied or harassed or that the institution’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy or any other relevant policy has, or may have, been breached in some way
- helped some other person who is making such a claim, perhaps by providing evidence or some other form of support to that other person

Victimisation is entirely unacceptable behaviour and, if not addressed, can also deter individuals from reporting acts of discrimination or harassment. Examples of victimisation include:

- penalising someone for making a complaint of discrimination, harassment or bullying

² There is no legal definition of bullying, but ACAS have provided this useful definition.

³ The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity

- excluding a person from work or classroom-related activities or conversations in which they have a right or legitimate expectation to participate because they have made a complaint of discrimination, harassment or bullying

5.4 Forms of bullying, harassment and victimisation

Bullying and harassment do not necessarily have to be face to face. They may take the form of images, written communications and telephone communications. They may increasingly have an electronic dimension through email or social media. Cyber-bullying, sexual harassment, Islamophobia and Transphobia are all forms of bullying and harassment.

Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people where an individual might act in a bullying manner towards several colleagues. Similarly, a group of people may also be responsible for bullying behaviour.

It is important to realise that there is a distinction to be made between bullying and firm management. Not everything that causes students or staff to become upset is bullying. For example, firm management may involve setting demanding performance targets, but these must be transparent and appropriate to the person's job role and level of responsibility. When it is necessary for poor performance to be addressed, this should be done in a fair, supportive and constructive manner, using our appropriate appraisal, performance management or disciplinary procedures. To have our work criticised is not bullying and only becomes so if such criticism is unfair or overly harsh.

6. Responsibilities

We all have a responsibility to adhere to this Dignity and Respect Policy. In addition, anyone who witnesses harassment or bullying has a responsibility to take action (informal or formal) as we all have a duty of care to one another.

7. Awareness raising and training

Our commitment to creating a climate of dignity and respect is at the heart of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy which is available to students and staff from our online Quality and Enhancement Manual. It is also one of the key corporate documents that all staff are required to read upon joining our institution. All staff are also required to complete compulsory Equality and Diversity training as well as compulsory training on Bullying and Harassment.⁴ The Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is responsible for monitoring completion of both courses. In addition, a session on Equality and Diversity and the work of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) is included in Staff Inductions.

At a student level, the importance of respect and acceptance of diversity are covered in one of the Student Induction Lectures and also in training sessions provided for our Peer Assisted Learning leaders.

8. Responses to bullying and harassment

8.1 Informal response

The best response to any perceived incidents of bullying or harassment and one which can bring the quickest resolution is to approach the person concerned informally to make them aware that their behaviour is causing you distress as all too often, bullying can be a result of a misunderstanding, cultural differences, a lack of interpersonal skills and/or insecurity. You might wish to seek advice and support initially from the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, the Disability and Wellbeing Advisor or a member of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. See Appendix A for contact details. Alternatively, you might prefer to raise the matter informally with:

For students:

⁴ These are ACAS online training modules.

- The Guild Manager
- The Student Staff Liaison Manager
- The Student President or the student representative for your cohort

For staff:

- your Line Manager or the HR Manager.

In doing so, both students and staff should be assured that we take all reports of bullying and harassment (informal or formal) extremely seriously. We are therefore committed to responding quickly and sensitively to resolve any issues or allegations as we recognise our duty of care to all employees including not only the complainant and the respondent, but also the wider community which may be affected by the situation. Staff should also be assured that confidences will be maintained wherever possible though there may be some circumstances where a situation is of such severity that the Institute must act irrespective of the wishes of the individual.

8.2 Formal response

Should there be no improvement in the situation following the above informal approach, you can make a formal complaint as follows:

For students:

- via our Student Complaints Policy and Procedures

For staff:

- via our Staff Grievance Procedure. It may be that Staff Disciplinary and Performance Procedures are subsequently invoked if appropriate.

8.3 Supporting students and staff

Dealing with bullying can be difficult for all concerned. It is therefore important for everyone involved to receive appropriate support. This includes both the perceived victim and the perceived bully as the latter may not always be aware of their behaviour or the impact it has on others.

9. Related policies and procedures

- Email Acceptable Use Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Ethics Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- Staff Grievance Procedures
- Student Complaints Policy and Procedures

10. Review

The Dignity and Respect Policy will be reviewed annually by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee who will approve any necessary amendments.

Appendix A: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee contact details

If you would like to raise in confidence any matter in relation to this policy with a member of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, please do so by contacting one of the following:

Name	Role	Email address
Maria Jackson	Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	maria.jackson@bil.ac.uk
Nadia Michail	Disability and Wellbeing Advisor	nadia.michail@bil.ac.uk
Shola Fiberesima	Guild Manager	guild.manager@bil.ac.uk