

HARASSMENT & BULLYING

Policy Statement Applicable to staff and students

1. The University of Reading is committed to maintaining a working, learning, living and social environment that is free from any harassment in whatever form that may take and ensuring that all staff and students are treated and treat others with dignity and respect.
2. This policy statement covers harassment and bullying which occurs within the workplace and the student learning and living environment. It also covers work and study related events, on business and study trips as well as social functions on and off campus.
3. Any harassment and bullying behaviour adversely affects the University of Reading environment and is unacceptable. This policy covers employees, students, contractors, casual and agency workers. It does not form any part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.
4. All steps taken under this policy by the University will be carried out in accordance with the University's principles relating to equality and academic freedom, as enshrined in the Charter of Incorporation and the principles of fairness, reasonableness and natural justice.
5. Any incident of harassment will be regarded very seriously and may be grounds for disciplinary action including dismissal in cases involving staff, and suspension and exclusion from the University in cases involving students. All members of the University community have a responsibility for helping to ensure that individuals do not suffer any form of harassment and that they are encouraged and supported in any legitimate complaint.
6. Students are expected to recognize their rights and responsibilities within the Student Contract, the Student Charter and the University Regulations for student conduct and other key policies in relation to acceptable behaviour.
7. This policy statement has been agreed with UCU and the Staff Forum, is supported by our Network Groups and RUSU and has the agreement of the Council of the University.

8. University Executive Board have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Director of HR in the case of staff and Director of Student Services and the Dean of Discipline in the case of students.

Harassment

9. Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It can take many forms and can be difficult to define precisely. It can range from violence and bullying to less obvious actions, such as repeatedly ignoring colleagues at work. Harassment could be a single act or comment or could take place over a period of time.
10. It is important to note that harassment is defined by the reasonable perception of the complainant – how it feels to be the recipient – rather than by the intent of the person causing offence. Harassment cannot be justified by claiming that it was unintentional or humorous; actions that may be acceptable to some people may be considered harassing to another. Harassment may occur between staff members or between students but also between a staff member and a student.
11. Some examples of behaviour which may constitute harassment are noted below, this list is not exhaustive nor does inclusion in this policy mean that in all circumstances this behaviour is necessarily considered to be harassment, regard must be given to the context in which it occurs and to the perception of the recipient.
12. Harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories. It is also unacceptable to treat someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.
13. Harassment may include, for example:
14. **Sexual Harassment or Sexual Violence:** any unsolicited or unwelcome sexual advance; request for sexual favours; inappropriate comments; inappropriate physical contact; abusive language or jokes; name calling or patronizing remarks; taking advantage of or putting others into a compromising situation. This may be accompanied by the condition whereby submission to such conduct would lead to or have a detrimental effect on employment status, promotion and/or academic assessment.
15. **Racial Harassment:** abusive language or jokes; name calling or patronizing remarks display or circulation of offensive textual or visual; material, including graffiti; physical threats, assault, insulting behavior or gesture; hate crimes; open hostility to staff for students; unfair allocation of work or responsibilities; exclusion from the normal social intercourse of the group concerned; inappropriate or intrusive questioning or pestering.
16. **Harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender**

expression: jokes about specific individuals or group of individuals; innuendo or gossip; expressing or acting on stereotypical assumptions; failure to accept that in appropriate circumstances, partners need to be recognised as such; exclusion from departmental activities; displaying offensive material on screen or in written form; homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic language; outing or threatening to out someone as gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans; (deliberately or repeatedly) misgendering someone.

17. **Harassment on the grounds of disability:** impractical or unfair work expectations, undue pressure or intimidation; offensive language; name calling or targeted jokes; assumptions about the disability and its implications and acting upon them; failure to accept any limitations a disability may cause and lack of engagement with practical solutions to work within possible limitations.

18. Harassment may also include;

- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may reasonably find offensive (including e-mails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet); offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content; or
- Other racist, sexist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about disabilities, a particular ethnic or religious group or gender, sexual orientation or gender identity;

19. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended “target”. For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if the jokes create an offensive environment or harassed by overhearing open discussions about sexually offensive emails/websites, even if they are not shown the content.

Bullying

20. Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, patronized, undermined or threatened and creates an intimidating working or learning environment. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation or power derived from acting as a group.

21. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Bullying can take place in person or remotely via email, text message or social media. It may include, by way of example:

- physical or psychological threats;
- overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision;
- inappropriate derogatory remarks or criticism about someone’s performance;
- deliberately excluding someone from work or social activities;

- regularly making jokes about someone or belittling them
22. Bullying can result in under performance, absenteeism, stress related illness and can damage or block career prospects or educational achievement.
23. Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a student/worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to student/workers in the course of their employment or study, will not usually amount to bullying.

Individual Responsibilities

24. All staff and students have a responsibility to understand and uphold the behaviours expected of them and to ensure that their own behaviour and that of those around them upholds the standards expected within the policy.
25. Individuals who believe they are subjected to or witness harassment or bullying are encouraged to raise the matter as early as possible to give every opportunity to resolve the problem. It may be possible to deal with incidents of harassment and bullying informally, especially where the complainant simply wants the behaviour to stop. Informal and amicable resolution of differences is usually much easier if matters are raised quickly. If the behaviour persists, or if it has not been possible to approach the individual responsible about it, then it may be appropriate to use formal procedures.
26. Those who witness examples of bullying or harassment may wish to challenge this behaviour; however they should only do so in an appropriate way and only if they can do so without putting themselves in a vulnerable position.

Manager Responsibilities

27. Any Leaders or Managers with responsibility for other staff or for students should take appropriate action to ensure that harassment or bullying does not occur at the University.
28. This may include;
- Making clear to staff and students within their School or Function that harassment and bullying will not be tolerated;
 - Taking action early to prevent any unacceptable behavior that may give cause for concern and to provide appropriate advice or guidance to those whose actions, whether deliberate or not, may expose them to accusations of harassment or bullying;
 - Modelling positive behaviours themselves;
 - Providing a supportive framework for those who wish to complain about harassment or bullying and in doing so to remain mindful of the rights of those against whom a complaint has been made.

Formal procedures

29. The University has a number of formal procedures for dealing with allegations of

harassment and bullying, all of which aim to ensure that issues are dealt with appropriately within the specific circumstances.

For Students: Student Complaints Procedure; Disciplinary Proceedings commenced on the part of the University;

For Staff: Harassment and Bullying Procedure; Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

30. It is also noted that there may be certain situations where the University decides to pursue a matter independently even if the original complainant does not individually want to take the matter further. Such situations will be carefully and appropriately considered in the light of the specific circumstances, for example where there is a safety concern beyond the original complainant.

Document control

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1.0	HR	October 2018	UEB	05/11/18	3 years	01/11/21
