Conducting interviews – The "funnel" approach - Case Study: Interview with Dr Truce

Example of using the "funnel" approach to exploring allegation (b): by making comments during lectures about Alice and her part-time work when making comments about recent coursework and students spending too much time in the pub and in his response to the question she asked during lectures

Assumptions:

- Investigator has a confirmed list of students who attended the particular class in February 2022

Open Questions (gain information):

- Could I just confirm some facts with you. Were you teaching *on [insert date of lecture where alleged actions/behaviour/conduct took place]*?
- Tell me about what happened in class on *[insert date of lecture where alleged actions/behaviour/conduct took place]*?
- How many students were present in class that day?
- How do you generally interact with your students?
- How would you describe the range of students you teach?
- How do you generally approach teaching students who may have a range of academic capability?
- Are there any things you might say to a student where they may be finding their academic studies challenging or difficult?
- Do you get many emails from students asking for guidance/help?
- How do you normally respond to those emails? E.g. how quickly would you say you respond to emails received? What response would you normally send a student?
- Were there any unusual circumstances or challenges which impacted your teaching that day? If so, can you please tell me more about them.

Explore and understand:

- Have you ever had the need to speak to Alice or any other students about them working part time alongside their studies? What were the circumstances?
- Where were you when you had that conversation?
- Who else was present?
- Can you recall what you said to them? If so, can you please provide me with the details of that conversation.
- It is alleged by Alice that you differentiate between how you ask questions to female students as opposed to male students. Is that true?
- Have you ever "rolled your eyes" when a student has asked you a question? If so, can you recall the situation/circumstances?
- It has been alleged that when you ask questions of female students that you are "really rude and give really dismissive or patronising answers". Would you accept that this is something you have done in the past? If so, what were the circumstances? Why may

you have said that? Do you recall whether you comments were directed at anyone in particular?

- Could you say a bit more about that?
- Are you aware that Alice has a part time job working evenings in the Crown?
- Alice alleges that you blamed her for having a part time job and said that she should choose between work and study and that these comments were made in front of the class – is this true? If so, could you tell me why you said this?
- Is there a different way you could have dealt with the situation?

Probe:

- Alice alleges that you "went off on one" at the start of the lecture saying that the students' coursework had been poor and that they were not working hard enough. It is alleged that you said that some of the students were spending too much time in the pub and that you looked at Alice when you said this, with the inference being that you were making a point about her having a job at the Crown. What is your response to this?
- Do you recall making a sarcastic comment to Alice at the start of a lecture on *[insert date of lecture where alleged actions/behaviour/conduct took place]*?
- It is alleged that when she asked a question, you made a sarcastic comment about how you and the class had covered that topic the week before hand and that perhaps Alice had been too tired from all her shifts at the pub to concentrate or catch up afterwards. Do you recall saying this to Alice?
- If so, what were the other students doing in the class whilst you were speaking to Alice?
- Do you recall Alice and her friend Dina trying to speak to you about this at the end of the class?

Check and clarify:

- Are you familiar with the harassment and bullying procedure?
- Can you tell me about what you understand harassment and bullying behaviour to be?
- Did you seek any support or guidance from work colleagues that day?
- Had you had any previous communication and/or conversation with Alice in relation to how she was progressing with her studies before these alleged incidents/before she sent the email dated 26 February 2022?

Summarise next steps:

Thanks for your time today.

I will arrange for the notes to be written up and sent to you. On receipt, please can you review the notes for accuracy and advise of any factual inaccuracies via "tracked changes". If you wish to add any new information that comes to mind following our meeting today, please add that information via adding a "new comment".

As mentioned to you when you were invited to the interview, please ensure that any information share with you today is kept strictly confidential.

Next steps are:

- I will be speaking to a number of other people as part of the investigation process
- I will then be writing up an investigation report that will go to xx. This will provide a summary of the allegations/incidents I have investigated, my findings and reference to associated “evidence” or information to support my findings. This will go to xxx who will then consider the investigation findings to determine if there is potentially a case to answer which may then, potentially, lead to a formal hearing being arranged.
- I will keep you updated on when I am likely to conclude my investigation for your information.
- Any questions?