

POLICY STATEMENT

Harassment – for employees and students

1. This statement of the University's policy on harassment is applicable to all those working in the University, both employees and students. It has been drawn up in conjunction with relevant trade unions and with the Students' Union and agreed by the Council of the University.

2. Harassment can seriously worsen working and social conditions for staff and students at the University. Incidents of harassment will be regarded extremely seriously and may be grounds for disciplinary action which may include dismissal or expulsion. Harassment or victimisation on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics laid out in the Equality Act 2010 is outlawed by law. If you consider you are being subjected to harassment in any form (for example, due to your sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, age, religion or belief, disability or any other difference) do not feel that it is your fault or that you have to tolerate it. The University has put in place procedures to enable you to remedy the matter.

3. It is preferable for allegations of harassment to be handled informally and quickly through mediation and conciliation, and an attempt to achieve this should normally be the first step when an allegation of harassment is raised. Where it is in the circumstances unacceptable to proceed in this way, or where an attempt at mediation and conciliation fails, then the option remains for a formal complaint to be made. For University employees, formal complaints would be through the Grievance procedure.

For students the formal procedures are as follows:

- a) Student Complaints Procedure;
- b) Disciplinary Proceedings commenced on the part of the University;
- c) Regulations for Conduct

Informal mediation and conciliation will not be treated as part of either type of formal proceedings referred to above, and so is not part of any investigation carried out as a necessary preliminary to such proceedings. For this reason, a person acting in an attempt at informal mediation and conciliation will not be appointed as an investigating officer for such formal proceedings. They may be required to give evidence to such proceedings about the attempt at mediation and conciliation.

4. Individuals who believe they are subjected to harassment are encouraged to raise the matter as early as possible to give every opportunity to resolve the problem. Incidents of harassment are usually best dealt with informally if this is possible, and this may especially be appropriate where the complainant simply wants the behaviour to stop. Informal and amicable resolution of differences is usually much easier if matters are raised quickly.

Normally, the first step should be to make it clear to the person causing the offence that his or her behaviour is not acceptable. Where the individual feels unable to do this, he or she will not be regarded as having consented to the harassment, nor will that fact prejudice any subsequent formal complaint. If

the behaviour persists, or if it has not been possible to approach the individual responsible about it, it is advisable to keep a note of details of any incident or incidents which have caused distress (including any way in which the incident caused a change in pattern of work or social life).

5. If a direct approach to the person causing offence does not have the desired effect, or where the individual feels unable to do this, it is recommended that the individual proceed to an attempt at informal mediation and conciliation. In many cases it is likely that the individual will feel most comfortable approaching a member of the University who is obviously neutral and not personally involved in seeking assistance in informal mediation and conciliation. To this end, the Vice-Chancellor has appointed a panel of Harassment Advisers who will be willing to help.

Names of the members of the Panel are published at

http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/equality/HARC_Advisers.aspx

and may be obtained at any time from the Human Resources or Student Services Department. There is, however, no constraint upon who may act in an attempt at informal conciliation: according to circumstances, it may also be a friend or colleague, a fellow student, a Dean or Head of School, a member of the Counselling & Psychological Services, a Faculty or Directorate liaison officer in the Human Resources Office, a Trade Union representative. Students may approach a harassment adviser directly or may prefer to contact their Personal Tutor, or their Hall Warden, or an officer from the Students' Union.