



Student Bullying and Harassment Policy

Reviewed: September 2016
Next Review Date: September 2019
Responsibility: Assistant Principal (Support and Student Services)
Approved by: Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee

Please ask if you, or someone you know, would like this document in a different format.

1. Introduction

The College is committed to providing a supportive, friendly, safe and positive environment so that students can learn in a secure atmosphere and benefit from their experience of college life.

2. Key Principles

Bullying or harassment of any kind is unacceptable and the College recognises its responsibility to respond to such issues to ensure a positive learning environment for all.

The College will also promote itself as a safe place to study and will highlight to students the actions to take if bullying or harassment occurs.

Students should be assured that they will be supported and listened to when bullying and harassment is reported.

The College will respect the particular sensitivity of bullying and harassment complaints and their consequences, as well as the need for confidentiality as described within the Student Confidentiality Policy.

The College expects that students will not engage in making frivolous complaints or make malicious complaints that are unfounded. Any such cases will be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

3. Definitions

Difficulty in defining what constitutes harassment or bullying should not deter students from complaining of behaviour that causes them distress nor should anyone be deterred from making a complaint because of embarrassment, fear of intimidation or of publicity. The following broad definitions however may be helpful:

3.1 Harassment

Harassment is conduct that has the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. However, differences of attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another. In some circumstances, the perpetrator may not fully understand the impact of his/her behaviour. The defining features however are that the behaviour is offensive or intimidating to the recipient, and would be regarded as harassment by any reasonable person.

3.2 Bullying

Bullying can range from extreme and obvious behaviour to behaviour which is much more subtle. Bullying occurs when any such behaviour creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for study or for social life.

Bullying and harassment can be:

- Emotional – ostracising, tormenting, extortion, offensive text messaging, misuse of social media
- Physical – punching, kicking, hitting or any use of violence
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Verbal – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Racist – racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Homophobic – comments about one's sexuality

Indicative signs and symptoms of bullying:

- Being frightened of travelling to/from College
- Change in usual routine
- Becoming anxious or withdrawn
- Crying
- Feeling ill
- Possessions 'go missing'
- Becoming aggressive and unreasonable
- Lacking in confidence

4. **Responsibilities**

4.1 Students

All students can prevent bullying or harassment by being sensitive to the reactions and needs of others and ensuring that their conduct does not cause offence.

For example, posting any derogatory, defamatory, offensive, harassing or discriminatory statements about another person on social media is likely to be considered as a disciplinary matter under the Student Disciplinary Procedure

All students can also discourage bullying and harassment by others through making it clear that such conduct is unacceptable and supporting other students who are taking steps to stop the bullying and harassment.

If at all possible any student who feels subjected to harassment or bullying should consider telling the individual(s) concerned that their behaviour is causing offence and ask them to stop. It is however not essential to approach the individual(s) informally and deciding not to do so will not prejudice any further complaint made.

The next step would be to tell a member of staff if you feel you are being bullied or harassed. This may be, in the first instance your Personal Academic Tutor/Student Adviser, a lecturer, someone in the Student Services Centre or any other member of staff.

Once a member of staff has been alerted he/she will inform the Student Advice Manager who will talk to you about the behaviour you find unacceptable. You will be listened to sympathetically and your concerns taken seriously and all allegations will be thoroughly investigated. The alleged bully/harasser will be interviewed separately in the first instance.

At all stages in the above procedure both parties involved in any allegation may bring along someone for support.

Victimisation as a result of a student raising a complaint of bullying or harassment will not be tolerated and will be treated as harassment and subject to disciplinary action.

4.2 Staff

All staff should have an understanding of what bullying and harassment is and be familiar with this Policy.

All complaints from students about bullying and harassment should be taken seriously and treated sensitively.

In the case of the student being over 16 or under 18 and considered at risk then staff should refer to the College Student Support and Protection Policy.

In the case of the alleged bully/harasser being a member of staff, staff should forward this matter to the relevant line manager.

If you are the person to whom the incident is reported or who first discovered the incident, take time to make the situation safe if necessary, i.e. control of the alleged bully and support for the alleged victim. Call on another member of staff if necessary.

Staff members working in specific areas will be requested to attend appropriate training. This training will be available for any staff member on request.

Staff members should promptly report any instances of alleged bullying or harassment to the Student Advice Manager. The Student Advice Manager will request a Reporting Form to be completed.

If the Student Advice Manager is not available staff should report the matter to the Assistant Principal (Support and Student Services).

4.3 Student Advisors

Student Advisors should ensure that all students are aware of this Policy at Induction.

4.4 Student Advice Manager

The Student Advice Manager is responsible for:

- interviewing the alleged victim and alleged bully/harasser separately in the first instance.
- interviewing other parties where required
- convening a meeting, if considered appropriate, whereby conciliation between all parties may be reached, being sensitive to the needs of the victim.
- offering counselling support to both the alleged victim and alleged bully if deemed appropriate.
- if necessary, determining if the matter be dealt with under the Student Disciplinary Procedure.
- monitoring the implementation of this policy and associated procedures.
- collecting equal opportunities monitoring data and reporting annually to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. All students involved in a bullying or harassment case will be requested to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form.