

# DEALING WITH HARASSMENT AND BULLYING AT COLLEGE – POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS

## 1. Policy Statement

The College is committed to the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, creed or religious belief, ethnic or national origins, age and disability or any other irrelevant reason. The College recognises the problems associated with harassment and bullying and is committed to providing an environment in which all students can study without the fear of victimisation. If a complaint is brought to the attention of College staff it will be investigated promptly and appropriate action taken.

The College recognises that any form of harassment or bullying of students is entirely inappropriate and can seriously undermine relationships. At a personal level it can cause extreme distress and anxiety and can affect health and the continuation of studies. In some cases, it is unlawful and a criminal offence.

**Any form of harassment or bullying is unacceptable in the College, whether or not it is unlawful. This policy attempts to deliver preventative action to keep young people and vulnerable adults safe from a wide range of potential harm including harassment and bullying.**

The College is committed to:-

- Ensuring that all students are treated with dignity by promoting a culture where harassment or bullying is neither condoned nor tolerated where it is found to exist.
- Providing a climate where students have the confidence to report incidences of harassment or bullying without fear of further victimisation.
- Ensuring that any complaints of harassment and bullying are investigated quickly, effectively and sensitively.
- Ensuring that all students are aware that incidents of harassment and bullying as well as malicious claims of harassment and bullying are regarded seriously, can amount to gross misconduct and as a consequence, can be grounds for disciplinary action, including expulsion.
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students receiving education or training on the College premises, any partnership providers and work placements.

## **2. What is Harassment and Bullying?**

Harassment and bullying is when people deliberately hurt or intimidate someone else. It can be described as:

- Being called names
- Being teased
- Being punched, pushed or attacked
- Being forced to hand over money, mobiles or other possessions
- Getting abusive or threatening text messages, emails or postings on social networking sites such as Facebook. 'Cyberbullying' can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe and personal.
- Having rumours spread about them
- Being ignored or left out
- Being attacked because of their religion, gender, sexuality, disability, appearance, ethnicity or race.

## **3. Responsibilities**

All staff and students have a responsibility to stamp out harassment and bullying. Staff should not behave in any way that could be seen as threatening or cause offence to students. Students must take responsibility for their own behaviour both on and off-site. Both staff and students have the responsibility to take appropriate action when they witness an incident.

## **4. Procedure for dealing with Harassment and Bullying**

This procedure has been designed to deal with complaints of harassment which need to be handled in a sensitive manner. The procedure, therefore, seeks to ensure minimal stress for the complainant, timely resolution of complaints and a degree of flexibility appropriate to individual circumstances.

This procedure is separate from the Student Disciplinary procedure, which may be used following the results of the investigation under this procedure. Alternatively, an incident may be so serious, or there may be sufficient evidence to proceed straight away with the disciplinary procedure.

It is recognised that in bringing a complaint, the complainant must be protected from further harassment or detriment arising from the alleged incident and associated complaint. Simply moving the complainant to another group or campus is not an option.

False allegations of harassment or bullying will be taken seriously and further action might be considered.

## **STEP 1.**

If a student feels that they are being harassed or bullied, they are advised to keep a record detailing the event/s. No student should feel ashamed about being bullied as it is not their fault. However, it is important that they seek help. This could be in the form of:

- Telling the harasser/bully to stop. They may not realise that their behaviour is offensive.
- Sharing the problem with a friend or someone they trust, for example, the Student Union, the Student Counsellor or a tutor.
- Going to Student Services or the Equality and Diversity Manager for advice.
- Writing a complaint to the Quality Manager who will pass it to Student Services.

## **STEP 2.**

If the harassment/bullying remains unresolved the student should tell the Student Services Manager or the Equality and Diversity Manager who will take a statement from the student. The Student Services Manager or the Equality and Diversity Manager will then decide what course of action to take as follows:

- Take no further action as there is insufficient evidence.
  - Work with the Curriculum Centre to attempt an informal resolution through arranging discussion with both parties
  - Arrange counselling as appropriate
  - Progress to Step 3 if still unresolved.
- **If it is a safeguarding issue the Student Services Manager or the Equality and Diversity Manager will refer it to the Designated Child Protection Officer or the Deputy Designated Child Protection Officer**
- **When a member of staff has been accused of harassment or bullying a student, the Student Services Manager or the Equality and Diversity Manager will refer the matter immediately to the Director of Human Resources and Projects.**

## **STEP 3.**

An investigation is undertaken by the Curriculum Manager and the Student Services Manager (or his representative) or the Equality and Diversity Manager. The outcome of the investigation will be one of the following:-

- No further action is taken as the allegation has not been substantiated.
- Disciplinary action initiated under the Student Disciplinary procedure – the disciplinary panel to include the Head of Learning Resources and Student Services
- At any point if staff implications emerge then Human Resources will be advised.

## **5. Keeping management records**

- The Student Services Manager will centrally maintain a log of harassment and bullying complaints and outcomes

- From this log, an annual statistical breakdown will be sent to the Equality and Diversity Manager to feed into the Equality and Diversity Annual Report
- A report is presented to students as part of anti-bullying week, and the policy is reviewed annually as part of anti-bullying week activities.

## **6. Action when the complainant is dissatisfied**

If the complainant or alleged bully/harasser disagrees with the decision, then the appeal procedure in the Student Disciplinary Policy will be followed.

## **7. Staff training**

Training will be provided, as appropriate, to all staff as part of the induction process. Specific training will also be provided for managers to ensure they gain the knowledge, skills and awareness necessary to operate the College's policy and relevant legislation efficiently and effectively and to communicate this to their staff and students.

## **8. Communicating the policy**

The policy will be communicated to students in the following ways:

- The Student Planner
- Course handbooks
- During the Induction period
- Personal and group tutorials
- Anti-Bullying week
- A copy of the policy and/or a brochure will be available from Student Services, Student Union, Libraries and Student Centres, Reception and the Student Zone portal

## **Supporting policies/procedures**

Single Equality Scheme

Student Disability Statement

Dealing with Harassment and Bullying at Work – Policy and Procedures for Staff

Safeguarding policy and procedures

Tutorials and Individual Learning Plans

Induction

Procedures for responding to Compliments and Complaints

Student Discipline Procedure

