



Policy Title:	Dignity at Work Policy
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Audience:	All Staff
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1. Our commitment

- 1.1 The Royal Holloway Students' Union (RHSU) values diversity and is committed to creating a positive working and membership environment in which all members of staff and students are treated fairly, equally and with dignity and respect. This policy should be read in conjunction with our Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 1.2 Harassment and bullying can have very serious consequences for individuals and for the organisation. Harassment or bullying can make people feel unhappy, may cause them stress and affect their health and family and social relationships, may affect their work performance and could cause them to leave their job. Effects on the organisation can include loss of morale, poor work performance, increased turnover of staff, legal claims and damage to the organisation's reputation.
- 1.3 RHSU wants to enable staff and students to fulfil their personal potential and will not tolerate harassment and bullying of any kind. We have a responsibility for encouraging a culture of dignity and respect and for challenging inappropriate behaviour. Managers have a particular responsibility for leading by example, identifying harassment when it occurs and taking prompt action to stop it.

It is our commitment that:

- All allegations of harassment and bullying will be taken seriously.
- All claims will be promptly and thoroughly investigated and, if appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken.

Furthermore, RHSU will also not tolerate victimisation of a person for making allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith or supporting someone to make such a complaint. Victimisation is also a disciplinary offence.

2. Application and scope of this policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to the conduct of all staff (including student staff). It applies to conduct towards fellow employees; job applicants; contractors; agency workers; the self-employed; ex-employees; and customers and clients.
- 2.2 This policy also applies to work-related functions held outside of normal working hours, either on or off the organisation's premises, such as Christmas parties, leaving celebrations, working lunches etc.
- 2.3 A separate policy is provided to the membership of RHSU in Schedule 6 of the Students' Union Constitution, Equality & Diversity.

3. What is harassment and bullying?

3.1 Harassment is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, (which are sex, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age), that:

- has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual; or
- is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating his/her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him / her, even if this was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

This means that harassment is defined by its impact on the complainant and not simply by the intention of the harasser. Conduct may be harassment whether or not the person behaving in that way intends to offend. Something intended as a 'joke' may offend another person.

3.2 It is important to understand that different people find different things acceptable. Everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to him/her and to have his/her feelings respected by others. Behaviour which any reasonable person would realise would be likely to offend will be harassment without the recipient having to make clear in advance that behaviour of that type is not acceptable to him/her. It may not be so clear in advance that other forms of behaviour would be unwelcome to, or could offend, a particular person, e.g. certain 'banter'. In these cases, first-time conduct which unintentionally causes offence will not be harassment but it will become harassment if the conduct continues after the recipient has made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to him/ her.

3.3 Harassment may also occur where a person engages in unwanted conduct towards another because he/she perceives that the recipient has a protected characteristic (for example a perception that he/she is gay or disabled), when the recipient does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

3.4 There may also be circumstances in which an individual is subjected to unwanted conduct from a third party, such as a client or customer. If an employee feels that he/she has been bullied or harassed by customers, suppliers, vendors or visitors, he/she should report any such behaviour to their manager who will take appropriate action. Bullying or harassment of third parties

by employees will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure. A worker who is bullied or harassed by a third party should not enter into any confrontation that may put their personal safety at risk.

- 3.5 Harassment is normally characterised by more than one incident of unacceptable behaviour, particularly if it recurs once it has been made clear that it is regarded by the recipient as offensive. However, just one incident may constitute harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

3.6 Examples of harassment

Examples of harassment include but are not limited to:

- verbal harassment - remarks or innuendos which ridicule; embarrassing or insulting jokes of a derogatory nature; malicious gossip; offensive songs
- non-verbal harassment – wolf-whistles; obscene gestures; sexually suggestive posters/calendars/screensavers; offensive letters or emails; text messages; social media posts
- physical harassment – touching, patting, pinching or brushing against another employee's body; intimidating behaviour
- coercion – pressure to participate in political, religious or trade union groups
- isolation or non-cooperation and exclusion from social activities
- intrusion – stalking, pestering, spying etc

- 3.7 **Bullying** is defined by ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) as “offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient”. The impact on the individual can be the same as harassment and the words bullying and harassment are often used interchangeably in the workplace.

Bullying can happen in public or private. It can be unpredictable, irrational and sometimes unseen by others. It can cause an individual to feel isolated with physical and mental health consequences.

3.8 Examples of bullying

Examples of bullying include but are not limited to:

- shouting or swearing at people in public and private
- derogatory or belittling remarks in front of others with regards to appearance, work or personal attributes
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power in position
- ignoring or deliberately excluding people
- persecution through threats and instilling fear

- constantly undervaluing effort
- spontaneous rages over trivial matters
- withholding information or supplying incorrect information
- deliberately sabotaging or impeding work performance
- constantly changing targets
- setting individuals up to fail by imposing impossible deadlines
- blocking applications for holiday, promotion or training without reasonable operational reasons.

3.9 Reasonable management practices

Reasonable management practice and guidance is defined as legitimate, constructive and fair criticism of the performance or conduct of staff or third parties. This will not be considered as harassment or bullying provided that those involved are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. Firm management and the use of reasonable measures to improve the quality of work are not bullying.

Examples of reasonable management practices include:

- Setting realistic work objectives, targets and deadlines
- Monitoring output and supporting staff to enable them to develop
- Setting reasonable standards of work and conduct and monitoring for compliance.

4. Procedure for dealing with harassment and bullying

4.1 Advice

RHSU recognises the sensitive nature of harassment and bullying. Employees who believe they are being bullied or harassed may wish to discuss their particular situation before deciding what action to take. The organisation operates an open-door policy to discuss workplace problems and employees can fully discuss the matter with their manager on an informal basis. However, the organisation recognises that this may not always be appropriate in the circumstances. If this is the case, employees can discuss the situation with the next higher level of management or with Human Resources.

4.2 Anyone giving advice will:

- ensure the conversation remains confidential as far as possible
- listen sympathetically
- help individuals consider objectively what has happened
- discuss what outcome the individual would wish to see

- draw attention to available procedures and options
- inform the individual of the legal liabilities involved
- help weigh up the alternatives, but without pressure to adopt any particular course
- assist the individual in dealing with the situation (if the individual asks for help).

4.3 Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible. However, if an employee decides not to take any action to deal with the problem and the circumstances described are very serious, the organisation reserves the right to investigate the situation — as it has an overall duty of care to ensure the safety of all employees who may be adversely affected by the alleged harasser's/bully's behaviour.

4.4 Solutions

Just as it is for the individual to decide what behaviour is either acceptable or unacceptable, it is also for the individual to decide which route to take in solving any problem that has occurred. There are two types of solutions available: informal and formal.

4.5 Informal solutions

Employees can choose to solve the matter themselves by simply approaching the harasser/bully, telling the harasser/bully that their behaviour is unwelcome and that it must stop, otherwise a formal complaint will be made. The person may not know that his/her behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help him/her to understand the effects of his/her behaviour and agree to change it.

Individuals may feel able to approach the person themselves, or with the help from someone in Human Resources, a manager or another employee.

4.6 Formal solutions

If an informal approach does not resolve the matter, or you think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, employees can bring a formal complaint by using the organisation's Grievance and Appeals Procedure.

Each step and action under the formal grievance procedure will be taken without unreasonable delay. Complaints will be investigated swiftly and confidentially whilst ensuring that the rights of both the alleged victim and the alleged harasser are protected.

Employees and witnesses can be assured that they will not be ridiculed or victimised for making, or assisting in making a complaint, even if it is not upheld.

Everyone involved in the investigation, including witnesses, will be required to maintain confidentiality. A failure to do so will be a disciplinary matter.

5. Malicious Complaints

Where a spurious complaint is brought, either out of spite or for some other motive, the complainant will be subject to the organisation's Disciplinary Policy. This will also apply to any witnesses who have deliberately misled the organisation during its investigations.

6. Responsibilities and implementation

- 6.1 RHSU has a duty of care to its staff, students and visitors; it is legally responsible for ensuring that the behaviour and conduct of staff is acceptable. Failure to recognise or investigate incidents of unacceptable behaviour does not excuse the organisation from liability and could have serious legal consequences under Health and Safety, and Employment law.
- 6.2 All staff are personally responsible for their behaviour towards others and are expected to demonstrate active commitment to this policy and its aims. They may be held personally liable as well as or instead of RHSU for any unlawful discrimination. Staff who commit serious acts of harassment may be found guilty of a criminal offence.
- 6.3 All staff as individuals and as managers with line management or supervisory duties have a responsibility to promote a culture free from unacceptable behaviour. This includes identifying unacceptable behaviour in themselves and others when it occurs, and taking reasonable corrective or preventative action. It is not acceptable for any manager to ignore unacceptable behaviour.
- 6.4 Senior managers have the responsibility to communicate this policy to their staff and ensure that where it is necessary to take remedial or disciplinary action against a member of staff, this is done fairly and in accordance with SURHUL procedures.
- 6.5 This policy will be communicated to all staff via the induction process, the staff intranet, and equality and diversity training.

7. Monitoring and review

- 7.1 All formal complaints of harassment and bullying will be reported to the CEO as soon as a written complaint is received by the Human Resources department. Human Resources will compile the personal details such as race, gender, age and disabled status of all individuals raising a claim of harassment irrespective of

whether the disciplinary process was subsequently invoked as a result of the claim. This information will be kept confidentially by the Human Resources department and will be used for no other purpose than to enable the organisation to fulfil its obligations for monitoring equal opportunities.

- 7.2 Positive action will be taken where there are high levels of complaints about harassment and bullying.