

# Bullying Prevention Guidelines

## Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) These guidelines provide information to assist employees and students understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to bullying behaviour at the University. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the [Bullying Prevention Policy](#).

## Section 2 - Definitions

(2) Nil.

## Section 3 - Policy Reference

(3) Refer to the [Bullying Prevention Policy](#).

## Section 4 - Procedures

(4) Refer to the:

- a. [Bullying Prevention Policy](#), and
- b. Flowchart of Procedure to deal with bullying by employees at the University.

## Section 5 - Guidelines

### Part A - What is Bullying?

(5) Bullying:

- a. Occurs when:
  - i. an individual or group of individuals repeatedly behaves unreasonably towards another individual or a group of individuals, and
  - ii. the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety;
- b. May include, but is not limited to, unlawful behaviours such as discrimination, harassment including sexual harassment, vilification, and workplace violence;
- c. Is characterised by behaviour of a persistent nature that is, it occurs more than once and it occurs as part of a pattern of behaviour. An isolated incident of bullying behaviour is not considered bullying, but may lead to action being taken against the perpetrator based on that single incident;
- d. May involve misuse of informal or formal power; and
- e. Can be:
  - i. intended: where actions are intended to intimidate, degrade or humiliate, or

- ii. unintended: where although not intended to intimidate, degrade or humiliate, the pattern of unreasonable behaviour has caused and should reasonably have been expected to cause that effect.
- iii. overt: the bullying behaviours are visible and noticeable to others.
- iv. covert: the bullying behaviours are not visible or obvious, they are concealed from others.

## **Part B - What is Unreasonable and Reasonable?**

(6) Unreasonable behaviour refers to behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would consider to be unreasonable. This would include, but is not limited to, behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening. In this context, the reasonable person is deemed to know as much as the alleged bully could reasonably know in the circumstances.

(7) Reasonable person refers to a hypothetical individual who uses an ordinary degree of reason, care, foresight and consideration to inform their conduct, conclusions, and expectations.

(8) In the case of bullying, the reasonable person is deemed to know that at University, employees and students must be respectful and inclusive of all other University community members regardless of individual attributes and personality. The reasonable person would take into account the norms of conduct at the University, as well as the personal traits of the aggrieved person.

## **Part C - When Can Bullying Happen?**

(9) The University recognises that bullying can take place wherever people work and study together and can be difficult to detect.

(10) Both employees and students can experience and be perpetrators of bullying behaviours.

(11) The perpetrator of bullying is equally likely to be male or female.

(12) Bullying can take place between all members of the University community, including:

- a. Employees or volunteer (sideway, upwards and downwards);
- b. An employee or volunteer and a student;
- c. Students; and
- d. An employee, volunteer, or student and another person on campus.

## **Part D - Why Is Bullying Not Always Reported?**

(13) Bullying is not always reported because employees and students may:

- a. Not recognise bullying behaviour;
- b. Not know the reporting procedure;
- c. Fear retribution or 'payback' from the alleged bully, or isolation from colleagues or fellow students;
- d. Believe no-one will respond to their complaint;
- e. Fear being labelled a complainer or weak;
- f. Believe complaining will damage their career or study prospects; or
- g. Accept bullying as a normal part of the organisational culture.

## Part E - What Are Examples Of Bullying?

(14) The examples of bullying behaviour listed below need to be repeated and unreasonable to fall within the definition of bullying.

(15) Bullying includes but is not limited to repeated unreasonable overt behaviours such as:

- a. Verbal abuse - yelling, screaming, shouting, aggressive or abusive or offensive language, personal insults, name-calling, sarcasm, inappropriate comments about a person's appearance or personal life, defamation of individuals or their family or associates;
- b. Teasing or regularly being made the brunt of pranks/practical jokes, particularly after an objection has been made known;
- c. Unconstructive criticism about work or academic performance;
- d. Demeaning, insulting and derogatory remarks;
- e. Requesting unachievable deadlines, assigning excessive workloads or demeaning tasks on one employee and not others within existing work unit standards;
- f. Minimising or non-acknowledgement of contribution to team activities;
- g. Denying appropriate breaks/leave;
- h. Repeated demands for leave at short notice;
- i. Deliberately changing work schedules to inconvenience particular employees;
- j. Handling the personal effects or work equipment of other employees without reasonable justification;
- k. Abusive and inappropriate emails or phone calls, either in nature or frequency.
- l. Targeting an individual or group because of a personal attribute protected under anti-discrimination legislation, including but not limited to being a woman; being same-sex attracted; being of non-binary sex and/or gender (such as intersex or transgender); having a particular racial, cultural and/or religious background; having family responsibilities; and/or having mental illness.

(16) Bullying includes but is not limited to repeated unreasonable covert behaviours such as:

- a. Excluding or isolating employees or students from normal work/study interaction without justification, including, but not limited to being on the basis of personal attributes such as sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, race and/or religion;
- b. Dispensing punishment, blaming, 'ganging up', preferential treatment for an individual/group to the detriment of others;
- c. Punitive sanctions that impede a person's work or academic progress,
- d. Ignoring the employee or student;
- e. Withholding work/study information or resources required for effective work/academic performance (for example time, leave, training, support, equipment);
- f. Displaying written or pictorial material which degrades or offends an individual.

(17) This list is not exhaustive. Other types of behaviour may also constitute bullying.

## Part F - What Is Not Bullying?

(18) Reasonable supervisory actions in the allocation and management of work or study should not be confused with bullying, even where employees or students do not accept those actions.

(19) It is not bullying to manage and supervise employees or students appropriately, professionally and impartially.

(20) Reasonable instances of guidance, counselling, or managing the work/study performance of employees or students is not bullying.

(21) Invoking unsatisfactory performance procedures or misconduct procedures does not in itself constitute bullying of employees.

(22) Applying student progress procedures, academic integrity procedures or assessment due dates does not in itself constitute bullying of students.

## **Part G - Consequences Of Bullying**

(23) Some effects of bullying can manifest immediately as discomfort/unease or may be expressed as feeling 'degraded' or 'undermined'.

(24) Other effects may evolve over time as the bullying behaviour gradually erodes an individual's or group's confidence, self-esteem and work/study performance.

(25) Effect on those experiencing bullying may include:

- a. Stress related illnesses, including headaches, nausea, insomnia;
- b. Loss of confidence, reduced self-esteem, depression and suicidal thoughts;
- c. Social isolation, absenteeism, overworking;
- d. Reduced performance at work or in study; or
- e. Risk of economic devastation through the loss of their job or withdrawal from study.

(26) Effects on those witnessing bullying may include:

- a. Fear that they might be the next target and therefore withdraw or resign;
- b. Guilt that they are not stopping the behaviour;
- c. Anger and resentment that nothing is being done about it; or
- d. Fear of retribution if they intervene or take sides.

(27) Effects on the University environment (study or work):

- a. Reduced employee or student productivity and motivation;
- b. Increased absenteeism;
- c. Loss of experienced and skilled staff through resignation;
- d. Increased student drop-out rates;
- e. Reduced commitment and respect for the organisation; or
- f. Breakdown in communication and teamwork.

## **Part H - What Should Managers And Supervisors Do?**

(28) All managers and supervisors should:

- a. Model workplace behaviour that is respectful and inclusive of all employees and students;
- b. Participate in training on the management of adverse behaviours including bullying, effective communication and conflict resolution;
- c. Discuss the University's intolerance of adverse behaviours including bullying, as part of team meetings and student orientation;

- d. Ensure their staff have access to appropriate training and skills development necessary to create effective workplace relationships;
- e. Be mindful and responsive to the different personalities of their employees in their management of teams; and
- f. Take all reasonable steps to ensure that the work or learning environment for which they are responsible is free from bullying.

(29) All managers and supervisors have a responsibility to:

- a. Promote the University's [Bullying Prevention Policy](#) and Guidelines within their working and learning environment;
- b. Monitor the working and learning environment to ensure acceptable standards of conduct are observed at all times;
- c. Demonstrate leadership through appropriate professional behaviour;
- d. Seek advice from Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing and assistance from the Office of People in managing employees where behaviour(s) may be in breach of this policy;
- e. Treat all reports of bullying according to the principles of natural justice; and
- f. Take immediate action to resolve the matter, such as:
  - i. Listening impartially to the aggrieved person's complaint;
  - ii. Having a courageous conversation with the alleged bully about the alleged behaviours;
  - iii. Providing the alleged bully with an impartial opportunity to explain their behaviours;
  - iv. Ensuring that the aggrieved person and alleged bully seek support;
  - v. Providing the opportunity for the aggrieved person to participate in personal development training such as assertiveness training;
  - vi. Providing the opportunity for the alleged bully participate in personal development training such as a behaviour management course;
  - vii. Providing reading material about rights and responsibilities to both the aggrieved person and the alleged bully;
  - viii. Suggesting that mediation be attempted to resolve the issue.
- g. Ensure that a file note is kept of every incident of bullying that is reported. File notes are to be kept in a confidential file and stored in a locked cabinet to which only the manager or supervisor has access (Refer to the [Privacy Policy](#));
- h. Ensure that the environment is safe for all parties during the investigation process;
- i. Ensure that no victimisation occurs against the person who reports bullying; and
- j. Follow up with all parties at an appropriate time to ensure actions to resolve the issue have been implemented and are sustained.

## **Part I - What Should Employees And Students Do?**

(30) All employees and students have a responsibility to:

- a. Comply with the University's [Bullying Prevention Policy](#);
- b. Behave in a respectful and inclusive manner towards all University community members at all times;
- c. Develop an awareness about the impact of their behaviours on others and act accordingly;
- d. Contribute to a productive workplace environment that is respectful and inclusive;
- e. Play a role in eliminating bullying by refusing to join in bullying behaviour;
- f. Report any behaviours outlined in the Bullying Prevention Policy to a unit head; and
- g. Offer support to anyone who is being bullied and advise them on where to get assistance and support.

## Part J - Where Can I Get Assistance And Support?

(31) For employees:

- a. [Employees Assistance Program](#)
- b. Equity, Diversity and Wellbeing [webpage](#)
- c. Office of People [webpage](#)

(32) For students:

- a. Student Support Services including Student Counsellors, Disability Advisors, Student Welfare Officers, and the Chaplaincy
- b. Head of [Student Equity web page](#)
- c. Student Welfare Service web page
- d. [Student Representation and Participation web page](#)

## Part K - What Is Natural Justice?

(33) The procedures used for dealing with bullying at the University should adopt the following principles of natural justice:

- a. Treat all reports seriously - this encourages reporting and reinforces the University's commitment to the elimination of bullying;
- b. Act promptly - resolve reports quickly and fairly;
- c. Do not victimise people who report bullying;
- d. Support all parties - provide details about support systems to all parties, such as the [Employee Assistance Program Procedures](#), interpreters, or appropriate support for people with disability;
- e. Support during interviews - give all parties the opportunity to have a support person with them at all interviews;
- f. Neutrality - the person in charge of the resolution process or investigation should have had no direct involvement in the matter;
- g. Impartiality - ensure that all parties are comfortable that the person in charge of the resolution or investigation is impartial and unbiased;
- h. Communication - all parties should be informed of how long the process will take and what they can expect to happen during and at the end of the process. If delays occur, inform all those involved of the reasons for the delay and when the process is expected to recommence;
- i. Confidentiality - all parties should be informed that details of the matter will remain confidential and will be disclosed only on a need to know basis;
- j. Documentation - document all meetings and interviews, who attended and agreed outcomes (even where no formal investigation is undertaken);
- k. Presumption of innocence - the alleged bully is to be treated as innocent until allegations are proven.

## Status and Details

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