

## Dignity at Work Procedure

### Purpose and Context

The University of Huddersfield is committed to promoting a positive working environment and culture for all members of staff.

This procedure outlines a transparent process to deal effectively with any incidences of bullying, harassment, including sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination and victimisation.

### Scope

This procedure applies to all staff employed at the University of Huddersfield.

Examples of situations that may be supported through this process include complaints relating to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination and victimisation. Complaints relating to terms and conditions of employment, new working practices and the working environment, should be raised in accordance with the Grievance Procedure.

It is important to make a distinction between what might be constituted as bullying and harassment (clearly defined in section 2) and techniques used to manage staff. Managers should always treat members of staff fairly, communicate effectively and use appropriate measures to support and develop potential or promote desired work performance. Positive, clear management action which relates to conduct, performance or legitimate operational needs, providing this action is taken in a fair and consistent way, does not constitute bullying and harassment.

Anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this procedure. Complaints raised anonymously can be raised using the University's [Share and Support tool](#).

Agency workers, contractors and any individuals working for the University on a self-employed basis are not covered by this procedure.

The University has a separate procedure for dealing with matters which may relate to Whistleblowing, when the concern relates to suspected malpractice or wrongdoing within the workplace <https://www.hud.ac.uk/media/policydocuments/Whistleblowing-Policy.pdf>

Complaints relating to the handling or outcome of any other processes, and where such a process provides a right of appeal, including in respect of disciplinary action or dismissal, should be dealt with in accordance with the relevant procedure and will not be considered separately in accordance with this procedure.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Huddersfield believes that every member of staff has the right to work in a supportive, inclusive and welcoming environment free from bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination and victimisation where all members of the University community are treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.2 Bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and victimisation are unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the University. All complaints of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination and victimisation will be treated seriously and in a sensitive and fair manner.
- 1.3 All members of the University community have a responsibility to ensure that they contribute to the development and maintenance of a positive working environment. The University wishes to create and maintain positive working relationships where the contributions of all colleagues are valued and respected.
- 1.4 The 'Huddersfield Leader' Framework identifies the behaviours expected of the University's managers and leaders. These behaviours build a respectful, positive, healthy, and productive working environment for the University community and are grounded in the University's values.  
<https://staff.hud.ac.uk/hr/pod/engagement-framework/>
- 1.5 To create and maintain a positive working environment all members of staff are required to:
  - Complete the online 'Diversity in the Workplace' module on a three-yearly basis;
  - Treat colleagues with dignity and respect;
  - Understand how their own behaviour may affect others and, if necessary, change it;
  - Intervene, if possible, to stop unacceptable behaviour and provide support where necessary;
  - Where possible, make it clear if they find a colleagues' behaviour unacceptable, explaining the reasons for this;
  - Report any incidences of unacceptable behaviour to their line manager; and
  - Be mindful that all members of staff will be held personally accountable for their actions, or lack of actions, or their conduct, in cases where complaints of bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation are upheld.
- 1.6 All managers and leaders have a specific responsibility to operate within the boundaries of this procedure, ensuring that all members of staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and to take appropriate action when behaviour falls below the requirement. In particular, managers and leaders are required to:

- Set a positive example by treating others with respect and promoting a working environment where bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination and victimisation are unacceptable and not tolerated; and
- Treat any complaint received seriously and deal with it promptly, sensitively and confidentially, providing full support to all involved throughout the process.

## 2. Definitions

### 2.1 Definition of Bullying

2.1.1 Bullying is defined by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) as “offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone’. Bullying may be a regular pattern of behavior or a one-off incident and can happen face-to-face or on social media, in emails or on calls. It may not always be obvious or noticed by other colleagues.

Appendix A provides examples of what may be considered bullying.

### 2.2 Definition of Harassment

2.2.1 The Equality Act 2010 offers protection from:

- Unwanted conduct that is related to the protected characteristics of: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation and that violates the person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or hostile environment for that person;
- Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment); and
- Less favourable treatment as a result of the harassment.

2.2.2 Harassment that is targeted at an individual or group of individuals may occur on the grounds of:

- A person’s actual personal characteristics - for example, a person’s views are persistently ignored or not sought because they have diagnosis of mental ill health;
- A person’s perceived personal characteristic – for example, homophobic/derogatory remarks are made to a person assumed to be gay, whether they are or not; or
- The characteristic of a person with whom someone is linked – for example, a person is harassed because of the religious or philosophical beliefs of a relative or friend.

2.2.3 The unwanted behaviour can be a serious one-off incident, repeated behaviour or in other forms such as spoken or written words.

Appendix A provides examples of what may be considered harassment.

- 2.2.4 The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 places a further legal obligation on the University to take reasonable steps to prevent the sexual harassment of members of staff in the course of their employment and to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties.

## 2.3 Definitions of Discrimination

- 2.3.1 Unlawful discrimination takes place when an individual or a group of people is treated less favourably than others based on a protected characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Discrimination includes;

**Direct discrimination** - less favourable treatment directly because of a protected characteristic.

**Indirect discrimination** - when a condition, rule, policy or even a practice applies to everyone, but has a disproportionate impact on people with a protected characteristic.

## 2.4 Definition of Victimisation

- 2.4.1 Victimisation occurs when a member of staff is treated less favourably as a result of being involved with a discrimination or harassment complaint. A member of staff is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint (The Equality Act 2010).

Appendix A provides examples of what may be considered victimisation.

## 3. Electronic Bullying and Use of Social Networking Sites

- 3.1 Bullying and harassment can take place through electronic media, for example, email, instant messaging such as Teams, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, X, Bluesky, blogs) or text /WhatsApp messages. When using electronic media, all members of staff should consider the appropriateness of the content and language used.
- 3.2 If instances of alleged online bullying and harassment are reported, they will be dealt with in the same way as if they had taken place in a face-to face setting.

## 4. Procedure for dealing with complaints of Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination and Victimisation.

- 4.1.1 Many issues can be resolved informally, and this approach is encouraged where possible.
- 4.1.2 Mediation is available at any stage of the procedure. This is a process where an impartial third party enables two or more people to work through conflict or

disagreement, with a view to finding a mutually agreeable solution. Please contact Human Resources ([hr@hud.ac.uk](mailto:hr@hud.ac.uk)) for more information about mediation.

- 4.1.3 If the member of staff does not feel that they are able to follow either the informal stage of the procedure or engage in mediation, or if the member of staff considers the incident to be too serious for such approaches, it is possible to proceed straight to the formal stage.
- 4.1.4 As a general principle, the decision of whether to progress a complaint is for the member of staff, however the University has a duty of care to protect all members of staff and may make the decision to pursue the matter independently if it is considered appropriate to do so.

## **4.2 Resolving Complaints Informally**

- 4.2.1 The informal stage is appropriate where the member of staff simply wants a behaviour to stop or where the behaviour does not pose a serious threat or has not been consistently repeated. The person causing the offence may be unaware that their behaviour is unacceptable, and, in these cases, the informal approach provides an opportunity for the individual to be made aware of the impact of their behaviour and change it accordingly.
- 4.2.2 Members of staff should talk directly and informally to the person causing the offence or write to them and explain clearly what aspect of their behaviour is unwelcome and ask them to stop.
- 4.2.3 If the member of staff feels unable to approach the person causing offence directly, they should discuss the concerns with their line manager who may be able to support with a facilitated conversation. If the line manager is the subject of the complaint the member of staff should speak to their line manager's manager.
- 4.2.4 Examples of informal resolutions could include the following;
- A direct conversation to resolve the issue(s);
  - A facilitated meeting between the parties;
  - The opportunity for reconciliation through an apology and agreement of standards of behaviour; or
  - Training, coaching, mentoring provided by the line manager or colleagues from the People and Organisational Development Team.

## **4.3 Formal Procedure**

- 4.3.1 If it is not possible for the complaint to be resolved informally, the member of staff may submit a formal written complaint.

4.3.2 To proceed to the formal procedure, the member of staff should submit a formal written complaint to Human Resources ([hr@hud.ac.uk](mailto:hr@hud.ac.uk)) along with any relevant supporting documents. A copy of the full complaint will be provided to the person the complaint is about. The formal written complaint should include:

- the name of the person whose behaviour the member of staff believes amounts to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination or victimisation;
- the type of behaviour that is causing offence, together with specific examples;
- dates and times when incidents occurred, and where the incidents occurred;
- the names of any members of staff who may have witnessed any incidents, or who themselves may have experienced the behaviour;
- any action that the member of staff has already taken to try to prevent the behaviour from taking place;
- the desired outcome.

4.3.3 Human Resources will identify an Investigating Manager. The Investigating Manager will be of an appropriate level of seniority and usually be from another School / Professional Service.

4.3.4 It is recognised that entering the formal procedure may cause understandable feelings of concern for both the member of staff submitting a formal written complaint and the member of staff who is the subject of the complaint. The University is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated with dignity and respect throughout the process and will be provided with appropriate support.

4.3.5 The member of staff that has raised the formal written complaint has the right to be represented by a Trade Union representative or accompanied by a colleague or a friend during formal meetings under the formal procedure.

4.3.6 The member of staff who is the subject of the complaint:

- Will be promptly informed about the complaint raised;
- Provided with a written copy of the complaint and any supporting documentation;
- Have the right to respond to the complaint in writing prior to attendance at any formal meeting; and
- Have the right to be supported by a colleague or trade union representative at any formal meeting during the process.

- 4.3.7 The Investigating Manager may also meet with witnesses as part of the investigation.
- 4.3.8 Intimidation or harassment of any members of staff involved in the process by any party will not be tolerated. Any such behaviour will lead to disciplinary action being taken.
- 4.3.9 Where the member of staff that submitted the complaint is absent due to sickness or other long-term absence, to minimise delays, the University reserves the right to investigate the complaint on the basis of written submissions or in the absence of engagement in the process from the member of staff, to make any determinations based on evidence gathered as appropriate.
- 4.3.10 The member of staff may withdraw a formal complaint at any time by writing to the Head of Human Resources. However, the University reserves the right to continue to investigate a matter where it deems it appropriate to do so due to factors such as the seriousness of the complaint and any potential impact on other members of staff or the University.

## **5. The Investigation**

- 5.1 Following the receipt of the formal written complaint the Investigating Manager will arrange a meeting with the member of staff that submitted the complaint within ten working days.
- 5.2 Following this meeting, further investigation meetings may be required with other colleagues to investigate the issue.
- 5.3 A member of Human Resources will attend all formal investigation meetings and will update the member of staff on the progress of the investigation.
- 5.4 The Investigating Manager will determine the outcome of the formal written complaint and will formally respond in writing to provide the outcome within ten working days of completion of the investigation.
- 5.5.1 If the outcome includes any recommended actions a member of Human Resources will liaise with managers as required to ensure that these are implemented and reviewed as appropriate.

## **6. Appeal**

- 6.1 The member of staff that submitted the formal written complaint has the right to appeal against the outcome. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Head of Human Resources and the appeal must be received no later than ten working days after receipt of the written outcome letter. The member of staff should set out clearly the grounds for appeal in full.
- 6.2 The appeal will only be heard if based on the following grounds;

- Evidence that there was a failure to follow the procedure, which had a material impact on the outcome;
  - That new information has come to light that should be considered that was not available at the time of the formal meeting; or
  - That the outcome was unreasonable or disproportionate to the issue.
- 6.3 The appeal will be considered by an appropriate manager (who has not been previously involved in the case) and who is senior to the Investigating Manager who undertook the formal investigation.
- 6.4 A member of Human Resources will be present at all formal meetings.
- 6.5 The member of staff will be invited to an Appeal meeting. The Investigating Manager who considered the complaint will prepare a report responding to the points of the appeal. The report should be provided to the member of staff and the manager considering the appeal at least five working days before the Appeal meeting.
- 6.6 The member of staff has the right to be represented by a Trade Union representative or accompanied by a colleague or a friend at the Appeal meeting.
- 6.7 The manager hearing the appeal will formally respond in writing to the member of staff within five working days of the Appeal meeting. If further investigations are required which may impact on this timescale the member of staff will be notified.
- 6.8 The manager may uphold, overturn or vary the decision made at the original complaint.
- 6.9 The appeal decision is final and there is no further right of appeal. This does not affect an individual's statutory rights.

## **7. Harassment by a Third Party**

- 7.1 If a member of staff is harassed by someone who is not a member of staff, the following steps should be taken:
- a) if it is by a student, the harassment should be reported to the member of staff's line manager and managed in accordance with the Students' Disciplinary Procedure.
  - b) if it is by a contractor, visitor or other third party, the harassment should be reported to the member of staff's line manager and Human Resources and further investigations will take place as appropriate.

## 8. False or Malicious Complaints

- 8.1 If an allegation is found to be malicious and / or without foundation, the member of staff responsible for such allegations, or any parties involved in the support of such allegations, may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the [University's Disciplinary Procedure](#).

## 9. Confidentiality

- 9.1 Due to the sensitive nature, all complaints will be investigated with particular care and will remain, where possible, confidential. The purpose of this provision is to protect the confidentiality of the person making the complaint and the reputation of the person being complained about until the matter has been resolved. However, where a complaint identifies unlawful discrimination, a safety concern or a potentially criminal act, the University has a legal responsibility to take appropriate action which might mean confidentiality cannot be preserved.
- 9.2 Requests from all parties to speak directly to any potential witnesses should be directed through Human Resources.

## 10. Support for members of staff

- 10.1 The University recognises that matters relating to discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation will be difficult for all parties concerned and is committed to providing support and assistance for member of staff in these circumstances. Please see below a summary of support available:
- Line manager
  - [Dignity at Work Network of Advisors](#)
  - Human Resources [hr@hud.ac.uk](mailto:hr@hud.ac.uk)
  - Trade Union Representative (for members) Unison [@hud.ac.uk](mailto:@hud.ac.uk) or UCU. (Support is available at all stages of the process)
  - [Staff Wellbeing Confidential Support](#).

## Appendix A

### Bullying

The following are examples of what may be considered to constitute bullying:

- Constantly criticising someone's work
- Spreading malicious rumours about someone
- Constantly putting someone down in meetings
- Excluding someone from team social events
- Showing continued disrespect
- Constantly undermining someone's authority

### Harassment

The following are some examples of harassment related to specific areas as defined by the [Equality Act 2010](#) .

#### Harassment related to age

This may include behaviour causing offense through ageist banter or jokes and the expression of age-related stereotypes. It may also include excluding a person based on a perception of what they can / cannot do in relation to their age, as well as ignoring a person or undermining their views based on their age.

#### Harassment related to disability

This can take the form of individuals being ignored, disparaged or ridiculed because of their impairment. Harassment may include offensive or patronising language when referring to a disabled colleague. It may take the form of unnecessarily intrusive and inappropriate questions about a person's disability or excessive and unnecessary reference to a person's disability.

#### Harassment related to gender reassignment

This may include derogatory remarks/gestures, less favourable treatment towards an individual who intends to, has or perceived to have undergone a gender reassignment process. Other examples of harassment may include:

- Deliberately 'outing' an individual by revealing to others personal information about their identity;
- 'Deadnaming' where someone refers to a person by their name used prior to their transition;
- Purposefully ignoring an individual's preferred pronoun;
- Excluding or refusal to work with someone because of their trans identity.

#### Harassment relating to race

Racial harassment is unwanted conduct relating to a person's race, including their ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality. This may include racist jokes, 'banter' or derogatory language. It may consist of offensive remarks about dress, culture or

customs which have the effect of ridiculing or undermining an individual or fostering hatred and/or prejudice towards individuals of particular racial groups.

### **Harassment relating to religion or belief**

This may include derogatory remarks/gestures about particular religious beliefs or religious practice. This may take the form of exclusion from workplace interactions or social events due to the individual's religion or perceived religion. It may be about the individual's religion or belief, or it may be about the religion or belief with whom the individual associates.

### **Sexual Harassment/Harassment relating to sex**

Sexual Harassment relates to behaviour that has a sexual content or sexual connotation. Examples could include unwelcome physical touching, making sexual remarks to or about a person, telling jokes with a sexual content or displaying sexually explicit images on a computer screen.

Sexual harassment is different to harassment related to a person's protected characteristic, for example sex. This type of harassment may take the form of jokes, assumptions or offensive language relating to an individual's sex or the sex of another person and the individual finds this unwelcome and offensive. It may take the form of exclusion or less favourable treatment due to their sex.

Someone could experience both types of harassment at the same time, or separately. Both types of harassment involve conduct that is unwanted from the individual and has the purpose or effect of violating the person's dignity or of creating an environment that they find intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive.

### **Harassment related to sexual orientation**

Harassment related to sexual orientation is unwanted conduct directed at a person because of their sexual orientation (actual or perceived) or it may be about the sexual orientation (actual or perceived) of those with whom the individual associates.

Examples can include:

- deliberately 'outing' a colleague;
- homophobic comments, gossip and speculation, jokes and 'banter' about an individual based on their sexual orientation or perceived sexuality;
- physical assault;
- unnecessarily intrusive and inappropriate questions about a person's private life.

This list is not exhaustive; however, they are indicative of behaviours that would be considered unacceptable conduct by the University.

### **Victimisation**

Victimisation can take many forms. The following list provides a few indicative examples of the type of behaviour which could amount to victimisation:

- Penalising someone for making a complaint of discrimination, harassment or bullying. For example, this might involve giving the person unrealistic or impossible deadlines;
- Excluding a person from work-related activities or conversations in which they have a right or legitimate expectation to participate because they have made a complaint of discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- Creating a difficult environment for an individual because they have made a complaint of discrimination, harassment or bullying (whether informal or formal).

## POLICY SIGN-OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS

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<b>Compliance Checks:</b>	HRG SMT regularly review to ensure compliance
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## REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Revision description/Summary of changes	Author
V1.1	October 2016	Formatting updates (minor amends not requiring committee approval)	HR Manager
V1.2	November 2019	Formatting updates (minor amends not requiring committee approval) and transference to new template	HR Manager
V1.3	March 2022	Formal review –requiring approval	EDI Manager
V1.4	Oct 2024	Minor amends to 'Purpose and Context' Section (not requiring formal approval)	Head of HR
V.2	January 2026	Formal Review – In consultation with Trade Unions	Head of HR/Director of Human Resources