

Guidance for staff members who have been accused of harassment or bullying

All staff and students have a responsibility to behave in a manner that does not cause unreasonable offence to others. All staff and students have a right to ask any of their colleagues or peers to stop behaving in a manner that is upsetting, insulting or offensive to them.

The University recognises that formal complaint and disciplinary procedures can be difficult and stressful for all involved. The University's [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#) advises individuals to raise such issues with the person concerned in order to try and resolve matters at an early, informal stage. The informal process is not intended to embarrass or offend. However, the University acknowledges that being approached in this way can also be stressful.

The aim of the Dignity at Work and Study policy is to ensure that when someone has been offended (whether or not this was intentional), there is an opportunity for all individuals involved to resolve the situation informally and discreetly.

Advice and support are available for all those involved in such situations. See below for more information.

1. Someone is upset or offended by your behaviour – the informal process

Even if you did not intend to offend anyone, you may find that someone tells you that they are offended or upset by certain aspects of your behaviour, and asks you to stop behaving towards them in a particular manner. The University recognises that it can be surprising and shocking to be approached by a colleague, peer or student in this way, but talking about issues in an informal way can avoid difficulties escalating to the point where a formal complaint or grievance is made.

Tips for dealing with being challenged about an aspect of your behaviour:

- Try to listen to the concerns of the person who approaches you and think about how your behaviour was perceived.
- Ask the person to provide an example if you are unclear about the nature of the behaviour that upset them.
- Apologise for the offence that was caused. You do not have to agree with the other person's point of view to say that you are sorry that an aspect of your behaviour upset them.
- Make sure you have an up-to-date understanding of the University's Dignity at Work and Study policy, and Equality and Diversity Policy. Behaviour which might have been regarded as acceptable in the past may not be appropriate now.
- Seek support if you need it – see section 4 below.

2. Being approached informally by a third party

You may be approached by your line manager, another member of staff or a Harassment Advisor if the person has approached them directly rather than raising the matter with you. If your line manager approaches you, they will be trying to establish what has happened, and it will be helpful to give your view of the situation. Any discussion with your line manager will be part of the informal process unless they explicitly inform you that it is part of a formal procedure.

3. Formal procedures

If a formal procedure has been invoked, it may be investigated under the University's Grievance or Disciplinary Procedures, or if a student has complained, under the Complaints Procedure initially. You can find more details about these on the University website:

www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/staff/mgrs-admin/employee/grievance/procedure/

www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/staff/mgrs-admin/employee/disciplinary/procedure/

4. Sources of support for you

You may find it appropriate to talk to someone about how you feel about what has happened, or to discuss how to ensure you are still able to work or study effectively with the person who approached you. Use of advice and support mechanisms will not be interpreted as any indication or admission of guilt.

There is a range of people you can approach:

- Your line manager
- Your local Human Resources team
- Your Trade Union representative
- Staff counselling through the Employee Assistance Programme:
www.gla.ac.uk/services/health/staffcounselling/
- Your mentor, if you have one
- An external body such as ACAS or the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

In cases where formal procedures have been invoked you may wish to seek assistance from your Trade Union representative, if you have one, or a work colleague to accompany you to any meetings.

5. Malicious or frivolous complaints

The University has a duty to protect employees from malicious or frivolous complaints and appropriate action may be taken where it can be demonstrated that a complaint is made on this basis. However this will not include any allegation that is made in good faith.

Thanks to the University of Cardiff for sharing their resources on this topic.

V0.3 January 2014