

Staff Policy on Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

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Appendix A – Definitions

1. Policy Title

- 1.1. Staff Policy on Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct.
- 1.2. This policy sits alongside the Student Policy on Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct.

2. Statement

- 2.1. The University of Leeds (UoL) believes that everyone in our community has the right to study and work in a supportive environment. We are committed to creating and maintaining a supportive and inclusive setting for everyone in the University community (including people who encounter UoL staff members or students in the course of their work or study). The University will not tolerate unacceptable behaviours such as bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.

2.2. Key Principles

- We do not accept bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct or other forms of unacceptable behaviours, by anyone in, or representing, our university, whether deliberate or unintentional¹.
- We encourage anyone who may have been impacted by, or who may have witnessed, unacceptable behaviours to disclose their concerns (see Procedures).
- We will make support available for those who have been affected by such behaviours and take appropriate actions to investigate and resolve.
- We expect all within our community to treat others with respect and dignity, and in line with our values.

¹ Further information on behaviours will be articulated in a new Behaviours Framework, which is being developed through mid-term Strategy review process, and which, when completed, could be considered in relation to this Policy.

- 2.3. Members of staff can, and are encouraged to, raise concerns of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct under this Policy irrespective of how or where the behaviour occurred, and the medium used.
- 2.4. Breaches of these Staff and Student Policies in a work or educational situation, by staff members or students will be investigated under the relevant procedures which, subject to investigation, could result in disciplinary action, up to and including exclusion or dismissal from the University.
- 2.5. Incidents which constitute a crime could also be referred to the Police, dependent on the circumstances.
- 2.6. Breaches by third parties will be dealt with appropriately and may be referred to security and/or the police and/or other relevant authority. Relevant third parties could include customers, clients, self-employed contractors or freelancers, service users, patients, students, friends and family of staff, delegates at a conference and members of the public. This list is not exhaustive.

3. Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Victimisation

- 3.1. Harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation (defined in [Appendix A](#)) is unlawful and will not be tolerated.
- 3.2. Bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct and victimisation may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal if committed:
 - a. in a work or educational situation.
 - b. during any situation related to work or study, such as at a social event with colleagues, during or outside working hours.
 - c. against a colleague or other person connected to the University of Leeds outside of campus, including on social media.
 - d. against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident is relevant to the worker's suitability to carry out the role.
- 3.3. Whether bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct or victimisation has occurred will be assessed on an objective basis, taking into account the full circumstances of the case. The nature of this objective assessment may vary depending on the specific type of conduct concerned but will in essence involve considering whether it is reasonable in all the circumstances to conclude that the conduct in question was bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct or victimisation.
- 3.4. For example, when considering whether unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic has had the effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, this will be determined by considering:
 - a. the perception of the individual affected,
 - b. all the other circumstances of the case, and
 - c. whether it is objectively reasonable in all of those circumstances for the behaviour or conduct to have that effect.

- 3.5. The University will consider any aggravating factors, such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague, when deciding the appropriate disciplinary action to take.
- 3.6. If any bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct or victimisation of staff occurs, the University will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. These may include updating relevant policies, providing further staff training and taking disciplinary action against the reported party.
- 3.7. The Staff Procedures on Addressing and Preventing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct set out how to report unacceptable behaviours.

Third-party Sexual Harassment

- 3.8. Third-party sexual harassment will not be tolerated.
- 3.9. The law requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties. While an individual cannot bring a claim for third-party harassment alone, it can still result in legal liability when raised in other types of claims.
- 3.10. Where staff experience third-party harassment, they are encouraged to report it through Report and Support or speak to their manager.
- 3.11. The University will monitor any potential risk areas for third-party harassment and take steps to prevent it occurring where possible. Where third-party harassment does occur, the University will take steps to remedy any complaints and prevent it from happening again (e.g. by warning the third party about their behaviour, banning a third party from the University premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police or sharing information with other areas of the University).

4. Overview

- 4.1. The University of Leeds aims to ensure that staff and students can report any unacceptable behaviours and are supported in the process of resolving it under the relevant policies on preventing and addressing bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct which:
 - define and prohibit bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment). Definitions are provided in Appendix A.
 - highlight the procedures for making, and responding to, complaints under the Policies.
 - set out action the University will follow if incidents or instances of such behaviour are identified.
- 4.2. This Policy applies to all:
 - employees
 - workers
 - volunteers
 - visitors (including researchers and lecturers)
 - honorary staff
 - examiners

- management/ IT consultants/agency staff
- contractors
- all students (including postgraduate researchers) engaged in teaching or other work activities
- other individuals who are involved with the University e.g. mentors, coaches, alumni.

4.3. For ease of reference only, the term ‘staff’ in this document includes all of the above.

4.4. The incident, or alleged incident, may have occurred:

- on University of Leeds property
- via UoL IT systems for example MS Teams, Zoom, Outlook, Skype etc
- off UoL property
- online whether via email, the internet or social media

and is alleged to have the effect of creating a hostile environment for a member of the University community.

4.5. This policy is designed to cover all areas of the University in the UK or abroad, subject to applicable local laws.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. This section outlines University and individual responsibilities to support the fair and consistent application of the policy and procedures.

5.2. Where reference is made to ‘manager’ this needs to be someone with the authority to make the decision such as a line manager, nominee or person with overall responsibility for the team.

The University:

5.3. It is the University’s responsibility to:

- a. work to prevent incidents of bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct and victimisation where possible; and to provide preventative educative opportunities for all members of our community regarding such behaviours.
- b. remove material or content on its premises which is reasonably considered, on an objective assessment, to be bullying or harassing or otherwise not within the scope of freedom of speech, or academic freedom, within the law.
- c. work to make available support for those who have been affected by such behaviours and to provide methods of investigation and resolution to stop bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.
- d. monitor data relating to harassment and sexual misconduct, and report it annually in line with University protocols to the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, University Executive Group and Council.
- e. review this Policy at regular intervals, and its effectiveness will be monitored and any changes which are identified as needed will be implemented.

Staff members:

5.4. It is your responsibility to:

- a. familiarise yourself with this policy and the procedures
- b. contribute to preventing unacceptable behaviours, by modelling behaviours consistent with the University of Leeds values.
- c. avoid abuse of power of the people you teach, supervise, manage or lead.

5.5. You are actively encouraged to come forward and raise concerns if you have them without fear of retaliation or repercussions. Support available is wide ranging, as set out on the intranet.

Managers

5.6. In addition to those responsibilities outlined under 5.4 and 5.5, it is your responsibility to:

- a. take concerns seriously and act upon these appropriately and in a timely manner
- b. seek advice and support as appropriate when concerns are brought to your attention.
- c. look into and explore allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct and provide appropriate support, including signposting.
- d. take appropriate steps to ensure that allegations of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct are addressed sensitively and following the appropriate procedures.

6. Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom

6.1. We are committed to securing academic freedom and freedom of expression through providing an environment for the peaceful and respectful exchange and exploration of diverse viewpoints; this includes peaceful protests and demonstrations. A balance must, however, be struck between the rights of the individuals to assert their lawful views on the one hand and, on the other, the rights of others (students, employees and visitors) to go about their business safely, unimpeded and free from unacceptable behaviours such as bullying and harassment. The framework is set out in the Freedom of Expression Policy and Code of Practice.

7. Equality Statement

7.1. All staff and students are responsible for contributing to an equitable and inclusive environment in which everyone is free of discrimination and harassment, and can contribute and flourish based upon their merits, abilities and potential.

8. Related Policies

- Staff Procedures on Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct
- Student Policy on Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct
- Code of Practice on Whistleblowing
- Conduct, Capability and Grievance policies (Staff Intranet)

- [Support Staff Procedure Agreement](#)
 - [Statute VII](#)
- [Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom Policy](#)
- [Policy on Personal Relationships at Work](#)
- [Policy on safeguarding children, young persons and adults in vulnerable circumstances](#)
- [Policy statement: Candidates for employment and existing staff with criminal records](#)
- [Social Media Policy](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Procedures](#)
- [Use of Computer Systems Policy](#)

9. Related Documentation and Supporting Information

- Appendix A Definitions
- [Bullying, Harassment and Misconduct information](#) (Staff Intranet)

10. Contact

equality@leeds.ac.uk

11. Policy sign-off and version control

Policy Owner	Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Function Lead	Equality and Inclusion Unit
Approved by	Council
Approval date	24 July 2025
Review date	July 2026

Appendix A: Definitions

The definitions apply to this Policy and associated procedures.

Abuse of Power

An abuse of power is where someone uses their position of power or authority in an abusive and unacceptable manner. Abuse of power can take various forms and may include, but is not limited to grooming, manipulation, coercion, or putting pressure on others to engage in unacceptable behaviours. The above behaviours may be expressed in person, in writing and/or by electronic means.

Abuse of power may also occur in the context of a close personal relationship or intimate personal relationship. Please read more about this in the [Personal Relationships at Work Policy](#).

Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.

Bullying may include overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision or inappropriate derogatory remarks about someone's performance or retaliation for making or supporting a complaint under this policy. However, legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to workers in the course of their employment, will not amount to bullying on their own.

Disclosure

Disclosure involves an individual choosing to tell anyone who is part of the University, about their experience of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct. Unlike Reporting (see definition below), disclosure does not trigger an investigation or action (unless the University has a safeguarding obligation), but it may lead to support being offered.

Harassment under the Equality Act 2010

Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of either:

- violating a person's dignity or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

A single incident can amount to harassment.

It also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or that is related to gender reassignment or sex, in the past.

Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex or

sexual orientation. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

Harassment may include, for example, derogatory jokes about a particular protected characteristic, or stereotypical remarks, mocking or mimicking, disclosing personal information of any individual or group.

A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended target. For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if the jokes create an offensive environment.

Harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Section 1

Harassment is a course of conduct conducted on at least two occasions that harasses one other person, or a course of conduct that harasses two or more persons at least once each. References to harassing a person include alarming the person or causing the person distress.

Reporting

Reporting is the sharing of information with a member of staff regarding an incident of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct experienced by that individual for the purposes of initiating the investigation process set out in this Policy and the accompanying procedures (different from *Disclosure*).

Reported Party

The Reported Party is the person(s) whose behaviour it is alleged amounted to an incident of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct.

Reporting Party

The Reporting Party is the person(s) who witnessed or is the subject of the alleged incident of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct.

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct means any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and includes, but is not limited to:

- sexual harassment (as defined below),
- sexual assault, and
- rape.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to sexual harassment.

It also includes treating someone less favourably because in the past they have submitted or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or that was related to gender reassignment or sex.

A person can be sexually harassed even if they are not the intended target.

Third-party harassment

Third-party harassment occurs where a person is harassed by someone who does not work for, and who is not an agent of, the University of Leeds, but with whom they have come into contact during the course of their work or study.

Victimisation

Victimisation is treating someone less favourably because they have, or are believed to have made a complaint, or to be supporting someone else in doing so.

It includes subjecting a person to a detriment because they have done, or are suspected of doing or intending to do, any of the following protected acts:

- Bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010.
- Giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act 2010.
- Doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Equality Act 2010.
- Alleging that a person has contravened the Equality Act 2010.

Where the University becomes aware of victimisation taking place, this may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal.