

Dignity and Respect Policy

People Services

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1.	28/11/2022	New formatting applied; links added; and minor updates made, including mention of sexual harassment, incidents outside the workplace and cyber bullying added; plus, sources of support updated.	Suze Attaway, Policy and Employee Relations Consultant
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3.	11/09/2025	‘People and Organisation Development’ updated to ‘People Services’; links checked; added ‘if appropriate to do so’ at the beginning of 6.1 and 6.1.	Suze Attaway, Employee Experience Consultant
4.	13/10/2025	Nilaari and EDI descriptions updated in Appendix	Nina Stonelake, People Partner
5.	14/5/2026	Statement 1.10 added to align with ERA 2025.	Nina Stonelake, Employee Experience Consultant
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) is committed to providing an environment that is stimulating and supportive and free of harassment (including sexual harassment), bullying and victimisation, by any person whether an employee, a student or an external third party.
- 1.2. All staff have a right to be treated, and are expected to treat others, with dignity and respect. Bullying and harassment can seriously worsen working, studying, social conditions and health and wellbeing at the University.
- 1.3. The University's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#) sets out the commitment towards the development of inclusive and supportive learning and working environments for all students and staff, where all individuals have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- 1.4. The University is determined to eradicate any harassment, bullying and victimisation and will maintain a zero tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviour at work.
- 1.5. The effects of unacceptable behaviour can be wide ranging and include:
 - Damage to health and wellbeing
 - Increased absence and ill health (particularly stress related)
 - Damage to morale
 - Poor performance/reduced efficiency
 - Poor customer service
 - Increased staff turnover
 - Possibility of legal action being taken
- 1.6. The policy is designed to ensure that staff are confident, if they bring a complaint in good faith, that the matter will be dealt with according to the procedure and that they will not be subsequently victimised or disadvantaged in any way.
- 1.7. The University recognises that informal channels can be a preferred means of preventing or stopping harassment, bullying or victimisation and encourages for them to be used wherever possible to address unacceptable behaviour at the first opportunity. Any reported incidents will be regarded seriously and dealt with appropriately by the University.
- 1.8. Appendix 1 contains definitions and examples of harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- 1.9. Third party contractors, consultants and suppliers are asked to complete [online training](#) ahead of working on campus.
- 1.10. As of 6th April 2026, someone who raises a concern about sexual harassment is protected as a whistleblower.

2. Purpose and scope

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to define acceptable behaviours for staff, outline the legal position and identify the responsibilities of managers and members of staff. The policy also outlines the procedure for action when behaviour falls short of the standards of acceptable behaviour.
- 2.2. This policy follows the [Acas \(Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service\) guidance on bullying and harassment at work](#) and references the [Equality Act 2010](#) and [Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Act 2023](#). It has been agreed with the staff trade unions (University and College Union, Unison and Unite).
- 2.3. The policy applies to all members of staff and the University recognises that the person responsible for unacceptable behaviour may be a manager, co-worker, team member or subordinate.
- 2.4. Unacceptable behaviour by students is dealt with under the [Policy for Bullying and Harassment of or by students](#). Students are required to behave appropriately according to the standards of the [Student Conduct Policy](#).
- 2.5. This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs both in and out of the workplace itself and in settings outside of the workplace such as business trips, events or social functions organised for and on behalf of the University both on or off premises. It includes cyber bullying such as emails and social media, as well as harassment or bullying by phone, text or during virtual events such as online meetings.
- 2.6. The policy does not cover staff grievances. Grievances, which arise directly out of an employee's employment or working practices of the University e.g. organisational change, new working practices, should be dealt with under the University's [Grievance Procedure](#).

3. Key principles

- **Timeliness** – Every reasonable effort will be made to deal with complaints in a timely manner, balancing the need to resolve issues quickly with the need to ensure that they are dealt with appropriately. It is recognised that delay results in stress for all parties involved and should be avoided.
- **Confidentiality** – All information concerning complaints must be treated in the strictest confidence in order to protect those involved. Matters will be dealt with confidentially and sensitively by all parties involved.

- **Awareness** – Managers and staff will be made aware of the acceptable standards of behaviour and the policy via University communications. All newly appointed staff will be advised about the policy as part of their induction.
- **Support** – Appendix 2 details those people who can be contacted by members of staff for confidential support and/or advice at any time on how to deal with situations.
- **Equality and diversity** – At all stages proper consideration should be given to the equality and diversity implications and needs of the individuals involved to ensure that matters are dealt with in a fair and equitable way. Information about the sources of support and advice available will be provided to all parties involved in any complaint.

4. Responsibilities

Staff

- 4.1. Staff have a responsibility to treat all colleagues and third parties with dignity and respect and take appropriate measures to ensure that bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation does not occur.
- 4.2. Staff have a responsibility to report any witnessed or suspected incidents of harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation immediately to their line manager or contact one of the people listed in Appendix 2 for support and/or advice.

Managers

- 4.3. Managers should maintain appropriate levels of communication with and supervision to staff; providing information and acknowledging achievement. Managers should hold regular [1 to 1 meetings](#), team meetings and [performance development reviews \(PDRs\)](#).
- 4.4. Managers should themselves demonstrate a high standard of behaviour and demonstrate to staff what behaviour is acceptable and expected at work.
- 4.5. Managers should help create a working environment in which staff feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour e.g. challenging behaviour where someone feels marginalised for views that they hold.
- 4.6. Managers have a responsibility to treat their staff fairly with consideration for their dignity.
- 4.7. Appropriate action should be taken by managers to stop unacceptable behaviour if it occurs and ensure all incidents are dealt with seriously, promptly and fairly. Managers

should keep notes of actions taken and follow up with employees to ensure the situation has improved.

5. Acceptable behaviour

5.1. All staff members within the University are expected to:

- treat all others with dignity and respect, including third parties
- conduct themselves professionally
- not behave in a manner that could be offensive to others
- be pro-active in developing and maintaining effective working relationships
- take appropriate action where there are difficulties in working relationships

5.2. Behaviour that may be acceptable to one individual may be offensive to another, and most of the time we expect individuals to be mindful and make the right judgements on how they should behave towards each other. Differences of opinion are to be respected regardless of whether they are unpopular or not widely held. However, there are occasions when behaviour can become undermining and destructive. On these occasions, staff should be entitled to point this out without becoming subjected to a violation of their dignity.

5.3. Unacceptable behaviour may constitute a pattern of repeated behaviours in which individual incidents are borderline, but which taken together, breach the bounds of acceptability. The behaviour does not need to be ongoing; a single event of unreasonable behaviour is enough for the employee to make a complaint.

5.4. There are some types of behaviour that would always be considered to fall below the threshold of acceptability. These include assault, discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

5.5. Unacceptable behaviour should not be confused with normal management authority carried out in a reasonable manner, including legitimate, constructive and fair criticism of staff performance or conduct.

5.6. There may be occasions where there are no witnesses to an incident of alleged bullying, harassment or discrimination and it is one individual's word against another. Where this is the case the balance of probability can be taken into account. In other words, an investigator will take into account what they consider to have been the most likely course of events and be able to explain this in their findings.

6. Procedure for dealing with complaints

- 6.1. **If appropriate to do so** every effort should be made to use informal means to stop the perceived offensive behaviour to enable early resolution. Many people are unaware that their behaviour is unacceptable and if this is clearly pointed out to them, the problem can often be resolved. It is important to raise issues as soon as possible after the event so that the details are still fresh in people's minds.
- 6.2. **If appropriate to do so** the complainant could approach the person(s) directly at the earliest opportunity and make it clear which aspect of their behaviour is considered unacceptable, explain the effect this is having on them and ask them to stop. The complainant may determine how to approach the person e.g. by asking for a confidential meeting.
- 6.3. If the complainant finds it difficult to approach the person(s) they could contact the following people in confidence for support and/or advice on how to deal with the situation. Further details can be found in Appendix 2.
- Line manager
 - [Dignity and Respect Advocate](#)
 - [People Services](#)
 - [Trade union representative](#)
 - [Employee assistance programme](#)
 - [Nilaari](#)
 - A member of [Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity](#)
 - [Staff networks](#)
- 6.4. Ultimately if the complainant is unable or does not wish to approach the person(s) directly they should discuss the matter with their immediate line manager. It may be useful for the complainant to capture the nature of their complaint in writing e.g. the name of the member of staff against whom the complaint is being made, the nature of the unacceptable behaviour complained about, dates and times when the offences occurred, examples of specific incidents any supporting evidence (e.g. emails), names of any witnesses to the incident(s).
- 6.5. If the line manager is the subject of the complaint, the complainant should report to the next line manager or [People Services](#), who will consider the most appropriate resolution.
- 6.6. Staff who feel they have been harassed, bullied, discriminated against or victimised at work by an external third party who is not a member of the University (e.g. a sub-contractor, client or customer) must report the incident to their line manager who will

determine the most appropriate course of action. Action will vary dependent upon the nature of the complainant's role and their contact with the external party.

6.7. The line manager will assess the situation and advise on the most appropriate intervention to resolve the matter. This may include:

- The line manager assisting the complainant to raise the issue with the person concerned.
- The line manager meeting confidentially with both parties, either separately or together so that there is an understanding of the behaviour, its effect and an agreed outcome on what changes in behaviour are necessary.
- Using a source of support and advice (see Appendix 2)
- The use of an independent mediator – [mediation](#) is a voluntary process where the mediator helps two or more people in dispute to find an agreeable solution to an issue. Advice should be sought from [People Services](#) Advice team.
- Provision of training, coaching, mentoring or counselling for relevant staff determined by the line manager. Anonymity will be provided to the member of staff who raised the complaint.
- Reviewing guidance on identifying and avoiding work related stress – further details can be found on the [managing wellbeing and stress at work for managers](#) intranet guide.
- Neutral assessment or a formal investigation maybe considered as appropriate.

This is not an exhaustive list and other options may be possible.

6.8. Line managers should keep a note of any discussions relating to the complaint and document interventions agreed. Line managers should monitor the situation and follow up with the complainant to ensure that there is no repetition of the problem.

6.9. The line manager may conclude that a disciplinary offence has occurred and the University's [Procedure for dealing with matters of Conduct](#) should be invoked. The line manager should contact [People Services](#) Advice team for advice.

6.10. If the complainant feels that their complaint has not been dealt with appropriately, they may choose to raise a formal grievance under Stage 2 of the [Grievance Procedure](#) to resolve their complaint.

7. Guidance for those accused of unacceptable behaviour

7.1. The University recognises that it can be distressing for a member of staff to have a complaint made against them, particularly where they have acted appropriately (e.g. a manager managing the performance or conduct of a member of staff). Staff may

contact one of the people listed in Appendix 2 for support and/or advice if they have a complaint made against them.

8. Monitoring and review

8.1. We use confidential qualitative and quantitative monitoring of data including, for example, staff survey results to inform our decision making regarding interventions and support in relation to this policy.

8.2. Review of the Dignity and Respect Policy will be undertaken by People Services.

Appendix 1

Definitions and examples of harassment, bullying and victimisation

1. Harassment

1.1. The Equality Act 2010 defines harassment as: unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

1.2. Harassment applies to all protected characteristics, except pregnancy and maternity, where any unfavourable treatment may be considered discrimination. Marriage and civil partnership are also not covered.

1.3. Find out more about behaviours that are likely to constitute harassment and examples in relation to the different protected characteristics on the [Acas website](#).

2. Bullying

2.1. Bullying is a form of harassment but does not need to be related to any protected characteristic. As with other forms of harassment there is no requirement to demonstrate intent to bully. The Acas definition of bullying is: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.

2.2. Find out more about behaviours that are likely to constitute bullying and examples in relation to the different protected characteristics on the [Acas website](#).

3. Victimisation

3.1. Victimisation is defined in the [Equality Act](#) as occurring when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so.

3.2. Victimisation can be described as subjecting a member of staff to unfavourable treatment because in good faith they have:

- Taken out court proceedings under the Equality Act, other similar legislation or they have indicated their intention to do so.
- Given evidence or information in connection with the proceedings.
- Done any other thing for the purposes or in connection with the Equality Act.
- Participated in an investigation of a complaint, or participated in any disciplinary hearing arising from an investigation.
- Made an allegation that a person has harassed or unlawfully discriminated against them.
- Made a relevant pay disclosure.

The Equality Act provides protection against victimisation for all the protected characteristics.

3.3. The [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#) also makes harassment potentially a criminal offence and gives the harassed party the right to legal redress.

3.4. Find out more about ways someone could be victimised and examples, including in relation to the different protected characteristics on the [Acas website](#).

4. Examples of online harassment, bullying and victimisation include:

- Downloading, displaying or printing offensive online content in the presence of or for distribution to another person or group of people.
- Using, displaying or saving offensive materials (e.g. screensavers, webpages, photographs, videos etc.) which are accessed, or viewed by another person or group.
- Sending or forwarding emails which contain content that could be perceived as bullying or harassing in nature; according to the definitions within this policy.

4.1. The University's [IT Acceptable Use Policy](#) provides further guidance.

Appendix 2

Sources of support and advice

1. Dignity and Respect Advocates

The network of advocates offer confidential support to guide staff to appropriate solutions. Advocates will listen and help to identify options to enable staff to deal with their particular situation. Advocates are staff volunteers who have undertaken training to equip them for the role. Advocates may be able to act as an independent companion in appropriate meetings where you may wish to have support.

Further information is available on the [Dignity and Respect intranet guide](#) or via email to hr@uwe.ac.uk or via (0)117 32 85111.

2. Immediate line manager

Or line manager's manager, if your line manager is the subject of your complaint.

3. People Services Advice team

People Services Advice team can be contacted on (0)117 32 85111 or via HR@uwe.ac.uk

4. Trade Union representative

Details of the 3 trade unions at UWE Bristol (Unison, UCU and Unite) and contact details of representatives can be found via the [trade unions intranet page](#).

5. Employee Assistance Programme

The [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#) offers staff access to a free and confidential service designed to support you through all of life's issues, both at work and at home. The EAP provides access to information, advice and both emotional and financial wellbeing support.

6. Nilaari

[Nilaari](#) is a black-led community-based charity. They have a diverse team that deliver culturally appropriate talking therapies and work with the Wellbeing team to support Global Majority staff and students.

Global Majority staff can access up to six sessions of confidential culturally appropriate counselling by calling 0117 952 5742.

7. Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity team

A member of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity team can listen to staff and provide informal support. Contact details can be found on the [Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity](#) intranet page.

8. Staff networks

Staff networks are run by staff for staff and bring together people from across the University who identify with a group relating to a protected characteristic, and/or staff with a common interest shared by a number of equality groups or linked to a protected characteristic. For more information see the [staff networks intranet page](#).

9. Health and Wellbeing Hub

The [Health and Wellbeing Hub](#) brings together all that we have at the University relating to health and wellbeing. Our resources, training, support, information, guidance and policies. Importantly it also provides information about what we are doing for staff as part of the Transforming Futures Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2030.