

UWE Wellbeing Service

Bullying and Harassment



What is bullying?

There's no legal definition of bullying, but The Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) defines it as follows:

"Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient".

Bullying is often repeated over time and can take many forms, such as:

- Verbal abuse and name calling
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Physical assault
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone — e.g. picking on them or setting them up to fail
- Making threats
- Cyber-bullying via phone or online (e.g. using email, social networks or instant messenger)
- Exclusion or victimisation

Whatever form it takes, though, bullying is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual

What is harassment?

Unlike bullying, harassment is defined by law and is a criminal offence. Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is any unwelcome comments (written or spoken) or conduct which violates an individual's dignity; and/or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Harassment is related to one of the following characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex and sexual orientation

At its most extreme, harassment may constitute a **hate incident**. A hate incident is any incident (which may or may not be a criminal offence) which is perceived by the victim or any other person witnessing the incident, as being motivated by prejudice or hatred based on race, disability, religion, gender/transgender identity or sexual orientation.



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The effects of bullying and harassment

Being bullied or harassed is likely to trigger your “fight or flight” response, increasing the levels of the stress hormones adrenalin and cortisol in your body. You might experience physical symptoms of stress and anxiety (e.g. increased heart rate, chest tightness/pain, muscle aches, sweaty hands etc.).

You may also experience fatigue, sleep problems, tearfulness, irritability or intrusive thoughts about what happened. Although being bullied is never your fault, it’s also not unusual to feel humiliated and ashamed. Over time, it can erode your self-esteem, and make you susceptible to depression, anxiety (including social anxiety) or panic attacks.

Getting help

It’s a good idea to document any episodes of bullying or harassment (dates, time, circumstances, any witnesses, the impact on you etc.). Keep records of incidents of cyber-bullying.

Although it can be hard to talk about being bullied or harassed, it’s good to get the support of trusted friends or family members. The Wellbeing Service can also provide you with help in coping with the emotional impact of being bullied or harassed.

You can get advice about reporting bullying or harassment at UWE from one of the Student Information Points, the Students’ Union or online at: <http://tinyurl.com/h4h5qnf>

Websites

Most of the information online focuses on bullying at school or in the workplace, but the same principles apply to bullying at university so you may find some useful information on the following websites:

- **Anti-Bullying Network** resource for young people experiencing bullying <http://antibullying.net/whatsnew.htm>
- **Bullying UK** part of family lives charity provides information and support <http://bullying.co.uk/>
- **Bully Online** focussing more on workplace bullying <http://www.bullyonline.org/>
- **Get Self-help** provides clear, practical, evidence-based advice for understanding and managing a range of problems www.get.gg
- **The NUS** provides some advice on bullying at university: <http://tinyurl.com/jdsgrem>

