

Dignity and Respect - Guidance for Accused Employees (or Respondents)

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Guidance for Accused Employees

1. Introduction

This guidance document is associated with the [Staff Dignity and Respect Policy](#) and the [Student Dignity and Respect Policy](#) and aims to support you if you have had an allegation of possible bullying, harassment, victimisation, or discrimination made against you by another individual. The individual making the complaint could be another staff member or a student.

The same standards of behaviour are expected of all members of the University community. If a student raises a concern about a staff member, they will raise this under the [Student Dignity and Respect Policy](#). If a concern is raised by a staff member about another colleague, then this would be raised under the [Staff Dignity and Respect Policy](#).

2. Informal Resolution

The University aims to create and maintain an environment where students and staff feel able to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity and reduce the need to initiate formal procedures. Wherever practicable and reasonable, concerns should be resolved informally. The Staff and Student Dignity and Respect Policies contain both informal and formal resolution approaches. Staff and students are encouraged to raise concerns informally first, when it is safe and possible to do so.

Consequently, it is possible that a colleague or student may approach you about your behaviour without raising a formal complaint. This could be the case regardless of whether you intended to upset or offend anyone or were aware that your behaviour caused upset or offence.

Being approached directly by a colleague or student about your behaviour might feel unexpected or uncomfortable. It is important to remember that everyone at the University has the right to address issues that concern them. Addressing concerns informally often helps resolve matters quickly and prevents issues escalating to formal complaints. The

informal process is designed to help us reflect on our actions and foster a more inclusive environment, not to cause embarrassment or distress.

If you are approached by an individual, it is recommended that you consider the following:

- Try to remain calm and do not respond in the heat of the moment. Instead, listen carefully and with an open mind to the concerns expressed – remember that different people find different things acceptable and you may have unintentionally caused offence.
- If unsure about the behaviour in question, ask for specific examples.
- Whether you agree or not with the informal issues raised, you should be ready to reflect on your behaviour and its impact. You may then need to change your behaviour and/or apologise for any offence or upset caused.
- Ensure you are familiar with the [Staff Dignity and Respect Policy](#).
- Seek support if needed ([Support](#) details below).
- Always observe confidentiality and expect all others involved to do the same.

In addition to direct approaches, your line manager or HR may approach you informally if the individual has raised the issue with them first. They will aim to facilitate resolution and provide support to both parties. They will typically begin by addressing the issues raised through open discussions, aiming to fully understand all perspectives. This ensures that every side of the story is fairly represented.

Depending on the informal concerns raised, your line manager, or HR, may ask you to complete relevant training or refresher training, even when no formal complaint has been raised against you. This training could include the [Staff EDI Training](#), including training on [Preventing Sexual Harassment](#) which is expected learning for all colleagues.

3. A Formal Complaint is Raised by a Student

If a formal complaint is raised by a student, then this may be taken forward under the [Student Complaints relating to Staff Conduct Procedure](#). You should familiarise yourself with this procedure if you are informed that a complaint about you will be progressed under it.

Following an investigation under the [Student Complaints relating to Staff Conduct Procedure](#), the investigating officer will confirm to you the outcome of the investigation and the reasons for the decision. If there is found to be a case to answer, then a disciplinary hearing under the [Disciplinary Policy](#) may be held. You should refer to this policy for information on the disciplinary process.

4. A Formal Complaint is Raised by a Staff Member

If a formal complaint is raised against you by another staff member, then this will usually be taken forward under the University's [Grievance Policy](#). You should familiarise yourself with the Grievance Policy, and particularly Appendix I, which provides guidance to employees who have grievances raised about them (referred to as respondents).

Please be assured that if a formal complaint or grievance is raised against you, you will be given a full opportunity to present your side of the story. The formal investigation process is designed to ensure impartiality and allows you the platform to voice any concerns you may have regarding other staff member(s). Our goal is to address all concerns comprehensively and fairly. We encourage you to communicate any additional information directly with the investigating officer.

If, following a Grievance Hearing, the Chair believes that there is sufficient evidence that the issues relating to your behaviour are serious, and that you have a case to answer, they will advise you that matters will progress to a Disciplinary Hearing. You should refer to the [Disciplinary Policy](#) for information on the disciplinary process.

5. Support for You

The University recognises that being accused of bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation can be challenging, upsetting and stressful. It is important that you have access to support and have the opportunity to discuss your experiences and explore possible solutions with someone you trust.

The University offers a confidential [Employee Assistance Programme](#), which is available to all employees. You can also refer to the [Staff Health and Wellbeing Hub](#) which contains wellbeing information, resources, and services available to you, including [crisis support](#). Your manager, HR, or your Trade Union representative can also be contacted if you need support.