

# Dignity at Work and Study

## Procedure and Guidance for staff

### 1. Scope

1.1 This procedure applies to bullying and harassment by:

- a) A member of staff against another member of staff.
- b) A member of staff against a student.
- c) A student against a member of staff.
- d) Third-parties such as external contractors and agencies against staff or students or vice-versa.

### 2. Making an informal complaint

2.1 It is often possible to sort out matters informally, particularly if the person does not know that his or her behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effect of their behaviour and agree to change it. Other informal routes are:

- a) Making it clear to the person or persons causing the offence that their behaviour is unacceptable to you. You might want to ask a colleague to support you in this conversation.
- b) Seeking support or advice from a friend, a work colleague or if appropriate, a trade union representative.
- c) Contact the QMUL employee assistance programme, Workplace Options (**Freephone: 0800 243 458**).
- d) Contact a colleague who has been trained to help in this type of situation. Information about Dignity Disclosure Officers can be found at Appendix 1.
- e) Speak to a member of staff from HR, who can advise on your options including mediation.
- f) Raise your concerns with your line manager.

### 3. Making a formal complaint

3.1 If you wish to make a formal complaint you can do so under the university's arrangements for dealing with grievances. These may be found at [www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/procedures/policies/grieve/index.html](http://www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/procedures/policies/grieve/index.html)

3.2 If you wish to make a formal complaint of harassment/bullying, please include:

- a) the name of the person(s) whose conduct you consider amounts to harassment or bullying;
- b) the type of conduct that is causing offence, together with specific examples;
- c) dates and times when incidents of harassment or bullying occurred, and where they occurred;
- d) the names of any colleagues or other students who witnessed any incidents, or who themselves may have been the victims of harassment or bullying by the same person;
- e) Detail of actions that you have already taken to try to deal with the issues raised.

3.3 During the process of dealing with the grievance, the Head of School/Institute/Directorate (or nominated representative) will, if appropriate, take proportionate and reasonable steps to

minimise and/or supervise any contact between the relevant parties and to keep them informed of these steps at all times.

- 3.4 Every safeguard will be put in place against the possibility of recrimination or victimisation, particularly in cases where a grievance is upheld. The Head of School/Institute/ Department (or nominated representative) has a duty to monitor the longer term situation as far as possible, both with respect to day-to-day working relations within the department and in the wider community.

#### **4. Physical assault**

- 4.1 If you have been physically attacked or assaulted you should seek help immediately. If you have been sexually assaulted or raped it is particularly important that you seek advice and medical assistance immediately. It is strongly recommended that such crimes be reported to the police. For cases of sexual assault an alternative is to seek advice from The Havens (see Appendix 1).
- 4.2 Suggested contacts, as listed in Appendix 1, will offer support in deciding what action to take and no additional parties will be involved without your permission. If there is a serious risk of harm to yourself or others, information may need to be passed on, but attempts to obtain your permission for this will always be sought first.

#### **5. Accusations of harassment or bullying**

- 5.1 If you are approached informally by someone or on behalf of someone about your conduct or behaviour, do not dismiss the complaint. Remember that people find different things acceptable or unacceptable and everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others. You should carefully consider the information provided as it may be that you have upset or offended someone unintentionally. If that is the case the person who approached you may be content with your explanation and an apology, together with an assurance from you that you will not repeat the conduct or action. If accused of harassment or bullying support and advice is available (see para 3 above).
- 5.2 If you are approached about informal allegations in relation to your conduct or behaviour and mediation is proposed as an option then you should carefully consider this as a helpful way forward to resolve the concerns raised. Mediation will only be viable where both parties agree to mediation. Further advice on mediation is available at <http://hr.qmul.ac.uk/procedures/policies/medn/i>
- 5.3 If a formal complaint is made about your behaviour this will be investigated under QMUL's arrangements for dealing with grievances. These may be found at <http://www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/procedures/policies/grieve/index.html>

#### **6. Harassment or bullying by a student**

- 6.1 Should you wish to make a complaint against a student, you should first raise the issue with your line manager so that the necessary support and guidance can be given and so that a

decision can be made on whether to refer the complaint to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Unit.

**7. Harassment or bullying by a third party**

7.1 If you believe you are being harassed whilst at work by someone who is not employed or studying at the university but is associated with it (i.e. contractors or visitors) you should report such incidents to your Head of School/Department or a relevant manager.

**8. Confidentiality**

8.1 Information concerning allegations of harassment will, so far as reasonably possible, be treated as confidential by those (e.g. Dignity Disclosure Officers) that staff or students choose to disclose to. If there is a serious risk of harm to the staff, student or others, information may need to be passed on, but attempts to obtain the staff or students permission for this first would always be sought. Information will be shared on a need to know basis, including (as appropriate), with the individual against whom a complaint is brought.

**9. Vexatious or Malicious Complaints.**

9.1 If at any time, there is evidence a complaint has been made vexatiously or maliciously or the complaint is deemed not of genuine substance by the member of staff hearing the complaint, no further action will be taken regarding the complaint.

9.2 Disciplinary action may be taken in relation to the complainant if the complaint is considered to be vexatious or malicious.

**10. Monitoring**

10.1.1 QMUL will collect information relating to staff and students experience of the implementation of this policy through relevant surveys, (which will include questions relating to harassment where appropriate).

10.2 Review of the Dignity at Work and Study general guidance will be undertaken by the Human Resources Department every two years.