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The University of Manchester

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

Dignity at Work and Study Informal Procedure for Staff and Students

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Purpose and Scope

1. This procedure is to be used by staff and students who wish to take informal steps in making a complaint, against a member of staff or against a student, when they believe they have been the subject of unacceptable behaviour.

2. Where a complaint is about someone other than an employee or student, such as a contractor, customer or visitor, the University will consider what action is appropriate to deal with the situation and to protect the complainant and anyone else involved. Where appropriate, the University will attempt to discuss the matter with the third party.

3. In the following sections, the:
person making a formal complaint is referred to as "the complainant"; and
expression "respondent" refers to an individual against whom a complaint of unacceptable behaviour has been made.

Support

4. Before initiating the formal procedures, staff and students are encouraged to seek impartial advice and support. There are a variety of support options available to both staff and students.

For staff and students

5. Harassment Support Advisors. An advisor can talk through the University's procedures, how to make a complaint and what support is available, in confidence.
6. **Report and Support.** The website provides information on reporting an incident and the support available to staff and students.

For students

7. **Your School**. If you are a student you can talk to your academic adviser, or a support adviser in your school.
8. **Student Support and Advice.** This University service offers support and advice on issues affecting your student life, with signposting and referral to more specialist services. If you're not sure where to go, this is a good place to start. Find them in the Atrium on the first floor of University Place.
9. **UMSU Advice Service.** This is a free confidential and impartial service where students can get advice and information on academic and personal issues, including advice on procedures and representation at hearings. The Advice Service is also a hate crime reporting centre.

10. **Residential Life Advisors (RLAs).** If you are a student in Halls, all of the residences have a team of RLAs living in-house, which is made up of either postgraduate students or members of staff at the University. The team can be an important source of guidance and support for students.

For staff

11. **Local People Directorate Contacts.** If you are a member of staff or a manager, your HR partner will be able to identify the support that is available for you.
12. **Trade Unions.** There are three trade unions that represent staff at the University: Unison, Unite and UCU.
13. **Staff Network Groups.** The University has a number of staff network groups. They are a good way to network with people from all over the University, build contacts, share experiences, arrange events and socialise. Many of the groups also offer confidential support and advisory services from their members to any member of staff.

External sources of support

14. **Citizens Advice** provides some information on bullying and harassment.
15. **Family Lives** provides some information and advice on bullying at University.

Evidence

16. For any member of staff or student who feels that they have/are experiencing unacceptable behaviour, it is important that they begin to keep a note of the details and dates of any incidents which have caused them distress. Where possible, the following information should be included:

- date of incident(s), location and time;
- nature of incident(s);
- the response made by the respondent;
- the complainant's feelings at the time;
- any action taken by the complainant;
- the name of any witnesses; and
- any relevant e-mails, posts on social media and other correspondence.

Advice for respondent:

17. Remain calm if someone approaches you about your behaviour. Although it can be extremely upsetting to be accused of unacceptable behaviour, getting angry will only aggravate the situation.

18. Where there has been a misunderstanding, the matter can hopefully be resolved with mediation from a third party.

19. Be prepared to change your behaviour or style of communication. It may be that a few modifications to your actions or manner of communication are all that are needed to resolve the situation. It's important not to get defensive and to stay open to any constructive feedback you receive.

Options

20. Many issues can be resolved informally and this approach is encouraged where possible.

21. Mediation is also available at any stage and offers a less adversarial method of resolving disputes.

22. However, if the complainant does not feel able to follow either the informal procedure, which is set out below, or mediation, or if the incident is too serious for such approaches, they may proceed straight to the formal stage for staff and for students

23. As a general principle, the decision of whether to progress a complaint is up to the individual. However, the University has a duty to protect all staff and students and may pursue the matter independently if it considers it appropriate to do so.

Informal procedure

24. Complainants are advised to talk to someone they can trust. This may be a colleague/fellow student, a line manager/tutor, a trade/students' union representative, a family member or friend. The process of talking through what has happened with someone else can help to determine what action to take. It's important, if appropriate, to talk to someone so that they are aware that something may be impacting on your work or study.

25. Complainants and respondents can contact a Harassment Support Advisor at any time to discuss the issue and seek advice.

26. The complainant may feel able to tell the person who they believe is discriminating against, harassing, bullying or victimising them, to stop,

either by talking or writing to them. Sometimes it is enough just to explain to the person what is unwanted about their behaviour and why it is unacceptable. This is often very difficult to do and the complainant may prefer to be accompanied by a colleague/fellow student, a line manager/tutor, a trade/students' union representative or to ask their manager/tutor to approach the individual on their behalf.

27. Informal action can be particularly useful in cases of unwitting behaviour, for example, where the person is not aware of the effect that they are having.

28. If the complainant feels unable to speak to the person concerned, this does not imply that they have accepted the behaviour, nor will it prejudice any complaint that they may bring.

Mediation

29. Mediation is an informal, voluntary and confidential process that can help the complainant and the respondent to explore issues and concerns.

30. Mediation can be used at any stage, as an alternative to the informal stage or as the next step after informal procedures. It can also be used at any point during the formal procedure, in which case the formal procedure will be halted pending the outcome of the mediation.

31. If the complainant or respondent wishes to find out more about the Mediation Service, they can contact the service by emailing mediation@manchester.ac.uk

Next steps

32. If after going through the informal stages, you feel that your complaint has not been resolved, you should consult stage two, the formal procedures for staff and for students.

Procedure Review

33. The effectiveness of this procedure will be reviewed every three years along with the associated policy in full consultation and discussion with the recognised Trade Unions and Students' Union. This procedure may be updated from time to time as necessary.

Document control box	
Policy title:	Dignity at Work and Study Informal Procedure for Staff and Students
Effective from Date:	February 2019
Approving body:	HR Sub Committee of Planning & Resources Committee Senate
Version:	3
Supersedes:	Dignity at Work and Study Procedure for Staff and Students October 2014
Previous review dates:	January 2012
Next review date:	Every third year, or upon any significant change in consultation with the recognised campus trade unions
Related Statutes, Ordinances, & General Regulations	**1.** University Statute XIII Part III Disciplinary Procedures & Part VI Grievance Procedure **2.** University Ordinances XXIV Staff Disciplinary Procedures pursuant to Statute XIII Part III & XXVIII Staff Grievance Procedure pursuant to Statute, XIII Part VI **3.** University Student Regulation XVIII Student Complaints Procedure **4.** University Student Regulation XVII Conduct & Discipline of Students
Equality relevance outcome:	High
Related policies:	Dignity and Work and Study Policy Equality and Diversity Policy for Staff and Students
Related procedures	Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure for Support Staff Grievance Procedure for Support Staff Regulation XVIII Student Complaints Procedure
Related information:	Staff Satisfaction Survey
Policy owners:	Director of Human Resources and Director of Teaching and Learning Support
Lead contact:	Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion