

# Harassment Advisors and Mediators

## Information session

# Outline of Session

- Dignity at work and study – the journey so far
- Policy scope
- Key roles
- Harassment Advisors
- Mediators
- Benefits and support
- Recruitment and selection
- Training
- Questions and suggestions

# Dignity at work and study - the journey so far

- Working group formed
- Consultation with stakeholders
  - HR, Student Support and Services
  - student and staff surveys
  - trade unions and student's union
- Good practice review
  - Other institutions
  - Experts in the field
- Finalising the policy
- Development of roles and responsibilities
- Training and communications

# Policy scope

- Student making a complaint about
  - Another student
  - A member of staff
- Staff making a complaint about
  - Another member of staff
  - A student
- Commitment to address issues also applies to visitors, contractors etc.

# Key roles

- Harassment Advisors
- Mediators
- Human Resources (HR)
- Student Support and Services
- Line managers/Heads of School
- Other support roles
  - Counselling Service
  - trade union or student's union representative

# Harassment Advisors

- First point of contact for anyone concerned about bullying or harassment
- NOT an advocacy or counselling role
- Advising on policy, procedure and next steps
- Cannot guarantee complete confidentiality

# Harassment Advisors

- To provide a confidential support and information service to University staff and students on issues relating to harassment and equality.
- To assist individuals to identify the problems they face and explore the various options available to them. This will not involve the Harassment Advisor in attending informal or formal meetings under the Dignity at Work and Study Policy.
- To support individuals against whom a harassment/bullying complaint has been made, by outlining the formal process and any other support routes open to them.

# Harassment Advisors

- To identify to individuals any other support services available and appropriate to their circumstances (e.g. mediation, trade/students union, Counselling Service, Occupational Health, Academic Advisory Service, Disability Support Office).
- To complete and forward monitoring data to the Equality and Diversity Team.
- To participate in meetings to share good practice, raise issues and provide mutual support. To receive regular updates on policy and legislative issues around harassment and equality issues.

# Harassment Advisors

- To spend on average 1 – 2 hours a month on the role
- To complete and forward equality monitoring data to the Equality and Diversity Team
- To attend the initial training programme and refresher training as appropriate
- To maintain a log of information held securely
- To actively participate in the Harassment Advisors Network
  - Attend meetings (3 per year)
  - Sharing good practice
  - Providing peer support
  - Help to ensure consistent practice
- The role is an annual appointment which will be reconfirmed after review

# Harassment Advisors... must NOT

- Promise confidentiality at all times. In certain circumstances, where there may be a criminal element, a risk to the individual or others or any unsafe working environment, the Advisor will need to share this information with Human Resources or Student Support and Services
- Act as an advocate
- Take responsibility for resolving the problems
- Maintain involvement once the complaint becomes formal

# Harassment Advisors – skills and experience

- Experience of providing sensitive and positive support to others in difficult situations whilst remaining objective and impartial
- Experience of dealing with a diverse range of individuals
- An understanding of and a commitment to equality and diversity
- Effective verbal and listening communication skills
- Able to maintain confidentiality
- An understanding of the need to maintain the boundaries of the role and an ability to refer issues on as appropriate

# Mediators

- Both parties need to agree to mediation
- NOT about dictating what the problem is and how it can be resolved
- Helping parties to generate a solution

# Mediators

- To facilitate negotiation and settlement between disputing parties by providing direction and encouragement, working collaboratively with the parties and finding creative ways to reach a mutual solution.
- To help parties who have a dispute move beyond initial positions by surfacing hidden interests, needs and constraints.
- To help parties improve communication and assist parties to understand interests and priorities in order for them to generate creative solutions.

# Mediators

- To help others discover and agree on mutually acceptable standards plus explore and assess alternative agreements.
- To complete and forward monitoring data to the Equality and Diversity Team.
- To participate in regular updates on policy and legislative issues around harassment and equality issues, meetings to share good practice, raise issues and provide mutual support.

# Mediators

- To spend on average 2 – 3 hours per month
- To support the resolution of a variety of disputes raised under the Grievance Procedure for Staff and the Student Complaints Procedure
- To complete and forward equality monitoring data to the Equality and Diversity Team
- To attend training and gain accreditation as a qualified Mediator
- To attend refresher or other training as appropriate
- To actively participate in the Mediators Network
  - Attend meetings (3 per year)
  - Sharing good practice
  - Providing peer support
  - Help to ensure consistent practice
- The role is a 3 year appointment which will be reconfirmed after review

## Mediators – skills and experience

- Able to adopt a flexible approach and respond creatively to problem solving
- Effective verbal and listening communication skills
- Able to gain trust and respect
- Able to act impartially in a non-judgmental way
- Experience of dealing with a diverse range of individuals at all levels
- Able to maintain confidentiality

# Benefits and support

- In depth training on the legislation and the policy.
- Training and development activity supporting skills important to the role such as active listening, managing conflict and questioning skills. (Mediators will gain accreditation as a professionally qualified mediator.)
- Ongoing confidential network meetings to share experiences and get feedback and support from Human Resources, Equality and Diversity and Student Support Services.
- The opportunity to gain new experience, skills and work in an institutional context supporting staff and students.

## Recruitment and selection

- Complete an appropriate application form
  - Closing date 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009
- A panel interview with questions based on the essential criteria
  - W/C 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009

# Training

- Harassment Advisors Training
  - Run by STDU
  - 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009
- Mediators Training
  - Run by UK Mediation
  - 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009

# Questions and suggestions