

School of Environment, Education, and Development (SEED)

Responding to discrimination, harassment, bullying, and victimisation (July 2026)

Statement

We have produced this SEED guidance to sit alongside the policies and procedures laid out by the University of Manchester (see links below). Discrimination, harassment and bullying have no place in SEED and we aim to foster a culture where all members of our community feel safe, like they belong and are respected and included by colleagues.

Our aim is to produce an accessible overview of the types of behaviours which are viewed as wholly unacceptable within the school and the University.

We also provide guidance for how individuals might respond when they have experienced or witnessed unacceptable behaviour.

Definitions

Taken from the [University of Manchester Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#):

Discrimination

- Unlawful discrimination takes place when an individual or a group of people are treated less favourably than others based on a protected characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity (including treating a woman less favourably because she is breastfeeding), race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation and in relation to direct discrimination only, marriage and civil partnership.
- Direct discrimination occurs where someone is treated less favourably because of one of the protected characteristics set out above; this can include association with or a perception of a particular characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination occurs where someone is disadvantaged by an unjustified provision, criteria or practice that puts people with a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared with others who do not share that characteristic.

Bullying

- Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined threatened or socially excluded. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.
- Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Non-verbal conduct includes postings on social media outlets. Work-related bullying may include, but is not limited to:
 - a) setting up someone to fail by giving them unachievable tasks, an unmanageable workload or impossible deadlines, or making unreasonable demands;
 - b) inappropriate monitoring of work or overbearing supervision;
 - c) giving someone too little work or work that is below their competence;
 - d) removing or reassigning a person's responsibilities without justification;

- e) deliberately withholding training or resources from someone that are necessary for them to perform the role, or opportunities for advancement or promotion;
- f) making inappropriate threats or hints about job security;
- g) withdrawing or refusing reasonable support.

Harassment

- Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which may (intentionally or unintentionally) violate a person's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, which interferes with an individual's learning, working or social environment. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.
- Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to a protected characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, gender expression or identity, pregnancy or maternity (including breastfeeding), race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.
- Harassment may include, for example:
 - a) unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay', including touching, pinching, pushing, grabbing, brushing past someone, invading their personal space and more serious forms of physical or sexual assault;
 - b) unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless), and suggestions that sexual favours may further a career or that a refusal may hinder it;
 - c) continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome;
 - d) sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including e-mails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet);
 - e) offensive or intimidating comments or gestures, or insensitive jokes or pranks;
 - f) mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability;
 - g) racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender;
 - h) outing or threatening to out someone as gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans;
 - i) ignoring or shunning someone, for example, by deliberately excluding them from a conversation or a workplace social activity.
- A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if they create an offensive environment.

Victimisation

- Victimisation is also prohibited. This is less favourable treatment of someone who has complained or given information about discrimination, bullying or harassment, or supported someone else's complaint.

As a school we recognise that these unacceptable behaviours are not only limited to **work related conversations and practices**, but any interactions also whether classed as social

or otherwise with colleagues should not involve discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

Micro aggressions

The University's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) team train staff to consider 'where do you draw the line?' about something someone has said: is it harmless, awkward, harsh, out of order, upsetting, offensive or dangerous?

This is focused on recognising the importance of 'micro aggressions', and the line from 'harmless' to 'dangerous'. Micro aggressions are defined as:

“...the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely on their marginalized group membership” (Sue, 2010, p.3)

'Micro' here does not mean that they are small or insignificant. They have a cumulatively damaging impact on individuals and communities.

It is important, when thinking about discrimination, bullying, and harassment, that we pay attention to the 'everyday' as well as the more overt and explicit forms of these behaviours.

Examples of such micro-aggressions are:

- Failing to learn to pronounce someone's name after it has been corrected
- Misgendering a colleague or student
- Disregarding religious traditions or their details
- Using sexist language
- Expecting someone to 'represent' the perspectives of others of their gender, race, class etc.
- Using inappropriate humour
- Asking people with hidden disabilities to identify themselves

Importantly, for something to be a microaggression it does not need to be intended. It is important that we separate out intention from impact, as 'small' communications or interactions can have a significant impact even when unintended.

What happens next? Responses to unacceptable behaviour

Where incidents of bullying, harassment, discrimination, micro aggressions, or victimisation occur then as a school we take this very seriously. Whoever the perpetrator is, we will support staff to report and gain support after experiencing or witnessing any of the above.

We would recommend that you keep some notes and details of what is happening and when, and who any witnesses were.

There are various parallel routes to following up such issues within the University, which are outlined below. **If you are unsure which route to take, please get in touch confidentially with your line manager.**

If you have concerns about talking to your line manager, please go via the Report and Support route OR alternatively please contact the People Leaders Advice Team

peopleleadersadvice@manchester.ac.uk. The Leaders Advice Team will redirect queries to the relevant People Partner where appropriate.

If you are unsure who to speak to, or don't feel able to speak to your line manager or People Partner please reach out to the SEED EDI Director – their name and contact details can be found here: [School Executive | School of Environment, Education and Development | StaffNet | The University of Manchester](#) or you can email edi.seed@manchester.ac.uk

You might benefit from talking to your trade union, or one of the staff networks (a full list can be found [here](#)).

1. Report and Support

If you have experienced or witnessed an incident you can speak to an advisor about this anonymously, or report it and get support from an advisor, using the University's [Report and Support Platform](#).

Please note:

- **If you report anonymously the EDI team will not be able to update you directly on any actions taken as result of your reporting.** Therefore, it is normal to not hear anything back on an anonymous report;
- If you report in a non-anonymous way, the University has Harassment Support Advisors who can provide support for any member of staff who has experienced discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- Even if you haven't reported the incident via Report and Support, you are able to email the central EDI team (equalityanddiversity@manchester.ac.uk) to ask to be put in contact with a Harassment Support Advisor (though they might ask you to put something brief into Report and Support just to have an audit trail);
- The EDI team also track patterns in reports in particular areas, and highlight issues of concern to departments and schools, so it is also worth submitting something (even anonymously) to Report and Support.

2. Dignity at Work and Study

[The Dignity at Work and Study Informal Procedure for Staff and Students](#) sets out recommended processes to follow, including what and how to make records of the incidents and advice for people who are approached by someone who has experienced or witnessed an incident. It sets out possible routes to follow including for example **mediation**:

- Mediation can provide an opportunity to sort out problems swiftly without using formal procedures. It can be used at any time during a disagreement or conflict, in a variety of different situations and for a range of issues.
- See details of the University Mediation service [here](#) – you can make a referral to mediation and be supported to meet with the person/people involved and talk through the issues and make a plan of action
- The service is confidential and information is only shared where criminal behaviour is discussed or if someone is at significant risk of harm

[The Dignity at Work and Study Process for Staff](#) sets out the formal complaints and investigation policy and steps involved.

- Unacceptable behaviour might be viewed as a disciplinary offence, and serious cases could result in dismissal. Making false or unsubstantiated claims with malicious intent could if proven also result in disciplinary action

If you feel able to do so, we encourage you to speak to your Head of Department or Head of School about what you have experienced or witnessed.

We would also encourage you as members of staff in SEED to speak to someone in the SEED EDI team, for example the EDI Director or one of our equity leads, should you have any concerns or questions about anything contained in this document.

Further support: Employee Assistance Programme

University staff now have access to our Employee Assistance Programme, Health Hero. In the case of discrimination, harassment and bullying colleagues can access information, advice, and well-being support.

Further training and resources

Please see the following for additional training and resources on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, and in particular issues connected with harassment and discrimination:

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/>

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/training/inclusive-language/>

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/race-charter-mark/support-race-equality/>

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/training/>

For information on EDI training available please see

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/training/>

And look out for specific training sessions at a school level, for example sessions on active bystander training, advertised via SEED e-bulletin and email lists.