



Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedure

All staff are entitled to a working environment which respects their personal dignity and which is free from unacceptable behaviour and conduct. Harassment and bullying are considered to be disciplinary offences and incidents will be treated seriously under the disciplinary procedure.

Harassment in the workplace is considered unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and is a criminal offence under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and therefore will not, along with bullying, be tolerated.

What behaviour is covered by this Policy?

- Unwanted conduct, on the grounds of gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical belief, which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the person at whom it is aimed or creating an intimidatory, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.
- Any form of verbal or non-verbal conduct which could be regarded as bullying or intimidatory behaviour, including of a sexual nature which has the above effect
- Bullying and harassment does not necessarily have to be face to face, it may occur through written communications, visual images, by email or by phone.
- The Academy of Medical Sciences is committed in taking steps to protect employees from all forms of harassment and bullying and therefore this policy covers employees who are subject to such conduct from third parties.

Examples of Harassment

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour
- copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
- exclusion or victimisation
- unfair treatment
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities.

Prevention of harassment

Informal Stage

In the first instance, a recipient of unwanted conduct amounting to harassment may prefer to try to resolve the problem by explaining to the individual concerned that the behaviour is not welcome, that it offends or makes the recipient uncomfortable and that it interferes with their work.

If you prefer, where you find it too difficult or embarrassing to take up the matter yourself, you should ask a colleague (or a manager) who will participate in an informal meeting between you and the individual concerned or will, at your request, approach the individual on your behalf.

The informal stage will not result in any formal internal investigation or disciplinary action but is intended to enable you to resolve the matter yourself without it going any further in The Academy of Medical Sciences.

Formal Stage

Where informal resolution is not appropriate, is not requested or where the outcome has been unsatisfactory, you may raise the matter as a grievance using the grievance procedure set out in the grievance policy and procedure.

Investigations

We will appoint someone unconnected with the allegations to investigate them swiftly and in an independent and objective manner.

Investigations will be carried out with sensitivity and with due respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged harasser. All those interviewed will be permitted to be accompanied by a work colleague or an authorised trade union representative.

All those interviewed will be informed that the interview is confidential and that they must not discuss the complaint with colleagues or friends. Breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action.

The investigation will focus on the facts of the complaint. Notes will be kept of all stages of the investigation and those interviewed will receive notes of the interview to agree. Parties will not be required to repeat distressing or embarrassing details any more than is necessary.

Wherever possible, consideration will be given to ensuring that the complainant and the alleged harasser are not required to work together whilst the complaint is under investigation.

The sanctions

Where a grievance is upheld, we will consider the wishes of the complainant as to what should be done. This may involve:

- moving the harasser to another post.
- moving the complainant to a different place or post, if the complainant wishes. (We will not require the complainant to move if this is not acceptable.)
- offering the complainant counselling and leave to enable him or her to recover from the effect of the harassment.
- However, the question of disciplinary action against the harasser is a separate matter and we will respect the rights of the harasser as to the confidentiality of any disciplinary sanction. Harassment or bullying can amount to gross misconduct and therefore if an allegation is substantiated through the disciplinary procedure this could lead to the employee being summarily dismissed.

General rules

We will seek to ensure that the complainant is not penalised whether directly or indirectly for bringing a complaint and the situation will be monitored to ensure that the harassment has stopped.

Any complaint that is unfounded and not made in good faith, for example a malicious complaint, will be treated as a disciplinary offence.