

**DIGNITY AND RESPECT POLICY**

**Revised May 2016**

# **Contents**

1. Scope
2. Introduction
3. General Statement of Policy
4. Unacceptable Behaviour
5. Procedure for Seeking Support
   1. Informal Advice
   2. Role of Dignity and Respect Advisers
   3. Confidentiality
   4. Who are the Dignity and Respect Advisers?
6. Resolution
7. Role of HR
8. Role of Managers
9. Responsibilities of Employees and Students
10. Review of Policy and Procedure

**EQUALITY STATEMENT**

Equality, freedom and **treating all persons with** **dignity and respect** are fundamental human rights. As such, the University is committed to making these central in all its work.

A diverse student body and workforce benefit the University’s role as a provider of high quality education and employment in a modern and ever-changing society. The University is firmly committed to the promotion of equality and will not unlawfully discriminate, or tolerate discrimination (direct or indirect, harassment or victimisation) on grounds of age, disability, ethnicity (including race, colour, caste and nationality) gender, gender identity, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation. This includes discrimination by association or due to perception.

Actions to promote equality, Equality Objectives with supporting action plans, and related Policies can be found at <https://share.coventry.ac.uk/staff/ps/equality/Pages/default.aspx> . Progress and successes are monitored by the Board of Governors and the Equality and Diversity Committee and are published annually (as above).

# The University is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity in the application of its policies and procedures, including this one.

# **1. Scope**

1.1 This Policy demonstrates the overriding commitment of the University to ensuring dignity and respect. It is designed to support an employee or student at a time of personal distress or concern and to enable them to make an informed decision on their next course of action.

The Policy covers behaviours which result in staff and students feeling they are not being treated with dignity and respect, including bullying and harassment.

1.2 The policy is applicable to all staff and students at the University.

### 2. Introduction

2.1 Coventry University is committed to providing an environment where all are treated with dignity and respect; a place free from bullying, any form of harassment, discrimination or victimisation and where no such actions are tolerated. It wishes to promote an environment where individuals have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

2.2 The University recognises the liability that both the institution and individuals may face under criminal and civil law should acts and omissions which contravene legislation be left unchecked. The most relevant pieces of legislation are

* The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;

* The Protection from Harassment Act 1997;
* The Human Rights Act 1998.
* The Equality Act 2010, which includes the public sector duty to foster good relations

Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 it is an offence to pursue a course of conduct that amounts to harassment of another person. Staff and Students could therefore be personally liable in law if they harass anyone at University.

2.3 Freedom of expression, within the law, is central to the concept of a University. To this end, the University seeks to foster a culture which permits freedom of thought and expression, within a framework of mutual respect.

2.4 The policy and procedures set out below, which have been agreed with the recognised trade unions, have been adopted to support the commitments and requirements set out above.

**3. General Statement of Policy**

Coventry University recognises that its employees and students have a right to be treated (and have an obligation to treat others) with **dignity and respect** so that the Institution is free from any form of harassment or bullying. The existence of any form of harassment can create a threatening and intimidating environment with adverse consequences for job and academic performance but, more importantly, for general health and well being. This is completely unacceptable and potentially unlawful and actionable. The University will therefore adopt a zero tolerance approach to such action when proven.

Therefore the University is determined to eradicate any such behaviour and will do so by implementing a series of measures, including awareness raising, training, counselling and, in appropriate cases, taking disciplinary action against any employee or student found guilty of such behaviour falling within the scope of this policy. However, making a formal complaint (grievance) falls outside of the remit of this Policy, and staff and students should refer to the appropriate related procedures outlined at Section 11 should they wish to pursue more formal action.

References to harassment and bullying in the context of this policy include unwanted acts perpetrated by means of direct physical or verbal interaction, written communications or by electronic means (e.g. sending abusive emails or posting of derogatory comments on ‘social networking’ websites such as Facebook, which are examples of behaviour termed as ‘cyber-bullying’). It should be noted that inappropriate use of the University’s IT systems may not only constitute a breach of this policy, but also of the Code of Conduct for the use of ICT facilities (<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/Documents/Registry/Regulations%20Academic/2015-16/general-regs/Appendix%204%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20ICT%20Facilities.pdf> )

#### 4. Unacceptable behaviour

4.1 Harassment

In the Equality Act 2010, harassment is identified as unwanted behaviour which has the purpose or effect of

Either

* violating an individual’s dignity

or

* creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or

offensive environment for that individual.

These behaviours may evidence discrimination on grounds of:

1. Age or youth;
2. Disability, impairment or long-term medical condition;
3. Marital status;
4. Nationality;
5. Pregnancy and maternity;
6. Race, ethnicity or colour;
7. Real or suspected status with regards to AIDS/HIV;
8. Religion or belief (including none);
9. Sex or gender reassignment;
10. Sexual orientation;
11. Subordinate or contract status;
12. Trans gender ;
13. Victimisation following an allegation of harassment

4.2 Coventry University regards the following as specific, but not exhaustive, examples of behaviour it deems contrary to its Dignity and Respect Policy;

(a) physical contact, ranging from unnecessary and unwelcome touching to serious assault;

(b) intimidating behaviour, either physical or non-physical;

(c) verbal and written harassment through jokes, offensive language, gossip and slander, letters, telephone, texts or E-mail;

(d) visual display of offensive material;

(e) isolating an individual or not co-operating with others in work or group assignments;

(f) pressure/coercion into participating in or relinquishing membership of political/religious groups;

(g) intrusion by pestering, spying or stalking;

(h) pressure to hide or disclose information relating to personal circumstances, for example, on sexual orientation or disability;

(i) abuse or misuse of power or authority which causes the recipient to feel undermined, humiliated, denigrated, embarrassed or injured.

**5. Procedure for seeking support under this Policy**

* 1. Informal Advice

Any member of staff who feels they have been subject to, or witnessed, behaviour deemed as inappropriate under this policy may contact their immediate manager, their HR Business Partner or their trade union representative, for further advice and assistance.

Any student may likewise contact their personal tutor or any member of staff with whom they have a good relationship, the Students’ Union Advice Centre or a Welfare Officer. In addition there is a Conciliation Scheme to provide students with an informal supportive route to resolving complaints and dealing with concerns, as well as issues relating to academic appeals. For further details go to:  <https://share.coventry.ac.uk/staff/ps/Registry/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/staff/ps/Registry/Documents/Conciliation_at_Coventry_University_Staff.pdf&action=default>

However there may be circumstances where a person may not wish to approach any of these parties initially. In these circumstances they may prefer to contact an independent Dignity and Respect Adviser, whose role is to support individuals within the terms of this procedure. Further information on these Advisers can be found at 5.4 below, and you can contact whichever adviser you wish – it does not need to be one who is from your Faculty or Service.

5.2 Role of Dignity and Respect Advisers

Dignity and Respect Advisers can:

1. offer a confidential ‘listening ear’ to employees or students who believe they are experiencing harassment or lack of dignity and respect;

###### provide information on the options for resolving the problem, including the complainant speaking or writing to the alleged harasser, suggesting referral of the matter to another source of help e.g. the University’s counselling service (students), Employee Assistance Programme, or pursuing more formal action e.g. invoking the Grievance or Complaints Procedure;

1. offer support and guidance on options (as above);
2. accompany complainants to meetings with the alleged harasser or other parties to discuss the issues raised.

Advisers are encouraged to support the individual to resolve issues informally wherever possible.

5.3Confidentiality

Dignity and Respect Advisers have a responsibility not to divulge information or take any action (e.g. involving other parties such as HR or Registry) without the express agreement of the complainant, unless there are circumstances where not to do so would endanger the complainant or other employees/students (e.g. where there is a danger of physical violence) or place the University or other individuals at risk.

On a monthly basis lists of general issues raised with Dignity and Respect Advisers will be sent by them to the Equality and Diversity Office and a summary given to the Director of HR on a six-monthly basis. This procedure will not identify individuals, Faculties or Services. However it will assist the University to gauge the range and frequency of any issues, take action as necessary and meet its duty of care towards its students and employees.

5.4 Who are the Dignity and Respect Advisers?

Advisers are employees of the University from a variety of Faculties and Services – excluding HR. They undertake the role voluntarily and are interviewed and appointed to the role following training to equip them with the necessary skills for the role. Advisers are afforded time out from their normal duties so that they can provide this support and you will be able to make an appointment to see one of them during working hours.

A list of trained Advisers is published on both the Staff Portal - <https://staff.coventry.ac.uk/ps/equality/Pages/dignity.aspx> and Student Portal <https://students.coventry.ac.uk/Equality/Pages/DignityandRespect.aspx>. This is regularly up-dated as new Advisers are appointed. If an employee is interested in becoming a Dignity and Respect Adviser they should contact the Equality and Diversity Manager. The University will use positive action, as necessary, to try to ensure that Advisers reflect the diversity within the University.

**6. Resolution**

6.1 If at all possible the complainant should make the harasser aware that he/she finds the behaviour or action inappropriate or unacceptable. Making the person aware of their actions may prevent any further occurrences. If the complainant feels unable to approach the harasser they can seek advice or be accompanied by a Dignity and Respect Adviser at any meetings convened to resolve the matter. Employees can find further guidance on this from the Bullying & Harassment Policy and Procedure (copies available on the Staff Portal or from Human Resources).

6.2 However if it has not been possible to resolve the matter using the informal stage (for example, where there has been a recurrence of behaviour previously dealt with informally), or where using the informal stage is otherwise inappropriate (for example due to the nature of the complaint) the formal stage may be invoked. This will be through the agreed University Grievance Procedure (available on the Staff Portal or from Human Resources) or Appendix 10 of the General Regulations (available on the web site or from Registry).

6.3 A formal stage is not covered by this Policy nor is consulting a Dignity and Respect Adviser a mechanism for, or requirement of, making a formal complaint. However it is designed to support a person (student or employee) at a time of distress and to help them to make an informed decision on their next step to resolving an issue.

**7. Role of Human Resources (HR) and Organisation Development (OD)**

HR and OD in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Manager, will

1. advise all parties on the general application of this policy;
2. approve the appointment of Dignity and Respect Advisers

(Director of Human Resources only);

1. implement programmes of training to support the policy and organise regular personal support meetings for Dignity and Respect Advisers.

**8. Role of Managers and Supervisors**

Within this procedure managers and Supervisors are responsible for:

1. ensuring that the area under their control is one where everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, including communicating this policy;
2. responding to complaints swiftly, confidentially and sensitively;
3. monitoring behaviour that could cause offence, reminding both employees and students where necessary, of standards that are required;
4. implementing the Disciplinary Procedure in cases of inappropriate behaviour;
5. leading by example; working consistently to University HR policies and procedures;
6. supervising students in line with Registry policies and procedures;
7. helping to resolve matters informally wherever possible and in line with policies, signposting staff and students to additional sources of support if applicable.

**9. Responsibility of Employees and Students**

All employees and students are required to familiarise themselves with the policy and to abide by its content.

Individuals have a personal responsibility not to be offensive to colleagues or to condone harassment by others. Harassment is misconduct and any formal action necessary will be taken under the appropriate Disciplinary Procedure as stated previously.

**10. Review of policy and procedure**

The effectiveness of this policy and procedure will be monitored, and reviewed at intervals not exceeding 3 years, or sooner if there is a significant change in associated legislation.

1. **Further University Policies**

This Policy supports the Policy on Equality & Diversity.

This Policy complements

* + For staff: the University’s policy on Bullying and Harassment and the formal Grievance Procedure by which an employee can submit a formal complaint of bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation against a member of Coventry University staff.
  + Students wanting to submit a formal complaint against another student should use Appendix 7: **Student Disciplinary Procedures.** Students wanting to submit a formal complaint against a member of staff should use Appendix 10A: Student Complaints Procedure’
  + Staff wishing to submit a formal complaint against a student should use Appendix 10B: Non-student Complaints Procedure