



Dignity at Work Policy

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Please note, this policy will remain in place until it is superseded by an updated version or withdrawn from circulation.

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the University's commitment to providing an inclusive, safe and respectful educational and work environment. We believe that everyone has the right to learn, work, and thrive in an atmosphere free from bullying and harassment. This policy outlines our commitment to preventing and addressing bullying and harassment within our University community.
- 1.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following other University policies:
- Disciplinary Policy
 - Resolution Procedure and Toolkit
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - Staff Code of Conduct
- 1.3 Any legislative changes will supersede this policy.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all University staff including honorary staff, TSS workers and all visitors to the University.

3. Principles

- 3.1 The University of Hull is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive community, which offers equality and opportunity for all by eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and promoting respectful relations on campus.
- 3.2 Bullying is defined for the purposes of this policy as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either:
- Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting; or
 - An abuse of misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.
- 3.3 This includes instances of 'upward bullying' which can be defined as bullying from one or more employee towards someone more senior (e.g. a manager). Examples of this can include:
- Showing continued disrespect.
 - Refusing to complete tasks.
 - Spreading rumours.
 - Constantly undermining someone's authority.
 - Doing things to make someone seem unskilled or unable to do their job properly.

- 3.4 Harassment is defined for the purposes of this policy as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is related to a protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and, intentionally or unintentionally (i.e. ‘banter’), either:
- Violates the person’s dignity; or
 - Creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.
- 3.5 Sexual harassment consists of unwanted conduct of a “sexual nature” and applies to individuals of any gender. Line managers also must take “reasonable steps” to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 3.6 You must respect the rights and dignity of others and refrain from offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or the abuse or misuse of power intended or tending to undermine, humiliate, denigrate, or injure the recipient.
- 3.7 We will not permit or condone bullying or harassment, and you have a right to complain should it occur. In the event of failure to adhere to the University’s requirements, disciplinary action may be a consequence of any reported or alleged activity that constitutes behaviour of bullying or harassment.
- 3.8 It should be borne in mind that anyone found responsible for harassment may also be held personally liable should the person who has been harassed undertake legal proceedings. Some forms of harassment may be criminal and punishable by prison sentences and fines. Where the University believes this to be the case, it will not hesitate to inform the appropriate authority.
- 3.9 In UK universities, every individual has a responsibility to uphold free speech, ensuring diverse perspectives and open dialogue are encouraged. At the same time, it's crucial that we all follow University policies, guidance and the Equality Act 2010 to prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination. By understanding and following the University’s guidance, we help create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment. Each of us plays a role in balancing the right to free speech with the duty to protect others from harm, ensuring that everyone feels valued and respected.
- 3.10 To achieve fairness in the workplace, everyone must, when carrying out their duties, have due regard to the public sector equality duty, created by the Equality Act 2010. The general duty has three components:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 3.11 Codes of practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission provide guidance upon how to meet the public sector equality duty.

4. Meaning of the terms

Disability

- 4.1 With regard to disability, the Equality Act 2010 is designed to remove barriers and give disabled people the opportunity to compete and be considered for all types of vacancies. Also, to exercise their skills and abilities in employment and to gain access to goods and services on a fair and equal basis subject to any statutory restrictions.
- 4.2 An employer must take all reasonable steps, supporting disabled staff to stay in work.
- 4.3 To qualify for disability protection under the Act, a person must have, or have had, a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- 4.4 Managers should not attempt to determine whether an individual falls within the legal definition of disabled and should instead always seek advice from People Services.
- 4.5 Day-to-day activities are common actions, like using a telephone, climbing a flight of stairs, or reading a sign, carried out by many people on a regular basis.
- 4.6 A disability can arise from a wide range of impairments which can be:
- Sensory.
 - Fluctuating.
 - Progressive, and can include autoimmune conditions, conditions which are organ specific, mental health and mental illnesses.
 - A person who has cancer, HIV infection or MS is a disabled person from point of diagnosis.
 - The Act also treats severe disfigurement as a disability.
- 4.7 The adverse effect of the impairment must be long-term. This means that it has lasted or is likely to last for 12 months, or it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.

Unlawful discrimination

- 4.8 Unlawful discrimination can occur in various forms.

4.9 Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination takes place when a person is treated less favourably than others on the grounds of some personal characteristic, such as sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy/maternity, civil partnership/marital status.

4.10 **Indirect discrimination**

Indirect discrimination takes place when a requirement or condition is applied equally across a diverse group of persons, and it is to the detriment of the individual concerned because they cannot comply with it.

- 4.11 Indirect discrimination can occur when an employing organisation seeks to apply a 'blanket policy' to treat numerous people identically, despite them having diverse characteristics and needs. For example, if a particular job description demanded that the holder possessed a particular qualification, which was only available in the UK, then the case could be made that a potential applicant for the role who possessed an equivalent but different qualification, obtained in a non-UK country, was indirectly discriminated against by the requirement.

Positive action

- 4.12 Positive action is the common term used to refer to a range of interventions that employers can legally take to influence the profile of their workforces. This could be to counteract the effects of past discrimination or to help eliminate stereotyping. In relation to selection for recruitment or promotion, the positive action methods all take place prior to, or outside the selection procedure, which remains identical for all participants. Positive action can be categorised into three types of activity:

- **Advertising**

When notifying potential applicants of a vacancy, a positive action message can be used to state that applications are particularly welcomed from members of a specified group or groups that are underrepresented. The purpose of the message is to help increase the number of applications from among the desired group(s).

- **Information events**

Where research suggests that applications from specified underrepresented groups may be low, owing to inaccurate perceptions or 'myths' about the role to be advertised, information events (or 'familiarisation events') can be used to inform potential applicants and encourage greater numbers of applications.

- **Coaching and mentoring**

Where research suggests that candidates from among specified underrepresented groups tend to perform less successfully than other groups in the selection process used, coaching and mentoring services can be offered to candidates from those groups, to assist them to prepare for and overcome any barriers or inequalities in the process.

- 4.13 In order for positive action to be legally justified, the employer must be able to show that the group or groups benefiting are under-represented, either in the existing workforce as a whole, or among the holders of the role for which selection is to take place.

Positive discrimination

- 4.14 Positive discrimination is distinct from positive action in that it describes a range of actions with a different purpose. These actions give preference to candidates from particular groups over others. They often involve intervention in the selection process itself, for example, by giving advantageous terms in the process or by use of quota systems, reserving a portion of vacancies exclusively for members of a particular group.
- 4.15 Positive discrimination is unlawful except in very limited situations, though the Equality Act 2010 states that an employer can treat disabled people better, or more favourably than a non-disabled person.
- 4.16 In practice, the extent of the favourable treatment expected may be applicable only in a very limited scenario. For example, where a disabled and a non-disabled candidate are equally qualified and have tied scores at the end of the selection process, the employer may then be expected to consider selecting the disabled candidate.
- 4.17 There are important benefits of having a representative workforce. These could include improved trust and confidence in the organisation by all sections of its workforce and the population served, together with better community intelligence and greater public satisfaction with the service received.
- 4.18 In aspiring to an ever more representative workforce, the organisation will:
- Monitor all sections of its workforce profile, by protected characteristics of diversity and by Faculties/Directorates.
 - Encourage applicants to disclose their diverse characteristics through use of interventions such as diversity monitoring questionnaires.
 - Encourage potential applicants and candidates from underrepresented groups to take up positive action opportunities.
 - Seek constantly to review and improve the fairness of selection processes used.
 - Seek to make use of positive action methods where justified.
 - Not positively discriminate in recruitment, promotion or selection procedures, except where required by legislation.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

- 4.19 In order to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, employers are under a positive and proactive duty to take steps to remove, reduce or prevent the obstacles a disabled staff member or job applicant faces. In addition, organisations must consider making reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises to ensure that a disabled person is not put at a disadvantage due to their disability.
- 4.20 The three requirements of the duty are:
- Changing the way things are done.
 - Making changes to overcome physical barriers of the workplace.
 - Providing extra equipment or support.
- 4.21 Unless organisations can objectively justify why this cannot be done, it will amount to an act of discrimination. A failure, without justification, to comply with this duty will amount to an act of discrimination.
- 4.22 The Equality Act 2010 allows for financial and other costs to be taken into account, together with the extent of the employer's financial resources when considering whether it would be reasonable to require any adjustments. For more information, please visit the Making Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace Guidance.

Victimisation

- 4.23 For the purposes of employment legislation and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, victimisation occurs when a person either has made a complaint or is perceived to have made a complaint about the discriminatory behaviour of another or the organisation, and as a result is treated badly. This can also occur when individuals have given evidence in connection with a discrimination claim before the employment tribunal.

Workplace

- 4.24 Any place where the business of the organisation is conducted. This extends, for example, to locations away from the office or campus (such as on placement) and can include work related social activities.

Recipient

- 4.25 A person against whom behaviours are used that are perceived as workplace bullying or harassment.
- 4.26 Conduct shall be regarded as having taken effect as above if, having regard to all the circumstances including in particular the perception of that other person, it should reasonably be considered as having that effect.

5. Guidance on behaviours

Bullying

5.1 Bullying behaviours can be categorised into five main types:

- Work-related - Affecting the person's tasks and performance.
- Social isolation - Not communicating with the person or isolating them from social events.
- Personal attacks - For example, ridiculing or insulting the person.
- Verbal threats - For example, criticising or publicly humiliating the person.
- Spreading rumours about the person.

Harassment

5.2 Harassment may take any of the following forms:

- Physical - Touching, leering, whistling, assaults or threats of abuse.
- Verbal - Jokes, banter, unwelcome sexual advances, comments about appearance or dress, intrusive questioning or obscene language.
- Non-verbal - Display of offensive pictures or material, suggestive looks or gestures, ignoring the person or maliciously hiding property.

5.3 Jokes with offensive connotations aimed at any population group may amount to harassment. Harassment need not be directed towards a particular person for it to be offensive to them. Some forms of harassment are classed as unlawful and can lead to prosecution and dismissal. An individual can be held personally liable if a person harassed undertakes legal proceedings.

Bullying or harassment

5.4 Bullying and harassment are not mutually exclusive terms. Some behaviours and courses of conduct meet both definitions. Others meet only one of the two. The terms do differ in several respects. For example, harassment can refer to a course of conduct whether there is an element of persistence, repetition or a one-off act. Harassment is when unwanted behaviour relates to a protected characteristic. Bullying, on the other hand, does not need to relate to a protected characteristic and is often associated with some form of power abuse, though the power may be, for example, that of a forceful personality rather than of position or role.

5.5 The purpose of this guidance is to ensure all are aware that bullying or harassment will not be tolerated, and all have a responsibility to address any such perceived behaviour.

6. Equality, diversity and inclusion

- 6.1 All colleagues are to be treated with dignity and respect. Every policy is subject to our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy. If you have any questions concerning any of the requirements related to a disability or other protected characteristic in this policy, as soon as feasible, you should raise such concerns with your line manager or the designated People Services Team representative so that adjustments can be given consideration.

7. Communication

- 7.1 We aim to raise awareness of all employees of their rights under this policy and the associated guidance through our internal communications and online platforms.

8. Further information

- 8.1 This policy is not contractual and is not intended to be incorporated into individual terms and conditions of employment. It may be subject to review, amendment, or withdrawal but any changes will be made following consultation with the recognised trade unions.

9. Monitoring

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed, including relevant data, as available to monitor the effectiveness of its application at the review date in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

10. GDPR

- 10.1 All collected data will be managed and processed in accordance with the [University's Data Protection Policy](#) and retained in line with the [University Retention Schedule](#).
- 10.2 Data will be securely stored within Workday and physical records maintained within the individual's central file. In cases where deemed necessary, data may also be securely stored within relevant departments. Access to this data is restricted to staff whose responsibilities necessitate the use of such information for the execution of their roles.
- 10.3 For further details regarding the handling of your data, please refer to the [University's Staff Privacy Notice](#) or contact the Data Protection Team via dataprotection@hull.ac.uk.

11. Version control record

Version number	Summary of changes including paragraph numbers	Date approved by PWG
V1	New policy created.	October 2025