

Dignity at King's – Bullying & Harassment Policy

Please note that the following document has been superseded and is provided for reference purposes only.

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Please note that this policy may contain links or references to content that is no longer available on the King's website or via external resources.

For access to earlier versions, please email governancezone@kcl.ac.uk.

Dignity at King's Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy

Policy Category	General
Subject:	Prevention of Bullying and Harassment
Approving Authority	University Executive
Responsible Officer	Senior Vice-President (Operations)
Responsible Offices:	Human Resources; Students & Education Directorate
Related Procedures	Statement on Freedom of Expression Grievance Procedure: Research, teaching-only and Professional Services Staff Academic Staff Regulation pertaining to Grievance Procedure Disciplinary Procedure: Research, teaching-only and Professional Services Staff Academic Staff Regulation pertaining to Disciplinary & Related Procedures
Related Policies	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy Safeguarding Policy
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1. Purpose & Scope

1.1. Statement of Commitment

King's College London is committed to creating an inclusive and respectful environment for all members of our community. We believe that all individuals have the right to work, learn, study, and live in an environment free from bullying and harassment.

This policy outlines the University's commitment to preventing and effectively addressing bullying and harassment, enabling a culture where all individuals are valued and supported to succeed.

We are committed to establishing clear standards for behaviour, simple and consistent channels for reporting inappropriate behaviour, and effective strategies to manage and prevent negative or harmful behaviour.

Instances of bullying and harassment will be taken seriously and staff and students who make complaints of bullying and harassment will be provided with support.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of our university community, including all students, all staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

This policy applies to situations occurring on campuses, online and also off campus when on university business, including external, international, academic or research events, and social functions related to the University. This policy may also apply if the claimant is not a member of the King's community, but the alleged bully or harasser is.

1.3. Definitions

Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. 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.

Harassment

Harassment has a number of relevant meanings. The first is unwanted conduct related to certain protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation), or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which either:

- has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them or,
- has the effect of violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Decisions about whether the unwanted conduct has had this effect will be made by taking into account the perception of the complainant and all the other circumstances of the case, and considering whether it is objectively reasonable for the conduct to have that effect.

Harassment may occur physically, verbally or non-verbally and it can be intentional or unintentional.

Harassment may also occur when someone is treated less favourably than they would otherwise be treated because they have previously submitted or refused to submit to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or unwanted conduct related to gender reassignment or sex, which had the purpose or effect described above.

A further type of harassment, arising from the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, occurs when:

- someone pursues a course of conduct (two or more instances of verbal or non-verbal conduct and/or speech) which amounts to harassment or another,
- they either:
 - know that this course of conduct amounts to harassment; or
 - ought to know that it amounts to harassment (because a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think that the course of conduct amounted to harassment)
- they cannot show that the course of conduct was reasonable in the particular circumstances of the case.

Harassment of this kind may include causing alarm or distress to another person but the conduct in question must, when considered objectively in all circumstances of the case, be oppressive and unacceptable.

Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment relating to one or more protected characteristics is illegal. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation. The University considers all harassment to be unacceptable, whether or not it relates to a protected characteristic (for example, harassment related to weight and body size, or social class or caste).

A complete list of definitions and examples of bullying, harassment and other unacceptable behaviours is available on [King's Report + Support](#) platform. This includes discrimination, assault, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, victimisation, hate crime, gaslighting, microaggressions, racism, controlling behaviour and coercive behaviour.

2. Who is Responsible for this Policy?

2.1. King's College London

King's aims to embed inclusion in its practice and culture to provide an excellent student experience and to be an employer of choice. Leaders at King's are committed to fostering environments free of bullying and harassment, ensuring that managers and supervisors have the tools to address issues that arise, and monitoring the effective use of those tools within their faculties and directorates.

King's recognises that bullying and harassment can be the result of organisational and cultural issues as well as individual ones.

In addition to the negative impact on individuals and the King's community, bullying and harassment may have a negative impact on the University's reputation and its relationships with partners and funding organisations. This policy also recognises and responds to expectations and specific requirements set as part of grant conditions by partners and funding organisations.

King's will:

- provide training and education to staff and students on identifying and responding to bullying and harassment.
- take appropriate action when reports of bullying or harassment are received, including, when required, a formal investigation and disciplinary action.

- offer support services to those affected by bullying or harassment, including counselling and referral services.

2.2. Managers, Supervisors and Heads of Departments

All managers, supervisors and Heads of Departments have a responsibility to demonstrate and promote good practice to ensure a working and studying environment that is inclusive and respects the expectations laid out in this policy. They are required to implement this policy in their area, and to ensure that all of their staff and students are aware of this policy.

When bullying or harassment has been reported or alleged, managers, supervisors and Heads of Departments should:

- promptly explore what has happened and endeavour to remedy the situation.
- seek to protect the complainant(s) from victimisation by colleagues and students,
- contact Human Resources (for staff) or Student Conduct & Appeals (for students) for advice on the application of this policy if necessary, and
- support any member of staff or student who makes a complaint or about whom a complaint is made throughout the process.

2.3. King's Staff

King's staff are required to act in accordance with this policy. However, this policy does not form a part of the contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

The following may be treated as misconduct under the University's disciplinary regulations for academic and non-academic staff:

- failing to comply with this policy,
- making false or malicious allegations under this policy, or
- retaliating against or victimising staff or students who make complaints or participate in good faith in investigations under this policy.

2.4. King's Community

King's expects all members of the King's community to:

- treat each other with respect, courtesy and consideration. All members of the King's community have the right to expect professional, respectful and inclusive behaviour from each other and have a reciprocal responsibility to behave professionally, respectfully and inclusively towards others.
- ensure that their conduct is in accordance with the standards set out in this policy and the overarching Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- actively promote and foster a working and learning environment that is free from bullying and harassment. They must take reasonable measures to ensure that bullying and harassment does not occur within the University.

If members of the King's community witness bullying or harassment, and it is safe to intervene, they are encouraged to be active bystanders. Staff and PGR students are strongly encouraged to attend [Active Bystander training](#), offered through Organisational Development.

3. What To Do

3.1. Options

Below is a list of actions individuals may take if they witness or experience bullying or harassment. There

are a range of steps and actions that can be taken to reach a positive resolution and these will be different in each situation. For instance, there will be some instances where early intervention (see 3.2) is not appropriate or where an individual may not feel safe or comfortable in engaging in a formal process. While early intervention can be a very effective way to reach a positive resolution, such steps are not required before formal action is taken.

3.2. Early Intervention

Early intervention is not obligatory and will not always be appropriate, but it can lead to a resolution where an honest and constructive conversation is possible. Such conversations may enable the person who experienced the bullying or harassment to explain how and why something was hurtful and enable the alleged bully or harasser to understand the consequences of their actions. If a member of the King's community believes they or another member of the King's community has been bullied or harassed, they may choose to, as appropriate:

- have an initial discussion with their own, or the alleged bully or harasser's, line manager or supervisor to facilitate a constructive conversation or help address the situation,
- members of staff who do not feel comfortable approaching the relevant line manager or supervisor may ask for support from their HR People Partner,
- have an initial discussion with the alleged bully or harasser to raise their concerns, where this is appropriate; and/or
- students who do not feel comfortable approaching the relevant line manager or supervisor, may ask for support from a personal tutor or student adviser or, if this is not appropriate, from KCLSU's Advice team.

3.3. Reporting

[Report + Support](#) is a platform available to all members of the King's community. Reports can be made at any time and alongside any of the other listed actions within this policy. Reports help us to identify patterns and inform wider preventative and proactive initiatives. Members of the King's community can tell us what happened by making an anonymous report, or a named report that includes their contact details. If a member of the King's community makes a named report, they can choose whether they want to access; support only; support and informal action; or support and a formal investigation.

3.4. Mediation (for staff)

Mediation is an informal, voluntary process where a neutral third party is appointed to support the parties involved in a dispute in reaching a satisfactory outcome. The purpose of mediation is to create a safe environment where parties can communicate and work towards the restoration of a positive working relationship. Human Resources will arrange mediation if it is appropriate and if all parties are comfortable engaging in it. An individual can request mediation without making a formal complaint.

3.5. Staff Grievances

Grievances may be raised by staff who have been bullied or harassed or who consider that another member of the King's community has been bullied or harassed. In addition, managers may engage the disciplinary procedures to deal with occurrences of bullying and harassment they become aware of. It is not necessary for a grievance to have been issued for a manager to take this step. The relevant policies are:

- [Grievance Procedure: Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff](#)
- [Academic Staff: Grievance Regulation](#)
- [Disciplinary Procedure: Research, Teaching-only and Professional Services Staff](#); and

- [Academic Staff: Regulation pertaining to Disciplinary and Related Procedures.](#)

3.6. Student Conduct & Appeals Office (SCA)

The SCA investigates formal complaints of instances of bullying or harassment relating to students. Students who wish to make a complaint in relation to bullying or harassment should contact SCA. They can also advise on whether informal action may be taken. If appropriate, the Employee Relations team and SCA will work together on cases involving both staff and students. Students are advised to contact KCLSU Advice for support and guidance on the procedures followed by SCA.

Postgraduate Research (PGR) students may be both a student and a member of staff. PGR students may address complaints to SCA or use the grievance or staff misconduct complaint procedures if appropriate. King's recognises the complexities in relation to PGR students. KCLSU Advice offers support and guidance to PGR students and has dedicated PGR Staff to support enquiries.

4. Support

Bullying and harassment can cause humiliation, isolation, loss of confidence and serious harm to mental health and wellbeing in both the short-term and longer-term. A range of support and advice services are available to members of the King's community who have experienced, witnessed or been accused of bullying and harassment.

For urgent help or support, members of the King's community are urged to contact emergency services in the first instance: reportandsupport.kcl.ac.uk/support/i-need-urgent-help.

All external support and services are described and can be accessed through King's Report + Support platform at reportandsupport.kcl.ac.uk/support/where-can-i-get-support-outside-kings.

While the above links outline the sources of support for the King's community at university level, many local departments and faculties also offer additional support so please check your local intranet pages or other normal communications channels for further information.