

Bristol Baptist College

Dignity at Work Policy

1. Our commitment

The college is committed to creating a work and study environment free of harassment and bullying, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Harassment and bullying can have very serious consequences for individuals and the college. Harassment or bullying may make people unhappy, may cause them stress and affect their health and family and social relationships, may affect their work performance and could cause them to leave their job or course. Severe cases of harassment and bullying can even lead to mental illness and suicide. Effects on the college can include loss of morale, poor work performance, increased turnover of staff, legal claims and damage to the college's reputation. Employees found guilty of harassment or bullying may face disciplinary penalties, up to and including dismissal, could be personally liable to pay compensation in legal claims, and may find their own family and social relationships are adversely affected. Serious harassment may be a criminal offence.

The college will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind. All allegations of bullying and harassment will be investigated and, if appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken. The college will also not tolerate victimisation of a person for making allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith or supporting someone to make such a complaint. Victimisation is a disciplinary offence.

2. The scope of this policy

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by managers, employees, students, contractors, agency staff and anyone else engaged to work at the college, whether they are in a direct contractual relationship with the college or otherwise. If the complainant or alleged harasser is not employed by the college, e.g. if the worker's contract is with an agency, this policy will apply with any necessary modifications such as that the college could not dismiss the worker but would instead require the agency to remove the worker, if appropriate, after investigation and disciplinary proceedings.

The policy covers bullying and harassment in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, e.g. study or mission trips and work-related social events.

3. What is bullying and harassment?

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and/or an abuse or misuse of power that is meant to undermine, humiliate or injure the person on the receiving end.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to relevant protected characteristics, which are sex, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age, that:

- has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person; or

- is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating their dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Conduct may be harassment whether or not the person behaving in that way intends to offend. Something intended as a "joke" may offend another person. Different people find different things acceptable. Everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others. Behaviour that any reasonable person would realise would be likely to offend will be harassment without the recipient having to make it clear in advance that behaviour of that type is not acceptable to them, e.g. sexual touching. It may not be so clear in advance that some other forms of behaviour would be unwelcome to, or could offend, a particular person, e.g. certain "banter", flirting or asking someone for a private drink after work. In these cases, first-time conduct that unintentionally causes offence will not be harassment but it will become harassment if the conduct continues after the recipient has made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to them.

Harassment may also occur where a person engages in unwanted conduct towards another because they perceive that the recipient has a protected characteristic (for example, a perception that they are gay or disabled), when the recipient does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic. For example, it would be harassment for an individual to tease repeatedly an individual because of an incorrect belief that the recipient is deaf. Similarly, harassment could take place where an individual is bullied or harassed because of another person with whom the individual is connected or associated, for example if their child is disabled, wife is pregnant or friend is a member of an ethnic minority group.

A person may feel harassed even if the unwanted conduct is not directed towards them or related to their actual or perceived protected characteristic. For example, it may be harassment where a male or female employee is offended by the display of unsavoury pictures or memes shown on a laptop or phone.

There may also be circumstances in which an individual is subjected to unwanted conduct from a third party, such as a supplier or visitor. For example, it might be that a visitor makes a series of racist remarks to an Asian employee. If an employee feels that they have been bullied or harassed by students, suppliers or visitors, they should report any such behaviour to their manager who will take appropriate action. Bullying or harassment of students, suppliers or visitors or others will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure.

A single incident can be harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

All bullying and harassment is misconduct and is a disciplinary offence that will be dealt with under the college's disciplinary policy. Bullying or harassment will often be gross misconduct, which can lead to dismissal without notice.

Bullying or harassment will constitute unlawful discrimination where it relates to one of the protected characteristics, which are sex, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age. Serious bullying or harassment may amount to other civil or criminal offences, e.g. a civil offence under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and criminal offences of assault.

4. Examples of bullying or harassment

Bullying and harassment may be misconduct that is physical, verbal or non-verbal, e.g. by letter or email (so-called "flame-mail") or through posting on social media.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour that are covered by this policy include (but are not limited to):

- physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault;
- unwelcome sexual advances;
- the offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances, e.g. promotion, access to training;
- threats for rejecting sexual advances, e.g. suggestions that refusing advances will adversely affect the employee's employment, evaluation, pay, advancement, assigned work, or any other condition of employment or career development;
- demeaning comments about a person's appearance;
- unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual or racial nature or about an individual's age, disability, sexual orientation or religion;
- questions about a person's sex life;
- unwanted nicknames related to a person's age, race or disability;
- the use of obscene gestures;
- excluding an individual because they are associated or connected with someone with a protected characteristic, e.g. their child is gay, spouse is black or parent is disabled;
- ignoring an individual because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic when they do not, in fact, have the protected characteristic, e.g. an employee or student is thought to be pregnant, or is perceived to be transgender;
- the open display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person;
- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone;
- picking on someone or setting them up to fail;
- making threats or comments about someone's job security without good reason;
- ridiculing someone;
- isolation or non-cooperation at work; and
- excluding someone from social activities.

5. What is victimisation?

Victimisation is subjecting a person to a detriment because they have, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint.

This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload.

Provided that you act in good faith, i.e. you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and the college will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.

Making a complaint that you know to be untrue, or giving evidence that you know to be untrue, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

6. What should I do if I think I am being bullied or harassed?

You may be able to sort out matters informally. The person may not know that their behaviour is unwelcome or upsetting. An informal discussion may help them to understand the effects of their behaviour and agree to change it. You may feel able to approach the person yourself, or with the help of a manager, trade union representative or another employee. Alternatively, an initial approach could be made on your behalf by one of these people. You should tell the person what behaviour you find offensive and unwelcome, and say that you would like it to stop immediately. You may want to add that, if the behaviour continues, you intend to make a formal complaint to your manager. You should keep a note of the date and what was said and done. This will be useful evidence if the unacceptable behaviour continues and you wish to make a formal complaint.

If an informal approach does not resolve matters, or you think the situation is too serious to be dealt with informally, you can make a formal complaint by using the college's grievance procedure. In the case of grievances about bullying or harassment, the normal grievance procedure is modified so that you can choose whether to raise your grievance with your manager or directly with the College Principal. The college will ensure, where possible, that you can bring your complaint in the first instance to someone of your own sex, if you so choose.

In very serious cases, a criminal offence may have been committed and you may wish to report matters to the police. The college can arrange for someone to accompany you to make a complaint to the police.

All complaints will be investigated promptly and, if appropriate, disciplinary proceedings will be brought against the alleged harasser. You will have the right to be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union official at any meeting dealing with your grievance in accordance with the college's grievance policy. You will be kept informed of the general progress of the process of investigation and, subject to data protection requirements, the outcome of any disciplinary proceedings. The college will decide on a balance of probabilities, after considering all available evidence, whether or not harassment or bullying has occurred.

The college will treat complaints of bullying and harassment sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. Investigation of allegations will normally require limited disclosure on a "need to know" basis. For example, your identity and the nature of the allegations must be revealed to the person you are complaining about, so they are able to respond to the allegations. Some details may also have to be given to potential witnesses but this will be limited as far as possible, while ensuring a fair and sufficiently thorough investigation. The importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to witnesses. If the complaint is upheld,

and a person who has been found to have harassed you is kept in the college's employment, managers may need to be given some information where this is necessary for them to manage the risk of further harassment by that person against you or others.

Wherever possible, the college will try to ensure that you and the alleged harasser are not required to work together while the complaint is under investigation. This could involve giving you the option of working from home, where possible, or remaining at home on special leave, if agreed. In the case of serious allegations, the alleged harasser may be suspended while investigation and any disciplinary proceedings are underway.

If your complaint is upheld, and the person found to have bullied or harassed you remains in the college's employment, every effort will be made to ensure that, if possible, you do not have to continue to work alongside the harasser, if you do not wish to do so. We will discuss the options with you. These may include the transfer of the harasser or, if you wish, you may be able to transfer to another post.

If your complaint is not upheld, the college will support you, the alleged harasser and your manager(s) in making arrangements for you both to continue or resume working and to help repair working relationships. The college will consider making arrangements to avoid you and the alleged harasser having to continue to work alongside each other, if either of you do not wish to do this.

You have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint in good faith, even if the complaint is not upheld. However, making a complaint that you know to be untrue may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

Some types of bullying or harassment may constitute unlawful discrimination and may give rise to the possibility of other civil claims or criminal proceedings. There are strict time limits for bringing claims of unlawful discrimination to an employment tribunal.

7. What can I do to help stop bullying and harassment?

We all have a responsibility to help create and maintain a work environment free of bullying and harassment. You can help to do this by:

- being aware of how your own behaviour may affect others and changing it, if necessary - you can still cause offence even if you are "only joking";
- treating your colleagues with dignity and respect;
- taking a stand if you think inappropriate jokes or comments are being made;
- making it clear to others when you find their behaviour unacceptable, unless it should be obvious in advance that this would be the case;
- intervening, if possible, to stop harassment or bullying and giving support to recipients;
- making it clear that you find harassment and bullying unacceptable;
- reporting harassment or bullying to your manager and supporting the college in the investigation of complaints; and
- if a complaint of harassment or bullying is made, not prejudging or victimising the complainant or alleged harasser.

Managers have a particular responsibility to:

- set a good example by their own behaviour;
- ensure that there is a supportive working environment;
- make sure that staff know what standards of behaviour are expected of them;
- intervene to stop bullying or harassment; and
- report promptly to your line manager or tutor any complaint of bullying or harassment, or any incident of bullying or harassment witnessed by them.

8. What happens if I am accused of bullying or harassment?

If someone approaches you informally about your behaviour, do not dismiss the complaint out of hand because you were only joking or think the complainant is being too sensitive. Remember that different people find different things acceptable and everyone has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others. You may have offended someone without intending to. If that is the case, the person concerned may be content with an explanation and an apology from you and an assurance that you will be careful in future not to behave in a way that you now know may cause offence. Providing that you do not repeat the behaviour that has caused offence, that may well be the end of the matter.

If a formal complaint is made about your behaviour, this will be fully investigated and the college may bring disciplinary proceedings, if appropriate. The college will follow its disciplinary procedure and you will have the rights set out in that procedure. You will have the right to be informed of the allegations against you and to put your side of the story and to be accompanied to meetings by a trade union official or fellow worker. The procedure will be implemented at the appropriate stage for the seriousness of the allegation. Complaints of bullying and harassment will often be allegations of gross misconduct that, if proved, could lead to dismissal without notice.

The college will treat complaints of bullying and harassment sensitively and maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. Investigation of allegations and future management of risk, if complaints are upheld, will normally require limited disclosure on a "need to know" basis. For example, some details may have to be given to potential witnesses but this will be limited as far as possible, while ensuring a fair and sufficiently thorough investigation. The importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to witnesses.

Wherever possible, the college will try to ensure that you and the complainant are not required to work together while the complaint is under investigation. If the allegation is of gross misconduct, you may be suspended on full pay during the investigation and, if a disciplinary hearing is to be called, until disciplinary proceedings have been concluded.

If the complaint against you is upheld, on a balance of probabilities, a disciplinary penalty may be imposed up to and including dismissal, having regard to the seriousness of the offence and all relevant circumstances. If the complaint is upheld, but you are not dismissed, the college could decide to transfer you to another post if other work is available.

If a complaint is made against you that is not upheld and the college has good grounds for believing that the complaint was not made in good faith, the college will investigate and, if appropriate, will take disciplinary action against the person making the false complaint.

You must not victimise a person who has made a complaint in good faith against you or anyone who has supported them in making the complaint or given evidence in relation to such a complaint. Disciplinary action will be taken against you if the college has good reason to think that you may have victimised the complainant or someone else.

If the complaint against you is not upheld, the college will support you, the complainant and your manager(s) in making arrangements for you both to continue or resume working and to help repair working relationships. The college will consider making arrangements to avoid you and the complainant having to continue to work alongside each other, if either of you do not wish to do this.

Some types of bullying or harassment may constitute unlawful discrimination and allegations may give rise to the possibility of other civil claims or criminal proceedings against you, which would proceed independently of the college's disciplinary proceedings. You could be personally liable to pay compensation to the complainant if a successful claim in the employment tribunal or other courts was brought against you. Criminal proceedings could lead to conviction and criminal penalties.

9. Making this policy work

The college will provide training to all existing and new employees and others engaged to work at the college to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment. We will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

The college will review the outcomes of cases where complaints of bullying and harassment have been made to check that the proper procedures have been followed and to identify any points that can be learned from those cases and implement any necessary changes.

The college will also periodically monitor how successful it is being in creating a workplace free of bullying and harassment by other means which may include confidential staff surveys.

When carrying out any reviews or monitoring, the college will ensure that individuals' personal data is handled in accordance with its data protection policy.