



Guidelines for dealing with harassment and bullying

Information for
students and staff

July 2011



Contents



Policy statement on Harassment and Bullying	2
Policy statement on Equality and Diversity	2
Aims of the guidelines	3
Harassment Advisers	3
Confidential Contact Line	4
Information on how to contact a Harassment Adviser	4
What happens if you contact a Harassment Adviser?	4
Definitions of harassment	5
Definition of bullying	10
Criminal offences involving assault	11
Hate Crime	12
Procedures for dealing with harassment and bullying	13
Formal complaints	14
Procedures for dealing with hate crime and assault	15
Confidentiality	16
Victimisation	16
Vexatious Complaints	17
Visitors to the University	17
Advice and support	18

Policy statement on Harassment and Bullying

The University of Essex is an international community that is both multicultural and diverse. All members of the University community and visitors to the University are to be treated with dignity and respect. The University is committed to establishing an environment that is free from any form of harassment and bullying. Harassment and bullying adversely affect working, learning and social conditions for University students, staff and visitors and is unacceptable. Any incident of harassment or bullying will be regarded seriously and will be treated as grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal with or without notice or expulsion from the University.

Policy Statement on Equality and Diversity

The University of Essex recognises the value of diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity within the University. We expect students and staff to be treated with dignity and respect and solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, political beliefs and affiliations, family circumstances or other irrelevant distinction.



Aims of the guidelines

These guidelines have been designed to offer you practical ways of dealing with harassment, bullying, hate crime and assault. Following the guidelines may help you to stop the harassment or bullying yourself, and will explain how to get help from the University to deal with the problem as well as giving advice on dealing with hate crime, sexual harassment and assault.

Harassment Advisers

The University has appointed and trained members of staff to act as Harassment Advisers for any member of the University, staff, students and visitors.

Confidential Contact Line 4334

You can contact an Harassment Adviser to arrange an appointment by ringing the confidential contact line on extension 4334 or texting 07948187107. This extension also has a confidential message service that will enable you to leave a message outside of normal working hours. Messages will be dealt with as soon as possible during the next working day. Alternatively you can e-mail harass@essex.ac.uk.

Information on how to contact a Harassment Adviser is also available from:

Equality and Diversity	T 2390/3507
Information Centre	T 2125
Student Support	T 2366
Students' Union Advice centre	T 2021
Departmental and Section Offices	
Joint Trades Unions	T 3329/2184

What happens if I contact a Harassment Adviser?

When you contact a Harassment Adviser they will make an appointment to see you in a private pre-determined room.

The interview will give you an opportunity to discuss issues of concern to you. The adviser will explain their role and advise you of routes and options for resolving the issues and will also advise you of support that is available to you. If necessary they will advise you on how to make a complaint and who it should go to.



Definitions of harassment

Harassment is a form of discrimination and is illegal under the Equality Act 2010. The University considers harassment to be unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, threatening or offensive environment for that person which interferes with their learning, working or social environment. Harassment can cause stress, anxiety, fear or sickness on the part of the harassed person.

Differences of attitude, background or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another; nevertheless, this does not make it acceptable.

Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be accepted as an excuse for harassment.

The defining features of harassment are any behaviour, including verbal, written or physical, that appears or feels offensive, humiliating, hostile, degrading, threatening or intimidating to the recipient or would be so regarded by a reasonable person.

Some general examples of harassment might include teasing, comments about personal characteristics or appearance, unreasonable criticism, promises of reward or threats made to secure sexual favours or negative comments about someone's race, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief. Some more specific forms of harassment are detailed below.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 and is considered a form of sex discrimination. The University considers sexual harassment to include either:

- the inappropriate introduction of sexual comments or activities into teaching, learning, working or social situations, or
- harassing someone because of their gender, sexuality, their perceived sexuality or the perceived sexuality of those with whom they associate, or
- harassment on the grounds of gender identity

Sexual harassment often, though not always, arises between people of unequal status. Any act of sexual harassment will be regarded by the University as very serious if it involves the abuse of a position of authority or trust.

The following are some examples of activities that might constitute sexual harassment:

- unnecessary and unwelcome physical contact
- sexual assault
- suggestive and unwelcome comments or gestures emphasising the gender or sexuality of an individual or a group
- persistent unwelcome requests for social or sexual encounters and favours
- display of, or electronic transmission of, pornographic, degrading or indecent pictures or e-mail containing threatening, abusive or unwanted comments of a sexual nature
- homophobic behaviour or the use of homophobic language or display of homophobic materials

These activities will be considered to be very serious if they are accompanied by one or both of:

- explicit or implicit promises for compliance that are a misuse of institutional position (promises of e.g. higher assessment marks for a student or a recommendation for promotion for a member of staff)



- explicit or implicit threats of penalties for non-compliance that are a misuse of institutional position (e.g. refusal to provide appropriate support/advice or resources)

See also: Hate crime.

Harassment on the grounds of Race

In a multi-cultural community such as the University of Essex, harassment on the grounds of race is especially unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Harassment on the grounds of race is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 and is regarded as a form of racial discrimination.

The University considers harassment on the grounds of race to include any hostile, intimidating, humiliating, degrading, threatening or offensive act or expression by a person or group against another person or group on grounds of racial, ethnic, or national origin, or incitement to commit such an act on racial grounds. Such behaviour includes:

- intentional unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity or nationality
- derogatory name-calling
- insults, threats and racist jokes
- ridicule of an individual for racial or ethnic difference
- racist graffiti, images or insignia

See also: Hate crime.

Harassment on the grounds of religion or belief

Harassment on the grounds of religion or belief is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 and will not be tolerated. Using religion to justify harassment on the grounds of gender, gender identity, ethnicity or sexuality, is also unacceptable. Any attempt at coercion of others to comply with the requirements or teaching of a religion, faith or belief system, or a particular interpretation of a religion, faith or belief system by any means or medium including electronic means by a student, member of staff or visitor is unacceptable.

Harassment on the grounds of religion or belief of an individual or group can be because:

- of their religious beliefs
- they have no religious belief
- they have changed or renounced their religious allegiance

See also: Hate crime.

Harassment on the grounds of disability

Harassment on the grounds of disability is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 and will not be tolerated.

The University will consider such harassment to include behaviour that is hostile, degrading, humiliating, threatening or offensive on the grounds of disability such as:

- direct verbal abuse or comments that make a disabled person feel uncomfortable, intimidated or degraded
- excluding a disabled person from activities without consultation
- refusing to consider reasonable adjustments that would enable a disabled person to take part in an activity
- refusing a disabled person goods or services that are available to others
- refusing to consider dietary requests
- physical abuse

See also: Hate crime.



Harassment on the grounds of age

Harassment on the grounds of age is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 and will not be tolerated.

The University considers such harassment to include behaviour that is hostile, degrading, humiliating, threatening or offensive on the grounds of age such as:

- unjustified direct or indirect discrimination
- direct verbal abuse or comments about age that make a person feel uncomfortable, intimidated or degraded
- unjustified exclusion or exclusion of a person on the grounds of age without consultation

Electronic and telephone harassment

The University recognises that harassment may take place by e-mail, intranet, internet, text, mobile phones, telephone or other forms of electronic communication. The University may be able to take action against the perpetrators of electronic and telephone harassment if it originates internally and may be able to offer you advice on dealing with such harassment from a source outside the University.

Electronic/Telephone harassment report forms can be obtained from:

- Equality and Diversity - Room 4SA.6.8
- Harassment Advisers
- Information Centre - Square 3
- Security Office – Room 4N.6.1 1
- Computing Service Help Desk - Room 4SW.5.4
- Nightline - Keynes Tower, Flat 1
- Students' Union Advice Centre - Square 3
- Student Support – Room 4N.6.2

Bullying

Bullying is offensive behaviour, which violates a person's dignity, or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, threatening or offensive environment or which humiliates or undermines an individual or group.

Bullying can be carried out by an individual or a group of people. It frequently involves someone in a position of authority bullying someone who is in a more junior position.

Bullying is typically unpredictable, irrational and sometimes unseen by others.

Examples of being bullied include:

- being shouted at
- being 'told off' in front of colleagues or other people
- being criticised in an inappropriate manner or belittled about your work, personality or personal appearance
- being persistently ignored or 'talked down'
- being pressurised by a group into behaviour/actions against your wishes



Criminal offences involving assault

Students

Students who experience serious assault should report the matter to the police as soon as possible.

Examples of such serious offences include: physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault or rape including date rape.

The University is unable to take disciplinary action against a student who is alleged to have committed a serious criminal offence until the outcome of any police investigation is known.

However, in exceptional circumstances the University may suspend a student pending the outcome of such investigations.

The University may take disciplinary action against a student who has been convicted or cautioned for a criminal offence.

Harassment advisers can offer advice and support to students who have been the victims of an assault.

Employees

In the case of employees, the University is able to investigate incidents of alleged serious misconduct including assault and, where appropriate, institute disciplinary procedures. Harassment advisers can offer guidance and support to staff who have been the victims of an assault. However, in the event of a criminal offence against you such as physical assault, indecent exposure or sexual assault including rape or 'date rape' the University would expect you to report the incident to the police.

Hate crime

Hate crimes are defined as:

Crimes or behaviour motivated by prejudice, hatred or intolerance that intentionally damage or demean an individual or a group of people, or damage the property of an individual or group of people, as defined by their ethnicity, race, religion or belief, sexuality, gender, gender identity, conscience, disability, age or lawful working practices and which create an environment in which people will experience, or could reasonably, fear harassment, intimidation or violence.

Hate crime committed by any individual on campus is unacceptable. Internal incidents of hate crime and intolerance will be dealt with under University procedures where possible. However, serious cases may require the University to report the matter to the police. Incidents occurring off campus should be reported to the police and the University authorities should also be informed.

Academic Freedom and Hate Crime

Academic Freedom is an essential part of academic and University life and flourishes where there is tolerance of and respect for a wide range of views and beliefs. The University also has a duty to promote good campus relations and such good relations could be damaged by hate crime.



Procedures for dealing with harassment and bullying

If you feel that you are being subjected to harassment or bullying in any form by a student, a member of staff or a visitor, do not feel that it is your fault or that you have to tolerate it. The University's primary concern is that the harassment stops and that there is support and assistance available when needed.

You are strongly advised to seek advice and help from:

- a Harassment Adviser who can give you an opportunity to talk about the issues, express your feelings and offer guidance on what action to take and advise on professional support
- your Head of Department/Section who has a responsibility as the Manager of the department or section to prevent harassment - if harassment occurs then he/she should ensure that appropriate action is taken so that the harassment stops
- other agencies listed in the advice and support section of this code of practice

You are advised to make it clear to the person causing offence that such behaviour on that person's part is unacceptable to you. You may find it easier to do this by letter (you should keep a copy). This may in some instances be sufficient to stop it. Please be aware that if you do not report the harassment to a Harassment Adviser and/or your Head of Department/Section or ask the person harassing you to stop, this may seem to constitute consent.

It is important to make a note or keep a diary of the details of any relevant incidents which distress you – particularly if you feel unable to speak to the person concerned or if, having spoken to them, the behaviour persists. You should include details of how the harassment has caused you to change the pattern of your work or social life and any effect the harassment has had on you with regard to your health.

Formal Complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint of harassment:

- it should be made in writing
- complaints about a member of staff should go to the Head of their Department or Section or the Director of Human Resources
- complaints about a student should go to the Head of their Department or Section or to the secretary to the Proctor, using an Incident Report form which can be found at:
www2.essex.ac.uk/academic/offices/discipline/incident.doc
- complaints about visitors or contractors should in the first instance go to the appropriate Head of Department or Section.

Harassment Advisers can advise you on how to make a complaint.



Procedures for dealing with hate crime and assault

It is particularly important that in cases of hate crime, physical assault, sexual assault including rape and date rape that you do the following:

1. you should seek help immediately.
 - a Harassment Adviser will be able to offer appropriate support and practical advice to both students and members of staff
2. you should report any assault to the police both for your own protection and for the protection of others. If you have been sexually assaulted or raped, then the police, as part of their investigation, will offer medical help as soon as possible. You can report incidents to the police and the University by contacting one of the following:

Students

Student Support	T 2366
Security Manager	T 2361
Students' Union Advice Centre	T 2021
Equality and Diversity Officer	T 2390
Harassment Adviser	T 4334

Members of staff

Director of Human Resources	T 3394
Harassment Adviser	T 4334
Equality and Diversity Officer	T 2390
Security Manager	T 2361

Please note:

If you report an incident directly to the police, please ensure you also report the incident to the University by contacting one of the agencies mentioned above.

- students may visit the Student Support who will be able to give information about the personal and academic support that is available within the University
- members of staff may also want to inform their trade union

Confidentiality

The University has an obligation to protect both you and other members of the campus community and for this reason the appropriate University authorities may need to be informed. You will be advised of this before any disclosure is made. Information will only be disclosed to relevant parties and all investigations will remain confidential.

Victimisation

Treating a person detrimentally because they have made a complaint about discrimination or harassment or have given evidence relating to such a complaint is illegal under the Equality Act 2010 and will be treated very seriously.



Vexatious complaints

Complaints of harassment are treated seriously by the University. It should therefore be noted that anyone making mischievous or malicious complaints will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Visitors to the University

Visitors are considered to be any person or persons who are not members of staff or students who are legitimately on campus i.e. contractors, visiting academics, prospective students, consultants, staff of businesses or organisations hosted by the University, etc.

Advice and support

University Harassment Advisory Network

T 2390/3507

E diversity@essex.ac.uk

Harassment Helpline

T 4334

E harass@essex.ac.uk

Student Support

T 2366

E sso@essex.ac.uk

Human Resources

T 3433

E staffing@essex.ac.uk

Students' Union Advice Centre

T 2021

E su@essex.ac.uk

Nightline

T 2020/2022

E nl@essex.ac.uk

Student Counselling Service

T 3133

E counserv@essex.ac.uk

Health Centre

T 3699

E hcentre@essex.ac.uk

Multi-Faith Chaplaincy Centre (Follow website address and click on User Groups for individual email addresses)

T 3108

www2.essex.ac.uk/chaplaincy

University Emergency

T 2222

(For Fire, Police or Ambulance only)

Joint Trade Unions

UCU

T 4967

E lcollins@essex.ac.uk

Unison

T 4166

E jwakeman@essex.ac.uk

Unite

T 3974

E ccmcau@essex.ac.uk



Other Agencies

Colchester Police Station

T 01206 762212

Police – non-emergency

T 101

Police Community Support Officer for University of Essex,
Greenstead and Wivenhoe

T 07801 461697

E alex.willmot@essex.pnn.police.uk

Equality and Human Rights Commission

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Colchester Gay Switchboard and HIV and Aids Helpline

T 01206 869191

E office@gayessex.org.uk

Colchester Rape Crisis Line

T 01206 769795

South Essex Rape & Incest Crisis Centre

T 01375 380609

info@rapecrisis.org.uk

Help and Advice for HIV and AIDS

T 01403 210202

www.avert.org.uk

Samaritans (national)

T 08457 909090

E jo@samaritans.org.uk

Colchester Samaritans

T 01206 561234

E jo@samaritans.org.uk

Victim Support

T 0845 3030900

Action4Men

T 01279 827508

www.action4men.org

Gay and bisexual men's sexual health team

T 07798 608106

action4men@epping-pct.nhs.uk

London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard

T 020 7837 7324

E admin@llgs.org.uk

