October 2026
Human Resources

Dignity at Work

Anti-Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Guidance for Staff

Queen Mary University of London is committed to a safe, welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment where staff and students can work, study and thrive.

The University does not tolerate harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, victimisation against those who raise concerns, or bullying.

Expected Standards of Conduct

All members of the University community are expected to treat others with dignity, respect and courtesy and contribute to an inclusive culture.

These standards also apply to third parties who interact with members of the University community, including visitors, contractors, consultants, suppliers, external partners, guest speakers and members of the public.

These standards apply to all forms of communication, including electronic communication (email, work/learning platforms, social media, and messaging).

These expectations do not seek to limit lawful freedom of expression and academic freedom, per our Code of Practice on Free Speech.

Breach of these expectations may lead to disciplinary action, in line with:

- Student Discipline Policy
- Staff Discipline Policy and Procedure

All Reasonable Steps

Law and regulation require Queen Mary to take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment of our staff and students. Read Our Commitment to better understand steps we take to prevent and address harassment and create an environment in which unacceptable behaviour is appropriately challenged and less likely to occur. The University takes a preventative approach. Measures include:

- training and awareness raising,
- clear behavioural expectations,
- accessible reporting routes,
- monitoring themes and trends,
- responding to concerns and learning from them,
- reviewing risks within different activities and environments.

Who is protected?

The University is committed to protecting staff, students and third parties who participate in our activities or attend our campuses from harassment, discrimination, victimisation and bullying. This applies whether unacceptable behaviour is carried out by, or directed towards, a member of the University community or a third party, including a contractor, visitor, supplier, partner or placement provider.

What is Harassment?

Harassment has two definitions, the Equality Act (2010) and the Protection from Harassment Act (1997):

'Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.' (Equality Act 2010)

'Harassment is a course of conduct that a reasonable person would think amounted to causing alarm and/or distress.' (Protection from Harassment Act 1997)

Harassment needs only meet the criteria of one definition to amount to such.

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment' (Equality Act 2010).

Sexual Harassment may be verbal, non-verbal, physical or online and can arise from a single incident or a pattern of behaviour. A person does not need to have objected previously or expressly stated that the behaviour was unwanted, and a lack of intent to cause offence or harm does not prevent conduct from amounting to sexual harassment.

What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as intimidation on a regular and persistent basis or as a one off, which serves to undermine the competence, effectiveness, confidence and integrity of the person on the receiving end. Bullying may be by an individual against an individual or involves groups of people.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Psychological intimidation, humiliation, excessive and/or unreasonable criticism or fault finding,
- Preventing an individual progressing by deliberately blocking opportunities,

- Unfair allocation of work and responsibilities or setting unreasonable goals or targets in work or study,
- Asserting a position of superiority in an aggressive, or abusive manner whether orally or in writing, publicly or in private.

Bullying may also happen from a staff member or student towards a more senior employee, a manager or an employer. This can be known as 'upward bullying' or 'subordinate bullying'. Examples include:

- Attempting to undermine a manager in front of their team through public criticism,
- Ongoing disruptive behaviour such as during class/ team meetings,
- Hostile or aggressive communication style.

Where bullying relates to one or more protected characteristics, it may also be considered harassment.

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination is defined under the Equality Act (2010) and can take several forms.

- *Direct Discrimination* treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than someone without that protected characteristic.
- *Indirect Discrimination* When a practice, policy, rule or arrangement which is applied to everybody in the same way puts someone with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage as compared to others.
- *Discrimination by Association* Treating someone unfairly because someone they know or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.
- *Discrimination by Perception* Treating someone unfairly because it is believed that they have a certain protected characteristic even if they do not.

What is Victimisation?

Victimisation is defined under the Equality Act (2010) and occurs when someone is 'subjected to a detriment or treated unfavourably because they have raised or supported a concern or complaint about discrimination or harassment, or otherwise exercised their rights under the Act'.

Examples of Unacceptable Conduct

The University has taken steps to educate our community to create a safe, welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment.

Our Commitment to Tackling Harassment and Sexual Misconduct webpage provides further information about the preventative measures we take, available support and

reporting options, and examples of unacceptable behaviour. Our mandatory e-learning for staff, Introducing Inclusion, covers:

- Identifying and understanding Protected Characteristics,
- Forms of discrimination (with examples),
- Protection from harassment, victimisation and bullying (with examples),
- Impacts and consequences of unacceptable behaviour.

Our Expectations of Student Behaviours that align to Queen Mary values as set out here.

Raising a Concern

The University has a reporting platform, Report + Support, which students, and staff and visitors can use to tell us about bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct, gender-based violence and hate crime. You can submit a report anonymously or with your contact details. If you submit with your contact details, you can request to be referred to support and/or make a complaint for investigation by Queen Mary.

Queen Mary recognises the value of anonymous reporting, whilst we are unable to investigate or take direct action on individual reports, unless the content meets the threshold for another duty, anonymous reports contribute to the ongoing monitoring of trends across our community. Where patterns and trends are identified, this may lead to additional preventative measures such as tailored learning and development.

Additionally, staff may wish to raise concerns directly with their line manager, or their manager's manager if the former is not appropriate, in line with the University's Grievance Resolution Policy and Procedure.

If students do not wish to use Report + Support they can report a matter of disciplinary misconduct to the Appeals, Complaint and Conduct Office through AskQM.

What Happens When a Concern Is Raised?

All Report + Support submissions are viewed by the designated triage team. Where contact details are provided, the relevant team responsible for either staff or student conduct will be notified. The relevent team will then contact the staff and students l to discuss the concerns raised, the support or action requested and the next steps available. Staff and students can access support whether or not they choose to make a formal complaint.

Our Commitment sets out how The University responds to concerns (see 'Investigating Harassment and Sexual Misconduct').

Any aggravating factors will be taken into account when determining the appropriate action. These may include:

- Power imbalance,
- Safeguarding concerns,
- The nature and impact of behaviour.

The University's Staff Student Relationship Policy provides further guidance where the matter involves a relationship between a member of staff and a student. A lack of intent to cause harm does not, by itself, excuse the behaviour or determine whether it amounts to harassment, bullying or misconduct. The impact on the individual affected will be considered alongside the nature, context and circumstances of the behaviour.

Where concerns relate to a third party, the University will consider appropriate and proportionate action. This may include raising the matter with the third party or their organisation, restricting access to University premises or activities, or reviewing or ending the relevant working or contractual arrangement.

What support is available?

Wellbeing support, advice and guidance are available to both staff and students raising concerns and the reported party. Submitting a Report + Support is the most effective way to access support. If there is an immediate risk of harm you should contact the relevant emergency services.

Students

- Students can choose to access support through our Advice and Counselling Service and may wish to contact our specialist Sexual Assault and Harassment Advice Service.
- Students who have a concern raised about them can contact the Student Union Advice Service for independent advice.

Staff

Staff may wish to contact their line-manager, the Employee Assistance Programme or a recognised Trade Union.

Further information is available on the Our Commitment webpage for students and the Wellbeing webpages for staff. Our Report + Support webpages also contain information on specialised external support services.

Where managers are receiving, or responding to a concern, The University have provided a toolkit to support managers to deliver their responsibilities per our policies and procedures:

- Managers' Toolkit: Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment.

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Agreements

The University is committed to taking all reasonable measures to protect the privacy of anyone who comes forward to share their experience. However, in certain situations, such as when there is a risk to someone's safety, we may need to share information either internally or with external agencies, please read our Safeguarding Policy for more information.

The University does not use non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in relation to complaints of sexual harassment, abuse, misconduct, or other forms of harassment and bullying. For further information see Our Commitment.

Vexatious Allegations

To make knowingly untrue allegations about others will be treated as a disciplinary offence. This does not apply to those who raise concerns with a reasonable belief of wrongdoing, even where concerns are not found to be true. No individual will be disadvantaged for raising a concern in good faith, supporting another person who raises a concern, or participating in an investigation.

Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The University reviews data, trends, training and feedback to strengthen prevention of unacceptable conduct and furthering our safe, welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment. This includes transparently publishing Report+Support insight reports each year.