



Dignity and Respect at Work and Study Policy



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Introduction

Dublin City University (DCU) is committed to equality, educational opportunity, social justice, ethical behaviour and academic freedom. The University is committed to providing an equal, inclusive and diverse environment in which all members of the University community should expect to be able to thrive and be respected and valued for their unique perspectives and contributions.

Dublin City University (DCU) is a multicultural community that values and promotes equality, diversity and inclusion across its organisation. The University does not tolerate unlawful discriminatory practices or behaviours. DCU believes that its staff, students, visitors, contractors, sub-contractors and others associated with the University (referred to in this document as “members of the University community”) have the right to enjoy their work and or study in a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.

This *Dignity and Respect at Work and Study Policy* sets out DCU’s commitment to the promotion of a university that recognises and respects individual difference and that rejects harassment or bullying as destructive to the recipient, the harasser or bully, and the University. Through our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, we aim to create a work and study environment that is inclusive at all levels, and embraces and celebrates our visible and invisible differences. This concept of fundamental equality within our University community is central to the University’s ethos.

All staff and students of the University should be aware that all forms of harassment or bullying are unacceptable and that everyone has a duty to behave in an acceptable and appropriate manner that demonstrates dignity and respect. All members of the University have a responsibility to actively support a university culture of equality, diversity and inclusion and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Each person has a duty not to place the safety, health and welfare of DCU community members at risk.

Bullying, discrimination and harassment behaviour may not always be intentional, but is always unacceptable, whether intentional or not. Differences in individuals’ attitude, background or culture can mean what is perceived as bullying and harassment by one individual may not seem so to another.

A key aim of the policy is to clearly set out what is meant by dignity and respect at work and study and to help readers understand what type of behaviour constitutes bullying and harassment. The policy’s partner documents, *Dignity and Respect at Work and Study Employee Procedures*, *Student Dignity and Respect Procedures* and the *Student Code of Conduct and Discipline*, clearly explain the



steps which individuals may take if they feel that they have been bullied, harassed, or discriminated against.

Where an issue related to dignity and respect has arisen, parties are encouraged to use informal resolution methods and mediation as early as possible if it is appropriate and safe to do so. Complaints should proceed to formal investigation once efforts to utilise local resolution methods or mediation have been exhausted, or are considered to be unsuitable due to the nature of the complaint.

Dealing with issues regarding bullying, harassment, or discrimination can be stressful and distressing for all parties concerned. Appropriate support is available through the DCU HR Department and/or DCU Employee Assistance Programme for employees and the DCU Student Advice Centre and DCU Counselling Service for students. Employees who are members of a recognised trade union may also wish to speak to their trade union representatives.

For concerns relating to sexual violence, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, please refer to the specific *Sexual Misconduct Policy* and accompanying Employee or Student Procedures document.

DCU's Commitment

DCU respects the human rights and dignity of all members of the DCU Community. DCU believes that a diverse community is among a university's greatest strengths. An inclusive university environment enhances the living, learning, and working experience for all members of the University community. We aim to develop an equal, diverse and inclusive community that is resilient, accomplished and adaptable and which creates a positive impact on our staff, students and society.

Our University has both a legal and moral obligation to recognise that bullying and harassment are serious issues. If unaddressed, the consequences can be damaging for both individuals and the institution.

Our University will regard any complaint of alleged bullying or harassment as a serious matter which could, if substantiated, lead to penalties being invoked under our University's staff or student disciplinary procedures. The University will support all parties involved and treat all with dignity and respect.

Our University has a responsibility to investigate any formal complaints of bullying and harassment and to help ensure that all employees and students are aware of this policy and the related informal and formal procedures that align with it.



Our University will treat seriously any such allegations which are deemed to be malicious and without foundation. The person responsible for such allegations, or any parties involved in the support of such allegations, may also be the subject of disciplinary action further to this policy.

The University is committed to monitoring reported incidents of all forms of harassment or bullying in the workplace. This will be managed through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit which sits within the HR Department. The EDI Unit will analyse available data related to bullying and harassment in line with GDPR and other data protection requirements. To allow the EDI Unit to report, on an anonymised basis, incidents of harassment or bullying, all members of the DCU Community are encouraged to report concerns in relation to any potential bullying or harassment incident to the EDI Unit. This data will be used to better understand how to continue to promote and support dignity and respect across the University community. Where appropriate, data related to formal complaints brought through the formal complaints procedure will be made available on the DCU website.

The Student Policy Officer based in Student Support and Development is the contact person for reporting incidents or concerns regarding bullying, harassment, or any other inappropriate behaviour concerning students. The Student Policy Officer will collect and analyse data related to bullying, harassment, and discrimination in line with GDPR and other data protection requirements. Information collated will be used to inform activities to address any unacceptable behaviour along with cultivating a culture of respect.

Our Promise

Our University culture will reflect our commitment to equality, educational opportunity, social justice, ethical behaviour, human rights, and academic freedom. We will achieve this by:

- Fair and equal representation for all, allowing everyone in our community to contribute and reach their full potential
- Fostering and maintaining a safe environment of dignity, respect and inclusion for employees, students, and members of the communities we serve
- Ensuring fair and inclusive access to our facilities, programmes, resources, and services, and working to make all of our policies and practices inclusive and equitable
- Advancing and building our workforce by assessing hiring practices and performance review procedures to attract, retain, and develop talented staff from diverse backgrounds
- Encouraging respectful and dignified behaviour amongst students, staff, and the wider DCU Community
- Recognising that bullying and harassment are serious issues. Our University has both a legal and moral obligation to treat any reports of bullying or harassment as a serious matter.



Consequently, the University will:

- 1) Ensure that adequate resources are made available to promote dignity and respect and to deal fairly and equitably with complaints;
- 2) Investigate any formal complaints of alleged bullying, harassment and discrimination;
- 3) Promote awareness of this policy and the related informal and formal procedures that align with it;
- 4) Endeavour to ensure that all areas and members of the University community shall adopt and implement fully, and without modification, this policy;
- 5) Publish the *Dignity and Respect at Work and Study Policy* and related documents on the DCU website.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote best practice in upholding dignity and respect within the University and to set out a systematic framework to:

- 1) ensure that the University upholds both its legal and moral obligation to recognise that bullying, harassment and discrimination are serious issues as outlined in:
 - Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2018
 - Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015
 - Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- 2) help to support all members of the University community to understand that bullying and harassment are unacceptable, that such behaviour will be challenged and that disciplinary action may be taken;
- 3) help to support all members of the University community to be aware of behaviour that may constitute bullying and harassment and their responsibilities for avoiding and/or preventing such behaviour;
- 4) as much as possible help prevent acts of harassment, discrimination, exclusion, unfair treatment, bullying and demeaning behaviours;
- 5) have adequate and accessible mechanisms in place for handling bullying, harassment and discrimination effectively;



- 6) foster a working and learning environment where individuals and groups treat one another with dignity and respect;
- 7) as much as possible help to eliminate all forms of offensive and inappropriate conduct and raise awareness of the impact of such conduct on individuals and their environment.

All members of the DCU community have a right to:

- a) be treated with fairness, dignity and respect;
- b) privacy and confidentiality;
- c) equal access to employment, education, training and career progression, services, activities and facilities in the University.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and students of the University including the companies within the DCU Commercial Group. It also applies to voluntary workers, contractors, sub-contractors and visitors. These are all hereinafter collectively referred to as 'Members of the University Community'.

This policy applies to all areas of the University's operations and programmes. It applies to conduct which takes place:

- on any University campus;
- at any other university or other place (including abroad) where employees or students are representing the University or are engaged in a University connected activity;
- any virtual setting in relation to any University related activity including, but not limited to; Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.
- at events such as social functions, conferences, sporting events, field trips or work assignments which are related to the University or are a University connected activity; &
- in person, in writing, on the telephone, by email or online, including social media and instant messenger services, in relation to any University related activity.

Sexual harassment and sexual misconduct are covered by the separate Sexual Misconduct Policy.



Complaints against employees and contractors connected to the Office of Student Life (OSL) are covered by the relevant policies within the OSL.

Definitions

Bullying¹

Repeated aggression or inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect whether verbal, psychological, physical or otherwise – that is conducted by one or more persons against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s right to dignity and respect.

An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to an individual’s dignity but, as a once-off incident, is not considered to be bullying. It may however be considered inappropriate behaviour.

The following are some common, but not exhaustive, examples of bullying behaviour.

- 1) **Verbal:** personal insults, demeaning remarks, regular humiliation (often in front of others), nicknames, ridicule, threats.
- 2) **Non-verbal or indirect:** exclusion with negative consequences, hostile attitude, spreading malicious rumours.
- 3) **Abuse of power:** regular excessive and inappropriate criticism, deliberately and maliciously withholding work-related information in order to undermine a colleague, repeatedly manipulating a person’s job content and targets without due cause.
- 4) **Physical:** aggressive behaviour, physical intimidation, unwelcome physical contact up to and including assault.
- 5) **Communications technology:** insulting texts, emails, derogatory comments on social media.

The intention of the person against whom the complaint is being made (the respondent) is irrelevant. The fact that the respondent may not intend to bully/harass/discriminate against a member of the DCU community is not a defence. The effect of the behaviour on the member of the University community is what is relevant.

Harassment²

Any act or conduct (including spoken words, gestures, or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material), if the action or conduct is unwelcome to the recipient

¹ [Dignity at Work: An anti-bullying, harassment and sexual harassment policy for the Irish civil service \(2015\), Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.](#)

² [Dignity at Work: An anti-bullying, harassment and sexual harassment policy for the Irish civil service \(2015\), Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.](#)

and could reasonably be regarded, in relation to the relevant characteristic of the recipient, as offensive, humiliating, or intimidating. Harassment may consist of a single incident, or repeated inappropriate behaviour. This includes any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the nine grounds of prohibited discrimination. As outlined in the [Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015](#), and the [Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2018](#), the following are nine grounds of prohibited discrimination:

- 1) **Gender:** A man, a woman, a non-binary person or a trans person (note: specific protection is provided for pregnant employees or in relation to maternity leave);
- 2) **Marital Status:** Single, married, separated, divorced or widowed;
- 3) **Family Status:** A parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or a parent of a person with a disability;
- 4) **Sexual orientation:** Gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual
- 5) **Religion:** Different religious belief, background, outlook or none;
- 6) **Age:** This applies to all ages above the maximum age at which a person is statutorily obliged to attend school;
- 7) **Disability:** This is broadly defined including people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions;
- 8) **Race:** A particular race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin;
- 9) **Membership of the Traveller community:** People who are commonly called Travellers, who are identified both by Travellers and others as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, identified historically as a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.

The following are some common, but not exhaustive, examples of harassment:

- 1) Verbal harassment – jokes, comments, ridicule or songs.
- 2) Written harassment – including but not limited to; text messages, emails, instant messages, notices or comments on social media.
- 3) Physical harassment – jostling, shoving or any form of assault.
- 4) Intimidation harassment – gestures, posturing or threatening poses.
- 5) Visual displays such as posters, emblems.
- 6) Isolation or exclusion from social activities.

What does not constitute harassment or bullying

It is important to differentiate between the exercise of a person's legitimate authority, as opposed to harassment or bullying. Line managers, supervisors, academic leaders, have the right to manage, direct and govern how work is done, and a responsibility to monitor workflow and to manage performance. The exercise of this right is not harassment or bullying. Disciplinary action taken against staff or students does not constitute harassment or bullying where the appropriate processes have been applied and communicated in a professional manner, examples of which follow:-



- 1) Constructive feedback and/or advice on performance or professional behaviour are appropriate and reasonable management actions.
- 2) Critical comments indicating performance deficiencies do not constitute harassment or bullying where the comments are objective and communicated professionally.
- 3) Constructive and appropriately delivered feedback which is intended to assist staff to improve their performance or the standard of their behaviour.
- 4) Constructive and appropriately delivered academic feedback to students. Any such feedback should be in keeping with the university regulations.

Sexual harassment³

Any form of unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. Sexual Harassment may consist of a single incident, or repeated inappropriate behaviour.

The following are some common, but not exhaustive, examples of harassment.

- 1) Sexual jokes, stories, comments, use of telephone (including text messages), or any other digital communication systems for inappropriate suggestive comments;
- 2) Display of offensive pictures, slogans, graffiti, written suggestive materials, etc. through email or otherwise (including a display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures or objects);
- 3) Telling lies or spreading rumours about a colleague's sex life;
- 4) Unwanted physical contact ranging from unnecessary touching, and consistently invading personal space to assault;
- 5) Persisting in unwelcome attempts to form a relationship, or continue a relationship to which one party has not consented, or for which the individual has withdrawn their consent.

This type of harassment is covered in detail in the separate *Sexual Misconduct Policy* and accompanying procedures.

Discrimination⁴

Discrimination is defined as less favourable treatment. A person has been discriminated against if they are treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on any of the nine grounds of prohibited discrimination. As outlined in the Employment

³ Dignity at Work: An anti-bullying, harassment and sexual harassment policy for the Irish civil service (2015), Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

⁴ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Citizens Information



Equality Acts 1998 – 2015 and Equal Status Acts 2000 - 2018, the following are nine grounds of prohibited discrimination:

- 1) **Gender:** A man, a woman, a non-binary person or a trans person (note: specific protection is provided for pregnant employees or in relation to maternity leave);
- 2) **Marital Status:** Single, married, separated, divorced or widowed;
- 3) **Family Status:** A parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or a parent of a person with a disability;
- 4) **Sexual orientation:** Gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual
- 5) **Religion:** Different religious belief, background, outlook or none;
- 6) **Age:** This applies to all ages above the maximum age at which a person is statutorily obliged to attend school;
- 7) **Disability:** This is broadly defined including people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions;
- 8) **Race:** A particular race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin;
- 9) **Membership of the Traveller community:** People who are commonly called Travellers, who are identified both by Travellers and others as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, identified historically as a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.

Cyberbullying*

Cyberbullying is defined as an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using mobile phones or the internet, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.⁵

Cyberbullying can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.⁶

The following are some common, but not exhaustive, examples of cyberbullying:

- 1) spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos of someone on social media;
- 2) sending hurtful messages or threats via messaging platforms; &
- 3) impersonating someone and sending inappropriate messages to others on their behalf.

Victimisation⁷

⁵ [The National Anti-Bullying Centre at DCU](#)

⁶ [How to stop bullying, UNICEF](#)

⁷ [Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#)

* Some of the aspects of cyberbullying may fall under the remit of the DCU Social Media Policy



Victimisation occurs when someone is dismissed or treated badly because they have made a complaint related to equality law.

Staff

In the context of this policy, the word 'staff' includes all full-time and part-time employees of the University and its campus companies.

An employee is a person who has a Contract of Employment issued by DCU.

Student

Includes all full-time and part-time students of the University, online and on campus.

All members of the DCU Community

This phrase is used in this policy as a generic term to encompass all adults who are involved in the operation of the University and its campus companies. It covers employees, students, voluntary workers, contractors, subcontractors and visitors.

Employees in a position of authority

All University employees who have managerial and/or supervisory responsibilities e.g. Executive Deans, Heads of departments, Faculty Heads, Line Managers and Supervisors.

Visitor

Includes any person visiting a DCU campus or virtual setting for any reason.

Contractor

Includes any person or company that undertakes a contract to provide a service or goods to the University.

Sub-contractor

Includes any person contracted by a person or company who has been contracted by the University to provide service or goods.

Good Citizenship Behaviour

To act in a manner which promotes good citizenship, through respecting others.

Roles & Responsibilities

All members of the University have a responsibility to:

- Actively support a university culture of equality, diversity and inclusion at all levels;



- Promote good citizenship behaviour, both within themselves and others;
- Take responsibility for their own behaviour, and conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful towards all members of the University community and in line with the rules, regulations and policies of the University;
- Behave and conduct themselves so as to respect the right of others to dignity, courtesy and respect at all times;
- Commit to the promotion of a university that recognises and respects individual difference and that rejects harassment or bullying;
- Challenge or report incidents of discrimination, bullying and harassment, or victimisation, as appropriate to their role in the University, even if they are not directly affected;
- Be aware of their personal liability under the Employment Equality Acts 1998 – 2015 and Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2018 for their conduct;
- Safeguard their own safety and welfare. Each person has a duty not to place the safety, health and welfare of our community members at risk by engaging in harassment or bullying;
- Cooperate by providing any relevant information when an allegation of harassment or bullying is being investigated, whether at an informal or formal stage;
- Read and be aware of this policy and its associated procedures and to ensure they do not behave in a way that could be intimidating or offensive to others; &
- Adhere to the procedures set out in this policy and the separate individual procedures documents for staff and students.

Employees in a position of authority have a responsibility to:

- Promote a culture that is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination, and help ensure that behavioural standards are acceptable;
- Act on reported incidents of bullying or harassment. Those who do not act on such reports are in breach of this policy;
- Help ensure that their employees are aware of the content of this policy and its associated procedures;
- Undertake managerial duties while taking care not to demean, devalue or intimidate employees and students. The power attached to their position should never be abused;
- Promote the policy and treat complaints seriously and address them promptly, confidentially and impartially in accordance with the informal complaint resolution procedure;
- Manage and facilitate a resolution where safe and appropriate. When a manager has witnessed or been advised of inappropriate behaviour, suitable remedial action should be taken as outlined in the procedures associated with this policy;
- Ensure that complainants are not victimised for making a complaint in good faith; &



- As much as possible, protect the health and safety of employees and students.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit

To support this policy the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit can be contacted at [\[edi@dcu.ie\]](mailto:edi@dcu.ie).

The responsibilities of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit include, but are not limited to the following:

- Help promote a culture that fosters dignity and respect and is free from bullying and harassment;
- Help ensure that behavioural standards are acceptable through promoting an equal, diverse and inclusive culture;
- Take appropriate action on reported incidents of harassment or bullying;
- Help ensure that all employees are aware of the content of this policy and its associated procedures;
- Help promote the policy and treat complaints seriously and address them promptly, confidentially and impartially in accordance with the informal complaint resolution procedure;
- Support colleagues to manage and facilitate a resolution where it is safe and appropriate to do so;
- Provide assistance at all stages of the resolution process as outlined in the procedures document;
- Help ensure that complainants are not victimised for making a complaint in good faith;
- Help ensure that employee complainants and respondents receive appropriate support; &
- As much as possible, protect the health and safety of the student and employee.

Human Resources

- Promote a staff culture that is free from bullying and harassment and to ensure that behavioural standards are acceptable;
- Help ensure that their employees are aware of the content of this policy and its associated procedures;
- Help promote the policy and treat complaints seriously and address them promptly, confidentially and impartially in accordance with the informal complaint resolution procedure;



- Take appropriate action on reported incidents of harassment or bullying;
- Support colleagues to manage and facilitate a resolution where it is safe and appropriate to do so;
- Endeavour to facilitate a resolution where it is safe and appropriate to do so, appropriate remedial action should be taken as outlined in this policy;
- Ensure that complainants are not victimised for making a complaint in good faith;
- Ensure that employee complainants and respondents receive appropriate support; &
- Promote wellbeing information for employees.

Student Support and Development

- Promote a student culture that is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination, and to ensure that behavioural standards are acceptable;
- Create an awareness in the student population of the content of this policy and its associated procedures;
- Help promote the policy and treat complaints seriously and address them promptly, confidentially and impartially in accordance with the informal complaint resolution procedure;
- Manage and facilitate a resolution where it is safe and appropriate to do so, appropriate remedial action should be taken as outlined in this policy;
- Help ensure that complainants are not victimised for making a complaint in good faith;
- Provide appropriate support for both student complainants and respondents; &
- As much as possible, protect the health and safety of the student.

Policy Violation

The University may take appropriate action against an individual(s) where:

- Complaints of alleged bullying and/or harassment, if substantiated, may lead to penalties under the appropriate employee or student disciplinary procedures being invoked.
- Where allegations are deemed to be malicious and without foundation, the person responsible for such allegations, or any parties involved in the support of such allegations, may also be the subject of disciplinary action further to this policy.

Any actions taken by the University with respect to University employees will be initiated in accordance with the appropriate DCU and/or commercial company regulations and disciplinary procedures, which may include, but are not restricted to, the initiation of steps for implementation



of the Dublin City University disciplinary procedures under Dublin City University Statute No. 5 of 2010: ‘Suspension and Dismissal of Employees’ (relevant to Dublin City University employees only) or the *DCU Commercial DAC Disciplinary Policy and Procedure*.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be dealt with as follows:

- Issues relating to alleged bullying and harassment by employees against another member of the University Community will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures associated with this policy (‘Dignity and Respect at Work Procedures Document’).
- Issues relating to alleged bullying and harassment by students against another member of the University community will be dealt with under the Student Code of Conduct and Discipline and the Student Dignity and Respect Procedures.

For students who are found guilty of an offence, penalties may be applied in accordance with the disciplinary procedure under Section 9 of the Student Code of Conduct and Discipline.

Please refer to the Respect and Dignity at Work Procedures Document, Student Dignity and Respect Procedures and Student Code of Conduct and Discipline for full details of the steps to follow when considering a grievance related to bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Related Documentation

Dignity and Respect at Work Procedure
Student Dignity and Respect Procedures
Student Code of Conduct and Discipline
Code of Conduct for Employees
Employee Grievance Procedure
Statute No. 5 Suspension and Dismissal of Employees
DCU Commercial DAC Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
Social Media policy
Student Gender Identity Policy
Staff Gender Identity Policy
Sexual Misconduct Policy



Contacts

For further details on any aspect of this policy please email:

Staff: The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit

Email: edi@dcu.ie

Students: Deirdre Moloney, Student Policy Officer, Student Support & Development

Email: deirdre.moloney@dcu.ie

Tel: 087 6640584

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as required and as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this policy refers.

Version Control

Document Name	Dignity and Respect at Work and Study Policy	
Version Reference	V1.0	
Document Owner	Human Resources Office	
Approved by	University Executive	
Date	April 18 th 2023	

End.