



Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Bullying and Harassment

The University has issued the following advice to students about racial or sexual harassment and bullying which is intended to ensure that the University provides a working environment that is free from all unlawful discrimination, including racial or sexual harassment and bullying. Any complaints will be investigated thoroughly and without delay. The University will respect the particular sensitivity and confidentiality of complaints about racial, sexual harassment and bullying and their consequences.

1. The University's Policy

The following principles are fundamental to the University's policy and practice in dealing with harassment and bullying:

- Racial, sexual and disability harassment, and bullying, of one member of the University community by another is wholly unacceptable behaviour. The University will take any incidents seriously and will act appropriately.
- The University will seek to ensure that all its members are aware of the fact that harassment and bullying are unacceptable and undermine dignity, self confidence and self esteem.
- All members of the University, without exception, have a positive duty to comply with the policy, to prevent harassment and bullying and to ensure that their colleagues are treated with respect and dignity.
- The University will seek to promote a working and learning environment in which harassment and bullying are unacceptable and do not occur.
- The University reminds members that racial, sexual and disability harassment may constitute unlawful discrimination or be a criminal offence.

Further information on the University's policy is given in the [Cambridge University Student's Handbook](#).

2. The College's Policy

The College is committed to creating and maintaining a working and learning environment free from all forms of unreasonable discrimination. It follows, therefore, that sexual or racial harassment and bullying by any member of the College community is wholly unacceptable behaviour. This applies, whatever the previous relationship between those involved may have been. Complaints will be considered with all possible speed and the College will take appropriate action as quickly as possible, if necessary by using the formal disciplinary procedures set out in the Statutes and Ordinances.

It is quite understandable that someone subjected to harassment or bullying may be reluctant to draw attention to the fact but unless a complaint is made, the College may not be able to take steps to prevent or eliminate future cases. It is therefore extremely important that the appropriate College personnel are informed of any potential complaint. This can be done under terms of strict confidentiality at the initial stage.

3. Definitions:

Racial and Sexual Harassment:

Racial and sexual harassment are difficult to define in terms of what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. Either form of harassment may consist of behaviour taking place over a period of time or a single incident. The following statements may help in understanding the behaviour that can come under the definition of harassment.

Racial harassment has three elements:

- a) A hostile or offensive act or expression, or a series or combination of such acts or expressions, against a person relating to colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origins. It also includes derogatory name-calling, insults or racist jokes, racist graffiti, verbal abuse ranging from belittling or suggestive remarks to threats, physical attack, and ridicule of an individual for cultural differences.
- b) The effect of such acts or expressions on the recipient is to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for study, or for social life, of which any reasonable person can justifiably complain.
- c) Racial harassment can occur even if the offence is not intended. Differences of attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as racial harassment by one person may not seem so by another. The defining features, however, are that the behaviour is offensive or intimidating to the recipient, is unwanted by the recipient, and would be regarded as racial harassment by reasonable people.

Sexual harassment has three elements:

- a) It always involves unwanted attention or treatment which emphasises sexual status or which has a sexual element. It includes harassment or discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Although it is most often found that it is women who are harassed by men, sexual harassment between members of the same sex or of men by women does also occur. It can be physical, ranging from suggestive looks to indecent assault or rape, or verbal, ranging from belittling or suggestive remarks and compromising invitations to aggressively foul language or unwanted demands for sex, or displays of sexually suggestive or degrading pictures on display. It also includes inviting or attempting to incite a person to commit an act of sexual harassment.
- b) The effect on such behaviour on the recipient is to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for study, or for social life, of which any reasonable person could justifiably complain.
- c) Any behaviour that treats the recipient less favourably on the ground of his or her sex is liable to cause offence, even if offence is not intended. An aggravating feature in some cases of sexual harassment may be the abuse of position of authority or trust. Differences of attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as sexual harassment by one person may not seem so to another. The defining features, however, are that the behaviour is offensive to the recipient, is unwanted by the recipient, and would be regarded as sexual harassment by reasonable people.

Bullying:

Bullying is a form of psychological harassment; it is intimidation, which serves to undermine the self-esteem, confidence, competence, effectiveness and integrity of the bully's target. Bullying behaviour may include continual, undeserved criticism, belittling remarks, shouting, swearing and offensive language, constant

interruption in discussion, and the display of overbearing or intrusive behaviour. Bullying behaviour may also maybe manifested by electronic means of communication such as email. Bullying is behaviour, which may take place between those of different status or those of same status. Bullying when reinforced by power within a relationship is particularly reprehensible. Behaviour which makes the recipient feel threatened, humiliated or patronised and which undermines his or her self-confidence or self-esteem is unacceptable, whatever the context. The defining features of bullying are that the behaviour is unacceptable to the recipient, is unwanted by the recipient, and would be regarded as bullying by reasonable people.

4. What you should do if you believe you are a target of harassment or bullying:

There are various ways in which an individual can deal with harassment ranging from simply asking the person to stop, to making a formal complaint.

Step One - Rejecting the offensive behaviour

I. If you think that you are being subjected to racial or sexual harassment in any form or you are being bullied, do not feel that it is your fault or that you have to tolerate it.

II. Do not allow the behaviour to continue to a point where it becomes intolerable. Do something about it sooner rather than later.

III. You may choose to speak to the person causing the offence about his or her behaviour and this could put an end to the matter (it is possible they were unaware of the offence caused). Or, if you prefer, you could get someone else to speak on your behalf.

IV. In any case, it would be wise to alert someone else to your problem because the possibility of a counter accusation exists.

Step Two - Seeking Advice

V. If you believe you have cause for complaint and the behaviour continues, keep a record of the details of any relevant incidents and then contact one of the advisers listed on the final page.

VI. They will listen to you in confidence and give you advice on how to proceed. They know how to initiate formal complaint procedures if this is necessary and will explain those procedures to you. On the other hand, they may suggest writing to the person against whom you have a complaint, being specific about what offends you. They will help compose the letter.

VII. If you choose to consult one of the advisers, you may do so in complete confidence. If you wish to be accompanied by a friend or colleague that is quite in order.

Step Three - Making a Formal Complaint

VIII. It is a serious matter for both the accuser and the accused to be involved in a formal complaint procedure, and it should not be undertaken without careful thought and prior consultation with one of the advisers, but you should not shrink from taking the step if serious or persistent harassment or bullying has occurred.

IX. You may complain in writing or orally to your Tutor, the President, Bursar, Senior Tutor or any Senior Member of College, or to one of the Advisers who will press the complaint forward.

X. It is helpful to have available written notes of the incidents, including dates, times and location. If the incident took place in front of people who would act as witnesses please supply their names. You should also be prepared to give details of any action you took to deal with the matter.

Step Four: Procedures to be followed in the event of a formal complaint

Action taken in response to a formal complaint may vary from an informal discussion with the individual named as the perpetrator, to a full disciplinary hearing according to the College statutes. Penalties could range from a reprimand to suspension or dismissal.

Whatever the route of investigation and subsequent action, the person making the complaint will be allowed to have a friend or colleague with them at all stages of the procedure.

Should you need advice on any of the above issues then you should contact one of the following: -

Your Tutor (if you feel you would rather discuss the matter with a Tutor other than your own personal Tutor, for example, if a woman student particularly wishes to discuss something with a woman Tutor, then you are free to do so).

The WCSA Welfare Officers or peer supporters

The Head Porter