



- 1.5 The RVC will seek to prevent harassment and bullying by publicising and communicating this policy widely; by providing training for those involved in advising on or dealing with complaints of harassment and bullying. The policy and its implementation will be reviewed in the light of experience, and within the context of external developments.
- 1.6 Nothing in this Policy is intended to restrict or undermine the right to academic freedom as set out in statute 18(3) of the RVC statutes.

**2 DEFINITIONS**

2.1 The effects of harassment and bullying can be very damaging to the physical and/or emotional well-being of the recipient, and, if unaddressed, can have longer term implications for the career, prospects and health. Some forms of unacceptable behaviour such as victimisation or harassment are unlawful. There are many definitions of harassment and bullying, but for the purposes of this document, the following definitions will apply:

2.2 is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past. Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories. Harassment may be persistent or a single incident. If sufficiently serious, harassment can be a criminal offence.

2.3 Harassment may include, for example: unwanted sexual conduct (ranging from lewd, suggestive or over familiar behaviour to serious assault); unwelcome sexual advances; promises made in exchange for sexual favours; offensive remarks (including offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content),

**3 GENER**

Where a complaint is about someone other than an employee, such as a client, supplier or visitor, the RVC

- To bring a formal complaint (either because an informal approach has been tried but proven unsuccessful, or the alleged incident may be so serious that informal resolution is inappropriate) (see Section 7).

**4.3** In any event, the complainant should keep a written note of the incident(s). This should detail the particular behaviour(s) encountered; dates, times and any witnesses; their feelings and/or responses at the time, as appropriate.

## **5 INFORMAL ACTION – Personal Resolution**

**5.1** Some people are not aware that their behaviour in some circumstances is causing offence or distress, and, if this is clearly pointed out to them, then they will stop and the problem can be resolved.

**5.2** If the employee feels able to, they should:

- explain directly to the person responsible for the behaviour: that they find it unacceptable, the effect it is having on them and make it clear that they want it to stop. This approach could be face- to-face (in which case, the person is strongly advised to be accompanied by a work colleague or Dignity at Work Ambassador) or, if this is too difficult, then expressed in writing;
- be clear to the person that if it continues then they will make a formal complaint

- 6.4** Any discussions and/or resolution at this stage will usually be confidential. The Mediator will make a record of the process and the outcome, with each party receiving a copy of this.
- 6.5** The mediation process will not in itself result in any further informal internal investigation or in any disciplinary action. All parties are expected to participate in a professional, respectful and courteous manner.
- 6.6** Where, however, having tried an informal approach directly or through mediation - the person feels dissatisfied that their complaint remains unresolved, the complainant may wish to consider taking formal action.

## **7 FORMAL COMPLAINT**

- 7.1** Where informal resolution is not appropriate (for example because of the seriousness of the allegations) or if informal attempts to resolve the situation have not been successful, an individual may bring a formal complaint.
- 7.2** Formal complaints must be made using the Complaint Form (Appendix

- 7.10** If the complaint is not upheld, the Recipient will inform the complainant of the right to appeal the decision under the appropriate RVC Grievance Procedure.
- 7.11** Regardless of whether a complaint is upheld, the RVC will consider how best to manage the ongoing working relationships between the parties concerned. For example, it still may be appropriate to arrange some form of mediation and/or counselling, or to change the duties, working location or reporting lines of one or both parties.
- 7.12** If the Recipient considers that the allegations were malicious, mischievous, vexatious, or frivolous, the relevant disciplinary procedure will be invoked against the complainant.

## **8. EQUALITY MONITORING**

## SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND ADVICE

1. The RVC is committed to achieving informal resolution of complaints relating to harassment and bullying wherever possible. In line with this approach, the RVC has in place a variety of measures to provide support. This support will be provided to complainants, those persons against whom complaints have been made and any witnesses.

External organisations can also prove a useful source of information and support. A list of organisations is provided at the end of this section. This list provides some suggestions but is not exhaustive.

## 2. INTERNAL SOURCES

### Managers

All managers have a responsibility to implement the RVC and bring it to the attention of employees in their work area in order to create and maintain a work and learning environment where harassment and bullying are not tolerated.

All complaints will be treated seriously and dealt with promptly and confidentially.

### Nominated Dignity at Work and Study Ambassadors ([List of Dignity at Work and Study Ambassadors](#))

Named Dignity at Work and Study Ambassadors are drawn from a wide range of roles across the institution and have been provided with specialist training. They are an independent and confidential resource and can be relied upon to provide support and assistance to employees and students who raise with them concerns about harassment and bullying. Their role is to explain how the procedures operate both informally and formally. They can provide support throughout the process.

## 3. HR



#### **4. Counselling**

The RVC offers a free, impartial, confidential Counselling Service, provided by Care First. This service provides unlimited free-phone access 24 hours a day, every day of the year for personal and work-

**GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL THEY ARE BEING HARASSED OR BULLIED**

- 1.** Bullying and harassment can make individuals feel anxious and humiliated. They may have feelings of anger and frustration at being unable to cope with the situation. Some people may try to retaliate in some way. Others may be frightened and become de-motivated. Stress, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem caused by harassment or bullying can lead to job insecurity, illness, withdrawal from work or study, and even resignation.
- 2.**

**GUIDANCE FOR THOSE ACCUSED OF HARASSMENT OR BULLYING**

- 1.** The RVC fully supports the right of all people to be treated with dignity and respect at work and study and is committed to promoting an environment where everyone can give of their best. Whilst every individual has a responsibility for conducting themselves with courtesy and respect, there will, from time to time, be situations where there is a level of disquiet or friction or where behaviours are unacceptable.
  
- 2.** Within the context of an Academic environment, academic disagreement and even conflict are to be

- <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/tackling-racial-harassment-universities-challenged.pdf>
- You will be given every reasonable opportunity to state your response to the allegations;
- You have the right to be accompanied to meetings by a trade union representative or work colleague.
  
- You will be informed of the outcome of the investigation into the complaint against you:
  - a. If the investigation reveals that the complaint cannot be upheld, then no further action will be taken (unless it is considered that the complaint against you was malicious or in bad faith);
  
  - b. If the complaint is considered to be well-founded, a decision will be taken as to whether it warrants the convening of a disciplinary hearing. If this is the case, this will be conducted in accordance with the relevant RVC disciplinary procedure.

**FORM FOR REGISTERING A FORMAL COMPLAINT OF HARASSMENT AND BULLYING**

*To be completed in accordance with Section 7 of the RVC's Dignity at Work and Study Policy*

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