



University of  
St Andrews

## Dignity & Respect at Work: FAQs

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## Employee-related FAQs

### What is bullying?

Bullying is defined by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service ([ACAS](#)) as the following:

*“Bullying is behaviour from a person or group that's unwanted and makes you feel uncomfortable, including feeling:*

- *frightened ('intimidated')*
- *less respected or put down ('degraded')*
- *you're made fun of and it makes you feel uncomfortable ('humiliated')*
- *upset (insulted or 'offended')*

### What is harassment?

By law, harassment is defined as bullying or unwanted behaviour which targets any of the following under the Equality Act (2010) (known as protected characteristics): age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. As with bullying, the person being harassed might feel disrespected, frightened, humiliated, made fun of, offended, or threatened, and that they are working in a hostile environment.

### Do I have to consider informal resolution?

You have a right to go straight to a formal grievance, but we would always recommend an attempt at informal resolution in the first instance. This allows for the matter to be discussed and gives the individuals involved a chance to change their behaviours. Often, a person may not be aware of any issues or concerns. It also allows for resolution without the stress and strain of a formal investigation. It is often more effective in maintaining good working relations.

If an informal attempt is not successful, you can still take the matter formal.

### What informal options for resolution are there?

You could:

- approach the individual about the issue and explain the impact, to allow the opportunity for change.
- approach your line manager or a [Trade Union representative](#) to assist.
- contact your [HRBP](#), who could make an approach on your behalf, arrange a facilitated meeting between you and the other party or just provide advice and guidance.
- contact the [Mediation Service](#).

There are also a range of courses provided by OSDS on dealing with conflict, communication styles and dealing with difficult people. Further information on these courses can be accessed via [PDMS](#) or contact a [member of OSDS](#) .

### How can I make a formal complaint?

You can report through the University's [Report and Support](#) tool or via the [Grievance Policy](#). A [grievance template](#) can be downloaded from the [HR Policy webpage](#). This should be sent to your line manager and to the [Director of HR](#). If the complaint is against your manager, it should be sent to their line manager and to the Director of HR.

## **What is the process of a formal complaint?**

A formal complaint will normally be dealt with in line with the [Grievance Policy](#).

The complainant will submit details of their complaint. A grievance meeting will be set up with an independent investigation manager, who will then meet with relevant parties if an investigation is required. The investigation manager will then issue an outcome to the complainant based on their findings.

## **Will my complaint be seen by others?**

Yes. A copy of your complaint will be sent to the person/s complained about. It will also form part of any report which would be seen by 3<sup>rd</sup> parties should matters progress e.g. to a formal disciplinary procedure (if any bullying or harassment is founded) or grievance appeal.

## **What details will I get of the outcome?**

You will receive an outcome letter detailing the findings in relation to your complaint. We have to respect confidentiality for all parties involved so you will not be informed of the outcome or any sanction given to any other party if applicable. If anything is founded, you will be informed that matters will progress to other formal proceedings. That will then conclude your involvement in matters.

## **I have received a complaint of bullying/harassment against me. What happens next?**

You will be invited to an investigation meeting to respond to the details of the complaint. It will normally be conducted as a grievance investigation. You will receive an outcome letter on conclusion of the investigation informing you of the findings and whether any further action will be taken.

## **Where can I get support?**

Support and advice can be sought from your [HRBP](#), [Trade Unions and/or](#) if it is having an impact on your well-being/health, contact [Occupational health](#).

## Line manager related FAQs

### What should I do if someone raises a complaint to me?

You have a responsibility to intervene and assist to resolve matters promptly in the form of informal resolution. You should:

1. Contact the individual who has raised the issue and support them where possible to speak directly to the other person, if they feel confident to do so either directly or by email. This is to ensure the perpetrator is aware of the impact of their actions.
2. Contact your [HRBP](#) for advice and consider referring to [Occupational Health](#), particularly if stress related or the employee is displaying signs of anxiety.
3. Contact the person complained against (or their manager, depending on the type of complaint made). Provide advice and suggest expected behaviour in moving forward. If possible, bring both parties together for a conversation to help resolve matters.
4. Suggest mediation to both parties. Details regarding mediation can be found on [The Mediation Service](#) page.
5. Keep an email note or diary note of the steps taken.
6. Take all reports seriously, no matter how trivial they seem to you. Issues left to fester can cause wider scale issues longer term. Such as employee ill-health, long-term and/or persistent absences, team conflict.

### How do I ensure my team are aware of Dignity and Respect in the workplace?

- You should complete “Diversity for Managers” training (conducted by an EDI team member). Further information about this course and how to book onto the course can be accessed through the [Personal Development Management System \(PDMS\)](#).
- Ensure you get your team to complete online training complete the (EDI) online Diversity in the workplace training module, and additionally on Unconscious bias. The University also signpost to an external optional module from the Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIREs). Such modules can be accessed via the [EDI training webpage](#).
- Ensure you lead by example and appropriately challenge bad behaviours and set down clear expectation of behaviour.
- Promote, discuss, and ensure adherence to the principles and expectations outlined in the University’s Dignity & Respect at Work Policy with your team members.

### Can I attend an investigation meeting with one of my staff members who has a formal complaint submitted against them?

You need to consider any such request on a case by case basis considering such aspects:

- Do you have any conflict of interest?
- How involved have you been in matters? i.e. you might be needed to provide information to the investigation. If that is the case it would not be appropriate.

- If the matter involves 2 members of your team you need to consider your position as a manger and what it might look like to attend with one and not the other.

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