



Dignity at Work (Bullying and Harassment)

Policy, Procedure, and Guidelines

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Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Brunel University of London is committed to providing a workplace that is free from bullying, intimidation, harassment or victimisation and where all employees and students are treated and treat others with dignity, respect, and courtesy.
- 1.2 The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy for employment sets out our commitment to both the principles and the implementation of equal opportunities for all our employees. We value the diversity of our workforce, and this is reflected in the core values of the University as set out in our Strategic Plan. We strive to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote our Equity Strategy within the context of the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.
- 1.3 The University is determined to eradicate any harassment, bullying and victimisation and maintains a zero-tolerance approach to such behaviour at work. The effects of unacceptable behaviour can be wide ranging and include:
 - damage to morale and engagement
 - poor performance
 - increased absence (particularly stress related)
 - poor mental health and wellbeing
 - poor customer service
 - increased employee turnover
 - inability to meet organisational priorities
 - detrimental impact on university reputation
 - possibility of legal action being taken
- 1.4 The [Brunel Values](#) (Open, Courageous and Inventive) outline expected ways of working across the University.
- 1.5 Appendix 1 contains definitions and examples of harassment, bullying and victimisation. Please also see the [Single Comprehensive Source of Information](#) which sets out policies and procedures relating to incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct as required by the [Office for Students' Condition of Registration E6](#).
- 1.6 Bullying and harassment can be treated as a disciplinary matter. Brunel's Disciplinary Policy can be viewed here (add link to revised version when ready).
- 1.7 Nothing within this policy should be construed in any way as a restriction on academic freedom nor should it be used as justification for restricting lawful freedom of expression. Brunel's Royal Charter protects at all times the ability for academic staff to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves at risk of losing their jobs or privileges. This is set out in the university's [Freedom of Speech Statement](#) (also see appendix 4).

2. Policy Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to assist in maintaining a healthy working environment where unacceptable behaviour is identified, challenged, and stopped. It aims to:
 - ensure the dignity of all employees at the University;
 - ensure that differences are respected and valued;
 - demonstrate our commitment to equity for all level of employees;
 - set out the responsibilities of all parties in preventing bullying, harassment and victimisation;
 - outline the process to seek support if bullying, harassment, or victimisation occurs.

The policy ensures that employees can feel confident that if they raise a complaint in good faith, it will be taken seriously, handled sensitively, and addressed according to the agreed procedure.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all employees of the University.
- 3.2 The principles of this policy also apply to agency workers, contractors, honorary appointees, visitors and volunteers. In addition, workers, third parties and trade union representatives are entitled to raise concerns under this policy.
- 3.3 This policy covers all places of work and work-related events, including external business trips, field trips and work-related social events.
- 3.4 A separate [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#) applies to students and is available on the [Single Comprehensive Source of Information](#). Where concerns cross over with employees and students, advice should be sought from HR and Student Support Services on how to approach the issue.
- 3.5 In exceptional cases, a dignity at work issue may constitute potential criminal misconduct, such as assault or sexual violence, and may warrant police involvement. In such circumstances the Head of Department and Human Resources Directorate will decide on the appropriate way forward in consultation with the individual and relevant authorities as appropriate.

4. Key Principles

- 4.1 **Timeliness** – Every reasonable effort will be made to deal with complaints in a timely manner, balancing the need to resolve issues quickly and the need to ensure they are dealt with fairly and appropriately, normally within 20 working days
- 4.2 **Confidentiality** – All information concerning dignity at work complaints must be treated in strictest confidence to protect those involved. Matters will be dealt with confidentially and sensitively by all parties involved.
- 4.3 **Awareness** - Employees will be made aware of the acceptable standards of behaviour, this policy, and the [Single Comprehensive Source of Information](#), through the University's compliance training programme. Bespoke and ad hoc training on Dignity at Work can be provided to departments/teams.
- 4.4 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** – At all stages, consideration should be given to the equity implications and needs of the individuals involved, to ensure that matters are dealt with in a fair manner.

5. Definitions of Unacceptable Behaviour

- 5.1 Unacceptable behaviour can take many forms but may constitute a pattern of repeated behaviour in which individual incidents are borderline, but which taken together, breach the bounds of acceptability. The behaviour does not need to be ongoing; a single event of unreasonable behaviour is enough for an employee to make a complaint. Unacceptable behaviour does not include lawful expression of personal or academic beliefs protected under the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.2 There are some types of behaviour that would always be considered to fall below the threshold of acceptability. These include assault, discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.
- 5.3 Unacceptable behaviour should not be confused with normal managerial authority carried out in a professional and reasonable manner including legitimate, constructive and fair feedback regarding an employee's conduct or performance.
- 5.4 Appendix 2 contains guidelines on expected standards of behaviour.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Employees

All employees are expected to:

- treat others with dignity, respect and courtesy
- conduct themselves professionally
- be proactive in developing and maintaining effective working relationships
- value differences in others and the contribution they make
- report any witnessed or suspected incidents of bullying, harassment or victimisation (see section 8 below)
- adhere to the University's [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

6.2 Managers

Managers and others in senior positions within the University have a responsibility to:

- lead by example, facilitating an inclusive and respectful working environment in which employees also feel able to challenge inappropriate behaviour
- setting standards and ensuring appropriate workforce behaviour is maintained
- take prompt action to challenge and stop inappropriate behaviour when it occurs
- ensure that any concerns raised with them are acted upon in line with this policy
- report to their HR Business Partner any complaints of bullying, harassment, and/or victimisation reported to or witnessed by them.

6.3 Human Resources Directorate

The Human Resources Directorate will:

- provide training on equality, diversity, and inclusion, including dignity at work. This training will also reflect the University's legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and its commitment to freedom of speech and academic freedom, as per the University's Freedom of Speech Statement.
- provide guidance and coaching for managers to enable and empower them to deal with incidents as and when necessary;
- provide advice to employees who wish to raise a dignity at work matter and to facilitate additional support as necessary;
- monitor and report on dignity at work instances;
- ensure the Dignity at Work Policy (and Grievance Procedure if necessary) is followed fairly and consistently.

7. Raising a Concern

7.1 Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, every effort should be made to stop perceived offensive behaviour informally. It is recognised, however, that some behaviour may be too serious to resolve informally, and in such cases, employees should go directly to their line manager, HR, or follow the formal procedures outlined in this policy.

Employees who experience unacceptable behaviour are encouraged to raise their concerns in a way that feels safe and appropriate to them. Where they feel comfortable doing so, this may involve having an informal conversation with the individual to explain what behaviour they found problematic, how it affected them, and asking for the behaviour to stop. An informal approach can sometimes help the individual understand the impact of their behaviour and agree to change it. There is no expectation, however, that employees must address the matter directly if they do not feel able to do so.

If an employee does not feel safe or comfortable addressing the person directly, they should raise the concern with their line manager or HR. If their line manager is the subject of the concern, the employee should report to the next level of line management or to their HR Business Partner. Employees are encouraged to raise concerns as soon as possible after an incident so that details remain clear.

However, it is recognised that some employees may need time before speaking up, and concerns raised later will still be taken seriously.

Once raised with the individual, if resolved informally, no further action may be needed. However, the employee may wish to notify their line manager of the situation. The line manager may not need to take further action at this stage. Line managers should always seek advice from HR if they are unsure whether a concern needs further action.

If the employee feels unable to approach the person directly, or has done so and the behaviour still exists, they should discuss the matter with their immediate line manager. If their line manager is the subject of the concerns, then the employee should raise this with the next level of line management or to their HR Business Partner.

At the point raised with them, Line Managers should assess the situation, and in discussion with the employee, advise and agree on the most appropriate intervention to informally resolve the matter. This may include:

- no further action if the employee has raised this directly and feels the matter has been informally resolved
- if they have not already done so, assisting and supporting the employee to raise their concerns directly with the person concerned
- meeting confidentiality with both parties, either separately or together, so that there is an understanding of the behaviour, its effect and an agreed outcome on what changes are necessary
- using another source of support and advice (see appendix 3)
- the use of an independent mediator
- seeking further advice, support, bespoke training, counselling or mentoring from the Human Resources Directorate.

This is not an exhaustive list; other options may be possible.

If the employees are in different departments, relevant line managers may work together to try and resolve the matter – they may decide to meet with their direct reports either separately or together so that there is an understanding of the behaviour, its effect and an agreed outcome of what changes are necessary

At the point raised with them, Line Managers should keep note of any discussions relating to the informal complaint and should monitor the situation and follow up as necessary to ensure there is no repetition of the problem.

In some circumstances the Line Manager may conclude that a disciplinary offence has occurred, and that the University's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures should be invoked. In such an event the line manager should contact their HR Business Partner for further advice.

It is advised that employees who experience unacceptable behaviour keep a record of any incidents that occur and any attempts to address the issue, noting the dates, times and circumstances, any documentary evidence (e.g. emails) and the names of witnesses. This will be a useful record if there is a need to use formal procedures to deal with the concerns.

Raising concerns informally will not preclude employees from raising a formal complaint at a later stage.

Employees who witness unacceptable behaviour are also encouraged to raise concerns in a way that feels safe and appropriate to them. Where they feel able, this may involve addressing the behaviour directly with the individual concerned. If they do not feel able to do so, they should raise the matter with a relevant line manager (this is likely to be the manager of the employee whose behaviour was witnessed) or Human Resources. Concerns can also be reported using the Report and Support platform.

All concerns raised informally will be handled sensitively and, wherever possible, confidentially. Employees who raise concerns in good faith will be supported and protected from victimisation, retaliation, or disadvantage as a result of coming forward.

At all stages, for confidential advice and support, please see appendix 3.

7.2 Mediation

In some cases, mediation might be helpful in resolving a dignity at work matter. Mediation is a process of dispute resolution, in which an impartial third party (mediator) facilitates a series of individual and joint meetings with the parties to identify a resolution on an informal basis. The University may suggest mediation, however both parties will need to agree to attend. All mediators will be fully trained. The University uses both internal and external mediators.

Further information on mediation is available by contacting your [HR Business Partner](#).

7.3 Formal Grievance Procedures

In most cases, informal measures should be sufficient to resolve concerns and stop unacceptable behaviour. However, if the employee feels that their complaint has not been resolved or if the perceived unacceptable behaviour continues, the employee may choose to raise a formal grievance under the [University's Grievance Policy and Procedure](#) to seek to resolve their complaint.

In exceptional cases, where the matter is of such a serious nature, it may be appropriate to invoke formal procedures immediately. If colleagues believe this is the case, they should seek from your Human Resources Business Partner.

Formal complaints should be submitted in writing to the Human Resources Directorate outlining:

- the person whose behaviour is causing concern;
- the type of behaviour including specific examples;
- dates, times and locations of incidents;
- any records kept (for example diary notes);
- details of any witnesses;
- any actions taken previously to address the concerns informally.

8. Guidance for those accused of unacceptable behaviour

- 8.1 The University recognises that it can be distressing for an employee to have a complaint made against them, particularly if they do not consider their behaviour to be unreasonable or inappropriate. However, complaints should not be ignored and should be considered impartially and objectively following University procedure.
- 8.2 If an employee is approached by a colleague and told that their behaviour is causing offence they should:
- remain calm and listen to the points made without interrupting;
 - allow their colleague to explain how they feel;
 - seek clarification, if necessary, of the behaviour causing distress or offence;
 - discuss how they might remedy the situation and work together more effectively;
 - If appropriate in the circumstances, offer an apology.
- 8.3 In some cases, an employee may have offended a colleague without intending to do so, in which case the other employee may be willing to accept an apology and an assurance that they will be careful to avoid behaving in a way that might cause offence. Providing the employee does not repeat the behaviour that has caused offence, this is likely to be the end of the matter.
- 8.4 It is expected that employees only raise issues with genuine intent. In the unlikely event that an unfounded or malicious claim is made then this will be dealt with through the University Grievance or Disciplinary Policy. HR Business Partners will advise appropriately.

9. Concerns involving employees and students

- 9.1 In circumstances where concerns involve employees and students, the initial process followed will be the policy that relates to the complainant (Dignity at Work for Employees or Bullying and Harassment for Students). Any resultant action will be in line with the most appropriate procedure

for that individual. Where needed, the Human Resources Directorate and Student Support Services Team will work together to ensure that the matter is dealt with fairly and as quickly as possible for all concerned.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1 Confidentiality is very important in dealing with cases of potential harassment, bullying and victimisation to protect those involved. Information relating to the matter/incident will only be divulged to relevant people with the complainants' consent, including witnesses, trade union representatives and workplace colleagues, on a need-to-know basis. The University, however, does have a duty of care to its employees and if HR feels an employee may be in danger they may intervene. Any breach of confidentiality will be treated seriously and may result in disciplinary proceedings.

11. Monitoring

- 11.1 The University monitors dignity at work allegations that are raised with the Human Resources Directorate (including the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team).
- 11.2 The Human Resources Directorate reports statistical data on dignity at work complaints in the annual EDI Report. This includes data from the Report and Support Platform.
- 11.3 Employees are also asked for their views on bullying and harassment in the workplace as part of employee surveys, the results of which are reviewed by the Executive Board, HR/EDI Committee and developed into departmental action plans as necessary.

12. Support for Sexual Harassment

- 12.1 Brunel University does not tolerate any form of sexual violence, harassment or abuse and expects all members of the University community, its visitors and contractors to treat each other with respect, dignity and consideration. Any form of sexual violence or harassment should be addressed promptly and any member of the University who feels they have been subject to violence or harassment should be supported, including making a formal complaint if appropriate.
- 12.2 Reporting of incidents of sexual violence, harassment or abuse will be in line with section 8 of this policy, however immediate support is available from Brunel Security Team (01895 255786) or extn. 66943 or by contacting Human Resources.
- 12.3 The University's [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy](#) and the [Single Comprehensive Source of Information](#) further details on support available for employees.
- 12.4 The University recognises that it takes courage to talk about experiences of sexual assault and violence. The information that employees disclose will be treated in confidence as far as possible. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis to arrange the appropriate support, to investigate complaints, or if the University assesses that employees may be in danger.
- 12.5 The support provided will be led by the employee and the University will work with you to see what the next steps will be and how the employee would like to prioritise those. We may offer you a referral to an external agency such as a sexual assault referral centre or the police, where there are specialists who can give you medical help and advice.
- 12.6 The University will appropriately manage contact between all parties concerned.
- 12.7 The University has an employee assistance programme which offers a counselling service which is free and confidential for all employees to use. There are professionally trained counsellors available.

Appendix One: Definitions and Examples

Brunel has adopted the definitions of 'harassment' used by the Office for Students as set out in its [Condition of Registration E6 Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#):

"Harassment, including sexual harassment, includes unwanted behaviour or conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment because of, or connected to, one or more of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation." The complainant need not possess the relevant protected characteristic themselves, as defined in section 26 of the Equality Act 2010.

In the context of section 26 of the Equality Act 2010, to decide whether conduct amounts to unlawful 'harassment,' the following matters must be considered:

- the perception of the person who is at the receiving end of conduct;
- the other circumstances of the case; and
- whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have the effect under scrutiny.

and

"A course of conduct conducted on at least two occasions that harasses one other person, or a course of conduct that harasses two or more persons at least once each. References to harassing a person include alarming the person or causing the person distress." (As defined in section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and interpreted by section 7 of that Act).

Under this definition, an offence is only committed if:

- the person knows the conduct amounts to harassment of the other, or
- a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to harassment of the other person.

Examples of behaviour which might constitute harassment, depending on the wider context, includes but is not limited to:

- verbal abuse – including verbal threats, derogatory name calling, insults, ridicule or belittling of another person
- physical assault or threat of violence
- intrusive behaviour – invasion of personal space, pestering, spying or stalking
- persistent, unwelcome contact – including text messages, emails, phone calls, gifts
- Exclusion – from normal conversation in the work environment or from social events
- spreading malicious lies, making insulting comments or bringing a vindictive allegation of unacceptable behaviour
- display or circulation of abusive or offensive materials on paper or electronically
- sending offensive text messages
- using humour to put another person or group of people down e.g. telling jokes that are sexist, racist or about an individual's sexual orientation

Sexual misconduct is defined as: any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. This includes, but is not limited to:

- sexual harassment
- sexual assault; and
- rape

For further detail on sexual misconduct see the [Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy](#). Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy.

Although there is no legal definition, bullying is defined by the Advisory, Conciliation and Advice Service (ACAS) as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either:

- offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting

- an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone

Bullying might:

- be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident
- happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or calls
- happen at work or in other work-related situations
- not always be obvious or noticed by others

Examples of behaviour which might constitute bullying are:

- psychological intimidation, humiliation, excessive and/or unreasonable criticism or fault finding of any colleague or peer
- asserting a position of superiority in an aggressive, abusive or offensive manner, including via electronic media
- preventing an individual progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- preventing access to resources
- unfair allocation of work and responsibilities or setting unreasonable goals or targets in work
- abuse of power or behaviour that causes fear or distress for others
- acting unreasonably by failing and refusing to listen, reflect and take appropriate account of the position or needs of other people
- withholding work by refusing to delegate appropriately, punishing competent people by removing their responsibilities, unreasonably limiting their access to facilities, treating people in an unprofessional manner, or refusing to follow agreed and fair procedures

Bullying can also happen from employees towards someone more senior, for example a manager. This may be referred to as 'upward bullying' or 'subordinate bullying'.

It can be from one employee or a group of employees.

Examples of upward bullying can include:

- showing continued disrespect
- refusing to complete tasks
- spreading rumours
- constantly undermining someone's authority
- doing things to make someone seem unskilled or unable to do their job properly

The University regards bullying and harassment as unacceptable. It is important to note that behaviour/conduct may constitute bullying and harassment despite the intentions of the person whose behaviour is in question.

There is a difference between bullying and harassment, and fair management. Bullying and harassment is unfair and undermines someone's efforts to perform well. Fair management allows managers to give fair and constructive feedback and set achievable targets, as well as standards of behaviour in relation to their team's jobs, grades and level of responsibility.

Managers should have regular one-to-one meetings with their employees so that feedback can be given, which should be a balance of positive appraisal as well as any concerns (if there are any). This should be done fairly and constructively. A differing view or opinion to that of your manager will not necessarily constitute bullying and harassment unless the concerns are raised or dealt with in an unfair way.

Cyber Bullying – Online behaviour is considered equivalent to face-to-face behaviour. Employees must not engage in any conduct online that would not be acceptable in the workplace or that is unlawful. For example, bullying, intimidating or harassing other users, or posting content that is hateful, slanderous, threatening or discriminatory. This includes conduct that impacts on work using social media (e.g. X, formally known as Twitter, Facebook or personal blogs, etc.), which may have been written out of working hours or using personal equipment.

This policy does not prohibit lawful, non-threatening expression of personal beliefs made in a personal capacity outside of work. However, care should be taken not to target individuals in a manner that constitutes harassment.

The University's [IT Acceptable Use Policy](#) provides further guidance.

Employees are protected from victimisation under the Equality Act 2010.

Victimisation means treating a worker badly (subjecting them to a detriment) because they have done a protected act **or** because it is believed they have done or are going to do a protected act. The worker does not actually need to have done the protected act, as defined in section 27 of the Equality Act 2010.

A 'protected act' means taking action related to discrimination law. This includes:

- making a complaint or raising a legal claim of discrimination or harassment
- supporting someone else's complaint or claim
- gathering information that might lead to a complaint or claim
- acting as a witness in a complaint or claim
- saying something or giving evidence that does not support someone else's complaint or claim

The law also protects a person from victimisation when someone else thinks the person has done or intends to do any of the things above.

Appendix Two: Examples – Standards of Behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour will be assessed based on its purpose or effect, taking into account the perception of the person impacted, the circumstances, and whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect. The following can only be used as a guide to assist in understanding what may be offensive whether intentional or not. It is not an exhaustive list of all behaviour that may be offensive or unacceptable, merely a guide to the types of behaviour that may be included. In all cases, it will depend on the wider context. This is not an exhaustive list.

Examples of potentially appropriate and unacceptable standards:

- Holding a team meeting regularly outside normal working patterns, which also can be potentially discriminatory against those with caring responsibilities for dependents. **(Unacceptable)**
- Holding a team meeting during the normal core working hours of all workers. **(Appropriate)**
- Giving an individual constructive criticism about his/her work in front of colleagues. – **(Unacceptable)**
- Making an appointment with an individual to meet in private, to give constructive criticism about his/her work. **(Appropriate)**
- A manager sends a derogatory written response e-mail dismissing a colleague's report or proposals. **(Unacceptable)**
- A manager offering a meeting to discuss a colleague's report or proposals. **(Appropriate)**
Team member using inappropriate language and/or raised voice to manager in front of peers. **(Unacceptable)**
- Team member asking to have a meeting with manager to express their opinion in a calm manner. **(Appropriate)**

The behaviours below are examples of potentially unacceptable behaviour. This list is not exhaustive and is not intended to be definitive, other behaviours may also be considered unacceptable, or depending on the context, some of the below behaviours might not be considered unacceptable.

- Verbal abuse, including insults or threats
- Shouting at an individual in a threatening or intimidating way
- Public reprimand or deliberate humiliation if persistent and targeted
- Belittling or patronising comments intended to undermine or degrade
- Persistent, unwelcome contact – including text messages, emails, phone calls, gifts
- Using humour to put another person or group of people down

Appendix Three: Sources of Support and Advice

Employees who feel they have been subjected to or witnessed behaviour that they consider is inappropriate have several people who they can contact for support and advice on how to resolve the situation.

Internal Services

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Team

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion manager for employees works with relevant colleagues to resolve concerns informally. The team can be contacted on edi@brunel.ac.uk.

HR Business Partnering Team

Advice and support can be obtained from the Human Resources Business Partners attached to the Department/College. The contact details for the relevant Business Partnering team can be found [here](#).

Line Manager

Advice and support can be sought from your line manager, however, if the line manager is the alleged harasser, please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team.

Trade Unions

Brunel has four trade unions that can offer advice and support (you normally need to be a member of the trade union). Their details can be found [here](#).

Report + Support

Brunel has a Report + Support tool where employee can report incidents of harassment and bullying on campus, both anonymously and with contact details. You can find the details [here](#).

Employee Assistance Programme

This gives access to advice and professional counselling, in strict confidence, from independent, trained experts, who can help you with any personal, work or family issues, including stress, debt, bereavement, wellbeing and employee support as well as lots of other information, guidance and practical support. Our provider Carefirst is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, throughout the year.

Call 0800 174 319 or visit www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk quoting 'Brunel' as your username and 'employee' as your password.

Staff Development and Awareness

Our Organisational Development team can provide training for employees in a range of relevant areas including team working, appropriate workplace values and behaviours, constructive conversations. They can also provide one-to-one coaching and advice on how to manage difficult conversations. They can be contacted on organisational.development@brunel.ac.uk.

Security Team

Security are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Security are trained First Responders and can offer help and support in case of immediate need.

In an emergency, call: +44 (0) 1895 255786 (from an internal phone use extension 66943).

Email use (non-emergency only): security-operations@brunel.ac.uk.

External Services

Equality and Human Rights Commission is the statutory body responsible for protecting, enforcing and promoting equality across nine protected characteristics — age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation. Learn more at www.equalityhumanrights.com.

Advance HE provides advice and support for students and employees on equality and diversity in

higher education. Learn more at www.advance-he.ac.uk.

Specialist Services

National Bullying Helpline provides help and advice related to bullying or harassment at work - www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk.

Samaritans provide free confidential emotional support 24/7 to those experiencing despair, distress or suicidal feelings. Call: 116 123 or email: jo@samaritans.org

Victim Support provides free confidential support to those affected by crime including harassment. Call for free on 0808 1689111 or request support online at www.victimsupport.org.uk.

Appendix Four: Freedom of Speech at Brunel

All staff at Brunel should understand that freedom of speech and academic freedom are both crucial for a healthy academic environment. Although they are protected by law, they also come with responsibilities. Staff should be aware that they have the right to express ideas and opinions, even controversial ones, within the bounds of the law, and that the university has a duty to protect this freedom. They also need to be aware of potential restrictions, such as where speech is unlawful, or harmful.

The **Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023** amends the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 ('HERA') to strengthen the legal requirements placed on universities relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom. The Act protects free speech within the law. It does not protect unlawful speech. The Act requires universities to take reasonably practicable steps to secure free speech within the law for their students, staff and members and for visiting speakers. It also requires them to maintain a free speech code of practice and to promote the importance of freedom of speech within the law and academic freedom in the provision of higher education.

The Office for Students (OfS) has also published [Regulatory advice 24: Guidance related to freedom of speech](#) which clarifies the legal position for universities.

Key terms relating to Freedom of Speech are:

- **Freedom of Speech:** This protects the right to express opinions and ideas, including in writing and electronically, without interference.
- **Academic Freedom:** This specifically protects the freedom of academic staff to question, test, and put forward new ideas, even if they are controversial, without fear of job loss or other negative consequences.
- **"Within the Law":** Both freedoms are not absolute and are subject to legal limitations, such as those relating to harassment, threats, defamation, and other unlawful activities

The University is committed to upholding freedom of speech within the law whatever people's opinion or beliefs may be. Such views may be controversial or unpopular or may shock, offend or disturb but must not be unlawful speech, which for example, may incite violence, hatred towards individuals with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, amount to a terrorism related offence or cause harassment, alarm or distress contrary to the law. Free 'speech' includes written materials and other forms of expression. It is not limited to the spoken word.

The University's approach to Freedom of Speech ensures that it upholds its duties to take reasonably practicable steps to secure and promote freedom of speech within the law. This includes placing significant weight on the importance of academic freedom and tolerance for controversial views. This means that staff being exposed to statements made and views expressed by a member of staff, another student, or third party that amount to freedom of speech within the law is unlikely to amount to harassment.

For further information see [Brunel's Freedom of speech statement](#). All University staff, members, students, visiting speakers and people invited or being lawfully present on the university's premises will at all times assist the University in upholding the free speech principles of the Freedom of Speech statement within the University.