

Harassment & Bullying Policy

Introduction

1. This policy applies to all members of the College, including all employees, staff, students, fellows and all contractors and visitors to the college. The policy covers harassment, bullying and victimisation.
2. The College is committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity, and maintains a working, learning, and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all members of the College community are respected. The College does not tolerate any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation.
3. If you have experienced or witnessed an incident of harassment or bullying, then this can be an upsetting experience. It is the aim of the College that all members of the College community can feel that they will be listened to, respected and that any concerns raised will be acted on diligently. Support will be offered, and the College will do all that it reasonably can to resolve the matter.
4. The College expects all members of the College community, its visitors, and contractors to treat each other with courtesy and consideration.
5. The aims of the College as reflected in this Policy are to:
 - a. promote a positive environment in which people are treated fairly and with respect;
 - b. make it clear that harassment, bullying and victimisation are unacceptable, recognising that those behaviours may cause harm, physically or emotionally, and that all members of the College have an active role to play in creating an environment free from harassment, bullying or victimisation;
 - c. provide a framework of support for staff and students who feel they have been subject to harassment, bullying or victimisation, and
 - d. provide a mechanism by which complaints can wherever possible be addressed appropriately and in a timely way.
6. Those in positions of authority, such as senior Officers of the College, managers, and members of the Governing Body, have formal responsibilities under this Policy and are expected to familiarise themselves with the Policy on appointment. All managers have a duty to implement this Policy and to take reasonable steps to ensure that harassment, bullying and victimisation do not occur in the areas of work for which they are responsible; and that if they do occur, any concerns are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately under this Policy and the relevant Procedures.

Definitions

7. **Harassment** is defined as unwanted conduct meeting one or more of the following criteria:
 - a. a **course of conduct** 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; in this context, harassment includes causing a person alarm or distress where this is not a reasonable course of conduct in the particular circumstances.¹

¹ Summarised from Protection from Harassment Act 1997 section 8(1), (3) & (4).

- b. unwanted conduct of a **sexual nature** that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment;² or;
 - c. unwanted conduct of a **sexual nature** or related to **gender reassignment** or **sex** that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment and because of the alleged victim's **rejection of or submission** to the conduct the alleged perpetrator **treats the alleged victim less favourably** than they would have done had the alleged victim not have rejected or submitted to the conduct³;
 - d. unwanted conduct relating to a **protected characteristic** (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership; pregnancy; maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation), that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment;⁴
8. **Bullying** may be characterised as unwanted behaviour that is either: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting, or an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.
 9. When deciding whether harassment or bullying has occurred the intentions of the alleged perpetrator and the perception of the alleged victim, including the extent to which that perception is in all the circumstances reasonable, will be taken into account.
 10. **Harassment** and **bullying** can be either face to face or through other forms of communication, including but not limited to written communications and communications via any form of digital media. It can be verbal and/or physical. It can be direct to the person concerned or to a third party.
 11. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or otherwise intoxicated, is not an excuse for harassment or bullying.
 12. **Victimisation** in a College context means subjecting someone to detrimental treatment because they have done, or you believe that they have done or may do, one of the following:
 - a. made an allegation of harassment, bullying or discrimination;
 - b. indicated an intention to make such an allegation;
 - c. assisted or supported another person in bringing forward such an allegation;
 - d. participated in an investigation of a complaint;
 - e. participated in any disciplinary hearing arising from an investigation, or;
 - f. taken any other steps in connection with this Policy.⁵
 13. Freedom of speech and academic freedom are central tenets of College life as set out in our Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech [Freedom of Speech Policy 2024.pdf](#) . Exposure to any of the following is unlikely to amount to harassment:
 - a) the content of higher education course materials, including but not limited to books, videos, sound recordings, pictures;

² Summarised from Equality Act 2010 section 26(2).

³ Summarised from Equality Act 2010 section 26 (3)

⁴ Summarised from Equality Act 2010 section 26(1).

⁵ Summarised from Equality Act 2010 section 27, translated into actions that might arise in a College context.

- b) statements made and views expressed by a person as part of teaching, research or discussions about any subject matter which is connected with the content of a higher education course;
- c) vigorous academic debate when conducted respectfully and without violating the dignity of others or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

However, in some cases otherwise-lawful speech can amount to harassment if the time, place, and/or manner of its expression interferes disproportionately with the rights of others. For example, speech which is acceptable as part of a formal debate on a controversial topic might nonetheless constitute harassment if delivered unprompted to a student with a relevant protected characteristic in a social context.

- 14. Reasonable management/criticism of work or the commencement of internal college procedures are not within themselves a form of bullying or harassment.
- 15. Harassment and bullying can take a variety of forms. **Appendix A** sets out a non-exhaustive list of examples of such behaviours.

Support

- 16. Members of the College community who feel that they have been subjected to harassment, bullying or victimisation or have witnessed such behaviour or who are the subject of an allegation of such behaviour can find welfare support and/or support and advice on the options available to them from a variety of different sources. **Appendix B** sets out a list of resources and the various sources of support available.

Application of this Policy

Reporting:

- 17. **Harassment, bullying and victimisation** are serious forms of **misconduct**. Members of the College community who consider that they have been subject to harassment, bullying or victimisation or have witnessed such behaviour may make a **report**. For reports relating to the behaviour of:
 - a student of the College – report to the **Dean**;
 - a member of College Staff – report to the **Head of Human Resources**;
 - a College Fellow – report to the **Warden**;
 - a guest of a student of the College – report to the Dean in the first instance
 - a third party – report to a **College Officer**
 - an alumnus – report to the **Warden**. See also [University of Oxford Alumni, Supporters and Friends Code of Conduct](#)

University Procedures:

- 18. Incidents of harassment that occur within a University context will normally be dealt with under University procedures and policy. This includes alleged harassment by students of a college other than **Wadham College**, in which case a report can be made to the Proctors. Advice and support on how to make a report to the Proctors can be provided for by the College Dean, College Harassment Advisors or the Welfare Lead. For matters relating to a member of University staff who is not linked to the College please consult the University Harassment Policy/Procedure [Harassment Policy | Equality and Diversity Unit](#)

College Procedures:

19. Where the responsible officer or manager judges a report to raise sufficient grounds for investigation, the College will investigate and if necessary, take action. This will take place under the **appropriate College Procedure**. For reports relating to the behaviour of:

a student of the College – **Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedure** [Disciplinary Procedures 2023 - Final Version](#);

a member of College Staff – [Employee Disciplinary Procedure](#);

a College Fellow – Statute XVL, Part III: [College Statutes](#); and

a third party – the most reasonably appropriate of either the Employee Disciplinary Procedure or Student Non-Academic Disciplinary procedure, given the nature of the third party.

20. Wherever possible, the College will be guided by the wishes of those who have been subjected to alleged harassment in determining whether or not to begin formal procedures and in general will only usually investigate if they have received a report. However, the College reserves the right to investigate in the absence of a report from the person who has been subjected to alleged harassment or where they do not wish any action to be taken in certain circumstances (for example, where the alleged behaviour indicates a risk to others in the College community).

Informal Resolution:

21. Where appropriate and where the alleged victim wishes, reports of harassment, bullying or victimisation may be resolved informally without recourse to formal investigation or other procedures. Parties can request facilitated mediation, and any such request will be received sympathetically by the College.

Precautionary Measures:

22. Where necessary, the College may also implement precautionary measures to ensure the safety of those involved or others on the College site. These may include (but are not limited to) the [precautionary measures in the student non-academic disciplinary procedures](#) or suspension or action short of suspension under the [Employee Disciplinary Procedure](#)

Complaints:

23. A member of the College community who is dissatisfied with the College's actions regarding a report of alleged harassment, bullying or victimisation may make a complaint under the Student Complaints Procedure (unless the complaint is more appropriately dealt with through another college procedure) [Complaints Procedure MT20 \[Final\]](#) (if the person who is dissatisfied is a student of the College); or raise a Grievance under either the Employee Grievance Procedure (unless the complaint is more appropriately dealt with through another college procedure contained within the [Staff Handbook](#) (if the person who is dissatisfied is a member of College staff) or Statute XVL, Part VI: [College Statutes](#) (if the person who is dissatisfied is subject to the provisions of that Statute).
24. No action will be taken against someone making a report of harassment, bullying or victimisation which proves to be unfounded if the report is judged to have been made in good faith. However, in the highly unlikely event that someone is quite demonstrably deemed to have known or to have reasonably been expected to know that a report was completely unfounded, the allegation of

harassment, bullying or victimisation may be judged to be vexatious or malicious, and disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with the relevant procedure.

Confidentiality

25. All parties involved in a matter (including any witnesses who may be interviewed as part of any investigation, or other members of the College community, and/or trade union representatives supporting any of the parties) should maintain the confidentiality of the process. Where possible, those involved in advising complainants should seek the consent of the individual for the onward disclosure of relevant information to those with a clear need to know. Where such consent is not forthcoming, the person entrusted with the information should make it clear that, in exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to disclose the information.

Responsibilities

- a. The Governing Body has overall responsibility for this Policy and for ensuring that the College takes all reasonable steps to promote and maintain an environment where neither harassment, bullying or victimisation is tolerated.
 - b. The Governing Body also takes responsibility for ensuring that all those who might raise a concern about harassment or bullying have their concerns received in good faith and have access to support for their welfare and wellbeing.
 - c. Responsibility for the operation and application of this Policy is delegated to the Dean in respect of the conduct of student members; to the Warden in respect of the conduct of Fellows of the College; and to the Domestic Bursar in respect of the conduct of non-academic employees of the College and the Senior Tutor in respect of the conduct of academic employees.
 - d. Equalities and Liaison Committee, reporting into the Governing Body, is responsible for:
 - a. overseeing the actions in respect of this Policy of those to whom responsibility under this Policy has been delegated, and;
 - b. receiving assurance and reporting on the application and effectiveness of this Policy for onward reporting to Governing Body.
 - e. All members and employees of the College are responsible for familiarising themselves with and adhering to this Policy.
26. This Policy will be subject to regular review by the Equalities and Liaison Committee of Governing Body.

APPENDIX A

This Appendix provides examples of behaviour which are not likely to amount to harassment and bullying as well as examples that *may* amount to harassment or bullying under this policy.

The following are key points to note:

- The examples of behaviour provided are illustrative only and this list is non-exhaustive.
- Those referring to this list should refer specifically to the policy in the first instance when considering if a matter falls within this policy. The policy sets out the those who the policy applies to, the different means by which the behaviour can take place and other factors that will be taken into account such as the intention of the alleged perpetrator and the perception (and the reasonableness of that perception) of the alleged victim.
- Help, support and guidance can be sought from a variety of sources to assist in determining if a matter falls within the Policy (see Appendix B) for further information.

Examples of behaviour that would *not* amount to harassment or bullying:

The following are unlikely to fall within this policy:

- Receiving constructive and reasonable criticism from your line manager.
- Reasonable criticism by a tutor (or another student in a tutorial context) of a student's work.
- The commencement of an internal college procedure e.g. student or staff disciplinary.

Examples of behaviour that *may* amount to harassment:

Repeated behaviour:

- Repeatedly making unwanted calls, messages, or emails.
- Sending a threatening message to more than one person.
- Repeatedly sending someone threats of violence or harm.
- Following or watching someone repeatedly, in person or online.
- Repeatedly sending graphic content, such as violent or hateful images, to someone.

Related to protected characteristics:

- Jokes or derogatory comments about someone's disability.
- Verbal and physical threats, or intimidating behaviour linked, for example, to gender reassignment, sex or sexual orientation.
- Sending memes mocking another person's religion to that person.
- Repeatedly questioning an individual's qualifications or right to be on a course or in a position at work based on aspects of their background, such as their gender, ethnic or racial identity.
- Consistently excluding someone from group work due to perceived religious, cultural, or gender differences.

Sexual:

- Standing unnecessarily close to someone or staring at them in a way that feels uncomfortable or intimidating.
- Sending unwanted sexual messages that are humiliating, disrespectful or aggressive.
- Displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content.
- Making repeated sexual comments about someone's body or appearance.
- Unwanted physical contact, for example, placing a hand on someone's thigh, lower back, or shoulder.

- Administering a substance to a person's drink without their explicit informed consent (drink 'spiking').

Less favourable treatment:

- Less favourable treatment could include, for example, being excluded, criticised or ignored e.g: Excluding someone from normal work or study related conversations after they have previously rejected an unwanted sexual advance.

Examples of behaviour that *may* amount to bullying:

- Constantly putting someone down and giving them unfair criticism in a work or study setting.
- Excluding someone from events or study groups.
- Putting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media.
- Mocking someone because of their socio-economic background.

APPENDIX B

The following provides examples of sources of support and advice available to members of the College community. Support and advice are available to:

- Those who feel they have been subjected to harassment, bullying or victimisation;
- Those who have witnessed harassment, bullying or victimisation;
- Those who are the subject of an allegation of harassment, bullying or victimisation

Support is available to:

- Provide support and advice on the options available;
- Provide welfare support

Advice & Support for Students:

If you feel you have experienced harassment, bullying or victimisation then the College recognises that this can be a difficult and upsetting period. Support is available and you will be listened to respectfully and empathetically. There are a number of people who are available to help and assist you by clarifying the options open to you assisting you throughout the resolution of your concerns, whether formally or informally:

College Tutors, College Welfare Advisors, Harassment Advisors and Dean

For someone who can listen to concerns, signpost formal or informal routes to resolution and signpost to welfare support, students can always approach a Tutor and ask to speak with them. This will be received sympathetically by any Tutor and treated confidentially. There are also a number of College harassment advisors who have been trained by the University on dealing with cases of harassment. Students may consult them confidentially about any issues involving harassment, and advice may be sought from them without invoking a formal complaints procedure.

- For welfare support as well as referrals to the University or external sources of welfare advice and support contact:

The Student Welfare team led by Sarah O'Brien (Welfare Lead) which includes members of staff and student Junior Deans: [Student Welfare](#) **This is a free and confidential support service that is there for all students.**

- For advice on how to make a formal complaint under the College's Procedure or under the University Procedure (if the person complained about is from another college) contact a harassment advisor.

Peer Support

- In addition to the above there are options for informal discussion with the following:

[Peer Support](#)

This link to the University Website provides information on how peer support at Oxford works and how you can contact and find different peer supports be that college, departmental, divisional as well as coffee ambassadors, peers of colour, rainbow peers, peers of faith and disability diversity peers.

[Oxford SU Student Advice Service](#)

Advice and information service exclusively available to Oxford Students.

University Harassment Advisors Network

[Harassment Advisor Network | Equality and Diversity Unit](#)

Oxford University Counselling Service

- [Oxford University Counselling Service](#)

University Sexual Harassment Advice & Support Service

- [Oxford University Sexual Harassment & Violence Support Service](#)
A safe space to be heard, with advisors offering free support and advice to any current student impacted by sexual harassment or violence.
- [The University ISVA Service](#)
Independent of a student's college or department. Can support as an advocate if reporting sexual violence to their college, the Proctors Office or police. Information on the criminal justice process as well as support.
- [Oxford University's single comprehensive source of information](#)

External Resources

- [Further Support | University of Oxford](#)
A number of organisations locally and nationally providing specialist support to individuals affected by sexual harassment.

Advice & Support for Staff:

Non-Academic Staff who feel they have been harassed, bullied or victimised can raise this/seek advice from their line manager, the Head of Human Resources, staff liaison Fellow or one of the College Officers.

Academic Staff who feel they have been harassed, bullied or victimised can raise this/seek advice from the Senior Tutor, Head of Human Resources, Sub-Warden or Warden.

University Harassment Advisors Network

[Harassment Advisor Network | Equality and Diversity Unit](#)

A network for staff who feel they have been harassed or bullied. Use this to locate your local advisor.

External Resources

- [Further Support | University of Oxford](#)
A number of organisations locally and nationally providing specialist support to individuals affected by sexual harassment.

Information and training on bystander intervention and how to support others safely. No formal steps are needed to speak with someone. [Responsible Bystander | Equality and Diversity Unit](#)

Accused of harassment/bullying/victimisation:

The above resources are all available as well for those accused of harassment, bullying or victimisation.

See also:

[University Reported Student Support](#)

A confidential specialist support service for students who are subject to an allegation of harassment or sexual misconduct.

NOTE: if both the reporter and the subject of a report both seek welfare support and advice the welfare team/human resource lead will make sure that an advisor is available for both people and that confidentiality is preserved.