

Bullying Prevention and Management Guidelines

Table of Contents

1. Purpose
2. Definitions
3. Understanding Bullying
 - 3.1. No Bullying at Flinders
 - 3.2. Who can be bullied or engage in bullying behaviour?
 - 3.3. Examples of bullying behaviours
 - 3.4. What effect does bullying have?
4. What can you do about bullying?
 - 4.1. What can you do about bullying behaviour?
 - 4.2. Specific strategies for preparing to address bullying

1. Purpose

These guidelines support the principles of the Bullying Prevention and Management Policy. They aim to provide further information and advice for:

- People who feel they have been bullied
- Managers, supervisors, teaching staff and other staff who are providing advice or initiating action regarding possible bullying
- Student Equal Opportunity Advisors and Equal Opportunity Contact Officers who provide information and advice to those who feel they may have been bullied.

2. Definitions

Bullying	<p>Bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour directed at a person, or group of people, that creates a risk to health and safety.</p> <p>Bullying may be intentional or unintentional. However, behaviour will only be found to be bullying if it satisfies all the elements in this definition.</p>
Discrimination	<p>Unlawful discrimination is discrimination based on any characteristic listed as protected by state, territory or Commonwealth legislation, and which has the purpose or effect of disadvantaging individuals on the basis of their protected characteristics.</p> <p>There are two forms of discrimination:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Direct discrimination, which occurs when people are treated less favourably because they belong to a particular group or category of people, for example, people with a disability or people of a particular ethnicity. It also includes treating someone unfairly because of a stereotype about a particular group or category of people to which they belong. b. Indirect (or systemic) discrimination exists when there is a requirement (a rule, policy, practice or procedure) that is the same for everyone, but which has an unequal or disproportionate effect or result on a particular group or groups.

	Unless this type of requirement is reasonable in all the circumstances, it is likely to be indirect discrimination.
Repeated behaviour	Refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour, not the specific form the behaviour takes. Behaviour is considered repeated if an established pattern can be identified.
Respectful relationships	Respectful relationships require that all people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are treated with integrity and goodwill • are aware of the impact of their behaviour on others, and • adjust their interpersonal styles and methods to the social and cultural environment.
University community	For the purposes of this policy, University community includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enrolled Flinders students, including cross-institutional students and students on exchange from another institution • employees and exchange staff • employees of controlled entities, Centres and Institutes, and affiliated clubs and associations • contractors and consultants performing work on University sites or on behalf of the University • visiting academics or persons with academic status • the Council and its committees • any volunteer in the workplace and study environment.
Work- and study-related activities	Work- and study-related activities are any activities that relate to a person's employment / work commitment, involvement with or status as a student, or other connection with the University. This includes activities that take place away from University sites, such as field trips, conferences, Work-Integrated Learning placements, work experience placements, work-related social events and email, online and social media activities.

3. Understanding Bullying

3.1. No Bullying at Flinders

- a. Flinders University is committed to providing a work and study environment that maximises the opportunities for everyone to undertake their work or study positively and safely. Respectful relationships between the people within our community are the basis for such an environment.
- b. When a person feels they may have been bullied, this can affect many aspects of the person's work or study and overall life. Flinders wants all members of the community to have the opportunity to access fair, prompt and effective relief from bullying.

3.2. Who can be bullied or engage in bullying behaviour?

- a. Bullying behaviour may be displayed by anyone. In particular, it is important to note that it can occur from individuals or groups who are:
 - i. in a position of authority or power over another person or group, or
 - ii. a peer of the person or group.

-
- b. In some instances, people can engage in bullying behaviour towards a person they report to or are taught by. This kind of bullying may also be experienced as a group action, where more than one person acts together to engage in bullying of a manager, teacher or supervisor.

3.3. Examples of bullying behaviours

- a. Examples of work- or study-related behaviours that, when repeated, may cause others to feel victimised, humiliated, intimidated or threatened include, but are not limited to:
- i. deliberately withholding resources or information vital for effective work / academic performance (for example: time, information, training, support, equipment)
 - ii. arbitrarily dispensing punishment, blaming, 'ganging up', preferential treatment for an individual / group to the detriment of others
 - iii. unreasonable criticism about work or academic performance
 - iv. online harassment (for example, making inappropriate or aggressive comments about individuals on discussion groups; repeated electronic "pestering" of individuals to provide responses in unreasonably short timeframes)
 - v. unjustified or exaggerated negative discussion about individual teaching staff or programs on any social media platform, including those not controlled by or affiliated with the University (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)
 - vi. constantly changing work / study guidelines, requesting impossible deadlines, assigning unreasonable workload or demeaning tasks, denying appropriate breaks / leave
 - vii. undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work / academic progress.
- b. Person-related behaviours that may also be bullying include:
- i. coercive or persecuting behaviours
 - ii. hostile or aggressive verbal and/or non-verbal communication
 - iii. personal insults and name-calling, verbal abuse, sarcasm, threats, repeatedly shouting or swearing at staff or students
 - iv. physical or psychological harassment
 - v. spreading malicious gossip, rumours, innuendo
 - vi. excluding or isolating someone socially at work or in the study environment
 - vii. intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking
 - viii. tampering with a person's personal belongings or work / study equipment
 - ix. initiation / hazing rituals or practices
- c. Sometimes, bullying can be motivated by a discriminatory reason (e.g. prompted by a bias against a protected characteristic possessed by the person being bullied, such as disability status, gender, sexuality, or race).

3.4. What effect does bullying have?

- a. Some effects of bullying can manifest immediately. Other effects evolve over a period of time as the behaviour gradually erodes an individual's or group's confidence, self-esteem and work / study performance.
- b. Signs that an individual may be being subjected to bullying include:
- i. the onset or worsening of stress-exacerbated illnesses
 - ii. loss of confidence and reduced self esteem
 - iii. social isolation, absenteeism, overworking
 - iv. reduced performance at work or in study

- v. in extreme cases, depression and other mental health conditions.
- c. Negative impacts on the University environment (work or study) include:
 - i. reduced commitment and respect for the organisation
 - ii. breakdown in communication and teamwork
 - iii. increased staff turnover / student attrition rates.

4. What can you do about bullying?

4.1. What can you do about bullying behaviour?

- a. **Seek advice:** Flinders provides several ways for staff and students to get assistance and information.
 - i. Students and staff can contact an Equal Opportunity Contact Officer to discuss the situation
 - ii. Student information and support is also available from:
 - Health, Counselling and Disability - Student Equal Opportunity Advisor
 - the fieldwork / placement Coordinator in the case of bullying behaviours being experienced while on fieldwork or a placement
 - for matters related to Flinders Living, Deputy Principal and Principal, Flinders Living
 - iii. Staff information and support is also available from:
 - People and Culture Business Partners
 - Employee Assistance Program
 - Work Health & Safety Unit
 - iv. For those managing bullying situations, extra support is available from:
 - Manager, Equal Opportunity and Diversity
 - Employee Assistance Program for Supervisor Assistance
 - Director, People & Culture
- b. **Take early action:** Everyone is encouraged to take appropriate and relevant action to address bullying early. Where successful, this improves outcomes for everyone.

Actions that are 'appropriate and relevant' will differ according to the situation, the context and the people involved. Some actions include but are not limited to:

- i. talking to someone you trust about the behaviour to test perceptions of 'reasonableness'
 - ii. raising the matter directly with the person concerned if you feel comfortable and safe to do so
 - iii. keeping a record of instances of the behaviour and the context within which it occurs
 - iv. reporting the behaviour to your manager, supervisor or teaching staff
- c. **Make a complaint:** If early action is not successful, or not appropriate, the University provides processes for both staff and students to make complaints.
 - i. Student complaints may be made in accordance with the [Student Complaints Policy](#) and supporting procedures.
 - ii. Staff complaints may be made in accordance with the [Staff Grievances](#) provisions in the University's Enterprise Agreement and associated policy and procedures.
 - iii. EO Contact Officers and the Student EO Advisor can provide advice about how the complaints process works.

4.2. Specific strategies for preparing to address bullying

- a. **Name the behaviours:** What are you experiencing that you find victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening? Naming the behaviours will assist in identifying strategies to address them, whereas simply reporting 'I'm being bullied' is less likely to lead to a positive resolution.
- b. **Make diary notes:** Write down:
 - i. when those behaviours are experienced and the context within which they occur (e.g. in private, in public, during one-on-one discussions)
 - ii. when the behaviours began
 - iii. how long they have been going on
 - iv. any witnesses who can speak to the 'persistent and ongoing' nature
 - v. whether others experience similar behaviours from the same source
 - vi. what, if anything, has been done to address the inappropriate behaviours to date.
- c. **Seek advice and support:** It is important to ensure that any direct action you choose to take is one that you feel safe, comfortable and supported to do. Seeking assistance in preparing to address the person whose behaviour is causing you a problem can help you determine your best course of action. If you decide to raise your concerns informally with the individual, you may find it helpful to have a support person with you when you do so.

If you do decide to address the issue directly with the individual, it is important to:

 - i. approach the matter in a non-confrontational way
 - ii. focus on the unwanted behaviour and how it affects you, rather than the individual's character
 - iii. provide specific information about what changes you would like them to make in their interactions with you
- d. **Consider taking more formal action:** You can speak with any of the identified contacts to find out the options available to you if you want to make a formal complaint. The complaints process is established via:
 - i. [Student Complaints Policy](#) and supporting procedures (if the complainant is a student)
 - ii. [Staff Grievances](#) provisions in the University's Enterprise Agreement and associated policy and procedures (if the complainant is a staff member).

Approval Authority	Director, People & Culture
Responsible Officer	Manager, Equal Opportunity and Diversity
Approval Date	5 July 2019
HPRM Ref	CF11/1537

Printed versions of this document are not controlled. Please refer to the Flinders Policy Library for the latest version.