

HARASSMENT POLICY - STUDENTS 2010/11

WHAT IS HARASSMENT?

It is behaviour which can take many forms and occurs on a variety of grounds and may be directed at an individual or group of individuals. It is the deed itself, and the impact on the recipient, which determines what constitutes harassment; it is the fact that this is unwanted and unwelcome to the recipient, not the intention of the perpetrator.

Although aware that there can be social or cultural differences in behaviour, the College considers that it is the duty of each individual to be sensitive about the impact they have on the people around them, and that a lack of sensitivity in this respect could constitute harassment.

STUDENT POLICY

This policy and procedure covers harassment of students either by other students or by members of staff. *There is a separate procedure for employees experiencing harassment by students or other staff members.*

COLLEGE COMMITMENT

Every student of City of Wolverhampton College has rights and responsibilities as set out in the Student Partnership Agreement. The College is committed to maintaining an environment free from harassment, intimidation or offensive behaviour in any form, verbal or non-verbal and expects all students and staff to be treated with respect.

COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITY

The College is committed to ensure that all staff will work to eliminate harassment in the learning environment. Students will be alert to physical and verbal harassment in their work area and deal with it immediately whether or not it is brought formally to their attention.

COLLEGE PROCEDURE

Staff will respond to any allegations of harassment. If a complaint about harassment has been brought to their attention it is their duty to ensure the following:

- i. you are made aware of this procedure and the informal and formal steps available to you
- ii. individuals who complain about harassment receive appropriate support before, during and after complaints are investigated
- iii. any cases brought to their attention are treated in a sensitive and confidential manner.
- iv. to keep full notes of incidents and actions taken.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

If you feel you have been harassed, or you believe someone else is being harassed, you should follow the informal procedure below.

THE INFORMAL ROUTE

As the perception of harassment can range from individual to individual, in the first instance it should be made clear to the harasser that the behaviour is unwelcome and that the person is asked to stop. In circumstances in which this is difficult or embarrassing for the individual, another student, member of staff or student union representative, may make the initial approach.

You may feel you want to choose a more informal route. You are advised to:

- Keep a record of any incidents which occur.
- Tell the harasser to stop if you feel able.
- Confide in a friend if it will help.
- Contact a member of staff. You may be accompanied by a friend or relative for any such informal and confidential discussion.
- Discuss any informal or formal actions you would like them to take.

Where the harassment continues despite efforts to deal with the matter informally or is of a serious nature, a formal complaint should be made in writing under the College's complaints procedure. You should ask for help from your Personal Tutor or any other member of staff or a Student Union Representative. Your case will be considered individually and every effort made to solve the problem at once.

THE FORMAL ROUTE

If the harassment continues and/or you decide it is appropriate, the complaint can be raised in writing, following the College's Complaints Procedure.

HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Complaints will be investigated promptly and discreetly and appropriate support given to the complainant. Both the complainant and staff dealing with the issues are advised to keep a record of incidents and any actions taken; whatever course of action is taken; the aim will be to make it clear to the offender(s) that the behaviour which led to it is not acceptable and must cease. They will also be told that appropriate action will be taken under the student or staff disciplinary procedure according to the nature and severity of repetition of the offence. Whether the problem is handled formally or informally, staff should ensure that any subsequent action is not detrimental to the complainant (or, if unproven, to the alleged offender). If the complaint proves to be malicious, disciplinary action may be considered against the complainant. Victimisation of either party will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

APPEALS

If any party to the case feels that it has been incorrectly handled it is open to the individual to appeal under the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

REVIEW

The effectiveness of this procedure will be reviewed annually by the Vice Principal, Teaching and Learning, in consultation with the Students Union, the Student Services Manager, and Diversity Co-ordinator.

UNSUBSTANTIATED CLAIMS

Claims under this procedure can lead to serious consequences affecting employment. It therefore follows, that where a complaint is not substantiated it is only fair that an assessment would be made about the reasons for the complaint having been brought. Where a complaint is deemed to be frivolous or malicious action will be taken under the Student Disciplinary Procedure. No complainant will be victimised for having brought a genuine complaint.