



Hertford College

OXFORD

HARASSMENT & BULLYING POLICY

Version 2.1 September 2025

Replaces all previous College codes of conduct, policies or similar in relation to harassment or bullying.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. The College expects all members of the College community, its visitors, and contractors to treat each other with courtesy and consideration.
- 1.4. The aims of the College as reflected in this Policy are to:
 - 1.4.1 promote a positive environment in which people are treated fairly and with respect;
 - 1.4.2 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;
 - 1.4.3 provide a framework of support for staff and students who feel they have been subject to harassment, bullying or victimisation; and
 - 1.4.4 provide a mechanism by which complaints can wherever possible be addressed appropriately and in a timely way.
- 1.5. Those in positions of authority, such as College Officers, 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.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. **Harassment** is defined as **unwanted conduct** meeting one or more of the following criteria:
- 2.1.1 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
 - 2.1.2 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;
 - 2.1.3 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;
 - 2.1.4 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
- 2.2. **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.
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. **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.
- 2.5. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or otherwise intoxicated, is not an excuse for harassment or bullying.
- 2.6. **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:

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

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).

- 2.6.1 made an allegation of harassment, bullying or discrimination;
 - 2.6.2 indicated an intention to make such an allegation;
 - 2.6.3 assisted or supported another person in bringing forward such an allegation;
 - 2.6.4 participated in an investigation of a complaint;
 - 2.6.5 participated in any disciplinary hearing arising from an investigation;
 - 2.6.6 taken any other steps in connection with this Policy.⁵
- 2.7. Freedom of speech and academic freedom are central tenets of College life as set out in the College's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech. Exposure to any of the following is unlikely to amount to harassment:
- 2.7.1 the content of higher education course materials, including but not limited to books, videos, sound recordings, or pictures;
 - 2.7.2 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;
 - 2.7.3 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.
- 2.8. 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 debate on a controversial topic might nonetheless constitute harassment if it is unwanted speech directed to a student with a relevant protected characteristic in a social context where its purpose or effect is to violate the student's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- 2.9. Reasonable management directions or criticisms of work, reasonable feedback on the academic work of a student, or the commencement of internal college procedures are not, in themselves, a form of bullying or harassment.
- 2.10. Harassment and bullying can take a variety of forms. **Appendix A** sets out a non-exhaustive list of examples of such behaviours.

3. SUPPORT

- 3.1. 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.

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

4. UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES

- 4.1. Incidents of harassment that occur within a University context will normally be dealt with under University procedures and policy. This includes alleged harassment by student members of another 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 by the Student Conduct Officer and/or College Harassment Advisors. For matters relating to a member of University staff who is not linked to the College please consult the University Harassment Policy, available at <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/harassment-advice>.

5. COLLEGE PROCEDURES

- 5.1. **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:
- 5.1.1 a student of the College (or their guest) – to the **Student Conduct Officer**
 - 5.1.2 a member of College Staff – to the **Domestic Bursar**, or the **HR Manager**
 - 5.1.3 a College Fellow, or an Alumnus – to the **Principal**
 - 5.1.4 a third party – to the **Bursar**
- 5.2. Where the person receiving the report judges there are 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:
- 5.2.1 a student of the College – the **Student Disciplinary Code** (Bye Law 5);
 - 5.2.2 a member of College Staff – **Employee Disciplinary Procedures**;
 - 5.2.3 a College Fellow – if employed by the College, in accordance with the Provisions for an **Academic Disciplinary Committee** (Bye Law 6) and related regulations; if not employed, in accordance with the provisions for the **Vacation of Fellowships** under Bye Law 2;
 - 5.2.4 a third party – in a manner judged to be fair and reasonable, according to the circumstances. This may involve, where relevant, referral to another appropriate body, including law enforcement agencies.
- 5.3. 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, in writing. 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).
- 5.4. 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.

- 5.5. The College may implement precautionary measures where these are deemed necessary to ensure the safety of those involved or others on the College site. These may include (but are not limited to) any measures set out under any of the College's policies, procedures or Bye Laws.
- 5.6. A member of the College community who is dissatisfied with the College's actions regarding a report they have made of alleged harassment, bullying or victimisation may make a complaint. Employees of the College should use the Employee Grievance Procedure for this purpose, and students should use the Junior Members' Complaints Procedure (where it would be classified as a Welfare matter).
- 5.7. 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, if an allegation of harassment, bullying or victimisation is judged to be vexatious or malicious, disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with the relevant procedure.
- 5.8. 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 any 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.
- 5.9. Those handling reports shall ensure that appropriate records, with due regard to Data Protection duties, sufficient to support the ongoing review and operation of the Policy, are maintained.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. Responsibility for this Policy rests with the General Purposes Committee, and includes:
 - 6.2.1 reviewing the actions in respect of this Policy of those to whom responsibility under this Policy has been delegated;
 - 6.2.2 Reviewing the effectiveness of this Policy;
 - 6.2.3 ensuring its continued compliance with any legal or regulatory duties;
 - 6.2.4 reporting on these matters to Governing Body (along with any recommendations for policy updates).
- 6.3. All members and employees of the College are responsible for familiarising themselves with and adhering to this Policy.

*Approved by the **Governing Body**, September 2025*

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 those to whom it applies, 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 make them feel uncomfortable or intimidated.
- 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 intimate physical contact, for example, placing a hand on someone's thigh.
- Less favourable treatment (e.g. being excluded, criticised or ignored) on account of response to any of the above - for example, 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.

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 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:

- Your Tutor
- Student Welfare Lead (Jane Corrigan - jane.corrigan@hertford.ox.ac.uk)
- Student Conduct Officer (Prof Andreas Galanis - andreas.galanis@hertford.ox.ac.uk)
- College Harassment Advisor (Prof David Dwan - david.dwan@hertford.ox.ac.uk)
- College Harassment Advisor (Dr Aruna Nair – aruna.nair@hertford.ox.ac.uk)

In addition to the above, there are options for informal discussion with or through the following:

- A Peer Supporter – see the information at <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/peersupport>
- Oxford Student Union Advice service – see <https://www.oxfordsu.org>
- University Harassment Advisor Network – see <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/harassment-advice>
- University Counselling Service – see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling>
- University Sexual Harassment Advice & Support Service - see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice>
- University Independent Sexual Violence Advisor – see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice/isva>
- Additional External Resources – see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice/further-support>

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 HR Manager
- The Domestic Bursar
- The Bursar, or the Principal (*if a conflict in reporting to the above*)

Academic Staff who feel they have been harassed, bullied or victimised can raise this/seek advice from:

- The Senior Tutor
- The Registrar
- The Bursar, the Principal, or the Senior Fellow (*if a conflict in reporting to the above*)

All staff may also access information and support from:

- The University's Advice Network – see <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/harassment-advice>
- Additional External Resources – see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice/further-support>

Advice & Support for those Accused of harassment/bullying/victimisation

The above resources are also available to those accused of harassment, bullying or victimisation.

For students who are reported, a dedicated University service is available – see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice/reported>

NOTE: if the reporter and the subject of a report both seek welfare support and advice, the College will make sure that a separate advisor is available for both people, and that confidentiality is preserved.