

STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
A College of Queen's University Belfast

**STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

# **DIGNITY AT WORK AND STUDY POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

<b>Version No:</b>	<b>Reason for Update</b>	<b>Date of Update</b>	<b>Updated By</b>
1	Revised and updated	June 2017	HR Manager
2			
3			

## **1: Policy Statement**

- 1.1 Stranmillis University College is committed to equality of opportunity for all of its staff and student and to promoting a good and harmonious work and study environment in which staff and students can fulfil their personal potential. Every individual in the College community should be treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to assist in the development and promotion of a working and learning environment in which harassment and bullying are known to be unacceptable and where individuals have the confidence to deal with harassment and bullying without fear of ridicule or reprisals.
- 1.3 The University College believes that such a safe and positive environment will support the organisation in attracting and retaining the best students and staff, and will provide the highest quality learning and working environment.
- 1.4 The University College adopts a zero-tolerance approach to behaviour which amounts to bullying or harassment. Any incident of harassment or bullying will be regarded seriously and can be grounds for disciplinary action including dismissal or expulsion.
- 1.5 This policy aims to ensure that if harassment or bullying does occur adequate procedures are readily available to deal with the problem and prevent it from happening again. When formal allegations are made regarding breaches of the Policy, the University College undertakes to promptly respond to complaints and to treat them with due respect, appropriate confidentiality and fairness.
- 1.6 The principles of equity, reasonableness and natural justice will dictate the operation of this policy at all times.
- 1.7 This policy should be read in conjunction with other University College policies and procedures, as necessary, such as:
  - Staff Code of Conduct
  - Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure
  - Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
  - Student Disciplinary Procedures
  - Computer Use Regulations
  - Social Media Policy
  - International Development – Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and Procedures

## 2 **Scope**

- 2.1 The Policy applies to all students and staff of the University College as well as applying to behaviour by visitors towards University College students or staff or vice versa.
- 2.2 The Policy applies to all staff and those contracted to work at, or for, the University College. It is applicable during working hours and outside where behaviour may be unacceptable under this policy towards a University College staff member or student e.g. online or at social events or conferences.
- 2.3 Dignity at Work and Study issues may arise between two or more members of staff, two or more students, a member of staff and a student, a visitor and a member or staff or student. This policy applies to all such circumstances.
- 2.4 The Policy also applies to Stranmillis University College students' conduct towards other students and staff off the University College's premises, including online and during all University College-related activities.
- 2.5 Social media should not be used by students and staff in a way that breaches the Dignity at Work and Study Policy (for further details see the University College Computer Use Regulations and Social Media Policy). Students and staff should not, therefore, engage in any conduct online that would not be acceptable. For example, making derogatory remarks, bullying, intimidating or harassing other users, using insults or posting content that is hateful, slanderous, threatening, discriminatory or pornographic.
- 2.6 If a student or member of staff suffers harassment, bullying or other unacceptable treatment while working outside the University College, such as placement, international visits, secondment or consultancy work, this should be brought to the attention of the University College tutor or line manager as well as to the supervising manager at the external organisation. It is likely that in such circumstances, the policies and procedures of the external organisation will apply and will be the framework within which such behaviour will be addressed. The University College will support its students and staff through this process in whatever way is considered appropriate. Students on international placements or staff on international business trips should also refer to the International Development – Health, Safety and Welfare Policy and Procedures.
- 2.7 An adapted version of the procedures will be used by the Chair of Governors to deal with any complaint about the Principal, members of the Senior Management Team or a Governor. Governors will be substituted for College officers where required

### **3 Definitions**

#### **3.1 Bullying**

- 3.1.1 There is no legal definition of bullying but it is generally accepted that bullying includes offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour and which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable and undermines their ability and confidence. (see examples set out in Appendix 1)
- 3.1.2 Vigorous speech and comment, academic debate and legitimate management of the performance of staff or students can be distinguished from bullying behaviour. However, care should be taken to ensure that neither staff nor students are made to feel intimidated.
- 3.1.3 Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff who report to them perform their duties to an acceptable standard. Bullying does not, therefore, include legitimate, justifiable, and appropriately conducted criticism of an employee's behaviour or job performance. An assertive management style would in itself not constitute bullying. However, if assertiveness on the part of the manager gives way to aggression, it is likely to become destructive rather than constructive and could constitute bullying.

#### **3.2 Harassment**

- 3.2.1 Harassment is defined in equality legislation as “unwanted conduct” related to religious belief; political opinion; sex; gender reassignment; race; sexual orientation; disability; or age, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity or of creating an intimidating hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person. Harassment is unacceptable behaviour, which can range from violence to more subtle behaviour such as ignoring an individual at work or study. Harassment may be physical (such as unnecessary body contact), verbal (e.g., offensive jokes) or non-verbal (e.g., ostracising or isolating an individual or sending unwanted emails). (see examples set out in Appendix 1) Indirect victims, which is those not personally subjected to the unwanted conduct may also make a claim for harassment related to their sex.
- 3.2.2 It subjects an individual or a group to unwelcome attention, intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, offence or loss of privacy. It is unwanted by the recipient and continues after an objection is made, although a single incident may be serious enough to constitute harassment and justify a complaint.
- 3.2.3 Differences in attitude, background, experience and culture can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another. The grounds for a claim for harassment will be valid if any reasonable individual deems it to have occurred.

3.2.4 A list of behaviours are outlined in Appendix 1, which while not exhaustive, may be forms of harassment and bullying.

## **4 Rights and Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Rights**

4.1.1 As members of the College community, members of staff and students have rights that they can expect to be upheld under the Dignity at Work and Study Policy.

4.1.2 Individuals have the right to:

- be treated with respect and dignity;
- work and/or study in an environment free from harassment, bullying, intimidation and victimisation;
- expect the appropriate level of confidentiality to be extended;
- equitable treatment, irrespective of status;
- request education about this policy;
- be accompanied to any meeting, relating to circumstances of alleged harassment or bullying by an Equality Adviser, work colleague, Trade Union representative, or fellow student (such as the SRC President or a member of the SRC Executive).

4.1.3 If a person believes that they are being harassed or bullied, they have the right to:

- seek support and assistance;
- decide the level of action they wish to take if they believe they are being harassed or bullied i.e. informal action, formal action or no action;
- make a formal complaint ;
- be protected from victimisation, due to raising a complaint.

4.1.4 If a person has a formal complaint made against them, they have the right to:

- an initial assumption of innocence pending the outcome of an investigation;
- be clear about the nature of the complaint;
- have a copy of the written complaint together with any relevant documentation and material;
- a fair hearing.

### **4.2 Responsibilities**

4.2.1 To ensure that individuals' rights are upheld and that an environment free from harassment and bullying can be achieved and maintained, members of the College community have the following responsibilities:

## Staff and Students

4.2.2 All members of staff and students have responsibility for:

- familiarising themselves with the Dignity at Work and Study Policy;
- contributing towards a positive working and learning culture and environment in the University College;
- respecting the dignity of all members of the University College community;
- contributing towards preserving individuals' confidentiality by not participating in rumours or gossip;
- challenging instances of harassment and bullying, where they feel able to do so;
- co-operating, as necessary, with investigations into complaints of harassment or bullying;
- identifying issues and raising any concerns.

4.2.3 If a member of staff or student believes they are being harassed or bullied and wish to have the situation resolved, they are responsible for:

- identifying the problem and playing their part in resolving the issue;
- seeking help and support as soon as possible;
- providing the evidence to support the complaint in the recommended format;
- giving the College the opportunity to resolve the issue, at the lowest level which this individual feels is appropriate;
- seriously considering the options for resolution;
- making reasonable efforts to make the recommended solution work;
- accepting that if they decide to take no action, it may not be possible for the problem to be resolved.

4.2.4 Managers:

In addition to the responsibilities that apply to them as employees, those who manage staff also have a responsibility to:

- support the institutional culture of respecting the dignity of the individual, and to act as a role model ;
- discuss and raise awareness of the Dignity at Work and Study Policy, ensuring that staff are reminded about the policy on an annual basis;
- provide guidance to staff on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour at work;
- challenge instances of harassment and bullying that occur within their own area of management responsibility and take disciplinary action where appropriate;
- enable complainants to take action without fear of repercussions or victimisation;

- fully play their role, as outlined above, in ensuring that the workplace is free from harassment and bullying.

Those in positions of authority have both a right and responsibility to discharge managerial duties. In so doing they may need to adopt a firm or assertive style, but they should take care not to demean, devalue or intimidate staff or students.

Those in managerial or supervisory roles have a responsibility to promote a culture free from unacceptable behaviour, and to react to any allegations of harassment/bullying as quickly as possible. In the same way, those responsible for student welfare must react to such allegations appropriately.

## **5. Breaches of Policy**

### **5.1 Informal Resolution**

5.1.1 If a student or member of staff feels that they are being subjected to bullying, harassment or other unacceptable behaviours identified in the Policy, they may, in the first instance, attempt to raise the matter informally by making the alleged perpetrator aware that they find their behaviour or action inappropriate and unacceptable and want it to stop. It is often the case that the alleged perpetrator is not aware of the impact of their behaviour. This can be done face to face or in writing, in which case a copy of the letter/email sent should be kept.

**However in circumstances where there are serious allegations against another member of staff or student, particularly where the allegations may constitute a criminal offence, informal resolution is likely to be inappropriate.**

5.1.2 The individual should keep a record of events which have caused concern or distress and the effect they have had on them, to inform their discussion with the alleged perpetrator.

5.1.3 If the student or member of staff does not feel able to make a direct approach to the person concerned, this will not constitute consent to the alleged bullying or harassment, nor will it prejudice any formal complaint they may bring.

5.1.4 Students can seek support and advice from the Students' Union or the University College Student Support Services.

5.1.5 Staff can seek support and advice from their line manager, the Human Resources Department and/or trade union representatives.

5.1.6 The University College also engages a network of volunteer Equality Advisors, staff and students who are trained to support to any staff

member or student who feels they are being harassed or bullied. The role of the Equality Advisor is set out in more detail Appendix 2.

- 5.1.7 The Adviser will help the individual review options and support them through the process of deciding upon, and taking, any appropriate action should they wish. Everything discussed with an Equality Advisor will remain confidential, should an individual so wish, unless the Equality Adviser judges that there is an unacceptable risk to the individual, another person, or to the College. If this is the case, the situation will be discussed with the individual and the Equality Advisor will refer the matter to the Human Resources Manager, or if it relates to a student to the Director of Student and Learning Services. There may also be occasions when, in order to give the best possible support, the Equality Adviser may need to seek advice from someone else in the University College. If this is the case, the individual's permission will first be sought and their identity will not be conveyed to the third party. Equality Advisor will keep a record of the advice provided.
- 5.1.8 It is expected that every effort to achieve a mutually agreed informal resolution to the complaint will be made by both parties, wherever possible and appropriate. Early and open intervention is actively encouraged.

## **5.2 Mediation**

- 5.2.1 If an informal, direct approach has not worked or the individual does not feel able to pursue this alone, mediation may help to create open discussion and help the parties to communicate and develop an agreement for working together in the future.
- 5.2.2 Mediation is a confidential and non-adversarial way of resolving issues and re-establishing working relationships that may have deteriorated or even broken down, by bringing in an impartial third party, the mediator. Mediation is entirely voluntary and can only proceed where both parties agree to it.
- 5.2.3 Staff can request access to an independent mediator via the Human Resources Department, who will advise whether mediation is appropriate or recommend a move to the formal stage of the Procedure might be more appropriate.

## **6. Formal Procedures**

- 6.1 Initiating the Formal Procedure
- 6.1.1 If informal attempts have been unsuccessful, or if the behaviour is too serious to be dealt with informally, an individual has the right to make a formal complaint under this policy.



- 6.1.2 A formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the Human Resources Manager if the complainant is a member of staff or the Director of Student and Learning Support Services if the complainant is a student. The written complaint must specify the name(s) of the alleged harasser(s), clearly identify what the complaint is about, providing details of specific incidents including dates, and names of witnesses if there are any.
- 6.1.3 If the complaint is about the Principal or a Governor, the individual should raise the matter with the Governing Body in writing via the Secretary of the Governing Body. Governors are expected to adhere to their Code of Conduct. Any complaints about the Chair of Governors should be referred via the Secretary to the Governing Body to the Permanent Secretary.
- 6.1.4 It may be necessary to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person or for someone who is not fluent in English or sufficiently literate to do put a complaint in writing. Assistance with writing the complaint can be provided by an Equality Advisor or by requesting assistance via the Human Resources Department or Student Support Services.
- 6.1.5 A line manager who witnesses behaviour by a member of staff which is unacceptable under this policy may initiate an investigation under the University College Dignity at Work and Study procedures. A tutor who witnesses behaviour by a student which is unacceptable under this policy should refer the matter to the Director of Student and Learning Services who may initiate an investigation under the Dignity at Work and Study procedures.
- 6.1.6 Under this policy complaints will not *normally* be investigated unless they are brought within 3 months of:
- when the complainant had knowledge of (or can reasonably be expected to have knowledge of) the act(s) complained of,
  - last of a series of such acts was within 3 months.
- However the University College may investigate a complaint which is out of time if it is considered just and equitable to do so, and it is believed to be in the interests of the individual and/or the University College.

## 6.2 Investigation of the Complaint

- 6.2.1 An Investigating Panel will be selected to investigate the complaint by the Principal in consultation with the Human Resources Department. Those investigating the complaint must be trained in handling such matters, must not be the harasser/bully, must follow set procedure rigorously, should be chosen (when achievable) with due sensitivity to the alleged victim's social identity, and should treat the matter in a confidential manner. Any specific requests by the alleged victim in relation to the social identity of the investigator should be accommodated where feasible.

6.2.2 In relation to complaints about students, a member of the Student Support Services team will act in a note taking capacity. In relation to complaints from or about staff, a member of the Human Resources Team will act in a note taking and advisory capacity.

6.2.3 At an early stage in the investigation the alleged perpetrator must be made aware by the panel of the nature and substance of the complaint being made against him/her orally and in writing, and advised of the stages in the procedure. The alleged harasser/bully should, be afforded the right of accompaniment by a work colleague or trade union representative to any investigatory meetings. The alleged perpetrator must be advised not to approach the complainant directly, nor to attempt to influence the actions of others. Such behaviours could be construed as further acts of harassment, bullying or victimisation.

6.2.4 The panel will interview both the complainant and the alleged perpetrator and any witnesses identified who may be able to assist with the investigation and will compile a report of the investigation to include direction as to the appropriate action to be taken and provide copies to the relevant parties.

### 6.3 Timescales

The University College will endeavour to ensure that all investigations are undertaken without unreasonable delay.

### 6.4.1 Outcome

6.4.1 Based on conclusions arrived at, the panel will decide on the appropriate action to be taken. Examples of action might include:

- providing guidance to the complainant and/or the alleged harasser or bully;
- personal development for either or both of the parties (e.g. team building, anger management);
- counselling or any other measures considered appropriate for one or both parties;
- mediation;
- no action;
- disciplinary action;
- redeployment or a change in reporting arrangements.

6.4.1 Should the panel find that there has been behaviour considered to be unacceptable under the College's Dignity at Work and Study and warrants disciplinary action the matter will be dealt by a panel constituted in accordance with the Staff or Student Disciplinary procedures and who have not been previously involved. The investigation conducted under the Dignity at Work and Study policy will replace the investigation stage of those proceedings.

The alleged harasser and victim shall be notified of the outcome as soon as reasonably practicable, of the recommendation(s) in response to the complaint, the reasons for the decision and the proposed action to deal with the complaint.

## 6.5 Appeal

6.5.1 The complainant will have the right of appeal if they are unsatisfied with the outcome.

6.5.2 A member of staff/student intending to appeal shall notify the **Human Resources Manager(staff) or Director of Student and Learning Services(students)** as appropriate in writing, **within 10 working days** from the date that they were notified of the University College's decision, and should set out the grounds of the appeal.

6.5.3 The appeal meeting will be conducted by a panel comprised of two members of more senior staff (where possible) or to Governors of the Permanent Secretary as appropriate, with no previous involvement with the case or the parties involved.

6.5.4 The appeal panel will be asked to consider the grounds of the appeal (e.g. specific grounds or based on the employee being unhappy with the original decision) with reference to the documentation and the procedures that had been followed. Following that meeting (at which the parties would continue to be entitled to accompaniment) the panel will inform the complainant of the final decision in writing.

6.5.5 Should disciplinary action be recommended and the alleged perpetrator be subject to a disciplinary sanction, an appeal may be made by that individual made under those procedures.

## 6.6 Case Review

At an agreed timescale after the case has been concluded those involved in investigating the case should review the case to ensure that the recommended actions have been put in place and to ensure relevant support is in place to protect the wellbeing of the staff or students involved.

## 7 Confidentiality

As far as reasonably practicable, strict confidentiality will be maintained throughout all investigations. However, there may be a need to refer to witnesses or directly involve others. Where it is necessary to interview witnesses, the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised. It will be explained to witnesses that any breach of confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action. All meetings and investigations will be treated confidentially, subject to any statutory requirements.

## **8 Victimization**

- 8.1 If an individual makes a complaint of harassment in good faith, s/he and anyone who gives evidence in support of the complaint will be protected from any form of victimisation as a result of having made the complaint, whether or not it is upheld.
- 8.2 Victimization means treating someone less favourably because that individual has
- made a complaint; or
  - perhaps is likely to make a complaint; or
  - may be helping someone else who is making a complaint.
- 8.3 Victimization will not be tolerated. Any complaints of victimisation should be raised and dealt with in accordance with this policy.

## **9 Criminal Offences and Legislation**

- 9.1 Staff and students have a right to exercise their legal rights so as to protect themselves in cases where a criminal offence may have been committed.
- 9.2 If a criminal offence such as harassing phone calls, physical assault, indecent exposure or rape takes place nothing in any of the College's policies is intended to prevent or dissuade an individual from contacting the Police.
- 9.3 Where an incident has occurred which may constitute a criminal offence, matters relating to a member of staff should be reported by contacting the **Human Resources Manager** or those relating to a student by contacting the **Director of Student and Learning Services** who will have been trained to provide support if such an incident is reported. A matter can be reported by the alleged victim or a witness. Advice on options will be provided. Should incidents be reported to a tutor or line manager the issue should be referred to the relevant member of staff.
- 9.4 The University College will contact the police only with the alleged victim's consent except in circumstances where there is a risk of serious harm to the individual or someone else. In such cases the alleged harasser/bully may be put on a precautionary suspension or other precautionary measures may be taken in accordance with the Staff or Student Disciplinary procedures. Precautionary action must be reasonable and proportionate.
- 9.5 Where the matter is the subject of criminal investigations the criminal process will take priority. Internal processes will be suspended until the criminal process has concluded. However action may be taken under

this policy where the case is based upon facts and matters which are different to those which are being dealt with in criminal proceedings.

## **10 Vexatious or Malicious Complaints**

- 10.1 The Dignity at Work and Study Policy exists to provide a fair means of resolving genuine complaints. Complaints of harassment or bullying are treated seriously by the College. The raising of unfounded allegations for mischievous or malicious purposes will be viewed as grounds for possible disciplinary action.

## **11 Anonymous Reports**

Reports made anonymously will be investigated. However it should be noted that without full information and independent witnesses there is may be insufficient information to proceed.

## **12 Counselling Advice**

- 12.1 Counselling may be offered to the person who has been harassed or bullied or to individuals against whom a complaint has been made but has been unfounded.
- 12.2 The University College has commissioned the provision of a free independent confidential and professional counselling service for staff and students through Inspire (see appendix 4 for contact details).
- 12.3 Professional counsellors are fully qualified and experienced in a wide range of issues including bullying and harassment. Counselling is provided by telephone and face to face.

## **13 Monitoring**

- 13.1 Stranmillis University College will monitor all formal complaints of harassment and bullying. The Human Resources Manager will provide an annual report on the numbers and nature of cases to the Senior Management Team and Governing Body on an annual basis.

## **14 Communication of Policy and Training**

- 14.1 Training will be provided to all staff on this policy. Staff will be required on an annual basis to acknowledge in writing that they understand the policy and the process for referring students or staff member to the relevant staff should an incident be reported to them. Special training will be provided to those who have specific roles under this policy, such as those who may be required to investigate complaints, staff who are required to provide advice and Equality Advisors.
- 14.2 Students will be provided with training under this policy as part of their induction.

14.3 The Student Support Service and Human Resources Department will work with the Student Executive and/or trade unions to produce user friendly flyers, posters and web information to accompany this policy and other initiatives to raise awareness.

## **15 Data Protection**

Documentation relating to investigations under the Dignity at Work and Study Procedure will be subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Documents will be retained for a period of two years.

## **16 Review**

This policy, developed in consultation with recognised unions and approved by the Governing Body will be reviewed every three years from the date of approval by the Governing Body or as otherwise required due to legislative changes.

Dr Anne Heaslett  
Principal

Date: June 2017  
Review Date: June 2020  
For distribution to: All Staff

## Appendix 1

Examples of Behaviour which may amount to bullying or harassment

### Harassment related to Sex or Sexual Harassment

- unwanted physical contact
- display of sexist pin-ups or pornographic material
- unwelcome advances, attention, invitations or proposals
- sexual innuendo
- suggestive comments, looks or attitudes or jokes
- stalking
- ridicule of a person who is gender re-assigning

### Racial Harassment:

- name calling or ridicule resulting from cultural differences
- verbal abuse
- racist jokes
- references to an individual's skin colour
- unnecessary comments or intrusive questioning about racial issues or origins

### Harassment on Grounds of Disability or Health:

- uninvited, patronising or unnecessary assistance
- prejudging an individual's capabilities without reference to them
- excluding a person with a disability from social events or meetings
- offensive behaviour relating to HIV or AIDS
- offensive language, mockery, taunts or jibes

### Harassment Relating to Sexual Orientation:

- homophobic comments or jokes
- innuendo or gossip
- expressing stereotypical assumptions
- threats of disclosing sexual orientation

### Harassment Relating to Age:

- derogatory remarks or behaviour
- expressing prejudicial assumptions about abilities based on age

### Harassment on the Grounds of Religious or Political Affiliation or Conviction:

- treating an individual unfavourably because of their membership or non-membership of a Trade Union
- embarrassing or derogatory comments

- drawing unwelcome attention to an individual's religious or political convictions
- religious or political jokes
- display of pin-ups/posters, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags, emblems

Personal Harassment:

- spreading malicious rumours
- insulting remarks about personal appearance or personal circumstances
- bullying an individual because of personal dislike or personality clash
- indiscriminate bullying because of own levels of workload, pressure or stress
- procuring or sending inappropriate/offensive material via e-mail or the internet. (Staff and students should be aware that internet use and the content of e-mails may be monitored and recorded centrally - please see Acceptable Use of IT and User Guidance Notes for further information. Both of these are available on the College website and form part of the process of logging into a user account.)

Bullying:

- shouting and sarcasm
- abuse of power, position or knowledge
- threats relating to academic progression, promotion or ongoing employment
- continually setting objectives with impossible deadlines or setting unachievable tasks
- excessive and unwarranted supervision or monitoring
- inappropriately removing duties and/or responsibilities
- derogatory remarks or unwarranted criticism
- refusal to delegate, where appropriate
- taking credit for someone else's work, but failing to take responsibility if something goes wrong
- exclusion or isolation
- unreasonable refusal to co-operate, or withholding information/ deliberately supplying wrong information so that another person is less able to do their job effectively
- subjecting someone to group pressure
- physical violence



## **Appendix 2**

### **Equality Advisor Network**

The Human Resources Department will take responsibility for the recruitment and training of the volunteer Equality Advisors. A list of the current Equality Advisors and their contact details are available on the HR section of the intranet and on notice boards throughout the University College.

### **Role of the Equality Advisor**

The primary role of the Equality Advisor is to provide expert advice at an early stage in proceedings. The Equality Advisor may act under instruction in order to apply a remedy but outside formal procedures. This may include mediating between all parties where there is mutual agreement.

Equality Advisors operate entirely outwith formal investigatory or disciplinary procedures and have no power to sanction those who are accused of harassment or bullying. Instead they are concerned with the resolution of complaints, normally acting under instruction from the person who brings forward the initial complaint or enquiry.

Equality Advisors are available primarily to:

- provide expert advice and support to those who feel that they have been subjected to harassment and bullying
- explore the various options and forms of intervention which are available with the alleged victim
- help the person reach a decision as to the most effective course of action to pursue
- take appropriate actions to effect a remedy outside formal procedures
- be a being a listening ear

### **How will Equality Advisors deal with those bringing forward issues and enquiries?**

The range of complaints and enquiries which an Equality Advisor is likely to deal with will be extremely varied. Therefore it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules as to how to handle all situations. However Equality Advisors will follow the guidelines below. During the meeting with the complainant it is important to:

#### Ensure Confidentiality

From the start, the person bringing the complaint/enquiry should know that under normal circumstances, whatever is being discussed will be treated in strictest confidence. An exception to this rule may be where information is divulged which suggests that either the person or others' well-being will be at risk unless certain actions are taken (see above).

### Give Control

The Equality Advisor will emphasise that the complainant has primary control of events and that, in normal circumstances, no further action will be taken without his/her express consent.

### Listen

The Equality Advisor will not normally offer advice until the experiences have been recounted in full. It may be necessary to ask for clarification along the way but assurance should be given that any notes will not be used to build up a record of the case but are merely an aide memoire. When the individual has presented all the information it is often useful to try to recap in order to outline a chronological summary of events.

### Protect

The person will be reassured that by having made this initial approach s/he has already helped to protect him/herself from further trouble because at the very least someone else now knows. Also the complainant will be reassured that if s/he decides that the bully or harasser should be made aware of the nature of the complaint then s/he will be protected from any further victimisation.

### Be Non-judgmental

Individuals bringing complaints may feel themselves to be on trial and feel somehow responsible or guilty. The Equality Advisor is not passing judgment nor is s/he acting as an investigative officer. Instead, the Equality Advisor's role is to listen to the story, to offer advice as to how to best move forward and then to help take positive steps towards a resolution. It must be borne in mind that there will always be various perspectives on each case and an emotional engagement with any one perspective is not likely to facilitate a successful resolution. The Equality Advisor will therefore remain objective and listen to the facts

### Empower

The Equality Advisor will not say outright what should or should not be done but instead should present the various alternatives and talk through the likely consequences. These may range from the Equality Advisor or a colleague making an informal approach to the harasser or bully, to more formal actions involving a line manager, human resources, external agencies should s/he wish. The way in which an interview with an alleged harasser or bully could be handled in order to protect the safety and/or identity of the complainant will be explained.

### Support

Having already approached a third party (i.e., the Equality Advisor) it is unlikely that the person will now want to be told how s/he should deal with the problem individually, although this may be what the person explicitly says s/he wants. If this is so then possible scenarios and how s/he can deal with situations more effectively in the future can be explored.

### Look Forward

Before the person leaves the initial meeting a time and date for the next meeting will be arranged and a list of actions to take place before that meeting should be agreed. The person will be informed that if s/he needs to talk in the meanwhile then this will be made possible.

### Record

A record of this meeting is kept, in case there be a subsequent and related action which makes the content of the original enquiry significant (see below).

### Next Steps

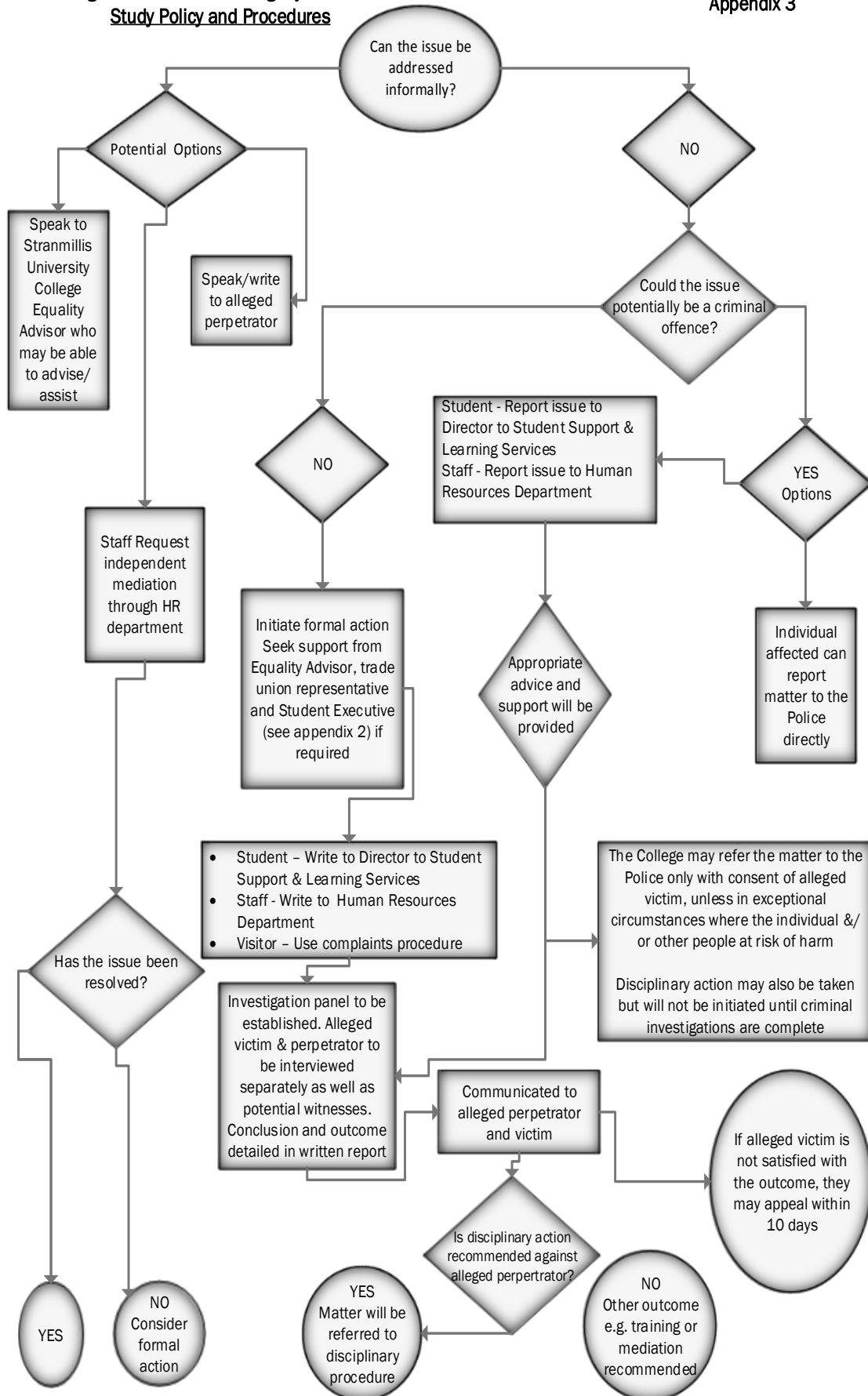
Following the meeting with the complainant, if the Equality Advisor is unsure as to how best to proceed then it may be useful to call a meeting of one or more of the Equality Advisory team to discuss the case, with the understanding that rules of confidentiality apply to the team as a whole. The permission of the complainant should be sought before talking to others, however discretely.

### Reporting and Record Keeping

The Equality Advisors will be required to prepare an annual report to the Human Resources Manager which will be shared with the Senior Management Team and the Governing Body detailing the number of cases which have come forward, the types of incident involved and the outcomes of the cases. The individual case forms held by Advisors will not be made available to management. However, should a case be formally investigated then any materials may be discoverable.

**Raising an issue under the Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedures**

**Appendix 3**



## Appendix 4 Useful Contacts



<https://www.inspirewellbeing.org/workplaces>

T: 0800 389 5362

email: [workandstudy@inspirewellbeing.org](mailto:workandstudy@inspirewellbeing.org)

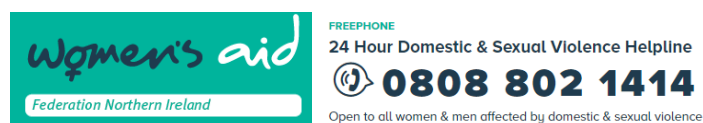


<http://www.lifelinehelpline.info/page/contacting-lifeline>



<http://www.samaritans.org/branches/belfast>

T: 116 123 (free to call) or 028 9066 4422 (local call rates)



<https://www.womensaidni.org/24-hour-domestic-sexual-violence-helpline/>

Email: [24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org](mailto:24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org)



<http://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/employees.htm>

T: 0845 225 5787 or 077 3470 1221



T: 0808 800 2222

<http://www.bullying.co.uk/general-advice/bullying-at-university/>



<http://www.equalityni.org/Home>

T: 028 9050 0600

email: [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)



T: 028 9032 1442