

Harassment Policy for Students

Applicable from September 2025 to Present

Potential applicants should be aware that this policy is under review in light of newly introduced regulatory requirements from the Office for Students. It is anticipated that it will be republished before 31 October 2025. Once republished a summary document will be included on the University website summarising changes made.

Purpose of Policy	This Policy sets out the University's commitment to prevent and to protect students from harassment and related unacceptable behaviours.
Internal services involved	Academic Registry Student Services
Related regulations, policies and procedures	Procedure for Reporting & Responding to Incidents of Harassment, Sexual Misconduct & Domestic Abuse Sexual Misconduct Policy for Students Domestic Abuse Policy for Students Student Disciplinary Procedure Fitness to Practise Procedure Student Complaints Procedure Mitigating Circumstances Procedure Freedom of Speech Code of Practice Safeguarding Procedure Privacy Notice
Enquiries to	Student Casework Team:
Senior Managers responsible	Academic Registrar Director of Student Services
VCG Lead	Pro-Vice Chancellor (Students & Teaching)

Version	Approved	Effective from	Revisions made	Next Review
1	May 2023	September 2023		May 2025

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A. Policy Statement

- A1. The University of Lancashire is committed to creating a positive and inclusive environment, where all members of our community feel a sense of belonging, and are supported to flourish in education, at work and for life. Our values and vision are set out in the **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Statement** and **Student Charter**. They detail the rights and responsibilities we all have as members of the University community.
- A2. We believe that all students have the right to live, study and relax in an environment where they feel safe and that is free from any form of unwanted behaviour or abuse. We will not tolerate sexual, racial, homophobic, transphobic or any other form of harassment or abusive behaviour which causes fear or distress or creates a hostile environment for others, whether in person or online.
- A3. We will create a culture at the University where harassment, discrimination and prejudice are not tolerated through a whole-university approach which means that our endeavours to tackle harassment are linked to our initiatives to promote student and staff wellbeing, deliver engaging education activities and create innovative preventative campaigns.
- A4. It is the responsibility of every member our community to ensure we have an inclusive and supportive environment, free from discrimination and to promote respect and good relations between people. Every student has a personal responsibility to treat fellow students, staff and visitors with dignity and respect.
- A5. Students should have the confidence to report concerns without fear of reprisal or recrimination, in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously, and the response will be fair and effective.
- A6. Nothing in this Policy seeks to prevent the exercise of the statutory right to freedom of speech within the law or the right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The latter is not restricted to ideas, opinions and ideas that are favourably received, but extends to those with which others may passionately disagree.

B. Scope of the Policy

- C1. This Policy applies to all current and former University of Lancashire students, including delegates on short courses and professional development activities, distance learners and degree apprentices.
- C2. The Policy covers harassment within the student learning and living environment. It also covers work and study related events, study trips, sporting activities and social events on and off campus.
- C3. It is acknowledged that our community exists in the digital world as well as the physical world and that harassment can also take place via e-mail, text message, instant messaging, social media, websites, chat rooms or online forums.
- C4. This is one of three University policies addressing **Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Domestic Abuse**, which demonstrate our commitment to tackling these unacceptable interpersonal behaviours which often intersect with one another. In some instances, harassment may potentially be considered as sexual misconduct or domestic abuse.
- C5. These policies are implemented by the **University Procedure for Reporting and Responding to Incidents of Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Domestic Abuse** (the Procedure) which sets out the **pathways** for students to share and/or report an incident of harassment and the **process** that will be followed.
- C6. The term 'Harassment' is used to cover a range of unwanted and harmful behaviours including stalking, bullying, cyber-bullying, victimisation and hate incidents. The behaviours described in this Policy are intended to help students to understand what we define as unacceptable behaviour and what would constitute a breach of the University's regulations .
- C7. Any difficulty in defining harassment or related misconduct should not deter a student from seeking support or reporting behaviour which causes them distress. Equally, a student should not be put off because of embarrassment or fear of intimidation.
- C8. Where the responding person is a University of Lancashire student, the matter will normally be progressed in line with the University's internal

Student Disciplinary Procedure. If the student is on a professionally regulated course, this may lead to action under the **Fitness to Practise Procedure**. Where the responding person is a member of University staff, a contractor or visitor, the report will be progressed in line with the **Student Complaints Procedure**.

- C9. Some incidents of harassment may also constitute a criminal offence. Such incidents may be addressed through criminal proceedings or internal disciplinary proceedings or in some cases both. Any internal disciplinary proceedings would normally be suspended until the criminal proceedings are concluded. Information about the distinction between the criminal and internal disciplinary proceedings is set out in the **Procedure**.

C. Our Commitment

As part of our commitment to prevent and protect students from harassment and other forms of unacceptable behaviour, The University will:

- Provide all reasonable **security measures** to help keep students and other members of our community safe. Our expert and approachable Security Team is available 24 hours a day and the SafeZone App provides an extra layer of safety.
- Enable current and former students to report incidents of harassment or other unacceptable behaviour using the **Report & Support** Online Tool, with the option to access support or make an anonymous report.
- Provide a safe space for students to reach out for practical guidance and emotional support from our expert and professional **Student Wellbeing Advisors** who can facilitate access to counselling and mental health support.
- Prioritise student safety by creating safety plans, conducting risk assessments, implementing precautionary measures and outcomes which aim to increase the feelings of safety of the student on campus and online.
- Ensure that students who are affected by harassment are offered support to address any impact on their academic studies, including applying for **Mitigating Circumstances**.

- Facilitate referrals to relevant external specialist support services who can meet the needs of students from a range of diverse backgrounds.
- Provide support to all parties involved and separate Student Wellbeing Advisors to ensure impartiality.
- Maintain **Freedom of Speech** in line with the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, particularly in relation to the content and delivery of teaching and research which is unlikely to constitute harassment even where it is controversial and which, for academic staff, is protected by the right to academic freedom
- Provide clear and consistent advice on reporting options and respect the right of the reporting student to choose how to take the matter forward.
- Offer options for informal resolution where appropriate and where both parties agree, via the **University Alternative Resolution Centre** and No Contact Agreements.
- Deal with reports through a procedure that is transparent, fair and clearly communicated to both the reporting and responding persons, who will be kept informed of the progress of the case.
- Ensure that investigations and hearings are carried out with due diligence and care, and take due account of any inclusivity or diversity requirements.
- Hold to account any individual who is found to have committed harassment. This may include the application of restorative and punitive sanctions, including exclusion from The University in serious cases. We will listen to the voice of the reporting student when considering sanctions.
- Communicate outcome decisions clearly, which aim to deliver effective redress for the reporting student and increase their feelings of safety at The University
- Not use non-disclosure agreements or confidentiality clauses in cases of harassment. It is important that all our students and staff feel safe and supported and we would consider the use of such clauses to be wholly unacceptable.
- Handle all information with the appropriate level of confidentiality.

- Co-ordinate innovative campaigns which will seek to attract a diverse audience, with the aim of promoting healthy relationships and encouraging students to trust themselves and reach out for support, see: **'When it feels wrong, it's wrong'**.
- Deliver engaging educational activities for all our students which aim to raise awareness and prevent harassment, including encouraging students to challenge problematic behaviour by being an active bystander.
- Ensure that all University of Lancashire staff are aware of this Policy and receive appropriate and effective training which includes challenging unconscious bias, unhelpful stereotypes and myths.
- Evaluate the impact of our work in this area regularly, in terms of changing attitudes and behaviours. This will be informed by consultation with students as well as the latest research and sector guidance, and we will review our approach in the light of any lessons learned.

D. Students' responsibilities

Students have a responsibility to:

- Abide by all University of Lancashire regulations and policies, particularly the **Regulations for the Conduct of Students**.
- Behave in a respectful manner towards others and acknowledge that other people's views and opinions might not always correspond with their own.
- Where is safe to do so, discourage harassment by making it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable and/or making a report.
- Signpost other students to support services if there are concerns for their wellbeing.
- Seek and actively engage in support from Student Services or the Students' Union Advice Centre.
- Raise concerns about harassment in a timely manner so that any required action or investigation can be carried out at the earliest opportunity

E. What is Harassment?

E1. Definition

Harassment covers many different types of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct perpetrated in person or online. It can occur as an isolated incident, intermittent incidents, or as persistent behaviour. It can happen on its own or alongside forms of discrimination.

Harassment includes behaviour that is offensive, frightening or in any way distressing. It may be intentional bullying which is obvious or violent, but it can also be unintentional or subtle and insidious.

For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions of harassment will apply:

- Harassment (as defined by section 26 of the Equality Act 2010) includes unwanted behaviour which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment in relation to one or more of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.
- Harassment (as defined by the Protection from Harassment Act 1997) is a course of conduct carried out on at least two occasions that harasses one other person, or a course of conduct that harasses two or more people at least once each. This includes alarming the person or causing them distress.

In deciding whether the unwanted conduct amounts to harassment, The University of Lancashire will take into account the following:

- The perception of the reporting student who is at the receiving end of the conduct; the other circumstances of the case; and whether it is reasonable in the circumstances for the conduct to have that effect.
- Harassment may occur where the responding person knows that the conduct amounts to harassment, or where any reasonable person with the same information would think that the conduct amounted to harassment of the reporting student.

- Students can make a report of harassment where the behaviour is not directed at them personally if they feel that someone's behaviour violated the dignity of someone else. For example, a student could complain that a homophobic remark was used even if they are heterosexual.
- Students can also make a report if they experience harassment because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic that they do not have, or because they are associated with a person with a protected characteristic. For example, an individual can bring a complaint if they are harassed because a family member or friend has undergone gender reassignment.
- It is recognised that differences in attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person, may not seem so to another. When deciding whether harassment has occurred, the impact on the individual and whether the behaviour breaches The University's values (including the right to lawful free speech and/or freedom of expression) will be the focus, rather than motive or intent.
- It is also recognised that harassers may minimise their behaviour and we will ensure we take appropriate action to support and protect students reporting harassment.

E2. **Types of Behaviour**

Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples of behaviour that may constitute harassment and be considered unacceptable conduct by the University:

- Offensive gestures, language, gossip or jokes
- Insulting or abusive behaviour or comments
- Unwanted physical contact, ranging from an invasion of personal space and/or inappropriate touching, to physical violence
- Display or circulation of sexually suggestive, racist or otherwise offensive material
- Persistent unwanted isolation or exclusion
- Persistent unwanted attention
- Intrusion by pestering, spying or stalking
- Humiliating or demeaning criticism
- Sexist jokes, racist jokes, or jokes about an individual's sexual orientation,

- gender identity, disability, religion or belief or age
- Offensive or intrusive behaviour relating to a person's disabilities or mischievous interference with personal aids or equipment
- Refusing to acknowledge someone's gender or identity
- Microaggression i.e. any indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against member(s) of a marginalised group such as a racial or ethnic minority
- Offensive references to a person's race, ethnicity, skin colour, religion or nationality, dress, culture, background or customs
- Making it unnecessarily difficult for people to conform to their religious beliefs, making assumptions based on belief
- Perpetuating negative stereotypes e.g. in relation to Antisemitism and Islamophobia
- Misogynistic or misandrist behaviour or otherwise treating someone as inferior because of their sex
- Offensive comments about someone's sexuality, including homophobic or biphobic remarks
- 'Outing' or threatening to 'out' someone as gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans
- Degrading, humiliating or abusive activities as part of any 'hazing' or initiation ceremony

E3. Stalking

Stalking is also a form of harassment and may be characterised by any of the following repeated and unwanted behaviours:

- Repeatedly following a person without good reason
- Contacting, or attempting to contact, a person by any means
- Publishing any material which purports to relate or originate from someone else
- Monitoring someone's use of the internet, e-mail or other form of electronic communication
- Loitering in any public or private place
- Interfering with any property in the possession of a person
- Watching or spying on someone including through the use of CCTV or electronic surveillance

E4. Bullying

Bullying is a particular form of personal harassment and may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Examples of

bullying include:

- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail
- exclusion, victimisation or other unfair treatment
- asserting a position of seniority in an aggressive, abusive or offensive manner
- psychological intimidation, humiliation and/or unreasonable criticism

E5. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like phones, computers and tablets. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or cruel content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok
- Text messaging and messaging apps on mobile or tablet devices
- Instant messaging, direct messaging, and online chatting over the internet
- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards
- Email
- Online gaming communities

E6. Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when someone treats another person less favourably because they have taken action in connection with equality legislation, for example, where they have made a complaint of discrimination, including harassment. Victimisation can constitute unlawful discrimination when committed by members of staff. Some examples of victimisation include:

- excluding someone from social situations following a complaint or rumour
- preventing someone from accessing opportunities or resources because they are perceived to be a 'troublemaker'
- lowering a student's assessment results because they have made or supported a complaint

E7. Hate

A hate incident is any incident that is targeted at a person because of hostility or prejudice towards that person's disability, race (including their colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity. This can be committed against a person or property.

A victim does not have to be a member of the group at which the hostility is targeted. In fact, anyone could be a victim of a hate crime or incident. Evidence of the hate element is not a requirement and even if the victim does not personally perceive the incident to be hate related, it would be enough if another person thought it was.

Examples of hate incidents include: physical violence; verbal abuse, threats or name-calling; incitement to hatred where someone acts in a way that is threatening and intended to stir up hatred. This could be in words, pictures, videos or music and includes information posted on websites or in chat forums.

The University Students' Union Advice and Representation Centre is a third-party Hate Crime reporting centre, see: [Hate Crime Reporting \(uclansu.co.uk\)](https://uclansu.co.uk)

F. Support

Students can reach out for support at by:

- Visiting reportandsupport.lancashire.ac.uk to request support or report anonymously
- Getting in touch with the Counselling, Mental Health and Wellbeing team at The University by:
 - attending the Student Support drop-in in the Preston Campus Student Centre, 10am-4pm Monday to Friday,
 - calling (+44) 1772 893020,
 - emailing Wellbeing@lancashire.ac.uk or
 - completing the online self-referral form on the [mental health and wellbeing page](#)
- Contacting security outside of normal opening hours on (+44) 1772 892068. Deaf users please text 07891 679 537
- The Students' Union Advice Centre is a third-party reporting centre for hate crime, see: *insert link*

G. Procedure

The **Procedure for Reporting and Responding to Incidents of Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Domestic Abuse** includes information on:

- Reporting Pathways
- Risk Assessments
- Investigations
- Disciplinary Process
- Monitoring and Review
- Equality and Diversity
- Confidentiality and Information Sharing