

Workplace Harassment / Bullying

All staff, students and visitors to the University can expect professional behaviour that shows respect and consideration for others. The University's [Code of Conduct](#) and [Student Charter](#) outline the standards of behaviour expected, which includes the expectation that the work and study environment will be free from harassment or bullying type behaviour.

The University has adopted the definitions and explanations of workplace harassment that are described in the State Government's [Prevention of Workplace Harassment Advisory Standard 2004 \(PDF 185k\)](#).

"A person is subjected to 'workplace harassment' if the person is subjected to repeated behaviour by a person or a co-worker or group of co-workers of the person that:

(a) is unwelcome and unsolicited;

(b) the person considers to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening;

(c) a reasonable person would consider to be offensive, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.

'Workplace harassment' does not include reasonable management action taken in a reasonable way by the person's employer in connection with the person's employment."

This definition is intended to cover a wide range of behaviours that can have an adverse impact on the workplace health and safety of workers and other persons. Harassing behaviours can range from subtle intimidation to more obvious aggressive tactics.

Outlined below are examples of behaviours that *may* be regarded as workplace harassment, if the behaviour is repeated or occurs as part of a pattern of behaviour. This is not an exhaustive list; however it does outline some of the more common types of behaviours that may constitute harassment/bullying. Whether they are deemed to be harassment will depend on the context of the individual case.

Examples include:

- Abusing a person loudly, usually when others are present
- Constant ridicule and being put down
- Leaving offensive messages on email or the telephone
- Repeated threats of dismissal or other severe punishment for no reason
- Persistent and unjustified criticisms, often about petty, irrelevant or insignificant matters
- Humiliating a person through gestures, sarcasm, criticism and insults, often in front of customers, management or other workers
- Sabotaging a person's work, for example, be deliberately withholding or supplying incorrect information, hiding documents or equipment, not passing on messages and getting a person into trouble in other ways
- Spreading gossip or false, malicious rumours about a person with an intent to cause the person harm
- Maliciously excluding and isolating a person from workplace activities.

There are bound to be occasional differences of opinion, conflicts and problems in working relationships – these are part of working life. However, if the workplace behaviour is repeated, unwelcome and unsolicited, and offends, intimidates, humiliates or threatens a person, then workplace harassment exists and action must be taken to stop the behaviour.

What is Not Workplace Harassment?

According to the definition, the following situations are **not** considered to be workplace harassment:

Single Incidents

A single incident of harassing type of behaviour is not considered to be workplace harassment. Nevertheless, single incidents of harassing behaviour should not be ignored or allowed. Well-managed intervention in response to single incidents will help prevent the situation from escalating.

Managerial Actions

Reasonable management actions include **legitimate**:

- performance management processes;
- action taken to transfer or retrench a worker;
- a decision not to provide a promotion in connection with the worker's employment;
- disciplinary actions;
- allocated work in compliance with systems and policies;
- injury and illness processes; and
- business processes, such as workplace change or restructuring.

However, these management actions may still be relevant to the Advisory Standard where:

- managerial actions are primarily used to offend, intimidate, humiliate or threaten workers
- processes create an environment where workplace harassment is more likely to occur

Policy

- [Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination Policy](#)