



Learning Development Unit (Quality)



# Learner Harassment and Bullying Policy

<b>POLICY NO.</b>	<b>POL/050/000</b>
<b>APPROVED BY</b>	<b>SMT on 24 April 2007 Student Council on 7 June 2007</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Paul Baker Karen Pepper</b>
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# LEARNER HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

## COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT

*“Stafford College will meet learner needs and aspirations through excellence in education and training.”*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy provides the framework and guidance for managers, staff and learners on dealing with claims or suspicions of the harassment or bullying of learners. The policy describes examples of behaviour, which may be deemed unacceptable and indicates the procedures and support mechanisms available to learners who believe they are being subjected to harassment or bullying (see Section 3 for definitions).

### 2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to the harassment or bullying of learners by other learners or by staff (whether employed directly by the college or by sub-contractors).

### 3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 **Harassment** takes many forms. Basically, it is any behaviour which is unacceptable to the recipient and which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment – for work, study or social life. This can be particularly serious if the harasser is in a position of organisational power in relation to the person harassed.

People who are being harassed often feel isolated and stressed, and this can affect their work or studies.

Any behaviour which shows lack of respect and which creates an atmosphere in which people feel uncomfortable and unwelcome can constitute harassment.

Differences of attitude and culture or misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another.

3.2 **Bullying** is the misuse of power or position to destructively criticise and condemn; to openly humiliate and undermine an individual’s ability until this person becomes so fearful that their confidence crumbles and they lose belief and confidence in themselves. These attacks on the individual are normally sudden, irrational, unpredictable and usually unfair. ‘Academic bullying’ has been defined as: ‘asserting a position of intellectual superiority in an aggressive, abusive or offensive manner, threats of academic failure, public sarcasm’.

**Appendix A** provides examples of the forms of harassment or bullying that could be encountered.

Further guidance can be found via the following website:

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/pupilsupport/wholeschoolsupport/AABLinks.htm>

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#### 4. COMMITMENTS

- 4.1 Stafford College is committed to protecting its learners from harassment and bullying. All forms of harassment and bullying are unacceptable and the College is committed to creating an environment in which harassment and bullying are not tolerated at any level. If possible, staff should act before waiting for a complaint to be registered.
- 4.2 Sexual, racial and other forms of personal harassment or bullying can seriously harm working and social conditions for both learners and staff. Any incidents of harassment or bullying will be regarded extremely seriously and can be grounds for disciplinary action under the College Student Disciplinary Procedure (QAL/005/000) or the Staff Disciplinary Procedure, whichever is appropriate.
- 4.3 Learners being subjected to sexual, racial or other forms of harassment or bullying do not have to tolerate it and should be able to seek assistance in confidence.
- 4.4 Stafford College aims to encourage all learners to report incidents of harassment in the knowledge that complaints will be dealt with promptly and sensitively.
- 4.5 Through staff induction and staff development programmes staff are made aware of the College's legal and moral responsibilities to eliminate any harassment or bullying.

#### 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 **The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality)** is responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of their duty to be vigilant regarding the behaviour of others and their responsibility for addressing actions which might cause offence.
- 5.2 **Heads of Faculty/Unit and Faculty Managers** need to ensure all staff are aware of their responsibility to be proactive in promoting an atmosphere where learners are free from harassment or bullying, and to challenge instances of harassment or bullying whenever they are encountered.
- 5.3 **All staff who have contact with learners** are responsible for supporting learners to achieve the commitments within this policy. At induction Personal Tutors (or class lecturers acting in this capacity) must inform learners of this policy.
- 5.4 The **Quality Unit** will provide advice and guidance on this policy to learners, parents, employers, managers and staff.

#### 6. REPORTING INCIDENTS, OR SUSPECTED INCIDENTS, OF HARASSMENT OR BULLYING

- 6.1 Any learner who feels she/he is being harassed or bullied may raise the matter informally with their personal tutor, lecturer, Student Counsellor, Quality Manager or any other member of staff. Alternatively a learner can

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formally lodge a complaint with the Quality Manager under the College's Complaints Procedure.

6.1.1 If a learner is unsure how to proceed they may seek guidance from a Student Union officer. The officer will signpost them to an appropriate member of staff. Student Union officers will receive training on their role from the Quality Unit at the start of their term of office.

6.2 Parents or guardians of learners who are under 18 may informally or formally raise the matter on their daughter's or son's behalf as in 6.1.

6.3 If a member of staff requires advice and guidance they should contact either the Quality Manager or the Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality).

## **7. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- POL/007/000 Equality and Diversity Policy
- QAL/033/000 The Equality and Diversity Code of Practice and Action Plan (incorporating the Race Equality Action Plan)
- POL/006/000 The College Disability Statement
- POL/046/000 Disability Equality Scheme
- POL/053/000 Gender Equality Scheme
- POL/021/000 Additional Learning Support Policy
- The College Charter (in the Student Diary or Handbook)
- POL/034/000 Staff Harassment Policy
- POL/001/000 Tutoring Policy
- QAL/005/000 College Learner Disciplinary Procedure
- QAL/038/000 Staff Disciplinary Procedure
- QAL/004/000 College Complaints and Accolades Procedure

## **8. SOURCES OF GUIDANCE USED IN THE FORMULATION OF THIS POLICY**

Association of Colleges ([www.aoc.org.uk](http://www.aoc.org.uk))

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## Appendix A – Examples of Harassment and Bullying

### Personal harassment – could include

- behaviour which makes direct or indirect reference to disability or impairment – and thus causes discomfort, patronises, insults or offends people with a physical, sensory or mental disability
- behaviour which makes direct or indirect reference to religion or culture thereby causing discomfort or offence
- repeated gibes in reference to personal traits, appearance or sexual orientation
- invasion of privacy or practical jokes causing physical or psychological distress
- pressure to become involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour
- messages to or about a person, including electronic mail, that are offensive, insulting or cause discomfort.

### Sexual harassment – could include

- behaviour which patronises, intimidates or offends sexual equality, e.g. sexual remarks, looks, jokes or offensive language.
- any behaviour which makes people feel viewed as sexual objects and which causes offence, even if unintended.
- provocative suggestions, propositioning people.
- the display of pornographic, semi-pornographic or suggestive material, in electronic or paper form.
- deliberate, potentially objectionable physical contact to which the person has not consented or had the opportunity to object to.
- threats of academic or work failure, or promises of success or other rewards in exchange for sexual favours.

Although sexual harassment is more often associated with women being harassed by men, our policy applies equally well to harassment occurring between people of the same gender, of men by women or harassment of transsexual people.

### Racial harassment – could include

- behaviour on the grounds of race which causes discomfort, intimidates or offends or which incites others to do so – derogatory names, insults, racist jokes or ridiculing cultural difference.
- the display or circulation of offensive material, including racist graffiti, electronic mail or information published through the Internet.
- verbal abuse and threats of physical attack

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**Bullying** could include:

- verbal and/or physical intimidation – threats, shouting, derisory remarks, often in front of others
- exclusion, or conversely, excessive supervision
- undermining of the individuals position by unreasonably changing work objectives/guidelines without consultation, taking credit for the individuals work, deriding the individuals work to other people
- removing areas of responsibility and giving people menial or trivial tasks to do instead
- withholding information unreasonably
- spreading malicious rumours
- destructive criticism
- messages, including electronic mail, that are threatening, derisory or defamatory

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