

# Sexual Harassment Policy

HARROW, RICHMOND AND UXBRIDGE COLLEGES POLICY AND PROCEDURES



**HRUC**

Policy No:	P08
Subject:	Sexual Harassment Policy
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Person responsible:	Assistant Director - Employee Experience and Compliance
Approved by:	People Board
For action by:	All Staff
For information to:	All staff

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 HRUC is committed to providing a work and study environment free from sexual harassment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. Sexual harassment is unlawful and will not be tolerated.
- 1.2 This policy applies to everyone who works for us, including all employees, workers, agency workers, consultants, casual workers, and volunteers.
- 1.3 This policy meets the requirements of the Office for Students (OfS) conditions.

## 2. What is “Sexual Harassment”?

- 2.1 Sexual harassment as described within the Equality Act 2010 includes any unwanted physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Examples include:
  - a. Unwanted physical contact, including touching.
  - b. Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behavior.
  - c. Sending or displaying sexually explicit material.
  - d. Sexual jokes, comments, or banter.
  - e. A person being treated unfairly for rejecting sexual advances.
  - f. Harassment conducted online or via social media.
- 2.2 A single incident can amount to sexual harassment.
- 2.3 A person may be sexually harassed even if they were not the intended target. For example, a person may be sexually harassed by pornographic images displayed on a colleague's computer in the workplace or by overhearing colleagues' boasting about their sexual conquests.

- 2.4 A person may experience sexual harassment because of conduct of a sexual nature that they find unwanted, even if it was not intended to have that effect by the person doing it.
- 2.5 In line with the Disciplinary policy and procedure, any member of staff who sexually harasses staff or learners will be disciplined (and in appropriate cases may be dismissed) if it happens:
- in a work situation including whilst working from home
  - during any situation related to work, such as at a social event with colleagues, clients or customers
  - on social media or other platforms and involves a colleague or any other person connected to us
  - against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident may negatively impact on our reputation or is relevant to your suitability to carry out your role.

### **3. Third-party harassment**

- 3.1 Third-party sexual harassment occurs where a person is sexually harassed by someone who isn't employed by us or is under our control but with whom they have come into contact during the course of their employment. Third-party harassment could include, for example, unwelcome sexual advances from a supplier visiting our premises, by our customers, or where employees are visiting third party premises in the course of their employment.
- 3.2 The law requires us to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties and we will not tolerate third party harassment either by a third party to our staff or by our staff to a third party.
- 3.3 All staff are encouraged to report any sexual harassment they experience or witness in accordance with this policy, including third party harassment, and to speak to their manager or any other appropriate person in our business if they think there are additional steps we could take to protect them from sexual harassment.

### **4. Procedure for reporting harassment**

- 4.1 We encourage anyone who experiences or witnesses harassment of all forms including sexual harassment to report it through one of the following:
- Intervening where you feel able to do so directly with a Manager, People & Organisational Development (POD) department, or Senior Leadership.
  - Supporting the victim to report it or reporting it on their behalf.
  - Reporting the incident where you feel there may be a continuing risk if you do not report it.
  - Third-party reporting—colleagues, friends, or external parties can report on behalf of someone else.
  - External reporting – learners or staff may also report incidents to external authorities such as the police.
- 4.2 All complaints will be handled confidentially and in line with our Disciplinary policy and procedure. HRUC will ensure that complainants are not victimised for raising concerns.

If you believe that you have been sexually harassed, you have the following options open to you:

- If you feel confident doing so, speak to the person who has harassed you, explain why their behaviour is unwanted and ask them to stop. Sometimes, people do not realise how their actions are impacting others and pointing this out can be enough to prevent repeated behaviour. Please speak to your manager if you'd like advice about how to approach the conversation.
- Make a formal complaint under our Disciplinary policy and procedure. The College hopes that you will be able to make a complaint openly within this procedure. However, if you wish to raise a complaint confidentially, the College will make every effort to keep your

identity a secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating the complaint to know your identity, the College will discuss this with you.

- 4.3 If you are not certain whether an incident or series of incidents amounts to sexual harassment, please speak to your manager or the POD department and ask for advice.
- 4.4 Staff will face disciplinary action if we reasonably conclude that their allegations are false and were made in bad faith (that means the employee who made the complaint didn't honestly believe it to be true). This will only be necessary in exceptional circumstances.

## **5. How we will deal with complaints**

- 5.1 We will deal with complaints in line with our Disciplinary policy and procedure.
- 5.2 We may, if we think it necessary, separate you from the person you are complaining about whilst we investigate to prevent things from getting worse whilst the investigation is ongoing. This is not a prejudgment of your complaint, and we will discuss this with you before doing it.
- 5.3 If we uphold your complaint we will deal with the matter in accordance with our Disciplinary policy and procedure.
- 5.4 If we decide not to uphold your complaint, we will explain why and explain how you can appeal in accordance with our Disciplinary policy and procedure. If your complaint relates to a colleague, we will consider ways of improving your relationship and may, for example, suggest mediation or offer training.

## **6. Prohibition of Intimate Personal Relationships**

- 6.1 To protect learners from conflicts of interest, abuse of power, and coercion, HRUC prohibits intimate personal relationships between staff and learners where professional, academic, or supervisory relationship exists.
- 6.2 All staff must disclose any pre-existing or developing relationships with learners and failure to disclose may lead to disciplinary action.

## **7. When we take disciplinary action**

- 7.1 Any employee found to have sexually harassed a colleague or another person will be subject to disciplinary action and may be dismissed. We will take into consideration any aggravating factors such as abuse of power over a more junior or vulnerable colleague when deciding on the appropriate disciplinary action. We may also report any criminal acts to the police.
- 7.2 If a member of staff has been harassed by a third party, we will take appropriate action to prevent it from recurring. That may include warning the harasser that if they repeat their behaviour we may ban them from our premises and report any criminal acts to the police.

## **8. How we will protect and support those involved**

- 8.1 Anyone who raises an allegation of sexual harassment with us in good faith will not be subjected to any detriment as a result.
- 8.2 We will provide appropriate support to anyone who makes a complaint or who witnesses an incident and will protect them from victimisation. You should not fear retaliation for having raised or supported a complaint of harassment and you will be protected from being treated less favourably because you have done so.
- 8.3 We offer access to confidential counselling, which is available on request for anyone affected by, or accused of, sexual harassment. This is available 24/7, 365 days a year via the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Plumm (Health and Wellbeing platform). Further information can be found on the staff intranet.

- 8.4 We will provide regular training to all employees on what sexual harassment is and how to report it. We will provide separate training to managers, so they understand the role they have in supporting colleagues who experience or witness sexual harassment.
- 8.5 We will undertake risk assessments and take other reasonable measures to understand areas and roles which are most at risk of sexual harassment and will take reasonable preventative steps to mitigate those risks.

## **9. How we will maintain confidentiality**

- 9.1 We are committed to handling all complaints of sexual harassment sensitively and confidentially.
- 9.2 If you have made a complaint, witnessed an incident or are accused of sexual harassment, you must not discuss the case with anyone except:
- any manager or other responsible person in our organisation you have approached for help and support.
  - your trade union representative.
  - someone at work who is acting as your companion at a formal meeting.
  - close family or friends who are supporting you.
  - anyone who is providing counselling or other services to you provided they are suitably qualified.
- 9.3 We will ensure that any investigation into a complaint is conducted confidentially and that the details of the complaint are only disclosed to those who need to know to investigate and resolve the matter. In some cases, this may include providing information to the police or to a regulator.
- 9.4 We may place information and documents about a complaint raised by or about you on your personnel file. These will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.
- 9.5 If you fail to maintain confidentiality when you are involved in some way in a sexual harassment complaint, then you may face action under our Disciplinary policy and procedure.

## **10. Training and Awareness**

- 10.1 To ensure compliance with this policy:
- a. All staff must complete mandatory training on sexual harassment and misconduct.
  - b. Specialised training will be provided for staff responsible for handling complaints.
  - c. Bystander intervention and consent training will be offered to staff.
  - d. Training will be reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness.

## **11. How we will monitor our progress**

- 11.1 We will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of sexual harassment or victimisation we receive to make sure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified, and workforce/learner training is targeted where needed.
- 11.2 The Safeguarding Committee will monitor reports of sexual harassment to identify trends and improve responses.
- 11.3 We will review the effectiveness and contents of this policy at least on an annual basis. We will identify any themes that emerge, evaluate feedback and consider what lessons can be learned.

## **12. Useful links and Support for Affected Individuals**

12.1 The following internal policies contain additional guidance:

- a. Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- b. Personal Relationships Policy – for staff
- c. Personal Relationships policy – for learners
- d. Grievance Policy and Procedure
- e. Data Protection Policy
- f. Whistleblowing Procedure

12.2 HRUC does not use Non-Disclosure Agreements to prevent individuals from discussing or reporting allegations of harassment. Information will be handled sensitively to enable individuals to speak about their experiences.

12.3 The following additional resources may also be useful to those who would like to understand more:

- a. Protect [Protect - Speak up stop harm - Whistleblowing Homepage](#)
- b. The requirements of the Office for Students (OfS) Higher Education conditions
- c. The Equality and Advisory Support Service [Equality Advisory and Support Service](#)

12.4 HRUC will provide appropriate support, including:

- a. Access to confidential counselling services for affected staff via our Employee Assistance Provider Health Assured (Peninsula). The POD department will log and report grievances.
- b. Learners will be supported via the Student Support Team. Academic allowances for learners who report harassment include deadline extensions, alternative assessment arrangements, and additional academic support where necessary.

12.5 POD is responsible for the administration of the Sexual Harassment Policy. Please contact the POD team if you have any feedback or have suggestions about how we can improve.