



LEARNER HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Reaseheath College and University Centre (the College) is committed to ensuring that all learners, staff and any other parties on the College premises are kept safe and provided with an environment in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

1 POLICY, SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 The College will use all necessary steps to challenge and prevent any discrimination, harassment or bullying of any kind. Any inappropriate behaviour, that may cause offence, whether intentional or not, will be treated seriously and discouraged and therefore all learners should feel confident that any reported incidences of harassment and bullying will be dealt with promptly, fairly and effectively. The College wishes to encourage everyone to behave appropriately at all times in accordance with the College values and codes of conduct.
- 1.2 The aim of this policy is to ensure that harassment and bullying does not occur in the organisation and if it has happened to ensure that procedures are in place to deal with it and prevent its recurrence. It is expected that where an allegation of bullying is raised, all parties will seek to achieve an effective and prompt resolution of the matter.
- 1.3 Harassment and bullying are totally unacceptable forms of behaviour and contrary to the College's aim of promoting an environment where its learners, staff, visitors and contractors will be treated with dignity and respect.
- 1.4 Any act of harassment or bullying may be grounds for disciplinary proceedings and/or investigation by the College. Everyone at the College has a duty to promote a culture free from unacceptable behaviour which includes the prevention of bullying and harassment. The College has a duty to react to any allegations promptly, fairly, effectively and in confidence.
- 1.5 The College has a 'duty of care' under Health and Safety legislation and Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults. Harassment is also a potential criminal offence.

2 DEFINITIONS

What is harassment?

- 2.1 Harassment is defined as any conduct which is unwanted by the recipient, or any conduct which affects the dignity of any individual, or group of individuals in the workplace. Harassment may be repetitive, or an isolated occurrence against one or more individuals.
- 2.2 It may be related to age, sex, race, religion/belief, disability, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. The point is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient. The College is committed to appreciating human diversity and will not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying. As such learners should read this policy in conjunction with the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

2.3 Harassment could be:

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| Physical | - unwanted contact (e.g. unnecessary touching), assault or gestures, intimidation, aggressive behaviour. |
| Verbal | - unwelcome remarks, suggestions and propositions, malicious gossip, jokes and banter which is based on a person's sex or race or which refers to a person's age, disability, sexuality, religion or personal appearance. |
| Non-verbal | - offensive literature or pictures, graffiti and computer imagery, isolation or non co-operation and exclusion from social activities. |

Some other examples of harassment are:

- physical contact ranging from touching, standing too close or physical threats
- written and verbal in the form of letters, e-mails, internet materials or other offensive language.

- 2.4 **Bullying** is a particular form of personal harassment. It is persistent, threatening, offensive, abusive, intimidating or insulting behaviour that may be an abuse of power, position or knowledge. It may be the use of unfair sanctions. It can happen in public or private and may arise from the

combination of the personal style of the bully and a lack of assertiveness and self-confidence in the person or persons being bullied. An assertive management style in itself would not constitute bullying but where assertiveness gives way to aggression it is likely to become destructive rather than constructive. What is important is that the conduct makes the recipient(s) feel upset, humiliated, vulnerable, or undermines their self-confidence. It may also cause them to suffer stress.

Some examples of bullying are:

- consistently undermining someone
- shouting and use of sarcasm at an individual
- derogatory or belittling remarks in front of others regarding appearance, work or personal attributes;
- unwarranted exclusions or victimisation;

2.5 Bullying is not confined to open, derisory remarks or aggression, but can also be subtle and devious, resulting in an individual being singled out, demeaned or devalued.

2.6 An individual or a group of individuals can carry out bullying. All types of bullying are viewed as equally unacceptable by the College.

2.7 Bullying and harassment can be unpredictable, irrational and may not be obvious to others. They can cause an individual to feel isolated and can have possible implications for physical and mental health. People being bullied or harassed may sometimes appear to overreact to something that seems relatively trivial to others, but may be the latest in a series of incidents.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Learner action

A learner who is being harassed or bullied within College by other learners, staff, or another party at College should report this to a member of staff – this could be:

- Personal Tutor
- Another member of the teaching staff if preferred
- A member of the support staff

Information on how to report a concern is made available to learners.

3.2 Staff action

The learner and the member of staff will look at the informal and formal options available and discuss what the learner wants to do. The learner may be accompanied by a friend at these discussions.

3.3 Confidentiality

Allegations of bullying and harassment will always be treated with the intent of maintaining confidentiality to protect the wellbeing of the complainant. However, there may be issues of safeguarding which result in the necessity to disclose information to other agencies. Learners must be reassured that:

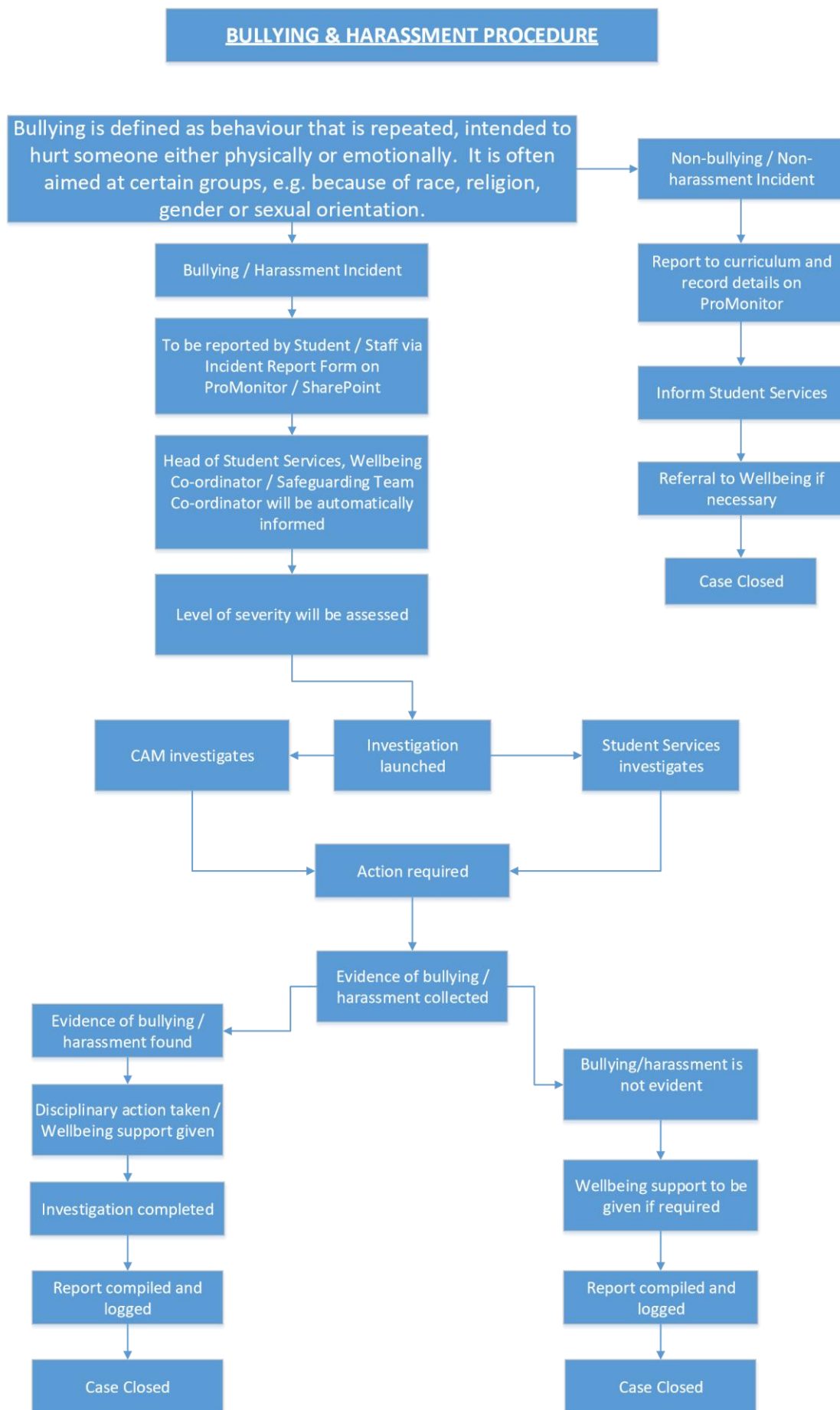
- Their complaint will always be taken seriously
- Action will always be taken against an allegation of harassment or bullying

The information given by the learner should only be recorded with their consent. It should be shared with others only by consent (although in exceptional cases it may be necessary for the member of staff to act on information received from the complainant even if consent has not been obtained for disclosure as above).

4 PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

- 4.1 Complaints of bullying or harassment will be addressed speedily and if possible, and depending on the nature of the allegation, within the Informal Procedure (see below). This is likely to produce solutions that are effective. However, there may be occasions when the Informal Procedure is not adequate due to the nature of the complaint and the Formal Procedure is more appropriate.

The College will use the most appropriate procedure in the circumstances of each case. To ensure that complaints / incidents are dealt with speedily and efficiently, the following user-friendly procedure is used.



5 INFORMAL PROCEDURE

- 5.1 A learner who feels that they are being subjected to harassment or bullying may wish to resolve the matter informally in the first instance. In some cases, with appropriate guidance and support, it may be possible and sufficient for the learner to explain clearly to the person engaged in the unwanted activities that the behaviour is unwelcome, that it offends or makes them uncomfortable.
- 5.2 At any stage of the process the learner, the member of staff dealing with the complaint or the other person or people may feel that they need the help of an independent person before deciding on the best course of action. Student Services may be able to assist and provide support for the parties concerned.

6 FORMAL PROCEDURE

- 6.1 If the situation cannot be resolved or if the process is not appropriate then the complainant has the right to pursue their complaint formally using the appropriate stage of the complaints procedure, such formal complaints will be investigated by the appropriate member of staff.
- 6.2 In cases where a claim of harassment or bullying is brought and there is reason to separate the parties, a short period of exclusion or suspension of the alleged bully/harasser may be necessary while the case is being investigated. Such action will be dealt with in accordance with the student conduct procedures.

7 INFORMATION AND TRAINING

- 7.1 Learners are made aware as part of the Learner Induction process of the policy and the process to raise any concerns.
- 7.2 As part of induction, college values and conduct expectations are emphasised and the student charter accepted by learners. These values and expectations are reinforced throughout the year.

8 OTHER SAFEGUARDING RELATED POLICIES

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Student Charter
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Consensual Relations Policy

**Addendum for compliance with Office For Students (OFS) Condition E6
applying to Higher Education Students and any staff that interact with Higher
Education students**

9 Intimate Personal Relationships

- 9.1 To protect students from abuse of power and conflicts of interest, Reaseheath prohibits intimate personal relationships where a staff member has academic, pastoral, administrative or professional responsibility for a student. Beyond this, intimate relationships are strongly discouraged and must be declared so safeguards can be applied. Breach of this requirement may result in disciplinary action.

10 Freedom of Speech and Sexual Harassment

- 10.1 The College affirms that lawful freedom of speech, including academic debate, is protected. A rebuttable presumption applies where exposure to course content (books, media, ideas) and statements made in teaching, research, or connected academic discussion is unlikely to amount to harassment. We will uphold lawful expression while meeting our equality and safeguarding duties.
- 10.2 Harassment and sexual misconduct policies shall not be used to unduly restrict lawful speech.
- 10.3 Sexual harassment refers to unwanted sexual advances, inappropriate touching, explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminatory remarks or jokes which cause the person to feel embarrassed, threatened, patronised or harassed. The behaviours create a hostile, intimidating, or offensive learning environment. Sexual harassment is a form of sexual discrimination which contravenes the Equality Act 2010.
- 10.4 Sexual misconduct: any unwelcome sexual behaviour conducted without consent and ranges from inappropriate sexual behaviours to sexual harassment and assault. It often involves actions that disregard boundaries, exploit power dynamics, or undermine consent, and it may have legal implications beyond anti-discrimination laws leading to criminal convictions, especially in relation to incidents of sexual assault (Sexual Offences Act 2003).

11 Staff Training

- 11.1 All staff will receive training on harassment, sexual misconduct, and their intersection with safeguarding and free speech. This ensures consistent

understanding and effective handling of issues in accordance with the policy.

12 Support for Students

- 12.1 The College ensures appropriate support is offered to complainants, witnesses, and alleged perpetrators. This includes access to counselling, safeguarding teams, and academic adjustments as needed.

13 Communication of Outcomes

- 13.1 Following an investigation, all relevant parties will be informed of the outcome and any actions taken, in line with data protection and safeguarding obligations.

14 Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs)

- 14.1 Since September 2024, the Office for Students has prohibited Higher Education Institutions from using Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in relation to student allegations of harassment and sexual misconduct. UCR does not use NDAs or restrict disclosure of information relating to allegations about harassment or sexual misconduct.

15 OFS Condition E6.

- 15.1 Where a student is a higher education student and enacts this procedure they should also be read in conjunction with the **Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Intimate Personal Relationships Single Comprehensive Source** and the **Freedom of Speech – Code of Practice**.

Date of issue/review	Oct 2016; Nov 2019; Nov 2022; August 2025
Lead for Policy	Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality
Approved/Reviewed	Executive 11.08.25/ College Board
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