

# **Bullying and Harassment Dignity and Respect: Dealing with Bullying and/or Harassment – Visitor Formal Complaints Procedure**

## **UPR EQ10 Appendix IV version 05.0**

This document forms a new appendix to UPR EQ10 'Bullying and Harassment' with effect from 1 September 2025.

### **Summary of significant changes to the previous version**

This is the first version of this document and should be read in full.

### **Glossary**

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

### **Table of Contents**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Glossary .....  | 2 |
| 1. Introduction .....   | 3 |
| 2. Visitors: Formal Complaints Process .....                      | 3 |
| 2.1 Formal Complaints Process .....                               | 3 |
| 2.2 Lodging a Visitor Formal Bullying & Harassment Complaint..... | 3 |
| 2.3 Initial Meeting .....   | 4 |
| 2.4 Investigation .....   | 4 |
| 2.5 Confidentiality .....   | 5 |
| 2.6 Letter of Decision: .....                                     | 5 |
| 2.7 Frivolous, Malicious, or Vexatious Complaints .....           | 6 |
| 3 Visitor Formal Complaints – Requests for Review .....           | 6 |
| 3.3 Alternative format .....                                      | 6 |

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Appendix IV should be read in conjunction with UPR EQ10 Bullying and Harassment Dignity and Respect: Dealing with Bullying and/or Harassment.
- 1.2. Visitors should attempt to resolve any complaint informally where possible before pursuing a formal complaint.
- 1.3. It will not always be possible or appropriate to attempt to resolve a complaint through informal action. In some cases, an informal approach may have been tried and proven unsuccessful and in other cases, the alleged incident(s) may be so serious that it is not appropriate to attempt informal resolution.

## 2. Visitors: Formal Complaints Process

### 2.1 Formal Complaints Process

- 2.1.1 Where a visitor considers themselves to be under physical threat or at serious risk of immediate harm, they should contact the police.
- 2.1.2 All parties will be treated with fairness and respect. The individual(s) against whom a complaint is made will have the opportunity to respond.
- 2.1.3 All parties must submit relevant evidence during the investigation, and this will be shared with the Complainant, Respondent, Investigator, and the Secretary and Registrar.
- 2.1.4 Complaints must be lodged with the Secretary and Registrar no more than three (3) calendar months from the date of the incident, or in the case of multiple incidents, from the date of the most recent incident.
- 2.1.5 Late complaints will only be considered in exceptional circumstances supported by evidence. If complaints are not made within a reasonable period, the University may not be able to adequately investigate or take steps to address the matter.
- 2.1.6 The use of internal or external third-party mediation may be considered where appropriate.

### 2.2 Lodging a Visitor Formal Bullying & Harassment Complaint

- 2.2.1 A Formal Complaint:
  - i. must be made in writing using the University's Visitors *Formal Complaint: Allegation of Bullying and/or Harassment* form. Complaints made in another format may require clarification by the Secretary and Registrar and/or Investigator. The complaint should provide as much information as possible, including details of the incident(s), supporting evidence, and (where possible) the desired outcome.
  - ii. If the complaint contains multiple allegations against the Respondent, these will be considered together within one investigation.

2.2.2 The Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) will:

- i. Formally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five (5) working days or as soon as possible thereafter.
- ii. Liaise with appropriate University staff (e.g. Human Resources) to determine whether it is necessary to restrict contact between the parties at this stage.
- iii. Notify the Respondent that a complaint has been made and provide them with the opportunity to respond.

### **2.3 Initial Meeting**

The Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) will:

- i. Invite the Complainant to an initial meeting to discuss the complaint and clarify how they wish the matter to proceed, including discussion of informal resolution where appropriate.
- ii. Obtain the Complainant's consent before progressing to a formal investigation.
- iii. Where an investigation is appropriate, initiate the process.
- iv. Where no investigation is required:
  - a. Inform the Complainant in writing that no investigation will take place.
  - b. Confirm that this decision is final.
  - c. Advise of the limited grounds on which a review may be requested.

### **2.4 Investigation**

2.4.1 Where an investigation is necessary, the Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) will:

- i. appoint an Investigator with no prior involvement.
- ii. determine the timescale for the investigation (normally 60 working days from the date on which the Formal Complaint is acknowledged in writing by the Recipient).
- iii. write to all parties confirming:
  - a) That an investigation will take place.
  - b) The name of the Investigator.
  - c) That confidentiality must be maintained.
  - d) That both Complainant and Respondent have the right to be accompanied at meetings in a supportive capacity.

2.4.2 The Investigator may meet informally with the Complainant at the outset to explain the process, clarify the allegations, and confirm the scope of the complaint.

- 2.4.3 The Complainant, Respondent, and any witnesses will be required to attend meetings as needed, with reasonable notice.
- 2.4.4 Consent will be sought from witnesses for the use of their statements. Anonymity will only be granted where it does not compromise fairness or the Respondent's right to reply.
- 2.4.5 The Complainant must consent to disclosure of their identity and the substance of the complaint to the Respondent. Without this, an investigation cannot proceed except in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.4.6 The Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) will provide progress updates at least every 20 working days if the investigation is delayed.
- 2.4.7 Further reports or evidence received during the process may be considered within the same investigation. If this is not possible, the parties will be informed.
- 2.4.8 The University reserves the right to use electronic access system, electronic access cards records, and other media, including material recorded via its CCTV scheme to enable the investigation and processing of complaints, as outlined in UPR HS05 Security and Public Access, and [UPR HS04 Closed Circuit Television \(CCTV\) - code of practice](#), paragraph 10.4 and Section 6.

## **2.5 Confidentiality**

- 2.5.1 All participants must maintain confidentiality. Information will only be disclosed where necessary to consider the complaint or as required by law (e.g. police, regulators).
- 2.5.2 The Complainant and Respondent will be advised not to contact each other regarding the complaint unless otherwise instructed.
- 2.5.3 Breaches of confidentiality will be treated seriously.

## **2.6 Letter of Decision:**

- 2.6.1 The Investigator's report will summarise the allegations, individuals interviewed, evidence gathered, and findings on the balance of probability as to whether bullying or harassment occurred.
- 2.6.2 Having reached a decision, the Letter of Decision from the Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) will confirm the outcome:
  - a) Complaint not upheld.
  - b) Complaint upheld or partially upheld.
- 2.6.3 On the balance of probability, if there is not enough evidence to support claims of misconduct under EQ10 Bullying and Harassment, the case will not be upheld, closed and no further action will be taken.
- 2.6.4 Where the complaint is not upheld, the Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) will write to the Complainant and Respondent within five (5) working days of receiving the investigation report, or as soon as possible thereafter, and

- i. Provide them with copies of the investigation report, including any appendices, and
- i. Inform them of the decision, and
- ii. Advise the Complainant of the limited grounds on which they may request a review

2.6.5 Where the complaint is upheld, the Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) will write to the Complainant and Respondent within five (5) working days of receiving the investigation report, or as soon as possible thereafter, and

- i. Provide them with a copy of the investigation report, including any appendices, and
- ii. Inform them of the decision, and
- iii. Advise that the decision is final, and
- iv. That the matter has been referred for consideration under the relevant university policy, and
- v. That the relevant university policy process is confidential, and
- vi. That the Complainant is not entitled to know the outcome of the relevant university policy and is not entitled to challenge the outcome or eligible to use the appeal mechanisms within the relevant university procedure.

2.6.6 In exceptional circumstances, the Complainant may be informed of precautionary or restorative actions that directly affect them (e.g. apology, contact restrictions).

## **2.7 Frivolous, Malicious, or Vexatious Complaints**

Where a complaint is found to be frivolous, demonstrably false, malicious, or vexatious the Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) will notify both parties in writing and provide the investigation report and appendices.

## **3 Visitor Formal Complaints – Requests for Review**

- 3.1 The Complainant may request a review by the Vice-Chancellor on the grounds of:
- i. Procedural irregularities.
  - ii. Bias on the part of the Secretary and Registrar (or their nominee) or Investigator.
- 3.2 The request must be submitted in writing within ten (10) working days of the decision letter, including all supporting evidence, and submitting via email to [s.harrison-barker@herts.ac.uk](mailto:s.harrison-barker@herts.ac.uk).
- 3.2 The Vice-Chancellor may determine the outcome based on documentation or convene a review meeting. The Vice-Chancellor's decision is final and will be communicated in writing.

Sharon Harrison-Barker  
Secretary and Registrar  
Signed: **1 August 2025**

### **Alternative format**

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at [governanceservices@herts.ac.uk](mailto:governanceservices@herts.ac.uk) or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.