



# College of Osteopaths Harassment Policy

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The College of Osteopaths will not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying. We strive to ensure that all our students and staff are able to study or work in an environment free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

The purpose of this policy is to inform employees and students of the College of the type of behaviour that is totally unacceptable.

## What is harassment?

**Bullying** can take various forms from name calling, sarcasm, teasing and unwarranted criticism, cyber bullying, to threats of violence or actual physical violence. It often involves the abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

**Harassment** can be defined as unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment which interferes with an individual's learning, working or social environment, or induces stress, anxiety, fear or sickness on the part of the harassed person.

Harassment is a discriminatory act and is also a criminal offence. It is very difficult to define as it can take many forms, but in the main it takes the form of unwanted behaviour by one individual towards another, for example:

- Patronising or belittling comments.
- Comments about appearance/body/clothes
- Leering or staring at a person's body
- Promises or threats, concerning employment conditions, in exchange for sexual favours
- Displaying offensive or sexually explicit material.
- Touching, caressing, hugging or indecent assault.
- Please remember the test is that the behaviour is UNWELCOME, UNINVITED AND UNRECIPROCATED.
- Bullying is also difficult to define. Obvious examples are:
- Threats of or actual physical violence.
- Unpleasant or over repeated jokes about a person.
- Unfair or impractical work loading.
- Unwelcome sexual invitations or pressure.

It is unlawful to harass someone because of their race, gender, gender reassignment, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief. It is also a criminal offence to harass (or stalk) someone persistently.

Differences of attitudes, background or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another; nevertheless, this does not make it acceptable.

**Other examples of harassment** include unwarranted physical or sexual contact, jokes, offensive language, posters, emails, texts, comments on social media, graffiti, public telling off or putting down, excluding or ignoring.

Harassment and bullying may be an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual. (Source: *A-Z of Equality and Diversity*. ECU, 2008, Acas 2009, The Equality Act 2010)

## **Policies**

Our policies and procedures support our aim to provide a safe, respectful and tolerant environment for all students, employees and visitors:

- Student Charter – produced jointly by the College and the students of the College, it sets out expectations in terms of learning opportunities and a successful learning experience.
- Student Conduct & Disciplinary Policy – This Code of Conduct and the related Disciplinary Procedures are intended to provide fair procedures for maintaining reasonable behaviour by students while they are enrolled with the College.
- Dignity at Work and Study Policy – this policy has been developed
- Employee Handbook – sets out the standards of behaviour expected of all employees of the College.

## **What should I do if I think I may be being harassed or bullied?**

### **Students**

If you think you may be being harassed or bullied, or witnessed an incident and wish to talk about it, the following may be able to give help and guidance:

- An Education Support Officer
- The Programme Leader
- Students' Union Student Advice Centre

### **Staff**

If you think you may be being harassed or bullied, you should follow the procedure as detailed in the Employee Handbook. Advice may also be sought from:

- Your Line Manager

### **Sources of guidance and advice for students:**

- Education Support Officer, Student Support  
Julie Thompson [j.thompson@collegeofosteopaths.ac.uk](mailto:j.thompson@collegeofosteopaths.ac.uk)

### **Sources of guidance and advice for staff:**

- ACAS Bullying and harassment at work – a guide for managers and employers
- ACAS Bullying and harassment at work – guidance for employees
- Workplace Bullying and Harassment