



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Unacceptable Behaviours Policy – Staff

Overview

Northumbria University seeks to provide a working environment where colleagues can flourish professionally, academically, and personally. We aspire to a community that is welcoming, respectful and free from bullying, discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. Our Code of Conduct and Values and Behaviours set out agreed standards of behaviour and expectations. We do not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, examples of which include:

- Unwelcome remarks, gestures or physical contact
- Deliberately ignoring or excluding others
- Offensive jokes or comments (explicit or by innuendo)
- Display or circulation of offensive words, pictures, or other materials
- Verbal abuse or threats
- Physical abuse or violence of any nature
- Sexual misconduct (which includes any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment)
- Hate crime
- Coercive control

This policy includes, but is not limited to, behaviours relating to the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010 and sets out how as an organisation we meet the requirements of the Worker Protection Act 2023.

If you experience, witness or are aware of unacceptable behaviour involving any person connected to your work at Northumbria, you are strongly encouraged to seek support and report it. For the avoidance of doubt, any person includes colleagues, students and third parties such as partners, agency workers, visitors and consultants.

The University is committed to ensuring that all concerns raised are taken seriously and dealt with thoroughly and sensitively. If at any point another university policy is considered more appropriate, concerns may be re-routed through discussion with those involved.

Resolve it

If you have experienced unacceptable behaviour get support quickly to help you to deal with the immediate situation. Next, think through your options in order that the concern can be resolved as early as possible. Consider talking with:

- A person you know and trust, this might be a friend, colleague, or family member
- Your Manager, who can provide practical and moral support as you work through addressing your concerns.
- A Human Resources Manager/Adviser who will advise on support available for you and the informal and formal approaches available to address your concerns.
- Your Trade Union Representative who will advise you on possible next steps and will support you through these.

- The University's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) where trained talking therapists are available for you and your immediate family members 24 hours a day 7 days a week

Sometimes, it may be possible to resolve the matter informally. For example, if the other person is not aware that their behaviour has caused offence or concern, or their actions or words have taken on a meaning they did not intend, an informal discussion may help to resolve the situation quickly by letting them know you would like the behaviour to stop.

A Human Resources Manager/Adviser can advise on the range of support available to help resolve concerns informally. This could include mediation, a voluntary and confidential approach where an independent person will help you both to discuss your concern in a safe environment.

Report it

If you feel it is not possible, or appropriate, to resolve the situation informally you can report your concern using the University's [online reporting tool](#). You might also want to talk with your manager, HR Manager, or trade union representative who can support you to report your concern.

You will be asked to provide information about what happened, the impact on you, whether it has affected anyone else and if there were any witnesses. Once you have submitted the report, an HR Manager will contact you to discuss the information you have provided and next steps.

Reports of unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with confidentially to the maximum extent possible and how the situation is addressed will be discussed with you. If the matter is very serious, for example you or someone else is at risk of harm or the incident constitutes a criminal offence, the University may need to take action to protect you and/or others and we will discuss this with you. If there is an ongoing police investigation relating to the incident, the University investigation may be paused until this is concluded.

Reporting your concern as close to the incident as possible will allow a timely investigation and resolution. Delayed reporting may limit the University's ability to investigate the issue fully.

We are best able to explore and address concerns, and provide support, when colleagues provide their names when reporting. You can raise an anonymous concern where this is not about a named individual. Anonymous reporting via this reporting tool will be used to help the University understand the issues impacting our University community, to monitor patterns and trends and help shape our prevention of and response to unacceptable behaviour.

If you wish to raise a concern about a named individual but remain anonymous to them please e-mail humanresources@northumbria.ac.uk. Raising your concern via this route allows us to ask questions and seek further clarity so that sufficient information can be gathered to allow a full and fair investigation to take place.

Formal Resolution Process

A manager who has not previously been involved will be appointed, normally within five working days, as the Investigating Manager to explore your concern, supported by an HR Manager. As part of their investigation they will:

- Meet with you to explore and understand your concerns and to receive from you any evidence to support these, normally within 10 working days.
- Provide details of the alleged unacceptable behaviour to the other person(s) involved and meet with them to hear their response and to receive from them any evidence to support their response.
- Meet in confidence with any witnesses and obtain a written statement from them if appropriate.
- Meet with individuals again to clarify any points made, if required.
- Consider any additional evidence or information available (e.g. CCTV, documentation)

All parties involved in the investigation will be supported through the process and can be accompanied at meetings by a trade union representative or work colleague.

In some circumstances the Investigating Manager may recommend that you and/or the other person have your working location and/or duties adjusted during the investigation to protect the interests of everyone involved. If the concerns are very serious, the University may suspend the other person while the investigation is underway to enable the investigation to proceed quickly and/or to protect individuals from harm. Suspension is a serious matter and will be for as short a time as possible, fully paid, and does not constitute disciplinary action nor will it pre-empt the outcome of any investigation.

Investigation Outcome

The Investigating Manager will assess the evidence and write a report, normally within 10 working days of concluding the investigation process, summarising their findings, outcome and any recommendations. A copy of this report will be provided to you and the other person(s) involved as early as possible. There are three possible outcomes of the investigation:

- The alleged behaviour occurred and action is required under the University's Disciplinary Procedure
- The alleged behaviour occurred and action short of disciplinary action is recommended. This might include: training, coaching, mentoring, mediation, or alternative working arrangements.
- The investigation was unable to reach a reasonable level of certainty on whether or not the alleged behaviour occurred, therefore no formal action is required. However, steps may be recommended to support the improvement or repairing of the working relationship.

In accordance with data protection legislation the Investigating Manager may share the detail of the outcomes and/or sanction with the person who raised the concern where it is appropriate to do so.

If you are a member of staff and are dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation you have the right to appeal the decision under the University Appeals Procedure

You will not be subject to disciplinary action or any other detriment if a complaint you make in good faith is not upheld.

Allegations that are malicious or vexatious will not be tolerated by the University. Any such cases will be investigated and dealt with under the University's Disciplinary Procedure. Where any person involved is found to have deliberately misled an investigation, the University will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence.

University use of data and reporting

Anonymised data relating to reports of unacceptable behaviour will be collated and reported via the appropriate University Committee and required External bodies on a regular basis.

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