UCQ UNIVERSITY CENTRE QUAYSIDE

Bullying and Harassment Policy

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1. Purpose

1.1 UCQ is committed to fostering a positive, respectful, and inclusive learning environment for all students. This policy sets out our expectations and procedures to prevent, respond to, and address bullying and harassment among adult learners. It also safeguards lawful freedom of speech and academic freedom in line with our obligations under UK law, including the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all UCQ students across all modes and locations of study. It covers bullying and harassment that:

- Occur in person or online
- Are directed at any member of the UCQ community
- Arise in academic, professional, or social contexts linked to the institution

3. Definitions

3.1 Bullying:

Unwanted behaviour that intends to harm, intimidate, humiliate, or coerce another person.

This may include:

- Persistent criticism, belittling or ridiculing
- Social exclusion
- Cyberbullying (e.g. malicious emails, messages or posts)
- Misuse of position or status to undermine another

3.2 Harassment:

Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation) that:

- Violates the dignity of the individual, or
- Creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment

3.3 Freedom of Speech:

The legal right to express lawful views and ideas without fear of censorship or discipline, subject to legal limitations (e.g. hate speech, incitement to violence). It does not include a right to bully, harass, or intimidate others.

3.4 Academic Freedom:

The freedom of academic staff and students to explore, discuss, and critically engage with contested ideas and knowledge, without institutional or political interference.

4. Policy statement

4.1 UCQ does not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form. We expect all students to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Express views in a constructive and inclusive manner
- Uphold the academic values of critical inquiry and respectful debate
- Avoid conduct that undermines others' safety or dignity

4.2 We recognise that academic and freedom of speech protections apply to lawful expression of controversial or unpopular views. However, the right to freedom of expression and academic freedom does not extend to conduct that is unlawful—such as harassment, bullying, or the incitement of hatred or violence—as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

5. Reporting and support

5.1 Informal Resolution:

Where appropriate, students may choose to resolve concerns directly through respectful dialogue. UCQ staff (e.g. tutors, programme leads) can offer mediation or advice.

5.2 Formal Reporting:

Concerns may be reported to UCQ's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Academic Registrar, or through the Student Complaints Procedure. Reports will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

5.3 Support Available:

- Access to pastoral and wellbeing support
- Academic accommodations if needed
- Referral to external agencies (e.g. counselling, legal advice)

6. Investigations and outcomes

6.1 Where a formal complaint is raised UCQ will investigate fairly, impartially, and promptly in line with the Complaints Procedure

7. Freedom of expression safeguards

7.1 In line with the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023:

- No student will face disciplinary action solely for expressing a lawful, unpopular, or controversial academic or political view
- Expression of such views must be lawful, respectful, and not amount to targeted abuse
- Any decisions balancing freedom of expression with other legal duties (e.g. under the Equality Act 2010) will be made proportionately, case-by-case

8. Monitoring and review

8.1 This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with legal requirements, sector best practice, and stakeholder feedback.

9. Document history

ISSUE NO.	DATE	PAGE	REVIEWER	DETAIL OF AMENDMENT
01	25/07/2025	All	Tara Henderson	Removed from SA-002 APP K into separate policy.
02	17/07/2026	All	Tara Henderson	Periodic review conducted. S10 IEIA added.

10. Initial equalities impact assessment

Department: All	**Completed by:** Tara Henderson, Head of Policy & Governance	**Date of initial assessment:** 17/07/2026
Area to be assessed:	SA021 Bullying and Harassment Policy	
Existing or new policy/procedure:	Existing	
What evidence has been used to inform the assessment and policy? (please list only)		
Equality Act 2010. Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. Human Rights Act 1998. Office for Students Regulatory Framework. UCQ Safeguarding Policy. UCQ Complaints Procedure. UCQ Student Code of Conduct.		

1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure		This Policy establishes UCQ's expectations and procedures for preventing and responding to bullying and harassment while protecting lawful freedom of speech and academic freedom. It promotes a respectful, inclusive and safe learning environment for all students.		
2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit from this policy/procedure?		All UCQ students. Students with protected characteristics. Academic and professional staff supporting students. Student representatives. UCQ through maintaining a safe and inclusive learning environment.		
The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:- (1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization (2) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and (3) Foster good relations between different groups		**3. Could the policy/procedure have a disproportionately negative effect impact in terms of the aims set out in (1) to (3) of the Act on any of the protected characteristics: -** **High** **Medium** **Low** **No effect**	**4. Briefly explain how the policy/procedure furthers or prevents the aims set out in (1) to (3).**	**5. If there is a disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristics, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality or any other reason? If yes, please explain.**
Protected characteristics	**Age**	Low positive	Policy protects all students from bullying and harassment.	Not applicable
	Disability	Medium positive	Explicit protection from disability-related harassment and access to support.	Not applicable

	Gender	Medium positive	Policy protects against gender-related harassment and promotes respectful conduct.	Not applicable
	Gender reassignment	Medium positive	Protected characteristic specifically recognised within the Policy.	Not applicable
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Low positive	Protection from unlawful harassment.	Not applicable
	Pregnancy and Maternity	Low positive	Protection from unlawful harassment.	Not applicable
	Race	Medium positive	Explicit protection from race-related harassment.	Not applicable
	Religion or Belief	Medium positive	Protection from harassment related to religion or belief.	Not applicable
	Sexual Orientation	Medium positive	Explicit protection from harassment related to sexual orientation.	Not applicable

6. Has there been any consultation/engagement with the appropriate protected characteristics?	The Policy has been developed with reference to equality legislation, freedom of speech legislation and UCQ student support arrangements. It is intended to strengthen protections for all students and no adverse equality impacts have been identified.	
7. What action(s) will you take to reduce any disproportionately negative impact, if any?	Promote awareness of the Policy. Continue staff training in safeguarding and student welfare. Monitor complaints and trends to identify any disproportionate impacts. Review the Policy annually in line with legislative developments.	
8. Based on the information in sections 1 to 7, should this policy/procedure proceed to Full Impact Assessment? (recommended if one or more 'High' under section 3)	**No.** The Policy is designed to protect individuals from discrimination, bullying and harassment and promotes equality, dignity and inclusion across the student community.	
Assessor signature:	**Approved by:** **Michelle Elliott**	**Date approved:** 17/7/26