

# SOAS Dignity and Respect Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Bullying and harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at the School. SOAS is committed to creating and sustaining a working and learning environment where people can achieve their full potential, free from any form of harassment, bullying, sexual abuse and coercion, discrimination and victimisation. The School is committed to creating an environment which is free from such behaviour and promotes a culture of accountability, dignity and respect for all.
  
- 1.2. For the purposes of this Policy, references to 'the SOAS community' includes all students, staff and lay governors of the School. The School will try to ensure other relevant parties (such as third-party contractors and visitors) comply with the required standards of behaviour in this Policy, including through the use of sanctions if behavioural standards are breached.

## 2. Aims of this Policy 2,1

- To promote the principles of dignity and respect;
  - To assist in maintaining a respectful learning and working environment where unacceptable behaviour is identified and tackled effectively;
  - To proactively work towards the elimination of bullying, harassment and victimisation, by building an inclusive culture, raising awareness and ensuring transparent effective mechanisms by which complaints can be addressed.
- 2.1. To encourage everyone to play a role in creating and maintaining an environment in which harassment, bullying and victimisation are understood to be unacceptable and people feel able to raise complaints, be heard and know that appropriate action will be taken.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1. The School will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment within its community or against its members both on campus and beyond the physical premises and normal business hours of the School, such as conduct at events and trips abroad or on social media, including in halls of residence where students are under the responsibility of the School.
  
- 3.2. This Policy applies to the SOAS community and relates to bullying or harassment perpetrated by:
  - 3.2.1. student against a student, member of staff or lay governor

3.2.2. a member of staff against a student, member of staff or lay governor,  
and

3.2.3. a lay governor against a student, member of staff or lay governor.

3.3. Any visitors and third-party contractors who violate the spirit of this policy will be subject to appropriate sanctions, including but not restricted to being barred from areas of or the entire campus.

#### 4. Definition of Bullying and Harassment

For the purpose of this Policy: the following terms are defined as:

4.1 **Bullying** is defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, which may include an abuse or misuse of power, through means that threaten, undermine, intimidate, humiliate, denigrate, take advantage of or injure the recipient.

4.2 **Harassment** is defined as unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment which relates to one of their protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation. Harassment is both a criminal offence and a civil action under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

4.3 Examples of behaviour that may constitute harassment under this policy include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted physical contact, ranging from an invasion of space to an assault and including all forms of sexual harassment, including unwanted sexual advances and touching, sexually explicit remarks or innuendo, inappropriate body language
- making offensive comments including insults, jokes, gestures or malicious rumour, for example on the basis of religion or belief
- insulting, abusive, embarrassing, demeaning, patronising, humiliating, intimidating behaviour or comments, for example on the basis of age, gender or sexuality
- ridiculing or ostracising an individual for cultural differences, including through the use of racial stereotypes
- making repeated comments about a person's appearance, lifestyle, family, or culture
- derogatory name-calling, insults and racist remarks, such as the use of anti-Semitic or Islamophobic tropes
- persistently shouting at, insulting, threatening, disparaging or intimidating someone, including through the use of abusive language in email
- threatening to disclose, or disclosing a person's sexuality or disability to others without their permission

- deliberately using the wrong name or pronoun in relation to a transgender person, or persistently referring to their gender identity history
- emailing, publishing, circulating or displaying pornographic, racist, homophobic, transphobic, sexually suggestive or otherwise offensive pictures or other materials

**5 Cyber bullying and harassment** is defined as the use of the internet and/or mobile technology to harass, humiliate, embarrass or otherwise target or cause harm to another. Cyber bullying can take many forms including, and not limited to:

- harassment – repeatedly sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages.
- denigration – sharing information about another person that is fake, damaging and untrue with the purpose to ridicule them.
- trolling – using extreme and offensive language to cause reactions of distress in the victim.
- impersonation– hacking into someone’s email or social networking account to use their online identity to post vicious or embarrassing material.
- outing and trickery– sharing personal information about another or tricking them into revealing secrets and forwarding it to others.
- cyber stalking – repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm, harassment or intimidating messages. This may be illegal.
- exclusion – intentionally leaving someone out of group messages, and other online engagement

**6 Victimization** is defined in the Equality Act as treating someone badly because they have done a ‘protected act’ (or because you believe that a person has done or is going to do a protected act). A ‘protected act’ is:

- Making a claim or complaint of discrimination (under the Act).
- Helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information.
- Making an allegation that you or someone else has breached the Act.
- Doing anything else in connection with the Act.

## **7 Responsibility of the SOAS Community**

7.1 All members of the SOAS Community can help to prevent bullying and harassment by: exercising personal accountability for their own behaviour, being sensitive to the reactions and needs of others and ensuring that their conduct does not cause offence

- discouraging bullying and harassment by others, holding them to account if such behaviour is witnessed and making it clear that such conduct is unacceptable
- supporting colleagues and peers who are taking steps to stop bullying and harassment

7.2 The School is responsible for:

- taking steps to eliminate bullying and harassment and other unlawful discrimination, as well as to actively promote equality to provide a collegiate, lawful and harmonious working environment;

- taking appropriate action when it is aware that bullying or harassment may be or is taking place;
- raising awareness to help members of the SOAS Community identify and deal with bullying and harassment.

7.3 All members of the SOAS community are personally liable for their actions, which in some instances could lead to criminal or civil action in the Courts under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Equality Act 2010 or other relevant legislation, such as the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

## **8 Taking Action Against Bullying and Harassment**

8.1 Bullying and harassment are abusive acts of power that can but do not necessarily always follow conventional hierarchies, i.e. someone can be bullied by someone junior to them or at the same level, and staff may be subject to bullying by students as well as students by staff or other students. The School's zero tolerance policy applies to all members of our community, without distinction.

8.2 The School is committed to taking appropriate steps to deal with any behaviour, intentional or unintentional, that constitutes bullying or harassment. Allegations of bullying and/or will be subject to confidential and impartial investigation under the relevant SOAS staff or student disciplinary procedure. Where such allegations of bullying or harassment are founded, there will be clear disciplinary consequences. For students, these can include a range of sanctions, including temporary or permanent exclusion. For staff, consequences may include dismissal for gross misconduct. Such investigations and disciplinary processes will follow the protocols established in our Staff Disciplinary and Student Discipline procedures and will at all times comply with the General Data Protection Requirement framework.

8.3 The School encourages everyone who experiences or witnesses bullying or harassing behaviour to come forward, by:

- contacting one of the School's Dignity Advisors, who will be able to offer advice on pathways to pursue a complaint and seek resolution, as well as support with strategies for minimising the damaging effects of bullying and harassing behaviour;
- raising the matter with your line manager or a trusted member of the department or directorate management team or a member of senior management;
- getting in touch with the HR Employee Relations team or your trade union representative if you are a member of staff or with the SU if you're a student;
- using Report and Support to report anonymously and to seek advice and support;

8.4 If you are a staff member or PhD researcher, counselling and emotional support is available from the Employee Assistance Programme. If you are a

student, you can seek advice and support from Student Advice and Wellbeing.

8.5 Those with responsibility for staff and students, including but not limited to Heads of Department, Professional Services Directors and other managers, are encouraged to make use of informal means of addressing disclosures of bullying and harassment. Such means include informal meetings with the parties involved in the complaint in order to examine and reflect on the impact of the individuals' conduct, and to caution the individuals accused of behaviour that is experienced as bullying or harassing, prior to formal action being pursued if there is not a change in behaviour. This should not, however, be a substitute for the pursuit of a formal complaint where there is a serious breach of acceptable behaviour.

8.6 Staff and students are encouraged to use bystander intervention to step in if they witness bullying or harassing behaviour. This includes approaching the individual who is manifesting this behaviour and making them aware that their behaviour is unacceptable, making it evident that the behaviour has been witnessed and may be reported. Staff and students are also encouraged to report any behaviour that they consider to constitute bullying or harassment, either directly to a Dignity Advisor or senior manager of the School's management team or anonymously by using Report and Support.

8.7 Stalking, sexual assault and any form of hate speech, for example homophobic or racist abuse, are criminal offences. Any member of staff or student who is found, after investigation, to have perpetrated these offences will be subject to sanctions that include permanent exclusion and dismissal for gross misconduct under our Staff Disciplinary and Student Discipline Regulations.

8.8 The School's Dignity Advisers offer a first point of contact for support and advice and can accompany those wishing to pursue a complaint through the informal and formal routes for raising and resolving complaints.

## **9 Monitoring of Bullying and Harassment Cases**

- Anonymised information about the number, nature and outcome of bullying and harassment cases will be recorded and reported to the Equality and Diversity Committee on a termly basis. This will draw together information from:
  - HR on formal grievances and disciplinary cases
  - Student Discipline on formal complaints and disciplinaries
  - Governance on anonymous reporting via Report and Support

## **10 Further Information**

If you have any queries regarding this policy or its application or an alternative format of this document, please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager on [dignity@soas.ac.uk](mailto:dignity@soas.ac.uk).