

# Dignity at Work and Study Guidance Note

## Informal Approach to Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour - Staff

If someone has behaved inappropriately towards you, or you have witnessed such behaviour, the best action in the first instance is to take care of yourself and your own mental health before deciding what to do. How you deal with a situation will depend on a number of things, not least the severity of the behaviour that you have experienced or witnessed. For some issues it may be appropriate to deal with the matter informally. In other situations, it may be more appropriate to commence a formal process at the outset. Sometimes just talking it over with a friend might help. If you decide on an informal approach, when, or if, you feel up to it, and only ever when you feel safe to do so, use open and constructive communication to try and sort the problem out. If you feel confident enough you can approach the person concerned and talk it through. If you feel you can't speak to them in person you may want to try e-mailing to let them know what went wrong. This may be enough to make them aware of their behaviour and stop it from continuing.

### How do I get started?

- Keep a note of the details of the inappropriate behaviour
- It may help to talk it over with someone such as a friend, colleague or someone from the [Workplace Dignity Network](#).
- Look through the Guidance Notes on how to deal with having a difficult conversation. This may give you some tips on how to get started.
- Write down what you want to say, so you don't miss anything

### Who can help me if I want to take an informal approach?

[Human Resources Adviser / HR Partner](#)

Supervisor/Line Manager/Head of School

[Trade Union Representative](#)

[Mental Health First Aiders](#)

[Workplace Dignity Network](#)

Workplace Mediation Service (via HR)

[Staff Network Groups](#) – BeWell, Disability, LGBTQ+, Menopause, New Staff, Parents & Carers, Race Equality, School Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Leads, Women's Development, Workplace Dignity.

If you just want to talk things over confidentially before deciding on how to proceed you will also get support from:

- Employee Assistance Programme – 0808 168 2143
- [University Chaplaincy](#)
- [University Counselling Service](#)
- Occupational Health Service (via HR)
- Alternatively you may wish to contact your GP or a trained counsellor

Additional information on the support which is available can be found on the [Workplace Wellbeing section on StaffNet](#).

Although any of the above will treat your concerns with the strictest of confidence they may have to seek advice from other sources to ensure that you receive the correct advice. This will never be done without your prior consent. In the event that several informal issues are raised against a specific member of staff these will be looked at to ascertain whether or not they represent a pattern of behaviour. If so, this will be dealt with accordingly.

## How Can they help?

### Human Resources

HR can give advice informally and confidentially on these types of issues. Asking them for advice doesn't mean that matter will be dealt with under a formal process. The HR Partner for your area can be found [here](#).

### Supervisor/Line Manager/Head of School

Your line manager can give advice informally and confidentially on these types of issues. Asking them for advice doesn't mean that matter will automatically escalate to a formal process. They can also sign-post you to other forms of support.

### Trade Union Representatives

Trade Union representatives have experience of providing confidential advice and support to staff in a wide range of matters. They can help you navigate internal University processes and signpost you to other forms of support. More information can be found [here](#).

### Mental Health First Aiders

The network of Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) are here to:

- Provide a listening ear and create a safe place to discuss mental health concerns
- Initial support if you or someone you know are experiencing mental health difficulties
- Signpost and support you to access local mental health services
- If you need to talk to someone.

MHFAs are not therapists and don't diagnose people. MHFAs are trained to listen, reassure and respond, even in a crisis. More information can be found [here](#).

### Workplace Dignity Network

Members of the network can provide you with the opportunity to talk to someone who has had specialist training and who is willing to listen and offer help and support, whether or not you want to make a formal complaint. All discussions with the Workplace Dignity Network will be treated in the strictest confidence and allegations will not be made known to any other department or individual within the University without your express consent. More information on the Workplace Dignity Network can be found [here](#).

### Workplace Mediation Service

Mediation is an effective way of resolving disputes and can be particularly effective when used in the early stages of a conflict arising. It relies on the self determination of both parties to resolve their differences which can be empowering and less stressful than more formal protracted processes. It involves an independent third party, a qualified Mediator, who helps both sides to reach an agreement.

Mediation is a voluntary process which sits outside any formal processes and will only take place if both parties agree. It is confidential and the content of a Mediation meeting is not disclosed to anyone outside

the meeting, even in the event that no resolution is found and a more formal process is subsequently followed.

The role of the Mediator is to help parties to reach a solution to their problem and to arrive at an outcome which both parties are happy to accept. Mediators are entirely independent; they avoid taking sides, making judgements or giving guidance. They are responsible for developing effective communication and building consensus between the individuals who are in dispute.

Mediation requests can be made directly to the Mediation Team e-mail [mediation@abdn.co.uk](mailto:mediation@abdn.co.uk) or through discussion with your HR Partner to ensure that Mediation is appropriate depending on the circumstances.

More information on the University mediation services can be found [here](#).

#### Staff Networks

We have a range of Staff Equality Networks which provide a safe space to staff to discuss equality, diversity and inclusion issues. Information regarding the networks can be found [here](#).