

# Dignity at Work and Study Guidance Note

## Formal Approach to Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour – Students

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 are 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. However, if you have tried this approach and the behaviour continues, or the issue is very serious to begin with, you may wish to use a more formal approach. Any action you may have taken informally will be considered within the formal process.

Who can help me if I want to take a formal approach?

### Student Support Advisers

Student Welfare Officer (Institute of Education in Medical and Dental Sciences only)  
Personal Tutor/Regent/Supervisor

What will the process be if I take the formal approach?

### Complaint against a member of staff

If you submit a formal complaint in relation to your treatment by a member of staff it will be dealt with under the Disciplinary process. You will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss your concerns and to clarify any points that have been raised. This meeting will normally take place with a member of the HR Team, and the member of staff who has been appointed as the Investigating Officer. The Investigation Officer will be someone who is not linked to the allegations that you have raised and will normally be the Head of School or the employee's Line Manager.

You can be accompanied to the meeting. Additional meetings will be held with anyone who has been witness to the behaviours concerned as well as the person against whom you have raised the formal process. It may be that you are required to attend more than one meeting if further clarification is needed following the other interviews.

Following the conclusion of the Investigation, a recommendation will be made regarding whether the matter should be referred to a full disciplinary hearing. If so, you will be told when the matter has been concluded but not necessarily what the outcome has been for the person involved.

In the event that your complaint is not upheld, you will be informed of the reasons for this. It may be that even though formal action is not taken, other recommendations or actions may be implemented as a result of your complaint. If your complaint is not upheld and you are dissatisfied with the outcome you can write to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), and details of this will be included in your outcome notification.

During this formal process, you can receive support from any of the sources previously identified within the policy.

#### Complaint against a student

If you are a member of a Students' Union affiliated sports club or society and the complaint relates to another member, complete this [form](#) or email [SUcomplaints@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:SUcomplaints@abdn.ac.uk). More information is available [here](#).

If you submit a formal complaint in relation to misconduct by another student, that does not relate to their membership of a Students' Union sports club or society, you will be appointed a Case Manager to co-ordinate your complaint and they will be your main point of contact. If necessary, you will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss your concerns and to clarify any points that have been raised. This process will be co-ordinated by the student conduct team and will be dealt with under the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (non-academic). This meeting will normally take place with a senior member of staff who will be conducting the Investigation into the misconduct raised. The Investigator will be someone who is not linked to the allegations that you have raised.

You can be accompanied to the meeting by a supporter and the Student Union can assist you with representation at such meetings. Additional meetings will be held with anyone who has been witness to the behaviours concerned as well as the person against whom you have raised the formal process. It may be that you are required to attend more than one meeting if further clarification is needed following the other meetings. Action is only taken after discussion with you, unless it is determined that the case involves high-risk (in which case, you would be informed of this).

Following the conclusion of the Investigation, an outcome will be reached under the Code which may require progression to a Review Panel.

In the event that your formal complaint is not upheld, you will be informed of the reasons for this. It may be that even though disciplinary action is not taken, other recommendations or actions may be implemented as a result of your complaint. If your complaint is not upheld and you are dissatisfied with the outcome you can make a complaint through the University Complaints Handling Process, and details of this will be included in your outcome notification.

During this formal process, you can receive support from any of the sources previously identified within the policy.