

Unacceptable Actions Policy

It is recognised that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. The circumstances surrounding an individual's interaction with the University may result in the individual acting in an unacceptable way. Individuals who display unacceptable behaviour may still have a legitimate case, and the University must therefore treat all individuals fairly and seriously.

The University places the same expectations in regard to behaviour on everyone who interacts with the University. The University also has a duty of care to ensure the safety and welfare of all staff and students. Consequently, the University will not tolerate individuals who behave in an unacceptable manner.

Everyone should feel able to raise any matter of concern without any risk of disadvantage, however, where the University deems an individual's behaviour to be unacceptable the University take appropriate action as necessary, for example:

- In the case of an applicant, unacceptable behaviour may result in consideration of an application being terminated or an offer of admission being withdrawn;
- In the case of a student, unacceptable behaviour may be dealt with under the Code of Practice on Student Discipline;

Where it is deemed necessary to take steps to address unacceptable behaviour, the individual will be advised of this and attempts will nevertheless be made to complete the relevant process although contact with the individual may be restricted.

1 Unreasonable levels of contact

Where an individual engages in communication which is unreasonably persistent or demanding in terms of volume or frequency this can make it difficult for the University to effectively manage processes and can place unreasonable demands on time and resources. This can occur over a short period (for example a number of telephone calls in one day or over the lifespan of a process when an individual repeatedly makes long telephone calls or submits unreasonable amounts of information which has already been provided or is irrelevant to the process being undertaken). The level of contact will be deemed to be unacceptable when the amount of time spent talking to an individual on the telephone or responding to, reviewing and filing emails or written correspondence impacts on the University's ability to carry out the process or to attend to other business.

The University has a responsibility to protect staff from such behaviour, whilst also allowing processes to continue, where possible. Where levels of contact are felt to be unacceptable, the individual will be informed of any decision to restrict their access, their right of appeal and any procedures for reviewing such a decision to restrict contact. Any decision to restrict

contact will be made by a member of senior management and the individual will be advised in writing of the decision and the reasons for it. The University's decision on this will normally be final and the individual will be advised of their right to ask the SPSO to review the University's decisions.

2 Unreasonable demands

The University will make every attempt to complete processes within the published timescales and to respond to reasonable requests from individuals. However, staff should not be subjected to unreasonable demands. A demand becomes unreasonable when it would impact on the work of staff in such a way that it would substantially limit their ability to undertake their normal duties. Examples of such unreasonable demands might include:

- Repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale
- Insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff when that is not possible
- Repeatedly changing the substance of a complaint or appeal or raising unrelated concerns.

3 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

The University will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour towards staff. In addition to any physical threats, aggressive or abusive behaviour can include behaviour or language (whether verbal or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused. Inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations are also considered to be unacceptable behaviour. If physical violence is threatened or used, the University will always report this to the Police. In cases where other behaviour is considered abusive or aggressive, the individual concerned will be advised that this is unacceptable and will be asked to moderate their behaviour and will be warned that if this unacceptable action or behaviour continues that the University will cease to respond and may involve disciplinary action, where appropriate.

4 Unreasonable use of University processes

Individuals have the right to enter into more than one process with the University if this is appropriate. However, this becomes unreasonable when the effect of the repeated requests or additional requests is to harass staff or prevent the University from pursuing its legitimate business or from implementing a legitimate decision. It is important that individuals are able to access the appropriate procedures, however in exceptional circumstances, the University may refuse to consider repeated request(s). Any decision to refuse to consider a repeated request will be made by a member of senior management and the individual will be advised in writing of the decision and the reasons for it. The University's decision of this will normally be final and the individual will be advised of their right to ask the SPSO to review the University's handling of the matter.

5 Unreasonable persistence and/or refusal to accept a decision

Where an individual persistently refuses to accept a decision taken or refuses to accept explanations regarding what can or cannot be done in regard to their issue and/or continues to attempt to re-open a matter without presenting any new evidence, this will be considered unreasonable. The University will advise the individual when consideration of the matter has been completed, and of the individual's right of review by the SPSO. Further communication thereafter is likely to result in contact being restricted and/or further communication being ignored.