



Bullying in the Working or Learning Environment

Q&A

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Q1. What is bullying?

- A1.** The University's Policy "*Bullying in the Working or Learning Environment*" defines bullying as repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed toward a member of the University community that creates a risk to health and safety. Unreasonable behaviour means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all of the circumstances, would expect to humiliate, intimidate or threaten another person. Such behaviour can include an individual's or group's actions or practices which could humiliate, intimidate or threaten another person.

Q2. How does the University regard bullying?

- A2.** ACU supports the principles of justice and equity as stated in the University's Mission. The University also aims to foster an environment that generates professional relationships among all members of the University community based on dignity and respect for the individual. This means that bullying is considered unacceptable behaviour at ACU.

As expressed in the Mission ACU aspires to promote a working and learning environment in which staff and students feel safe and are treated with courtesy and respect. The University also has an obligation under Occupational Health and Safety Legislation in relation to bullying.

Q3. Who does the bullying policy apply to?

- A3.** The policy applies to the activities of all University staff during the course of their employment whether they take place on or off campus, all students, religious members of the University and any agents or contractors engaged by the University (and their employees).

Q4. Is bullying considered to be discrimination and/or harassment?

- A.4** Bullying may also amount to unlawful discrimination or harassment if it is based on one of the grounds described in the University's Discrimination and Harassment Policy, such as race, age, sex or disability.

Q5. What are examples of bullying Behaviour?

- A5.** It is not possible to define all behaviour and/or cases in terms of what constitutes bullying. The University's policy sets out some examples in terms of what may be considered bullying behaviour, including:

- abusive, offensive or demeaning language
- teasing or regularly making a person the brunt of practical jokes/pranks
- spreading derogatory innuendo or rumours about a person
- interfering with or damaging a person's property
- displaying written or pictorial material which degrades or offends an individual
- repeatedly criticising or making comments intended to discredit or undermine a person or devalue their work
- outbursts of anger or aggression
- physical or verbal intimidation or threats
- making phone calls or sending letters, sms messages or emails that are abusive, threatening or offensive
- threatening a student with low grades or a staff member with dismissal, disciplinary action or demotion without proper justification
- excluding or isolating a member of the University community
- "ganging up".

This list is not exhaustive. Other types of behaviour may also constitute bullying.

Q6. What can I do if I consider I have been or are being bullied?

A6. If you feel that you are being bullied, there are actions which you can take that may resolve the problem. In the first instance you should:

- Refer to the University's policy "*Bullying in the Working or Learning Environment*" (available on the Human Resources website at <http://my.acu.edu.au/21581>), in particular part B of the policy sets out what you can do if you believe you are being bullied?.
- Practical steps you may consider taking include:
 - Not ignoring the circumstances where you feel you are being bullied.
 - Being aware of and avoiding any particular circumstances that enable bullying behaviour to occur - if that is possible,
 - If you feel comfortable then ask the person to stop their behaviour,
 - Make it clear to the person that you find the behaviour offensive or unwelcome,
 - Contact your local Harassment and Discrimination adviser as soon as possible for confidential assistance.
 - You may speak to your nominated supervisor (or her/his supervisor if you see her or him as the source of the bullying or that they condone the behaviour by others).
 - Contact your Human Resources Consultant.
 - Notify a grievance under the *University's Grievance Management Policy and Guidelines* which is available on the Human Resources Website at <http://my.acu.edu.au/21109>.
- Sometimes these issues can be upsetting. If you require confidential counselling or other psychological support related to what you feel has been an experience of bullying, you may contact the University's Employee Assistance Program on 1800 81 87 28 (for 24 hour confidential support and counselling).

Q7. What is the role of the nominated supervisor and staff in relation to bullying?

A7. If issues or allegations of bullying arise in their area of responsibility the nominated supervisor and staff member(s) will take all reasonable steps to deal with them promptly in accordance with the University Policy ("*Bullying in the Working or Learning Environment*"), and the University's grievance management policies and guidelines, in order to try to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

Q8. Is it worth raising the issue if no one else has witnessed the bullying behaviour?

A8. Even if no one has witnessed the behaviour you should speak to someone about your concerns. The University takes these matters very seriously and there are a number of actions that can be taken to assist you to deal with the issue whether it has been witnessed or not.

Q9. How do I know the bullying won't get worse if I speak to someone about the issue or make a complaint?

A9. The policies relating to Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying and Grievance Management clearly state that victimisation of any party involved in a complaint, including the grievant, the respondent, witnesses or investigators, will not be tolerated and can result in disciplinary action under the *University's Code of Conduct and Enterprise Agreement*.

Q10. What happens if someone makes a complaint about me?

A10. If you have been advised that a grievance has been lodged concerning you, you have certain rights and responsibilities in responding. Please refer to the brochure "*Has someone lodged a Grievance against you?*" for more information about the process. A copy can be downloaded from the Human Resources website under Grievance Management Brochure for Respondent at <http://my.acu.edu.au/21105>.

Q11. How do I find out further information about bullying?

A11. You can refer to the Human Resources Directorate website for policy/guideline information, discuss the policy with your nominated supervisor, telephone or meet with a Harassment and Discrimination Adviser or contact your local Human Resources Consultant.