

Anti Harassment and Bullying Policy**AIMS**

Richmond and Hillcroft Adult Community College aims to create a working environment that respects the dignity and rights of all employees, and where individuals have the opportunity to realise their full potential. The aim of the College's policy is to support this ethos and to strive to prevent harassment and bullying from occurring.

We extend this principle to students and to all people with whom the College interacts.

The College believes that an atmosphere of free and open discussions is essential to its life and work achieving its mission. Such an atmosphere can be achieved only if all concerned behave with necessary tolerance and avoid offensive or provocative action and language. An environment free from hostility enables individuals to contribute far more effectively to their studies or work. Every member of the College's community has the responsibility to protect that right and ensure that the dignity of individual students and employees is not abused.

Harassment and bullying are known to cause fear, stress, anxiety, sickness, absenteeism, poor performance, low morale and may cause student withdrawals and higher employee turnover. The College seeks to develop a studying and working environment in which harassment and bullying is known to be unacceptable and where individuals are confident enough to bring complaints without fear of ridicule or reprisal.

The College seeks to comply with current legislation and best practice in creating a culture that is free from harassment and bullying. The College's management will take all allegations of harassment or bullying very seriously and will be responsible for ensuring that an individual's allegations are fully investigated and resolved, informally if possible, but formally if necessary. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible by all concerned but an investigation will involve fact-finding interviews of the complainant, the alleged harasser and any relevant witnesses. A justified complaint may result in action being taken under the College's Disciplinary Procedures. Equally, a complaint which is made and is considered by the College to be frivolous or malicious may result in disciplinary action being taken against the complainant.

DEFINITIONS**Harassment**

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to relevant protected characteristics, which are sex, gender reassignment, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age, that:

- has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person; or
- is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating his/her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him/her, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

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In some circumstances, first-time conduct which unintentionally causes offence will not be harassment but it may become harassment if the conduct continues after the recipient has made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to him/her.

A single incident can be harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

Harassment can also include unreciprocated and unwelcome comments, actions, suggestions or physical contact that is found objectionable and offensive. In deciding whether harassment has occurred, it is not the intention of the perpetrator that is paramount, but whether the behaviour could be deemed unacceptable by a reasonable person or disadvantageous to the recipient of the unwanted conduct.

It is therefore the duty of every member of the College's community to be aware that he/she could unintentionally be harassing another member of the College's community and should take responsibility for his/her behaviour and if necessary modify it.

Forms of harassment may include those listed below. This list is not exhaustive and should not be considered as being so:-

- Physical contact ranging from touching to serious assault;
- Oral and written harassment through jokes, offensive language, emails, gossip, defamation, letters, social media etc;
- Visual display of inappropriate material such as posters, cartoons, graffiti, obscene gestures, etc;
- Isolation or non co-operation whilst studying or working, exclusion from social activities;
- Coercion ranging from pressure for sexual favours through to being put under duress to participate in a lobbying or support group for political, religious, or discriminatory activities etc.;
- Intrusion by pestering, spying, stalking, etc;
- Intimidatory conduct involving abuse of authority, power or coercion.

Bullying

Bullying is often defined as behaviour that is repeated, offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and/or an abuse or misuse of power that is meant to undermine, humiliate or injure the person on the receiving end.

Examples of bullying may include:

- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour.
- Circulating emails that are critical about someone- picking on them or setting them up to fail
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Unfair treatment
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position

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- Unwelcome sexual advances- touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected.
- Making threats or comments about job security without foundation.
- Preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotions or training opportunities.
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism.

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