



AEE DIGNITY AND RESPECT POLICY
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Dignity and Respect

1. Policy Statement.....	2
2. Purpose of Policy	2
3. Scope.....	2
4. Roles and Responsibilities.....	2
4.1 AEE's Responsibilities	2
4.2 Individual Responsibilities	3
5. Support and Advice.....	3
5.1 Support for Staff.....	3
5.2 Support for Students.....	3
6. Seeking Resolution.....	4
6.1 AEE's commitments.....	4
6.2 Complaints	5
6.2.1 What happens if I want to make a complaint?	5
6.2.2 What is the Complaints procedure	5
6.2.3 Who Handles My Complaint?	6
6.2.4 What Information Do I need To Provide For My Complaint?	6
6.2.5 Is My Complaint Tracked?	6
6.2.6 Our Commitment.....	6
How long do I have to make a complaint?.....	6
Appendix A: Definitions	8
Appendix B: Acceptable Management Practice	13
Appendix D: Guidance on Investigating Complaints	14

Dignity and Respect

1. Policy Statement

The Academy of Enterprise Education is a virtual learning environment but we are committed to ensuring all staff, students and visitors are valued for their contribution. It is our expectation that all students, staff, contributors conduct themselves in a manner which ensures that everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

2. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Confirm AEE's commitment to providing an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- Confirm AEE's commitment to providing an environment which free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation (for definitions of these terms please see the Equality Act 2010).
- Outline the informal and formal mechanisms and support which are available to staff and students if they perceive that they have been harassed, bullied or victimised.

3. Scope

This policy covers all members of the AEE Faculty and Students:

- All members of staff holding a contract of employment, academic contributors and staff from other organisations or third party partners of AEE.
- All students.
- Individuals working or acting on AEE's behalf including suppliers of goods and services.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 AEE's Responsibilities

To ensure successful implementation of this policy, AEE commits to:

- Take action to ensure that all AEE team members, clients and students are aware of this policy through appropriate communication means such as the AEE website and other publications, as well as the provision of training, where appropriate.
- Promote a culture of community in which every member is treated with courtesy and respect.
- Ensure that complaints of harassment, bullying or victimisation are treated seriously and with utmost sensitivity.

- Monitor complaints by protected characteristics and report these annually.

4.2 Individual Responsibilities

To ensure successful implementation of this policy, all individuals must:

- Make themselves familiar with this policy and their responsibilities under it.
- Participate in training which supports the implementation of this policy.
- Behave in a positive manner at all times to ensure AEE is a community within which all members are treated with courtesy and respect.
- Not participate in, or condone, any acts that could be perceived to constitute discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.
- Modify behaviour should they become aware that they have behaved unacceptably in relation to this policy.
- Managers have a responsibility to address any incidents of bullying, harassment or victimisation that they observe or witness even though no complaint may have been made by the subject.

5. Support and Advice

5.1 Support for Staff

Staff who feel that they have been bullied, harassed or victimised or have been accused of bullying, harassing and victimising others can seek support and advice from the following contacts and services:

- [Human Resources](#)
- Dignity and Respect Advisers (see Appendix B for more information)
- [Employee Counselling Service](#)
- Trade Union Representatives
- Equality and Diversity Manager
- [Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

5.2 Support for Students

Students who feel that they have been bullied, harassed or victimised or have been accused of bullying, harassing and victimising others can seek support and advice from the following contacts and services:

- [Student Counselling](#)
- [The Advice Hub at the Students Association](#)

- Dignity and Respect Advisers (see Appendix B for more information)
- [AEE Chaplaincy](#)
- Adviser of Studies or Academic Counsellor
- Equality and Diversity Manager
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

6. Seeking Resolution

6.1 AEE's commitments

AEE will treat all records concerned with allegations or complaints made under this policy as confidential and complaints will be investigated impartially and as timeously as possible. AEE commits itself to treat all parties involved with fairness and sensitivity. It should be noted that proven instances of bullying, harassment or victimisation will be treated very seriously and may result in formal action, including the issuing of disciplinary sanctions, being taken under the relevant procedures.

6.1.1 Personal Action

If you feel that you have been or are being harassed, bullied or victimised you are encouraged to make it as clear as you can to the person(s) causing the offence that this is the case. If you ask the person causing offence to stop this behaviour at an early stage this may be sufficient to end the behaviour. In some cases it may be that the individual is not aware that the behaviour is inappropriate or it may be the case that the individual's behaviour is being misinterpreted. Examples of personal action that may be considered include:

- A conversation with, or written correspondence to, the other person which explains what it is you consider to be unacceptable about their behaviour and requests that he/she stop behaving in this way.
- A request that bullying and harassment issues and/or AEE's Dignity and Respect Policy is discussed at a team meeting to ensure that all staff within the team understand the standards of behaviour expected and their responsibilities under the policy.

Before taking personal action you may wish to seek advice or support from:

- A designated Dignity and Respect Adviser
- A colleague or friend
- An HR Manager or Adviser
- Your line manager or Head of Department/School/Directorate

- A trade union representative
- Another of the support mechanisms listed in section 5 above

6.1.2 Mediation

AEE has a network of trained mediators who can be engaged at an early stage to assist with issues of conflict, including issues that would be considered under this policy. Mediation is a voluntary process where an impartial third party enables two or more people to work through issues of conflict or disagreement with the aim of improving the working relationship. The focus within mediation is on moving forward rather than attribution of blame. As mediation is a voluntary process, individuals have a choice as to whether they wish to participate. Where individuals agree to mediation, they should engage in the process in a positive and constructive manner with a view to achieving resolution.

Anyone interested in exploring mediation should contact Human Resources in the first instance. Students who are interested in exploring mediation should contact the Director of Learning in the first instance kyle.andrews@aoee.co.uk.

6.2 Complaints

6.2.1 What happens if I want to make a complaint?

1. Please visit our website aoee.co.uk/contact and Click the support pop up, enter your details and the message you wish to send.
2. This will then be received by our student support team who will send an initial response to you within 24 hours.
3. You can also email support@aoee.co.uk if you wish to do so.

6.2.2 What is the Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email or in writing. We have a two-stage complaints procedure. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage 1: Frontline response

We will always try to respond to your complaint quickly, within five working days if we can. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at stage 2.

Stage 2: Investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage 1.

We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they need investigation. We will acknowledge your complaint within three working days. We will confirm the points of complaint to be investigated and what you want to achieve. We will investigate the complaint and give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than 20 working days unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

6.2.3 Who Handles My Complaint?

1. All complaints are handled in-house by our student support team.
2. If your complaint is regarding a specific pathway, the complaint will be escalated to our Director of Learning and Teaching.
3. We will notify you if your complaint needs to be escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 and you will receive an email to confirm this, along with confirmation of when to expect a response.

6.2.4 What Information Do I need To Provide For My Complaint?

Please provide us with the following information for your complaint. This will aid us in resolving your complaint as quickly as possible.

1. Details of how we can contact you
2. A clear description of your complaint
3. Details of what you would like us to do to rectify the situation
4. If needed, copies of any relevant supporting documentation

6.2.5 Is My Complaint Tracked?

Yes, all complaints are tracked and stored internally.

6.2.6 Our Commitment

In some cases our customer support team may need to contact you for more information. AEE will thoroughly investigate your complaint and offer a fair response that will take into account all the information available to us and you as a customer. We may not always provide the answer you are looking for, but we'll make sure we offer a clear explanation for our decision. We will always use complaints and feedback from our customers to improve our services so the situation doesn't rise again. Please note that a complaint is never taken lightly.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, if your complaint is within our 14 day money back guarantee, then a full refund will be

provided. However, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about; or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain.

Appendix A: Definitions

This Appendix provides definitions of the terms “harassment”, “bullying” and “victimisation” for the purposes of enabling staff and students to make informed judgements about whether particular behaviours may fall under the scope of this policy.

Harassment

Harassment is deemed to have occurred when a person engages in unwanted conduct, potentially related to a protected characteristic of another person as defined by the Equality Act 2010, which has either the purpose or effect of violating another person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. Harassment may include conduct of a sexual nature.

It is important to note that harassment may be deemed to have occurred even where there has been no intent. Members of AEE community must therefore be aware that the perception of the complainant is very important and what may be deemed to be acceptable behaviour by one person may not necessarily be acceptable to another.

In defining the types of behaviour that may be judged to constitute harassment the key issue is whether the behaviour could reasonably be considered as having the effect defined above, even if others feel they would not be offended by the behaviour. The perception of the complainant does not automatically mean that the complaint will be upheld however as those responsible for managing or investigating the complaint must make an objective assessment as to whether the behaviour complained of can reasonably be regarded as harassment.

In some circumstances, such as where physical or extreme verbal violence has occurred, isolated incidents of unwanted behaviour may be deemed to be harassment. In other circumstances, behaviour may be deemed to be harassment where it is repeated or sustained.

In addition to the potential consequences for employment and study of breaching this policy, types of harassment may also be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and may even constitute a criminal offence. Individual staff members who have been deemed to have harassed others may be personally named in legal complaints and may be liable to personally pay compensation to a successful claimant.

The harassment may be related to a particular protected characteristic as defined by

the Equality Act 2010. The protected characteristics which are relevant are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

It is possible for the harassment to occur in a targeted manner towards an individual or group on the grounds of:

- Someone's actual characteristics (e.g. a person may be harassed because they are disabled.)
- Someone's perceived characteristics (e.g. a person may be harassed because it is considered that they are disabled.)
- Someone's link to one of the personal characteristics via someone else (e.g. a person may be harassed because they have a partner or family member who is disabled.)

It is possible however that harassment is not targeted at a particular individual or group of individuals but rather that within a particular team or group a culture exists which permits offensive or stereotypical jokes. In these circumstances an individual may make a complaint on the basis that this culture creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment even if no- one within the team or groups holds the particular characteristic(s) in question.

Harassment may take place face to face, by writing or in written or electronic communications including via social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Examples of the types of behaviour that may amount to harassment include:

- Racist language or jokes or derogatory comments about national origin
- Unwelcome sexual advances which may include touching, invasion of personal space, requests for sexual favours
- Comments which imply that gender impairs a person's ability
- Excluding people from conversations, meetings or social events on the basis of sexual orientation
- Jokes about a person's disability
- Insensitivity to religious beliefs such as the use of sectarian language

- Homophobic jokes.

Bullying

Bullying is deemed to have occurred when a person engages in offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour which intentionally or unintentionally undermines, humiliates, denigrates or injures the recipient of the behaviour. As with harassment, it is important to note that bullying may be deemed to have occurred even where there has been no intent.

Bullying is normally characterised by a pattern of behaviour. One off minor issues of impatience, pre-occupation or lack of courtesy do not constitute bullying. In some circumstances, such as where physical or extreme verbal violence has occurred, isolated incidents of unwanted behaviour may be deemed to constitute bullying.

Bullying should be differentiated from the legitimate exercise of management or supervisory responsibility. See Appendix C for more information.

In addition to the potential consequences for employment and study of breaching this policy, types of bullying may also be unlawful and may even constitute a criminal offence. Individual staff members who have been deemed to have bullied others may be personally named in legal complaints and may be liable to personally pay compensation to a successful claimant.

Bullying may take place face to face, by writing or in written or electronic communications. Examples of the type of behaviour that may amount to bullying include:

- Picking on people and unreasonably criticising their performance.
- Unreasonable withdrawal of authority and responsibility.
- Imposing unrealistic objectives and deadlines or changing objectives without reasonable justification.
- Isolation or non co-operation at work or in class; exclusions from meetings, seminars or work-related social events etc.
- Aggressive behaviour or conduct, physical or verbal.
- Reacting to a minor issue with the same vehemence as a major one.

Victimisation

Under the scope of this policy, victimisation involves treating someone less favourably than another because:

- An individual has made a claim of harassment or bullying under this policy or a claim of discrimination under another policy.

- An individual has complained that they may have been discriminated against, harassed or bullied or that AEE's equal opportunities policies have been breached in some way.
- An individual has assisted another who is making such a claim, through providing evidence or some other form of support for the person.

Victimisation is entirely unacceptable behaviour that can have a detrimental effect on a work and study environment and may lead to reluctance to report acts of harassment or discrimination.

In addition to the potential consequences for employment and study of breaching this policy, types of victimisation may also be unlawful and may even constitute a criminal offence. Individual staff members who have been deemed to have victimised others may be personally named in legal complaints and may be liable to personally pay compensation to a successful claimant.

Victimisation may take place face to face, by writing or in written or electronic communications. Examples of the type of behaviour that may amount to victimisation are similar to those contained under the bullying and harassment sections above.

Appendix B: Acceptable Management Practice

"Bullying", "harassment" and "victimisation" as defined in Appendix A should be differentiated from an acceptably assertive management style. It is legitimate for a manager to provide clear feedback and take action in relation to a member of staff's conduct or performance provided that this is done in a fair, consistent and reasonable way which is in line with existing University policies. In this case any action taken by a manager to address performance or conduct concerns will not be considered as breaching this policy.

There may also be times where a manager makes a decision or issues an instruction which the member of staff does not agree with or considers unreasonable. This may not necessarily fall into the definition of "bullying", "harassment" or "victimisation" and may best be dealt with under alternative dispute resolution procedures. In such circumstances members of staff should be aware that even if they do not agree with the decision made or action taken it may be considered to be in AEE's best interests and therefore this needs to be balanced with any individual concerns.

Appendix D: Guidance on Investigating Complaints

General principles

- All matters under investigations will be treated with due confidentiality and sensitivity
- Investigations should be conducted in a consistent and equitable manner, albeit that there may be variations in process resulting from specific factors of the complaint

The complaint should be recorded in writing and include the following:

- Clear, specific allegations against named people.
- Dates, times and witnesses (if appropriate).
- Factual descriptions of events rather than assumptions or opinions.
- Direct quotes if they are remembered or relevant.
- A brief description of the context of the incident(s).
- An indication of how each incident made the complainant feel.
- An explanation why he or she considers that the complaint amounts to bullying, harassment or victimisation if this is not clear.
- Details of how the complainant has shown the harassment to be unwelcome.
- Any other documentary evidence.

Interviewing the Complainant

- Be sensitive to the feelings of the complainant and recognise their feelings even if you personally do not think they are justified. The complainant will probably find it difficult to talk about the incident to a third party.
- Avoid questions that might imply that the complainant may have consciously or unconsciously invited the harassment.
- Avoid pre-judging until you have heard from both parties.
- Repeating the facts may be embarrassing for the complainant so it may be advisable to get a written statement of events which would enable you to refrain from repeating questions.
- It can be useful for the complainant to have someone with them to provide support during the interview. This could be a Dignity and Respect Adviser, colleague, fellow student or trade union representative.
- Interviewing the Respondent

- The respondent should be provided with the full details of the complaint when a full statement from the complainant has been obtained.
- Avoid pre-judging until you have given the respondent an opportunity to present their side of the story.
- Avoid any suggestion that you condone the behaviour complained of or that the complainant was being over sensitive.
- It can be useful for the respondent to have someone with them to provide support during the interview. This could be a Dignity and Respect Adviser, colleague, fellow student or trade union representative.