

**Glasgow University Union**  
**Policy on Harassment and Bullying**

**October 2013**

**1. Introduction**

1.1. All members of and visitors to Glasgow University Union (GUU) have a right to socialise, as well as employees the right to work, in an environment free from harassment and bullying. Harassment and bullying may contravene civil law, criminal law or both. Even if civil or criminal law has not been contravened, harassment and bullying are fundamentally incompatible with the standards of conduct required in GUU and will not be tolerated. GUU expects all its members and visitors to treat each other with respect, courtesy and consideration.

**2. What is Harassment?**

2.1. A person subjects another to harassment when he or she engages in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating that other person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for another person.

2.2. Examples of harassment include among others:

- |                                |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. Race.                       | f. Sexual orientation |
| b. Colour.                     | g. Religious belief   |
| c. Nationality.                | h. Appearance         |
| d. Ethnic or national origins. | i. Age                |
| e. Gender.                     | j. Disability         |

2.3. Harassment can have devastating consequences for the individual concerned and therefore all members of GUU have a responsibility to prevent harassment if it involves other members, visitors or employees of the GUU.

2.4. The following are typical examples of harassment:

- a. Verbal or physical threats or abuse, including derogatory or stereotypical statements or remarks.
- b. Innuendo, mockery, lewd or sexist/racist jokes or remarks.
- c. Personal comments about a person's physical appearance or character, which cause embarrassment or distress.
- d. The use of offensive language in describing someone with a disability, or making fun of someone with a disability.
- e. Displaying or circulating racially offensive or sexually suggestive or offensive material.

- f. Making or sending unwanted, sexually suggestive, hostile or personally intrusive phone calls, e-mails, texts, faxes, letters or electronic communications.
- g. Leering, rude gestures, touching, grabbing, patting or other unnecessary bodily contact such as brushing up against others.
- h. Unwarranted, intrusive or persistent questioning about a person's relationship status, personal life, sexual interests or orientation, or similar questions about a person's racial or ethnic origin, including their culture or religion.
- i. Unwelcome attention, such as pestering, overly familiar behaviour, or other unwelcome verbal or physical attention.

### 3. **What is Bullying?**

3.1. Bullying is the abuse of power or position to threaten, abuse, intimidate, insult or criticise; to humiliate and undermine a person so that their confidence and self-esteem is damaged. It may happen in public or in private and may range from overt forms such as shouting to more subtle forms such as marginalising and ignoring a person. It may arise from the personal style of the bully and attacks may be irrational, unpredictable and unfair.

3.2. Examples of bullying include:

- a. Violence
- b. Shouting and sarcasm with malicious intent
- c. Constant destructive criticism
- d. Behaviour that is ignoring, patronising or ostracising.

3.3. Criminal law issues:

In some circumstances, harassing behaviour can amount to a criminal offence. For example, touching, grabbing, patting or other unnecessary bodily contact might amount to the offence of sexual assault (under section 3 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009), while unwanted and sexually suggestive communications might amount to the offence of communicating indecently (section 7 of the same Act). A number of the other examples listed above could also result in police involvement and even prosecution. Conviction for any offence is a serious matter which can have damaging consequences for any person's future career. In particular, conviction for a sexual offence would result in the individual concerned being subject to the sexual offences notification procedure (commonly referred to as being placed on the sex offenders' register), with all the consequences this entails.

**None of the above behaviours will be tolerated in GUU. They will constitute grounds for complaint and possible disciplinary action.**

**If you witness grounds for complaint, please refer to the Complaints Procedure.**