



Prevention of Harassment and Bullying Policy

September 2023

To be reviewed in September 2024

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1 Prevention of Harassment and Bullying Policy

1.01 Policy Statement

The Islamic College aims to provide a stimulating and supportive environment for both students and staff to enable them to actualise their personal potential and flourish their creativity. The College acknowledges that such an environment cannot be created or sustained if staff and/or students are subject to harassment, intimidation, aggression or coercion.

The Islamic College is fully committed to the principles of equal opportunities and regards personal harassment as a discriminatory and unacceptable form of behaviour.

Accordingly, the College will treat any incident of harassment as a serious matter that may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against the perpetrator.

All members of the Islamic College's staff are responsible for ensuring that personal harassment of other staff members, students, College contractors, or visitors to the College does not occur.

To help to create a safe environment for all those who work or study at the College or just visit it, the College, through the Students' Safeguarding Officer (SSO) engages some qualified members of staff in appropriate training programmes which equip them with the skills required for dealing with personal harassment. Apart from its role in arranging for appropriate training programmes, SSO is available to offer, in confidence, advice, information and support to all staff, students, College contractors and visitors as required.

Harassment of College staff or students outside the College premises or outside working hours may nevertheless fall within the scope of this policy and its procedures.

In addition to any penalty imposed by the College, those responsible for harassing others may be subject to criminal and/or civil proceedings. Nothing in this policy and its procedures will prevent the College's members of staff and students from exercising their legal rights.

1.02 Definition

Harassment may take many forms, but essentially, it manifests itself in a particular type of conduct (including the use of language) which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may take place in many different contexts and with respect to many aspects of an

individual, including but not limited to) the individual's race and ethnicity, disability, religion or beliefs, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital or social status.

Harassment may involve single, sporadic or continuing acts of intimidation, coercion, bullying, verbal or physical abuse, or the creation and/or maintenance of an offensive working environment for others.

1.03 Details of types of personal harassment.

1.04 Types of Harassment

1.04.01 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and involves unwanted and unwelcome attention of a sexual nature. This may be physical or verbal or involve the denigration of an individual on sexual grounds or by sexual means. Some examples of sexual harassment are:

- Indecent assault
- Deliberate physical contact to which the individual has not consented or has not had the opportunity to object to it.
- Offensive or derogatory language alluding to a person's private life or sexual behaviour or orientation by innuendo, jokes or remarks
- Provocative suggestions
- Pressing an individual to accept unwelcome invitations
- The display of suggestive or pornographic material
- Unwelcome repeated telephone calls, letters, emails or other forms of communication, including what is available on social media.

These examples should not be seen as exhaustive: any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for the recipient, may be regarded as sexual harassment.

1.04.02 Racial harassment

Racial harassment is any behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, relating to race, colour, ethnic, national or religious origin directed at an individual or group, which is found to be offensive or objectionable to the recipient and which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. Some examples include:

- Physical attack
- Verbal abuse, threats, derogatory name-calling, racist insults and jokes
- Ridicule of an individual on racial or cultural grounds
- Exclusion from normal workplace interactions or social events
- Unfair allocation of work and/or responsibilities

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- Racist graffiti/insignia or display of racist material
 - Inciting others to commit any of above

1.04.03 Bullying

Bullying in the workplace damages individuals' health and lives and undermines productivity and effective work relationships. Bullying can occur when a superior uses the opportunity of position to intimidate a subordinate. It may also happen in peer relationships or, in rare cases, may affect someone in a superior position. Bullying can be broadly defined as behaviour, which consistently undermines another's confidence, reducing feelings of self-esteem and self-worth. Such behaviour may be deliberate, as in a planned campaign, or may arise out of the bully's own immaturity, lack of interpersonal skills and poor self-confidence. It may be psychological and may be tacit and subtle. It could also take physical or verbal forms and may be explicit. Bullying may also be exacerbated by the bully's own susceptibility and reaction to stress. Workplace bullying consists of the abuse of power and the regular use of inappropriate behaviours at the expense of another individual. Some examples of these behaviours include:

- Physical or verbal abuse, including threats
- Psychological intimidation, humiliation, excessive and/or unreasonable criticism
- Unjustifiable removal of areas of responsibility
- Ostracism ("sent to Coventry")/exclusion
- Malicious lies, unfounded rumors
- Setting unreasonable and unrealistic goals/targets
- "Academic bullying": i.e. asserting a position of intellectual superiority in an aggressive, abusive or offensive manner; threats of academic failure; public sarcasm and humiliation.

Note 1

Legitimate, constructive and fair critique/critical assessment of a staff member's conduct or behaviour at work will not be considered to be bullying or harassment. The College will not condone bullying under the guise of "strong management" but, conversely, regards an assertive management style as acceptable provided that staffs are treated with respect and dignity.

1.05 Other forms of harassment

The following are further examples of specific types of harassment but, once again, they should not be considered as providing an exhaustive list:

- Harassment in respect of a recipient's disability or impairment

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- Harassment in respect of a recipient's sexuality
 - Repeated gibes in respect of personal traits or appearance, practical jokes or invasions of privacy, any or all of which may cause physical or psychological distress

1.06 Guidance for Staff

1. If students experience harassment at the College, they will be given full support of the Islamic College in putting an end to that harassment.
2. Options to enable students to deal with harassment, ranges from simply indicating that the behaviour is unacceptable to making a formal complaint through the Grievance Procedure.
3. If a student feels that harassment is taking place then a written log should be indicating all relevant incidents and behaviour which has caused trouble or discomfort to him/her. Notes should be made about the place, dates and times, names of any witnesses and what was said and done. This information will be useful if it is decided that a complaint should be made.
4. Students should act quickly and not delay until working conditions become intolerable or their personal well-being is seriously affected. In some cases, it may be that the person against whom a complaint is made is unaware that their behaviour is inappropriate or offensive, or it may be that their words or actions have been misinterpreted. In cases like this, a misunderstanding can be cleared up promptly.
5. If the student is able to speak up at the time and tell the person to stop, and doing so does not in any way put the student in harm's way, then he/she should be direct and express his/her displeasure, disagreement, disapproval of the conduct of the bully or harasser. Wherever possible and reasonable, the students who feel they have been harassed should say explicitly what they feel and show objection to the individual's behaviour and conduct. Even if the other person intended to act in an unacceptable way, a swift and clear statement from the student may be enough to put a stop to the problem. If this cannot be done by the student alone the assistance should be taken from a colleague, friend or representative member of staff, etc.
6. Alternatively, the students who have been subjected to some act of harassment could write a letter to the harasser, clearly identifying the behaviour/conduct they found to be offensive and, if the behaviour/conduct is continuing, requesting that it should stop immediately. If the students in question decided to write to the harasser, they should keep a dated copy of the letter they send for possible future reference. This will be useful in the event of a formal complaint.
7. If the students who have been subjected to some form of harassment don't want to

confront the harasser face to face but still want the matter to be dealt with informally, they have the following options; they can

- Ask a representative, colleague or a member of staff to go with them to speak to the harasser on their behalf or to go in their place
- Get advice from the Students' Safeguarding Officer. SSO is an adviser who can explain the alternative types of action available to students, can assist them in writing a suitable letter to the harasser if they wish to do so or can approach the harasser directly but informally on their behalf
- Take the issue up informally with their immediate through the SSO or with a more senior member of staff if they wish to do so.
- Consult the Registry

8. If the harassment continues and the students who have been at the receiving end of it, have not already done so, they should contact the Safeguarding Officer without further delay. The Safeguarding Officer will deal with their case in confidence and advise them on how to proceed. The Officer will explain how the students can make a formal complaint if they decide to do so.

9. If informal methods of dealing with the issue of persistent harassment have not succeeded in stopping it, the students who have been at the receiving end of this unacceptable conduct may decide to make a formal complaint by raising a grievance. This should follow the Grievance Procedure (available) and should include full details of their complaint of harassment, including descriptions of the incident(s), dates, times and the names of any witnesses.

10. Students who are victims of harassment are under no obligation to pursue the matter informally first and seek other options. They may raise a Grievance at any stage.

11. At any point in the grievance process students who are victims of harassment can seek advice or support. In dealing with the issue, a friend may accompany the complainant to relevant meetings, if appropriate.

12. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that all enquiries and complaints are dealt with in confidence. Accusations of harassment are potentially defamatory and could provide grounds for possible legal action; it is therefore essential that complainants as well as recipients of complaints observe strict confidentiality.

Note 2

If students are physically attacked they should seek help immediately. If they have been sexually assaulted, it is particularly important that they should seek advice and medical assistance immediately. Any one of the suggested contacts named in these guidelines will willingly offer students support and will help them decide what course of action they should adopt.

If students who have been victims of harassment decide to consult any of these contacts, no one else will be involved without their permission: These students will be advised what to do, but the choice will always remain with the students alone and no one else.

In cases where it becomes clear that a student has been the victim of a crime then the College's advice to the victim is to consider reporting the incident to the police as soon as possible. It is important for the victim's own protection and that of others, that an offender is caught.

Note 3

If any student is concerned that his/her behaviour, manner or attitudes might be regarded as harassing to others, they should consult the Safeguards Officer for discussion and advice.

1.07 Guidelines for Managers and Supervisors

If the bullying or harassment is being perpetrated by a student, the college will respond in accordance with the Student Conduct and Discipline procedures as stated in the handbook. If bullying and harassment is perpetrated by a member of staff, the issues will be addressed by the Complaints and Grievance procedure.

A manager, supervisor, head of section or other senior member of staff who is approached informally by a complainant:

- Should respond sensitively and reasonably to the complainant.
- Should respect and accept a complainant's decision to have the matter dealt with on a wholly confidential basis (though it should be explained that an anonymous complaint can only be pursued in more general terms and may be less likely to effect the desired change in behaviour).
- Should arrange, if appropriate and agreed by the complainant, a meeting between the parties involved. At this meeting the person against whom the complaint has been made will be given details of the nature of the complaint and the opportunity to respond. If all parties accept that a problem exists, steps to remedy the situation and prevent it from recurring will be agreed and notified to both parties.
- Should advise the complainant (if appropriate) that the complaint is so serious that the matter should be dealt with formally by way of the Grievance Procedure. If the complainant is not able or willing to accept this advice, the matter will continue to be dealt with informally as far as is reasonably practical.
- Should provide advice and information on how to make a formal complaint if necessary.
- Should ensure that a person who brings a reasonable complaint suffers no

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- detriment by doing so.
- Should maintain appropriate written records.

1.08 Grievances and Discipline

A formal complaint should follow the normal grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, except that any panel, committee or other body set up to investigate the case must include member(s) who have recognised experience in equal opportunities issues.

Serious cases of harassment will be treated as gross misconduct and may lead to dismissal if proved. Less serious cases may be dealt with under the normal disciplinary provisions.

In proven cases, it may not be considered appropriate for the harasser and complainant to continue working in the same area, department or unit or over joint projects. Wherever possible, the College will redeploy the harasser rather than the complainant.

Unless a complaint of harassment can be shown to be based on knowingly false information or was made with malicious intent, the complainant will suffer no loss or detriment as a result.

Supporting Policy to read: NON-ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

Supporting Members of Staff, The Safeguarding Officer, The Registry, Dr Mesbahi as the Islamic College link tutor or Dr Siebers as Middlesex University link tutor.

Note 4

Being under the influence of alcohol or otherwise intoxicated will not be admitted as a mitigating factor or an excuse for harassment and may be regarded as an aggravating feature.

Abuse of a position of authority will be considered an aggravating feature of harassment.

The College recognises the possibility that complaints may be brought with mischievous or malicious intent and this may provide grounds for disciplinary action against individuals so doing.

All those involved in a complaints procedure, including the complainant(s), should observe the strictest confidentiality, bearing in mind that accusations of harassment may constitute grounds for legal action.

The term "staff" is used throughout this document to refer to all employees of the College, whether from faculty or any other groupings. Similarly, "managers" and "supervisors" are used to describe all those with a responsibility for the management of staff, in whatever category.