



WRITTEN POLICY STATEMENT FOR DEALING WITH ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

OVERVIEW

Oxford Science Studies (OXSS) believes its students have the right to enjoy their lessons and work towards their educational goals without their classes being disrupted by the misconduct of another student.

In addition, we believe that our staff have a responsibility to behave in a professional manner at all times and have the right to be treated respectfully by both students and their own colleagues on our courses.

We make the parameters of unacceptable behaviour very clear to our staff and the student body during the induction process. We address incidents of general misconduct in the classroom and on activities as and when they might occur. Any health and safety issues - such as those related to the misuse of fire and smoke alarms - are also made very clear during induction, as are OXSS rules regarding smoking, vaping and drinking alcohol.

The Student Handbook and Staff Handbook have additional elements that may relate to what OXSS deems to be acceptable behaviour, however, this policy should be used as a specific guide by Staff and Students alike.

HARASSMENT, BULLYING, AND DISCRIMINATION

OXSS is committed to equal opportunities and to providing an environment in which all staff, students and visitors are treated with dignity and respect, and in which they can work and study free from any type of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. All staff and students are responsible for upholding this policy and should act accordingly; offensive behaviour will not be tolerated.

Harassment may be unlawful where it is carried out on certain protected grounds, including sex, marital status, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age.

DEFINITION OF HARASSMENT

A person subjects another to harassment where he or she engages in unwanted and unwarranted conduct which has the purpose or effect of:

- a) Violating the other's dignity, or
- b) Creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive environment for the other

Harassment may involve repeated forms of unwanted and unwarranted behaviour, but a one-off incident can also amount to harassment.

The other person's motives are not the main factor in deciding if behaviour amounts to harassment. Just because certain behaviour may be acceptable to the alleged harasser does not mean it is not harassment.

Reasonable and proper management instructions given in a fair and proper way, or reasonable and proper review of a member of staff's or student's work and/or performance will not constitute harassment. Behaviour will not amount to harassment if the conduct complained of could not reasonably be perceived as offensive.

Examples of behaviour that may amount to harassment:

- Suggestive comments or body language;
- Verbal or physical threats;
- Insulting, abusive, embarrassing or patronising behaviour or comments;
- Offensive gestures, language, rumours, gossip or jokes;
- Humiliating, intimidating, demeaning and/or persistent criticism;
- Open hostility;
- Isolation or exclusion from normal work or study place, conversations, or social events;
- Publishing, circulating or displaying pornographic, racist, sexually suggestive or otherwise offensive pictures or other materials;
- Unwanted physical contact, ranging from an invasion of space to a serious assault.

The above is not exhaustive. All examples may also amount to bullying, particularly when the conduct is coupled with the inappropriate exercise of power or authority over another person.

Many of the examples of behaviour may occur through the use of internet, email or telephone. Being under the influence of alcohol or similarly intoxicated will not be admitted as an excuse for harassment or bullying.

BULLYING

Bullying is a form of harassment. It may be characterised by offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. It may not be based, or may not appear to be based, on gender, race or any other specific factor.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination may be unlawful where it is carried out on certain protected grounds, including sex, marital status, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or age. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and it may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Direct Discrimination occurs where someone is put at a disadvantage because of a protected characteristic (as above). For example, rejecting an applicant on the grounds of their race because it is considered they will not "fit in" could be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs where an individual is subject to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice which puts them at a particular disadvantage because of, for instance, their sex or race. For example, a

height requirement would be likely to eliminate proportionately more women than men. If this criteria cannot be objectively justified for a reason unconnected with sex, it would be indirectly discriminatory on the grounds of sex.

Discrimination also includes victimisation (less favourable treatment in response to certain action taken to raise concerns about discrimination) and harassment (dealt with above).

STUDENT PROTECTION PROCEDURES FOR DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (DSL)

Once any incident has been reported, the DSL then becomes immediately responsible for dealing with allegations or suspicions of abuse at their centre, with, if appropriate, the Managing Director (Nick Strugnell, nick@oxss.co.uk) and/or or external agencies.

They will document all information and may take appropriate action at the centre.

Staff will seek advice from the DSL before taking any action. The DSL (James Blencowe) is responsible for the welfare on courses and will therefore write a report on any incidents.

- If it is further deemed necessary, statutory agencies may be consulted*. The following information may be required by these agencies:
 - Staff name, address, telephone number, position/role within OXSS.
 - As many details about the student as possible, e.g. name, date of birth, address, home telephone number, school.
 - What the reasons are for telephoning, e.g. the suspicions, allegations, what has been said, giving details of times and dates and the student's emotional state, or what the student has said in response to the suspicions/concerns. Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
 - A description of what's been done so far.
 - Where possible, referral to the police or social services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded. For Social Work, this will normally be the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or Emergency Duty Team (EDT) if outside normal office hours. Details of the LADO and EDT responsible for each area will be made available to the Child Protection Officers during their induction.

The relevant statutory agency will then give instructions as to what to do next and take the responsibility for further action.

* Statutory agencies include:

- Local Social Services Emergency Duty Team or Local Authority Designated Officer
- Child Protection Unit or Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) Team.
- NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0800 800 500

RECORDING SUSPECTED OR ACTUAL INCIDENTS

No matter what happens to a suspicion, allegation or actual incident of abuse, (that is whether or not it is processed through a statutory agency or not), all details must be recorded. This should, ideally, be done in the format described in this document. However, important information to record includes:

- The date and time of disclosure, suspicion, allegation or actual abuse incident
- Details given to you about the above, e.g. date & time of when things occurred
- An indication of the parties involved
- Details of what action was taken
- Details of reporting on, e.g. who to (statutory agency) and when

If it is decided not to consult with a relevant statutory agency, a full explanation of why must be documented. Recording should be factual, that is no reference made to your own subjective opinions. Records should be kept completely confidential and secure (always locked away) and only shared with those who need to know about the suspicion, allegation or actual incident of abuse.

WHAT TO DO UPON SUSPICION OR DISCLOSURE

What to do

- Stay calm – do not become angry or upset
- Listen, hear and believe
- Give time to the person to say what they want
- Reassure & explain that they have done the right thing in telling. Explain that only those professionals who need to know will be informed.
- Act immediately in accordance with the procedure in this policy
- Record in writing as near as verbatim what was said as soon as possible – see idealised version of notes to be taken during disclosure
- Record your report. Inform the DSL immediately and ensure the student is safe.

What not to do

- Don't panic. Don't over-react. Don't dismiss what the student is telling you.
- Don't probe for more information. Questioning the student may affect how the student's disclosure is received at a later date.
- Don't make assumptions, don't paraphrase and don't offer alternative explanations
- Don't promise confidentiality to keep secrets or that everything will be OK (it might not)
- Don't try to deal with it yourself (do not confront the alleged abuser).
- Don't make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- Don't 'gossip' with colleagues about what has been said to you
- Don't make a student repeat a story unnecessarily