

Working Together Respectfully Guidance

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1. Introduction

The University is committed to providing a fair, supportive and accessible student casework service. We want everyone who contacts us to feel respected, listened to and treated with dignity. At the same time, we have a responsibility to ensure that our staff are able to work safely and effectively.

This Guidance explains how we expect people to behave when interacting with the Student Casework Team (and any other staff involved in student casework procedures) and what you can expect from us in return. Its purpose is to support respectful communication, enable concerns to be considered calmly and fairly, and set clear boundaries where behaviour makes this difficult.

We recognise that people who contact the Student Casework Team may be experiencing stress, frustration, anxiety or disappointment. We will always seek to communicate in a way that is sensitive to individual circumstances and that supports constructive engagement. However, we cannot accept behaviour that causes harm to staff or undermines our ability to provide a fair service to others.

This Guidance also explains how we may respond where behaviour becomes unacceptable or unreasonably impacts our service.

2. Our principles

When working with students, applicants and members of the public, we aim to:

- Treat everyone fairly, consistently and with respect
- Communicate clearly, calmly and professionally
- Resolve issues as efficiently as possible through positive engagement
- Seek to understand individual circumstances and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- Explain concerns about behaviour and provide an opportunity for change
- Use restrictions only when necessary and as a last resort
- Record and handle all actions in line with data protection and record-keeping requirements

Decisions about serious or ongoing restrictions will be reviewed by appropriate senior staff to ensure consistency and fairness.

3. Who and what this Guidance applies to

This Guidance applies to **anyone who contacts the Student Casework Team**, including:

- Registered students
- Applicants
- Former students
- Members of the public
- Anyone supporting or representing one of the above
- Other members of the University community including staff

It covers **all forms of interaction**, including (but not limited to):

- Emails and letters
- Telephone and video calls
- Online forms
- In-person meetings
- Any public comments or communications directed at staff in connection with casework matters, including online

4. What you can expect from the Student Casework Team

You can expect us to:

- Treat you with courtesy, professionalism and respect
- Be impartial and transparent about our role and processes
- Explain what information we need and why
- Keep you informed about next steps and timescales
- Make reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- Respond appropriately where behaviour raises safeguarding or wellbeing concerns

5. What we expect from you

We ask that everyone engaging with the Student Casework Team, whether in writing or verbally:

- Treat staff and other parties involved in the case with courtesy and respect
- Communicate honestly and provide relevant information when requested
- Allow reasonable time for responses
- Accept that you may not always agree with decisions or advice provided
- Raise concerns or disagreements in a calm and respectful way

If you are finding aspects of the process difficult, we encourage you to tell us so we can try to help.

6. Unacceptable behaviour

Most interactions with the Student Casework Team are positive and constructive. However, some behaviours can make it difficult or impossible for us to perform our role safely and fairly.

Unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal or written threats
- Harassment or bullying
- Aggressive or intimidating behaviour
- Discriminatory or derogatory language
- Persistent or excessive contact that disrupts our work
- Unreasonable demands or refusal to accept clear explanations

This list is not exhaustive. We may take action whenever behaviour affects staff wellbeing or our ability to provide a service.

7. Protecting our staff from abuse

The University does not tolerate the following behaviours under any circumstances:

- Threats of harm
- Aggressive behaviour or language
- Harassment
- Violent behaviour
- Stalking
- Discriminatory language or behaviour

If any of these behaviours occur, even once, we will take immediate action. This may include:

- Ending the interaction
- Restricting or stopping direct contact
- Suspending or closing a case
- Taking action under the [Student Conduct Policy](#) if the person is a registered student
- Reporting the behaviour to appropriate authorities where necessary

Our priority in these situations is the safety and wellbeing of staff.

8. Unreasonable demands

We understand that people may wish for quick or detailed responses. While we aim to be helpful and responsive, behaviour may become unreasonable where someone:

- Repeatedly requests actions outside the scope of our role
- Repeatedly asks for information or outcomes that have already been clearly explained
- Demands outcomes that the University is unable or unwilling to provide

Such demands can prevent us from working effectively and fairly across all cases.

9. Unacceptable levels of contact

Contact may become unacceptable where someone:

- Makes repeated contact without allowing time for a response
- Sends excessively long or frequent correspondence or sends the same communication to multiple individuals within the University creating unnecessary work
- Attempts to contact individual staff outside agreed channels (for example via personal social media accounts)
- Copies large numbers of people into correspondence to apply pressure

Contact should always be proportionate, relevant and respectful.

10. Controlling or coercive behaviour

We will not accept behaviour that seeks to influence our work through:

- Threats of self-harm or harm to others

- Attempts to intimidate or emotionally manipulate staff
- Coercive or controlling behaviour

Where risk to life or serious harm is identified, we may contact emergency services and/or signpost to appropriate professional support.

11. Refusal to engage constructively

Our casework processes rely on cooperation. We may be unable to continue with a case where someone:

- Refuses to provide requested information
- Ignores reasonable communication
- Repeatedly challenges process rather than engaging with substance
- Attempts to bypass agreed procedures

12. Disrespectful, aggressive or abusive behaviour

This includes:

- Shouting or hostile language
- Personal insults or demeaning or discriminatory comments
- Speaking over staff or attempting to control interactions
- Online abuse or inappropriate public commentary

While we recognise that people may be under significant strain, behaviour that harms or intimidates staff will not be tolerated.

13. How we respond to unacceptable behaviour

We normally take a **three-step approach**:

1. We explain why the behaviour is a concern and ask for it to stop
2. If the behaviour continues, we issue a formal warning,
3. If it persists, we may restrict or manage contact

Actions may include:

- Limiting how or when contact can be made

- Restricting contact to a single named staff member
- Returning or not responding to correspondence containing unacceptable content
- Placing a case on hold or bringing it to an end

In serious cases, we may move directly to restrictions without prior warning.

14. Reasonable adjustments

We are committed to accessibility and inclusion. We encourage individuals to tell us if they need reasonable adjustments to communicate effectively with us.

However, reasonable adjustments do not require us to accept abusive, threatening or unsafe behaviour.

15. Concerns about the application of this Guidance

If you believe this Guidance has not been applied correctly, you may raise a concern through the University's [Complaints Procedures](#). This is separate from any complaint or appeal relating to the substance or outcome of a case.

16. Conclusion

This Guidance exists to support **positive, respectful and safe engagement**. By working together constructively, we can ensure that concerns are addressed fairly and that support is available when it is most needed.