

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Purpose

As an equal opportunities employer, QRS supports a working environment for individuals in which dignity at work is paramount. The purpose of this policy is to support a working environment and culture in which bullying and harassment is unacceptable.

Personnel

This policy applies to all staff working for QRS either on a full or part-time, on temporary, fixed-term or permanent contracts.

Area

This policy will apply to all premises and all QRS personnel working on our behalf, either on or off-site.

Principles

QRS recognises that all employees have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity and respect. QRS seeks to support all staff in their professional development and aims to provide a happy and fulfilling environment in which to work. This policy promotes the respectful treatment of staff and the protection of our employees from bullying and harassment at work. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated by QRS in any form.

Each member of staff carries personal responsibility for their own behaviour in relation to this policy and are responsible for ensuring that their conduct is in line with the standards set out in this policy. Staff should report to their appropriate line manager or a Director, any incidents of bullying and harassment which come to their attention.

Allegations raised regarding bullying and harassment will be taken seriously and treated confidentially. QRS gives an assurance that there will be no victimisation against an employee making a complaint under this policy or against employees who assist or support a colleague in making a complaint.

Bullying and harassment may be treated as a disciplinary offence and, where allegations are founded, may lead to dismissal. Disciplinary action may also be taken if a complaint is found to have been submitted maliciously or in bad faith.

What is bullying and harassment?

Harassment, in general terms is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Bullying or harassment may be by an individual against an individual (perhaps by someone in a position of authority such as a manager or supervisor) or involve groups of people. It may be obvious or it may be insidious. Whatever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual. *Appendix 1 gives examples of unacceptable behaviours that can be considered to constitute bullying and harassment.*

Responsibilities of staff and managers

All staff have personal responsibility for their own behaviour and for ensuring that they comply with the policy. There are a number of things that staff can do to help prevent harassment, such as:

- ⇒ Set a positive example by treating others with respect.
- ⇒ Be aware of QRS's policy and comply with it.
- ⇒ Do not make personal comments.
- ⇒ Do not accept behaviour that may be offensive when directed against you or others, and take positive action to ensure that it is challenged and/or reported.
- ⇒ Be supportive of colleagues who may be subject to bullying and/or harassment.
- ⇒ If you are subject to bullying and/or harassment but do not feel able to talk about it yet, make notes including dates and details which will help you recall events clearly at a later date.

All managers have a responsibility to implement this policy and to bring it to the attention of staff in their work area, in order to establish and maintain a work environment free of harassment. They must:

- ⇒ Treat a complaint seriously and deal with it promptly and confidentially, giving the employee and the alleged perpetrator full support during the whole process.
- ⇒ Set a positive example by treating others with respect and setting standards of acceptable behaviour; also, promote a working environment where harassment is unacceptable and not tolerated.
- ⇒ Tackle, and where possible, resolve incidents of harassment.
- ⇒ Consult with their line manager or a Director at any time for advice and support.

Role of Directors

The Directors have a responsibility to ensure that the policy is followed, fairly and consistently. Their duties will involve:

- ⇒ Advising managers on the application of the policy.
- ⇒ Advising managers and staff where individuals feel that they are being harassed or bullied in the course of their employment.
- ⇒ Ensuring the effective implementation of the policy.
- ⇒ Monitoring incidence of bullying and harassment and initiating appropriate action.
- ⇒ Reviewing and amending the policy as necessary.

Informal procedure

Employees are encouraged to discuss any concerns about harassment with their line manager or a Director.

Actions you can take yourself:

- ⇒ Keep a diary of all incidents – records of dates, times, any witnesses, your feelings etc. Keep copies of any correspondence that may be relevant, for example reports, letters, memos, notes of any meetings that relate to you.
- ⇒ In many instances it is possible for the complaint to be resolved quickly by explaining directly to the harasser the effect their behaviour is having and that you want it to stop.
- ⇒ You should always make it clear that if it continues you will make a formal complaint.
- ⇒ If the behaviour of a person is aggressive it may be necessary to walk away making it clear you do not wish to be spoken to in that way.
- ⇒ If you do not feel able to raise your concerns with the person directly, you could write to them stating that you feel harassed, state where and when this occurred and how you wish to be treated. Always keep a copy.

Formal procedure

If informal attempts to resolve the situation have not been successful, or if you feel that the acts complained may not be resolved informally, this may be raised with your line manager or a Director, who will advise on the next steps, for example, formal investigation.

A decision to conduct a formal investigation should be made by a Director.

Where an investigation is deemed appropriate, it should be conducted independently by two senior people (at least one Director). This investigation and any action arising from it will be carried out in line with QRS's disciplinary procedure.

If, following investigations, it appears that harassment/misconduct has occurred, the investigating people will recommend the appropriate course of action in line with the QRS's disciplinary procedure. A detailed response will be given to both parties outlining the results of the investigation and what action, if any, is being taken in respect of the complaint. This may result in a meeting under QRS's disciplinary policy being convened and the behaviour being viewed as serious misconduct. This may also apply in cases where the complainant's behaviour is deemed to be malicious.

QRS has set a target of one week for completing formal investigations. However, given the complexities of some issues, this may not always be achievable. Timescales will be discussed in more detail with the individual concerned.

Follow up

Following resolution of both formal and informal harassment complaints, a record should be kept of the incident. Where harassment did occur, it is important to check that the harassment has stopped and that there has been no subsequent victimisation. Monitoring will be carried out on a regular basis.

Confidentiality

All employees involved with the investigation and any subsequent process are required to respect the need for confidentiality.

All complaints, associated correspondence and interviews will be treated in strict confidence. Breaches in confidentiality will be subject to disciplinary action.

Appendix 1

Examples of unacceptable behaviours that can be considered to constitute bullying and harassment:

- ⇒ Bullying by exclusion – this may take the form of social isolation and/or exclusion from meetings.
- ⇒ The deliberate withholding of information with the intention of affecting a colleague's performance.
- ⇒ Unfair and destructive criticism.
- ⇒ Intimidating behaviour.
- ⇒ Verbal abuse and spreading of unfounded rumours.
- ⇒ Humiliation or ridicule.
- ⇒ Setting of unrealistic targets which are unreasonable and/or changed with limited notice or consultation.
- ⇒ Copying memos that are critical about someone to others that do not need to know.

This list is not exhaustive.



These policies supplement your terms of employment but are not of contractual effect. Their purpose is to explain the Company's current policies and procedures but they may be subject to change without notice if changes are considered appropriate by the Company or if there are changes in relevant legislation.