

Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy

At Aspire Scientific, we are committed to ensuring that all our employees are treated with dignity and respect and treat others in the same way. We believe that everyone has the right to work in an environment that is free from any form of harassment and/or bullying.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. We may amend it at any time and decide to follow a different procedure where we consider it appropriate.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Sexual Harassment Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy. Every employee, whether a victim or not, is encouraged to report harassment or bullying of any nature. Any employee found to be harassing or bullying a colleague will be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

Harassment

The harassment of any of our employees is unacceptable behaviour. Anyone found to be in breach of this policy will be liable to disciplinary action, which could result in dismissal without notice.

Harassment involves subjecting an individual to conduct that is unwanted and where the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity, or creating an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to the victim.

Harassment also occurs where the perpetrator engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and that conduct has the purpose or the effect referred to above. An individual of any gender may be the victim of sexual harassment.

Harassment can be intentional or unintentional. It is the effect on the victim that is important, not whether the perpetrator intended to harass them or not. Harassment or bullying is unacceptable even if it is unintentional.

Harassment may relate to:

- age (or perceived age);
- disability (past or present);
- gender reassignment;
- marriage or civil partnership;
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;

- maternity and pregnancy;
- trade union membership (or non-membership);
- part time or fixed term status; and
- willingness to challenge harassment (leading to victimisation).

The phrase 'relate to' is very wide and therefore covers harassment based on a perception of another person (for example, that the person is gay, or is disabled, whether or not this perception is correct and even if the perpetrator knows that their perception is wrong). The phrase also covers harassment that occurs because someone is associated with another person (for example, someone who is harassed because they care for a disabled person, or who is harassed because they are friends with a transsexual person, or a white worker who sees a black colleague being subjected to racially abusive language that also causes an offensive environment for them).

Whilst not an exhaustive list, forms of harassment include:

- physical contact and obscene or offensive gestures;
- 'jokes', 'banter', gossip, slander, offensive language, shouting and/or behaving in an intimidating manner;
- offensive, insensitive or sectarian songs or messages (including email);
- displaying posters or pictures, graffiti, emblems, flags, offensive emails and screen savers etc;
- isolation or non co-operation and exclusion;
- coercion for sexual favours and sexually suggestive remarks;
- pressure to participate in political/religious groups;
- intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking;
- continued requests to participate in social activities after it has been made clear that such requests are not welcome; and
- verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Harassment is unlawful in many cases and individuals may be held personally liable for their actions. In some cases, their behaviour may also be considered a criminal offence.

Bullying

Bullying may be described 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 may be physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct.

Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. Most people will agree on extreme cases of bullying and harassment but it is the 'grey' areas that may cause problems. At Aspire Scientific, unacceptable behaviour includes (this is not an exhaustive list):

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly but not exclusively because of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation);

- copying messages that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know, ridiculing or demeaning someone, picking on them, or setting them up to fail;
- unfair treatment, deliberately excluding a person from communications or meetings without good reason, overbearing or intimidating supervision, and/or other misuse of power or position;
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation;
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by constant criticism; and
- excluding a colleague from activities in which they would normally be included.

Legitimate, reasonable, and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to a worker in the course of their employment is not bullying.

Harassment and bullying procedure

All allegations of harassment and/or bullying will be dealt with seriously, promptly and, as far as possible, in confidence. Employees who feel they have been subject to harassment and/or bullying must not hesitate to raise their concerns in accordance with our grievance procedure. Any complaint following the formal grievance procedure should be made in writing to your line manager or the HR & Operations Manager and where possible include: the name of the harasser or bully; the nature of the harassment or bullying; dates and times when harassment or bullying has occurred; name of any witness to any incidents of harassment or bullying.

Aspire Scientific HR workstream

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