

# Sexual and Racial Harassment: Notes of Guidance for Staff and Students

## Policy

- 1 The Governors of the University will not tolerate harassment based on the sex, sexuality, ethnic origin or colour of its employees, students or other users of its services, and will take all necessary steps to ensure employees, students and service users have access to information regarding its policies and procedures as regards sexual and racial harassment and complaints arising there from. All victims of sexual and racial harassment will be assisted in attempting to prevent its continuation.
- 2 Sexual harassment is unreasonable behaviour that makes a person feel embarrassed, disadvantaged, demeaned, ridiculed or intimidated because of his or her sex or sexual orientation. This can take many forms including:
  - i comments about appearance
  - ii embarrassing jokes about sex or sexual orientation
  - iii offensive/pornographic pictures displayed in the workplace
  - iv unwanted physical contact
  - v demands or requests for sexual favours.
- 3 Racial harassment encompasses a wide variety of behaviour, the effect of which is to create a stressful or threatening environment in the manner similar to that described above. It can be an open display of hostility towards a person because of his or her ethnic origin or colour and can include:
  - i open expression of racist views
  - ii derogatory racist statements
  - iii use of racist abuse
  - iv repetition of racist jokes and offensive remarks.

## Sources of advice

- 4 If you are a member of staff: advice is available from your Dean or Head of Service or the Head of Personnel Services.
- 5 If you are a student: advice is available from the Head of the Centre for Student Affairs or a member of the Counselling Service staff.
- 6 If you are a user of University services: advice is available from the Clerk to the Governors in the first instance.

## Procedure

- 7 In attempting to provide an acceptable and effective framework within which action can be taken, the following concerns have been paramount:
  - i the procedure must not act as a barrier to victims but must also be rigorous and fair, complying with the laws of natural justice
  - ii stress to all parties should be minimised
  - iii speed of action and confidentiality is essential
  - iv timely informal action is preferable to formal action
  - v advice to employees, students and service users needs to be readily available from a number of different sources
  - vi counselling support should be available to both parties during and after the investigation of a complaint.

### **Informal action: staff and students**

- 8 If you do not feel able to approach the person yourself, seek advice from any of the people listed above. They may be able to speak informally on your behalf.
- 9 If you feel able to, approach the person yourself and ask him or her to stop the offending behaviour. If the harassment continues, put the request in writing and keep a copy.
- 10 Keep a written note of incidents over a period of days or weeks, including dates and times, and whether they were witnessed by other people. (In a case of severe harassment amounting to criminal assault, the police should, of course, be notified immediately.)
- 11 If you are able to confront the 'harasser' you should give him or her the opportunity either directly, or through a third party, to explain and amend the offending behaviour. You should keep a written record of what you have done.

### **Formal action**

- 12 Allegations of sexual or racial harassment may fall within the formal grievance or disciplinary procedures which apply to staff or students.

Further information about the formal procedures is available from the Clerk to the Governors or the Head of Personnel Services if a member of staff is involved.