



RCSI

Dignity and Respect Policy

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Definitions and Examples.....	2
3. Procedure.....	3
4. Sources of Support:	3
5. Right of Appeal.....	4



RCSI

RCSI Student Dignity & Respect Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to outline RCSI's policy guidance and procedures relating to Dignity and Respect in the RCSI environment. The policy sets out to achieve the following:

- To support good communications and to set standards of behaviour which are reasonably expected of a student healthcare professional, and in keeping with the RCSI Student Code of Conduct.
- To raise awareness of such a policy in relation to the prevention of bullying and harassment and the means by which to resolve these issues (formally or informally) as quickly and confidentially as possible.

Bullying and harassment can affect a student's health, confidence, morale and performance. As well as contravening RCSI policy and the RCSI Student Code of Conduct, many forms of bullying are unlawful. Bullying can also interfere with the opportunity for students to participate in a supportive and productive learning environment.

Introduction

RCSI is committed to the promotion of an environment where diversity is respected and the dignity and respect of students is upheld. RCSI supports every individual's right to study in an environment which is free from any form of discrimination.

The Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004 prohibits discrimination on the following nine grounds:

1. The gender ground: a man, a woman or a transsexual person;
2. The marital status ground: single, married, separated, divorced or widowed;
3. The family status ground: pregnant, a parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability;
4. The sexual orientation ground: gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual;
5. The religion ground: different religious belief, background, outlook or none;
6. The age ground: this only applies to people over 18 except for the provision of car insurance to licensed drivers under that age;
7. The disability ground: this is broadly defined including people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions.
8. The race ground: a particular race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin;
9. The Traveller community ground: people who are commonly called Travellers, who are identified both by Travellers and others as people with a shared history, culture and traditions, identified historically as a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland.

It is the responsibility of all members of the RCSI community to abide by RCSI regulations enshrined in the RCSI Student Code of Conduct, to treat others politely and with respect and consideration. This does not affect academic freedom, the values of free open enquiry, discussion of ideas, or humour. Care needs to be taken, however, not to cross the line into unacceptable behaviour which is offensive, abusive or intimidating.



RCSI

Definitions and Examples

Harassment is defined as any act or conduct which is unwanted and unwelcome and which could reasonably be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidating on any of the following discriminatory grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, or membership of the traveller community.

Sexual Harassment is any form of verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. The unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

It is the unwanted nature of sexual harassment and the damaging impact it has on the recipient that distinguishes it from flirtatious or sexual behaviour which is entered into freely and mutually.

Examples of Sexual Harassment

- **Verbal:** unwelcome sexual advances, suggestive jokes and innuendo, requests for sexual favours.
- **Non-verbal or indirect:** sexually suggestive pictures or written material; staring or gestures.
- **Electronic:** sexually suggestive messages or images transmitted by e-mail or other electronic means while social networking.
- **Physical:** unwelcome physical contact up to and including assault.

Racial Harassment is harassment on the grounds of race/ethnic origin which is defined as unwanted or unwelcome conduct based on a person's race that is offensive to the recipient and which might threaten a person's security or create as stressful, hostile or intimidating work or study environment.

Examples of Racial Harassment

- Verbal: offensive jokes about a person's race or ethnic origin ridicule based on stereotypes.
- Non-verbal or indirect: exclusion, hostile or demeaning attitudes, spreading malicious rumours.
- Visual: production, display or circulation of materials offensive to a particular racial or ethnic group e.g. cartoons or racial propaganda.
- Physical: physical assault, threats of physical assault.

Bullying consists of repeated inappropriate behaviour whether by word, by physical action or otherwise, directly or indirectly applied, by one or more persons against another person or persons at the place of work or study which undermines the individual person's right to personal dignity. It may arise as a result of personal conflict but it could arise where a victim has not been involved in any conflict with the perpetrator but finds him or herself in a situation through no fault of their own where acts of aggression and frustration are exerted.

Bullying can take many forms from open aggression, threats and shouting to subtle comments or exclusion. It can be verbal physical or psychological.

It should be noted that the issuing of reasonable work related instructions, student discipline or study related matters, or the exercise of lawful management rights or duties would not be construed as bullying



RCSI

Examples of Bullying

- **Verbal:** Personal insults and name calling, persistent unjustified criticism and sarcasm. Public or private humiliation; shouting in public and/or private, instantaneous rage.
- **Non-verbal** Exclusion, hostile attitude, spreading malicious rumours; using e-mail, mobile phone texting and social networking sites as potential tools for bullying.
- **Abuse of Power:** excessive criticism, withholding essential information, providing inaccurate information.
- **Physical:** aggressive behaviour, physical intimidation unwelcome physical contact up and including assault; suggestions that sexual favours may further someone's career, or that refusal may damage it.

Cyberbullying: Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conduct by an individual or group against others. Cyberbullying or online bullying refers to bullying which is carried out using the internet, mobile phone or other technological devices. Cyber bullying takes a psychological rather than a physical form but is often part of a wider pattern of 'traditional' bullying. Technology can be used to cyber bully through personal intimidation; impersonation; exclusion; personal humiliation and false reporting. This constitutes unacceptable use of the RCSI IT infrastructure and is contrary to the Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy for RCSI Computing and Network Systems.

Resolving Incidents of Bullying or Harassment

RCSI is committed to providing an environment where all persons working or studying in RCSI are treated with respect and dignity. All complaints of harassment or bullying will be treated seriously with due regard to the sensitivities of the complainant and to the rights of the person against whom the complaint has been made. The issue will be handled sympathetically and where possible confidentiality will be maintained. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue promptly.

Procedure

For those who feel that they have been the subject of bullying or harassment, there are informal and formal procedures to resolve such difficulties. The objective of RCSI is to resolve such difficulties with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved. The following may be appropriate where the student simply wants the offensive behaviour to stop and can include one or all of the following:

- a) The complainant may ask the perpetrator to stop, make it clear that their behaviour is unwelcome, unacceptable and offensive. This may be all that is required to resolve the problem. However, it does not constitute consent to bullying or harassment if the student feels unable to do this.
- b) The complainant may seek support to assist the complainant to raise the issue informally and constructively at source.

Sources of Support:

Contact persons include:

1. Personal Tutors
2. Mentors
3. Student Welfare Officers
4. Associate Director for Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA)



RCSI

5. Heads of Department
6. Heads of Schools/Cycle Directors

If there has been no resolution or the complainant finds it difficult to approach the perpetrator or they do not wish to seek support outlined above to resolve the complaint informally, the complainant may make a formal complaint as per the RCSI Complaints Procedure.

Before making a formal complaint, a student who feels subjected to harassment is advised to consult the Associate Director for Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) or contact person. Consultation with a contact person is strictly confidential and no further action will be taken without the consent of the complainant. If the harassment is deemed serious by the contact person and the problem cannot be resolved by informal means, the contact person will assist the complainant in making a formal complaint in writing to the Associate Director for Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA) (see RCSI Student Complaints Procedures). If the matter is reasonably deemed sufficiently serious by the Associate Director for Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA), the complainant may also be advised to consult a member of An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force). Formal complaints of harassment must identify the alleged offender(s).

If a student is found to contravene this policy for Dignity and Respect, RCSI will take appropriate action in accordance with the RCSI Disciplinary Regulations, which may include suspension or expulsion. It is therefore incumbent on all students to be familiar with the appropriate policies and procedures of RCSI.

Right of Appeal

A student, against whom a complaint of harassment is substantiated, has the right to appeal in accordance with the RCSI Disciplinary Regulations.

References

[Policy and Procedures for Student Dignity and Respect at the University of Limerick](#)

[Trinity College Dublin Dignity and Respect Policy](#)

[University College Dublin Dignity and Respect Policy](#)