

AIMS

Richmond Adult Community College believes that every person has the right to study, work or use the College without fear of harassment or bullying, whether on grounds of sex, race or colour, disability, age, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation or for any other ground which may affect a person's dignity.

The College believes that an atmosphere of free and open discussions is essential to its life and work. Such an atmosphere can be achieved only if all concerned behave with necessary tolerance and avoid needlessly offensive or provocative action and language. An environment free from hostility enables individuals to contribute far more effectively to their studies or work. Every member of the College's community has the responsibility to protect that right and ensure that the dignity of individual students and employees is not abused.

Personal Harassment and bullying are known to cause demoralization, fear, stress, anxiety, sickness, absenteeism, poor performance, and may cause student withdrawals and higher employee turnover. The College seeks to develop a studying and working environment in which harassment and bullying is known to be unacceptable and where individuals are confident enough to bring complaints without fear of ridicule or reprisal.

The College seeks to comply with current legislation and best practice in creating a culture that is free from harassment and bullying. The College's management will take all allegations of harassment or bullying very seriously and will be responsible for ensuring that an individual's allegations are fully investigated and resolved, informally if possible, but formally if necessary. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible by all concerned but an investigation will involve fact-finding interviews of the complainant, the alleged harasser and any relevant witnesses. A justified complaint may result in action being taken under the College's Disciplinary Procedures. Equally, a complaint which is made and is considered by the College to be frivolous or vexatious may result in disciplinary action being taken against the complainant.

DEFINITIONS

Harassment is unwanted behaviour, which is hostile and/or offensive to the recipient or others, and which is not justified by the professional and/or working relationship. Such behaviour may be physical, verbal or non-verbal.

Harassment can also include unreciprocated and unwelcome comments, actions, suggestions or physical contact that is found objectionable and offensive. In deciding whether harassment has occurred, it is not the intention of the perpetrator that is paramount, but whether the behaviour could be deemed unacceptable by a reasonable person or disadvantageous to the recipient of the unwanted conduct.

It is therefore the duty of every member of the College's community to be aware that he/she could unintentionally be harassing another member of the College's community and should take responsibility for his/her behaviour and if necessary modify it.

Forms of harassment may include those listed below. This list is not exhaustive and should not be considered as being so:-

- Physical contact ranging from touching to serious assault;
- Oral and written harassment through jokes, offensive language, computer messages, gossip, defamation, letters, etc;
- Visual display of inappropriate material such as posters, cartoons, graffiti, obscene gestures, etc;
- Isolation or non co-operation whilst studying or working, exclusion from social activities;
- Coercion ranging from pressure for sexual favours through to being put under duress to participate in a lobbying or support group for political, religious, or racial activities etc.;
- Intrusion by pestering, spying, stalking, etc;

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Review interval:	Three years	Approved on:	17 th December 2009
Date of next review:	December 2012	Post to website:	Yes

- Intimidatory conduct involving abuse of authority, power or coercion.

Bullying can be described as conduct towards an individual or individuals which is carried out more than once and may be considered by the reasonable person as being offensive, abusive, intimidatory, malicious or insulting, an abuse of power or unfair penal sanctions which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable and which undermines his/her self-confidence.

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