

# Respect at BCU

## Policy Statement

Birmingham City University and Birmingham City University Students' Union ('BCUSU') are fully committed to sustaining a positive environment free from harassment, discrimination, bullying and victimisation, where people can work collaboratively and productively together and are equally valued and respected. We value and will actively seek to promote and celebrate the diversity of our staff, students and partners throughout all our activity, and will provide a supportive working and learning environment. We will actively seek to identify and dismantle inequalities within the University community.

We are committed to protecting the dignity of all those who attend campus or interact with us online or through partnerships, and require all those associated with the University and BCUSU to treat each other with dignity, courtesy and respect at all times.

We will ensure that our systems and processes are just and fair for all, and do not inadvertently discriminate against any specific groups or individuals.

We will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour in any form (including discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation), regardless of whether covered by legislation or not. Definitions and examples of unacceptable behaviours agreed between the University and BCUSU can be found [here](#).

What makes behaviour unacceptable is often the effect it has on the recipient; for example, they may feel distressed, threatened or abused. An individual might perceive behaviour as unacceptable even if there is no intention of causing offence. We will take appropriate steps to prevent unacceptable behaviour, including the provision of training and awareness-raising activities.

Those who are subject to unacceptable behaviour or witness such behaviour should feel able to raise complaints without fear of victimisation, and to know that the University and BCUSU (together or independently) will investigate and resolve such matters in a fair and objective manner.

**BCUSU**



**BIRMINGHAM CITY**  
University

# Definitions of Unacceptable Behaviour

2023–2024

# Introduction

The following definitions have been agreed by Birmingham City University and Birmingham City University Students' Union ('BCUSU'). The definitions should be read alongside the Respect at BCU policy statement, and provide more detailed explanation of terminology used in the statement and in the following documents:



[Dignity At Work Policy \(University staff\)](#)



[Grievance Policy \(University staff\)](#)



[Staff Disciplinary Policy \(University staff\)](#)



[Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure \(University students\)](#)



[Student Suspension Procedure \(University students\)](#)

# Protected Characteristics and Protected Acts

Both these terms are used in the Equality Act 2010, which provides the legal framework for tackling disadvantage and discrimination.

## **Protected characteristics are:**

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

## **Protected acts are:**

- Making a claim or complaint of discrimination under the Equality Act.
- Helping someone else to make a claim by giving evidence or information.
- Making an allegation that you or someone else has breached the Act.
- Doing anything else in connection with the Act.

# Victimisation

Victimisation is defined in the Equality Act as treating someone badly because they have done a protected act, or because you believe that a person has done or is going to do a protected act.

# Discrimination

## **Direct discrimination:**

occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

## **Discrimination by association:**

applies to all the discrimination strands except for pregnancy and maternity. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

## **Indirect discrimination:**

when a condition, rule, policy or even a practice applies to everyone, but puts people with a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage, and that condition, rule, policy or practice cannot be justified.

# Racism

Racism is a particular form of discrimination based on racial prejudice. Racism in the UK is the exercise of historic power relations that produce discrimination and is ideologically driven: it means students and staff who identify and are identified as part of the white ethnic majority enjoy a position of relative, and typically unspoken and unacknowledged, privilege over Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students and staff (adapted from the [UCL Statement on Race](#)). It is possible for systems and processes to be racist as well as people and groups. Specific forms of racism include:

## **Anti-Black racism**

Practices and policies that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent. (Adapted from [Black Health Alliance](#))

## **Antisemitism**

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

## **Islamophobia**

“Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”  
([Runnymede Trust](#))

# Harassment

Harassment is defined as behaviour which is unwanted and which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. The views of the person who is being subjected to the unwanted behaviour are important when considering whether something constitutes harassment.

# Bullying

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour; an abuse or misuse of power to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. The behaviour or treatment may relate to a person's gender, disability, gender re-assignment or gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, age or any other protected characteristic.

In addition the University recognises that bullying does not need to be deliberate; someone may demonstrate bullying behaviour without intending to. Bullying may be obvious or it may be more covert. Whichever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual and will often cause embarrassment, fear, humiliation or distress to an individual or group of individuals.

## Cyber bullying and the use of social networking sites

Cyber bullying and electronic harassment can take place through electronic media; for example, email, instant messaging, social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, blogs), or text messages. When sending emails or other electronic communications, staff and students should consider the content, language and appropriateness of such communications. Guidance on the appropriate use of social media can be found [here](#).

## Signs of bullying

Obvious Signs	Less Obvious Signs
Open aggression, threats, abuse and obscenities, shouting and uncontrolled anger triggered by trivial situations.	Excessive supervision and monitoring, and being excessively critical about minor things with malicious intent.
Humiliating, ridiculing or belittling in front of others, persistent criticism or sarcasm.	Taking the credit for another person's work but never the blame when things go wrong.
Personal insults and name-calling, spreading malicious rumours.	Overruling an individual's authority without warning or proper discussion.
Freezing out, ignoring or excluding to isolate the victim.	Setting impossible objectives or changing targets without telling the person.
Never listening to others' point of view, always cutting across people.	

# Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia

Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic hate crimes or incidents are motivated by the offender's hostility or prejudice towards lesbian, gay, bi or trans people. Anyone can be a victim of a homophobic, biphobic or transphobic incident - it does not matter if the victim is lesbian, gay, bi, trans or straight. It may be a hate crime if someone shouts homophobic, biphobic or transphobic abuse at someone in the street, or physically attacks them because they think they're gay, lesbian, bi or trans. ([Stonewall](#))



