

# **HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY AND PROCEDURES - VOLUNTEERS**

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## **Contents**

### Part A - Policy

1. Why we have this Policy	2
2. Who this Policy relates to	2
3. Other relevant documents	2
4. Overview	2
5. Policy	3
6. What happens if you do not follow this Policy	5
7. Queries and comments	5

### Part B - Procedures

1. Procedures	6
2. Informal Procedure	6
3. Formal Procedure – complaints against IET members	6
4. Formal Procedure - complaints against IET staff	7
5. Complaints against non-IET members or staff	7
6. Malicious or unwarranted complaints	7

## **PART A - POLICY**

### **1. Why we have this Policy**

- 1.1. The IET is committed to ensuring that all people supporting activities on its behalf are treated with dignity and respect, and treat others in the same way, in its premises, at meetings and at related events, and that they are able to meet and work in an environment which is free from any form of harassment and bullying. If you have any queries, please contact the Volunteer Support Unit on [volunteer@theiet.org](mailto:volunteer@theiet.org).
- 1.2. The IET is under an obligation - a duty of care - to provide both a safe environment and safe systems within which staff and volunteers can undertake their duties. The IET wants to create a harassment free environment through general awareness and, where possible, training to ensure all volunteers gain the knowledge and skills necessary to comply with this Policy.
- 1.3. Any form of harassment or inappropriate behaviour which causes offence, whether intentional or not, will be treated very seriously, and where appropriate will lead to action, which could include disciplinary action under the Rules of Conduct.
- 1.4. This Policy will be incorporated into all aspects of training where appropriate, e.g. induction and development programmes, thereby promoting awareness of the issues and strategies to tackle and eradicate harassment and bullying and encourage a high standard of behaviour and communication across the IET.

### **2. Who this Policy relates to**

- 2.1. This policy applies to all volunteers who are directly or indirectly engaged in undertaking IET activities. All volunteers are required to read this Policy and to ensure that they understand what types of behaviour are unacceptable. IET staff are subject to a complementary policy.

### **3. Other relevant documents**

- 3.1. Volunteers should also make sure they have read and understand:
  - 3.1.1. the IET's [Bye-laws](#), in particular Bye-laws 28 – 32 inclusive;
  - 3.1.2. the IET's [Volunteer Code of Conduct](#)
  - 3.1.3. the IET's [Rules of Conduct](#);
  - 3.1.4. the IET's [Disciplinary Regulations](#); and
  - 3.1.5. the IET's [Social Media Policy](#).

### **4. Overview**

- 4.1. It is the IET's policy that the harassment or bullying of any of its volunteers, members or staff is unacceptable behaviour. Any harassment or bullying that is reported must be dealt with in accordance with the following Policy and procedures in order to comply with the IET's duty of care.
- 4.2. The management of the IET is responsible for ensuring that all volunteers are aware of this Policy and the procedures for dealing with complaints, and that confidentiality is maintained when dealing with any form of harassment, bullying or inappropriate behaviour, whether or not they have been made officially aware of it.

## **5. Policy**

- 5.1. The IET expects volunteers and staff to treat their colleagues with respect and to value their colleagues and other members. All volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their behaviour does not cause offence or distress to others.
- 5.2. If a volunteer is aware that a colleague or staff member is experiencing harassment or inappropriate behaviour from another volunteer or employee, it is their duty not to allow this to continue by reporting it to the relevant staff contact for their volunteer role or another senior volunteer such as a Committee or Board Chair. Staff contacts can be found in the [Volunteer Gateway](#) area of the website.
- 5.3. What is harassment?
  - 5.3.1. Harassment may take many forms (including bullying), occurs on a variety of grounds and can be directed at one person or many people. It does not need to be directed at the complainant and can occur if the complainant witnesses another person being bullied or harassed.
  - 5.3.2. Harassment can be conducted in person, over the phone, and via email, text or other electronic or written forms of communication, including social media.
  - 5.3.3. Harassment involves subjecting individuals to conduct which is unwanted and where the conduct has the purpose or effect of:
    - (a) violating the victim's dignity; or
    - (b) creating an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to the victim.
  - 5.3.4. Harassment also occurs where the perpetrator engages in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and that conduct has the effect of purpose referred to above. An individual of any gender may be the victim of sexual harassment.
  - 5.3.5. A person will also commit harassment if they (or anyone else) engages in unwanted conduct (of a sexual nature or otherwise) that has the purpose or effect referred to above and the victim either rejects or submits to it and, because of that rejection or submission, that person treats the victim less favourably as a result.
  - 5.3.6. Conduct also becomes harassment if it continues once it has been made clear that it is regarded by the victim as offensive or unwanted, although a single incident will amount to harassment if it is sufficiently serious.
  - 5.3.7. It is the unwanted nature of the behaviour that distinguishes harassment from friendly behaviour that is welcome and mutual. Volunteers must always consider whether their words or conduct may be considered offensive.
  - 5.3.8. Harassment can occur whether or not the behaviour is intended to be offensive – it is the effect on the victim which is important. Harassment or bullying is unacceptable even if it is unintentional.
  - 5.3.9. Harassment may relate to:
    - (a) age;
    - (b) disability (past or present);
    - (c) race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins;

- (d) religion or belief;
- (e) sexual orientation;
- (f) gender or gender reassignment;
- (g) trade union membership (or non-membership);
- (h) power or hierarchy; or
- (i) willingness to challenge harassment (leading to victimisation).

5.3.10. The phrase “relate to” is very wide and therefore covers:

- (a) harassment based on perception of another person, whether or not the perception is correct and even if the perpetrator knows that their perception is, in fact, wrong; and
- (b) harassment that occurs because someone is associated with another person.

5.3.11. Whilst not an exhaustive list, forms of harassment include:

- (a) physical contact;
- (b) ‘jokes’;
- (c) offensive language, shouting or behaving in an intimidating manner;
- (d) gossip;
- (e) slander;
- (f) offensive, insensitive or sectarian songs or messages;
- (g) obscene or offensive email and screen savers etc;
- (h) coercion for sexual favours or sexually suggestive remarks;
- (i) continued requests for social activities after it has been made clear that such suggestions are not welcome; and
- (j) verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

5.3.12. In many cases, harassment is unlawful and individuals may be legally held liable for their actions. In some cases, it may be a criminal offence.

5.3.13. Harassment does not mean:

- (a) mutually acceptable friendship or flirtation; or
- (b) enjoying a joke, provided it is not at someone else’s expense.

#### 5.4. What is bullying?

5.4.1. 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.

- 5.4.2. Behaviour that is considered bullying by one person may be considered firm management by another. In the IET, unacceptable behaviour includes (this is not an exhaustive list):
- (a) spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone;
  - (b) ridiculing or demeaning someone;
  - (c) deliberately excluding a person from communications or meetings without reason;
  - (d) unfair treatment;
  - (e) overbearing or intimidating supervision or other misuse of power or position; and
  - (f) deliberately undermining a competent person by overloading and constant criticism.
- 5.4.3. Bullying can include relationships with members of staff, other Institution members and members of the public.

## **6. What happens if you do not follow this Policy**

6.1. If volunteers do not follow this Policy:

6.1.1. the risks to the IET are:

- (a) another IET member, member of the public or IET staff member feels they have been the victim of harassment and/or bullying;
- (b) the IET suffers damage to its reputation;

6.1.2. the risks to the volunteer are:

- (a) they are subjected to a formal disciplinary process under the IET's Disciplinary Regulations, which may result in expulsion from the IET; and
- (b) they may be subject to legal proceedings, which may include criminal proceedings.

## **7. Queries and comments**

7.1. If you have any queries regarding how this policy works in practice, or comments or suggestions as to how it could be improved, please contact the Volunteer Support Unit on [volunteer@theiet.org](mailto:volunteer@theiet.org).

## **PART B - PROCEDURES**

### **1. Procedures**

- 1.1. Due to the seriousness with which the IET views harassment and bullying, informal and formal reporting procedures are in place as a mechanism for dealing with complaints of harassment and/or bullying. The Procedure seeks to ensure minimal stress for the complainant, timely resolution of complaints, and a degree of flexibility appropriate to individual circumstances.
- 1.2. All allegations of harassment and/or bullying will be dealt with seriously, promptly and in confidence. The need to maintain confidentiality will be paramount, except in circumstances where the alleged incident is serious enough to pose a risk to that individual or another person.
- 1.3. The informal Procedure is separate from the Rules of Conduct and Disciplinary Regulations but these will be called into effect where the victim does not feel able to follow the informal Procedure, or the matters complained about cannot be resolved informally.

### **2. Informal Procedure**

- 2.1. If an incident occurs which you feel may be harassment or bullying, you may prefer initially to attempt to resolve the problem informally, if you feel able to do so. In some cases it may be possible and sufficient to explain clearly to the person engaging in the unwanted conduct that the behaviour in question is not welcome and that it offends you or makes you uncomfortable. You should make it clear that you want the behaviour to stop.
- 2.2. If the complainant finds that this course of action is not possible because it is too embarrassing or difficult, or the harassment already complained about continues, then the complaint should be referred to the appropriate staff contact or their line manager.
- 2.3. If the alleged harasser is one of these people, then the complaint should be addressed to the Complaints Secretary, who can be contacted via [legalandcontracts@theiet.org](mailto:legalandcontracts@theiet.org).
- 2.4. The complainant will be responded to, verbally, as soon as reasonably possible but where practicable within 5 working days.
- 2.5. The staff member or General Counsel will take informal action to investigate and address the complaint.
- 2.6. If the alleged behaviour is more serious, or the matters complained of informally have not been resolved, then the complainant may follow the appropriate formal Procedures set out below.

### **3. Formal procedure – complaints against IET members**

- 3.1. Where informal methods fail or are not appropriate, or serious harassment or bullying occurs, you are advised to complain formally to the Complaints Secretary, who can be contacted on [legalandcontracts@theiet.org](mailto:legalandcontracts@theiet.org). You should give full details of the conduct in question, including the name of the perpetrator, the nature of the harassment or bullying, the date(s) and time(s) on which it occurred, the names of any witnesses and any action that has been taken to stop it occurring.

3.2. The complaint will then be promptly managed through the [Disciplinary Regulations](#).

#### **4. Formal procedure – complaints against IET staff**

4.1. Where informal methods fail or are not appropriate, or serious harassment or bullying occurs, you are advised to complain formally to the IET's Head of Human Resources. You should give full details of the conduct in question, including the name of the perpetrator, the nature of the harassment or bullying, the date(s) and time(s) on which it occurred, the names of any witnesses and any action that has been taken to stop it occurring. The Head of Human Resources can be contacted on +44(0)1438 767360 or [HumanResources@theiet.org](mailto:HumanResources@theiet.org).

#### **5. Complaints against non-IET members or staff**

5.1. Where the complaint is against non-IET staff or members, i.e. contractors, clients, or members of the public, and arises during the course of IET duties, the IET will consider what action may be appropriate to protect the complainant (and anyone else involved), bearing in mind the needs of the IET and the rights of the other person. The IET will try to discuss the matter with the relevant third party where appropriate.

5.2. Complaints should be made to an appropriate member of staff or the Complaints Secretary as above.

#### **6. Malicious or unwarranted complaints**

6.1. The IET will also take very seriously any malicious or, in its opinion, unwarranted allegations of harassment or inappropriate behaviour as these can have a serious and detrimental effect upon the person concerned. Should these occur, the IET will take appropriate disciplinary action where necessary. The IET is sure that all volunteers and staff will appreciate that this is necessary to protect the integrity of this Policy.



## Appendix

### Control Sheet

### Policy

**Document owner:** Sandra Godman – Manager, Volunteer Support

**Document reviewer:** Sandra Godman

**Document adopted on:** 1 July 2013

**Next review date:** 1 September 2022

### Review/change history

Date of Review/Change	Summary of changes	Version no.
August 2012	Initial draft.	0.1
July 2013	Approved and published.	1.0
April 2015	Re-drafted to bring into line with current best practice.	2.0
April 2016	Reviewed – no changes required	2.0
June 2017	Minor amendments to procedure to reflect the amended Disciplinary Regulations.	3.0
January 2018	Reformatted in line with new Policy template – no changes to content.	3.1