

HANDLING AGGRESSION AT WORK

INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS AGGRESSION AT WORK?

Aggression to staff may be defined as "any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work". (Health and Safety Executive)

No member of staff should have to accept that the threat of aggression is part of the job. We do however need to recognise but regret that there is potential for flash points in everyday life.

For the purposes of these guidelines, the following definitions will be used as forms of aggression to which staff might be exposed:

- *Verbal abuse*: Threatening or obscene language to the person, face-to-face or over the telephone. This form of abuse may be contained within written communication.
- *Psychological (emotional) abuse*: Humiliating (intimidating) behaviour risking a person's sense of well-being.
- *Discriminatory abuse*: Harassment or abuse based upon sex, age, ethnicity, colour, race, disability etc.
- *Threat*: verbal or written, to the person or to property, or both.
- *Physical abuse*: Attempted assault, with or without a weapon, which does not result in actual physical harm to the member of staff.
- *Physical assault*: With or without a weapon, resulting in actual physical harm to the member of staff at the level of bruising/cuts/lacerations/hair pulling or more serious injury.
- *Sexual abuse*: Sexual harassment or other forms of inappropriate sexual behaviour, which does not result in actual physical harm to the member of staff.
- *Sexual assault*: Sexual assault resulting in actual physical harm to the member of staff at the level of bruising/cuts/lacerations or more serious injury.
- *Other*: Any form of physical assault, or psychological abuse, or threats, harassment or unpleasant behaviour not contained in the above, which the member of staff considers to have been sufficiently serious to warrant concern.

UNIVERSITY OBJECTIVE

The University aims to ensure that its staff are free from harassment and aggression in the workplace.

Regrettably however, aggressive incidents may occur from time to time. Although such incidents will be relatively rare, whenever they do occur, they are distressing for the staff concerned.

Measures must be taken to minimise the risk of aggression and to develop the ability to deal with incidents should they occur through employment policies and procedures..

These measures may include, to the extent that is necessary:

- a) The provision of training, backed up by appropriate guidelines in the avoidance of, and dealing with, aggressive situations;
- b) The inclusion of staff safety considerations in design of workplaces and work tasks;
- c) Appropriate support and counselling to any member of staff who is a victim of aggression as a result of his or her employment with the University;
- d) Monitoring of incidences of aggression against staff;
- e) Review of policy and preventative measures.

This Standard intends to ensure that any and all aggressive incidents are learnt about and learnt from – both locally and by the University at large. This monitoring will then inform the adequacy and success of these risk management measures.

KEY PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

The University will:

1. Put in place a procedure for reporting and investigating incidences of aggression.
2. Periodically examine incident experience and review practices and procedures.

The Executive Deans and Directors/Heads will:

1. Identify and examine the circumstances that may constitute a significant risk of aggression within the activities of their Faculties and Services. Consider who is potentially at risk, and what measures are appropriate to eliminate or reduce that risk.
2. Provide and implement appropriate risk control and precautionary measures (eg. procedures, environment, workplace, task design).
3. Provide as is necessary, instruction and training to their staff and managers in avoidance and reduction of the risk.
4. Ensure that their Faculties and Services use the *Aggressive Incident* report form for the purposes of record, investigation, risk evaluation and action.
5. Participate in the sharing of University experience and learning by forwarding the *Aggressive Incident* report forms to the University Health & Safety Unit.

The University Health & Safety Unit will:

1. Support Faculty and Service use of the *Aggressive Incident* reporting procedure.
2. Collate reports received and, as-required, review and report to Senior Management.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AGGRESSIVE INCIDENTS

- All incidents of aggression must be reported promptly to the individual's line manager or an alternative manager as appropriate.
- Each incident, and the detail of findings and action, will be recorded on the prescribed *Aggressive Incident* report form.

The line manager should discuss the incident with the individual and determine what appropriate action needs to be taken. Such actions can include telling, or writing to, the aggressor that their behaviour is not acceptable and that further incidents will result in action being taken against them. Actions can also include disciplinary action where an aggressor is a student or member of staff. *Care will be necessary* as in some cases, in occasionally complex circumstances, a preliminary response requiring conversation will be appropriate.

If physical or mental harm, resulting in injury or ill-health, is attributed to an aggressive incident then this must be reported by the victim on a University Accident Report form.

Incidents of violence resulting in actual physical injury must also be reported to the police. (With assistance of Operations & Security).

- The Faculty or Service will act upon its findings and keep a record available for monitoring and auditing purposes.
- The *Aggressive Incident* report form when completed will be sent to the University Health & Safety Unit.

The gathering and collation of experience recorded in a consistent form will enable periodic analysis of trends, problems and solutions. This information will enable opportunities to be taken for improvements in procedures and practices.

AGGRESSIVE INCIDENT

Date:	Time:
Victim:	Post held:
Location:	
Incident:	
Outcome:	
Witnesses:	
Action taken:	

Abuse: Threat: Assault: Other (detail):

Reported to:	Signature:
Notes:	