

Bullying and Harassment Policy

(Please note that this applies to all staff and volunteers with the ESU)

Introduction

The English-Speaking Union is committed to encouraging and maintaining good employee relationships within the working environment which promote effective team working allowing all to perform to the best of their abilities. Every employee of the ESU has a responsibility not to use language or undertake actions that are likely to affect the wellbeing of others. In addition to the obligations placed upon them by the organisation's Equal Opportunities Policy, everyone has the right to be treated with consideration, fairness, dignity and respect.

The ESU is therefore committed to providing a working environment which is free from harassment and intimidation. The ESU recognises that harassment and bullying can cause extreme distress to the person subjected to it, it can lower morale and also interfere with the effectiveness of people at work. Harassment in many forms is also unlawful and both the organisation and the harasser could be liable as a result.

Harassment

Harassment is normally defined as behaviour which is based on sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation or age which is unreasonable, unwanted and offensive, which creates an offensive, humiliating or intimidating working environment and which affects the dignity of people at work. Harassment based on any grounds is unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the organisation, please see the ESU's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Examples of harassment include

- Verbal abuse of a sexual and/or racial nature, offensive remarks, comments or jokes related to a person's sex, sexual orientation, race, disability, age or religion, requests for sexual favours, repeated requests for social activity outside the workplace, suggestive remarks and innuendoes.
- Physical contact of a sexual nature, assault and physical violence motivated by the individual's sex, race, sexual, orientation, religion, age or disability.
- Deliberate exclusion from work related activities, ignoring and isolating an individual because of one of the criteria listed above.
- The display of pornographic material, sexually suggestive pictures and objects, abusive literature, graffiti or e-mails.

This list is not exhaustive.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as the persistent use of power to criticise, intimidate, insult, or undermine in a way which leaves people feeling hurt, humiliated or vulnerable.

Examples of bullying include;

- conduct which is intimidating, physically abusive or threatening,
- conduct that denigrates, belittles, ridicules or humiliates an individual, especially in front of colleagues,
- continually criticising an individual without justification,
- picking on one person when there is a common problem,
- shouting at an individual,
- giving unrealistic and unmanageable tasks and deadlines,

- removing responsibilities from individuals seen as too competent,
- refusing to delegate, and
- cyber bullying; using email and social media to criticise, insult, intimidate or undermine.

Harassment and bullying may be summarised as any behaviour that is unwanted by the person to whom it is directed. It is the impact of the behaviour rather than the intent of the perpetrator that is the determinant as to whether harassment or bullying has occurred.

Employees must therefore behave appropriately with colleagues, members, volunteers, supporters, donors, beneficiaries and any other individuals that they may deal with during the course of their employment. Any employee who is found to have harassed or bullied an individual in contravention of the organisation's policy will be subject to disciplinary action including dismissal. The course of employment is not limited to working hours or events outside working hours.

In addition, the ESU will not tolerate acts of victimisation or retaliation against an employee who is involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. Such acts of victimisation may also result in appropriate disciplinary action being taken.

Making a Complaint

The ESU wishes to ensure that employees feel able to report acts of harassment and bullying using the organisation's grievance procedure. All complaints will be investigated, dealt with in confidence and resolved as quickly as possible.

Procedure

Any employee who wishes to make a complaint of harassment or bullying should be encouraged in the first instance to discuss the matter informally with their Line Manager if they feel able to do so. Should it not prove possible to resolve the issue at this stage or the employee feels unable to raise it informally, then it should be progressed to the formal stage of the Grievance Procedure.

When a complaint of harassment or bullying is brought to the organisation's attention, whether formally or informally, an immediate investigation will be undertaken.

If it is considered that one of the parties concerned should be removed from the workplace during the course of the investigation, as a matter of principle, the ESU would ordinarily remove the alleged perpetrator rather than the complainant. It should be explained to the concerned party(ies) that this action is not an implication of guilt and that no detriment will be suffered as a consequence.

Confidentiality

All issues relating to the investigation of a complaint of harassment or bullying will be dealt with in the utmost confidence and individuals involved in the investigation must abide by such confidentiality. Any breach of such confidentiality may result in disciplinary action being taken against those responsible for the breach.