



Health & Safety Violence at Work Policy

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¹ or earlier if change in legislation or on risk assessment

Amendment Control

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1.0	Aug 2015	
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Policy Summary

Work carried out by a number of bodies on the incidence of violence within the education sector as a whole produced disturbing evidence on the levels of threatening behaviour and physical violence.

Violence being defined as “any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a student, a member of staff, or a member of the general public in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment”.

Included within this definition would be rude gestures, innuendoes, sexual and racial harassment and malicious damage to employee’s property.

Fortunately, the number of recorded physical attacks on staff by students within the education sector are few.

The university is committed to being fully supportive to staff who have been the subject of violence in connection with their university duties and to taking measures to minimise potential risks.

Staff are encouraged to report such incidents to their supervisor and/or Dean of School/Director of Service and to the Health & Safety Team on the [university accident/incident form](#). The reporting of such incidents can assist in measures being taken to prevent a recurrence.

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1. Background

Work carried out by a number of bodies on the incidence of violence within the education sector as a whole produced disturbing evidence on the levels of threatening behaviour and physical violence. Fortunately, the number of recorded physical attacks on staff by students within the education sector are few.

However, the University has a legal duty to protect our staff and anyone else potentially affected by our undertaking from work-related health and safety risks. This includes protecting people from non-consensual acts of violence, or abuse or threats that arise from, or in connection to, work.

Violence can impact the University negatively, making it difficult to recruit and retain staff, lowering morale and undermining the University's public image. Violence can cause distress and pain to individuals.

People may have different responses to abuse and threats, with some suffering more anxiety than others.

2. Legislation

- The Health and Safety at Work Act
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

3. Scope and definitions

This policy is limited to incidences of non-consensual violence, abuse and threats arising out of, or in connection to, work.

'Violence' being defined as "any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a student, a member of staff, or a member of the general public in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment".

Included within this definition would be rude gestures, innuendoes, sexual and racial harassment, and malicious damage to employee's property.

4. Policy statement

The university is committed to being fully supportive to staff who have been the subject of violence in connection with their university duties and to taking measures to minimise potential risks.

Staff are encouraged to report such incidents to their line manager and/or Dean of School/Director of Service and to the Health & Safety Team on the [university accident/incident form](#). The reporting of such incidents can assist in measures being taken to prevent a recurrence.

5. Arrangements

The University will manage its activities in such a way as to minimise the risk of employees and anyone else potentially affected being subjected to work-related violence or abuse or threatening behaviour.

- The University takes a zero-tolerance approach toward violence.
- Risk assessments will be produced for all work activities where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk of violence and suitable control measures will be implemented in consultation with relevant staff.
- Any incident involving threatening behaviour, verbal abuse or physical violence should be reported to the Health & Safety Team on the [university accident/incident form](#). Anyone acting in a physically violent way may be subject to security intervention, and possible criminal investigation depending on the type of incident and any injury caused.
- Any member of staff acting in a threatening or physically abusive manner may be dealt with by their line manager in accordance with the University's disciplinary procedures. Students will be dealt with by their School/Governance Services.
- Contractors who initiate work related violence may be escorted off site and banned from future University contract work. The incident will be reported to the Health & Safety Team and to the employing Contractor via Property & Facilities.

6. Responsibilities

The Safety Officer

The Safety Officer has the overall day to day responsibility for health and safety matters at the University. The Safety Officer delegates responsibility for undertaking aspects of these duties through line management and identified roles. The following people are identified as having responsibilities (in addition to any other responsibilities under other health and safety policy) for the management of work-related violence risks in those areas, and for those relevant persons, that fall under their control.

Deans of School, Directors of Service and Line Managers

Deans of School, Directors of Service and Line Managers are responsible for making sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that:

- Suitable and sufficient risk assessments are carried out for all work activities where there is a risk of violence or abuse and providing a safe working environment.
- Risk assessments consider people who may be especially vulnerable to the risk of violence or abuse, such as young people or expectant or nursing mothers.

- Suitable and sufficient control measures are put in place to eliminate the risk of work-related violence. Where this is not reasonably practicable, then control measures should reduce the risk of such issues to a tolerable level.
- Suitable training, instruction and supervision is provided for employees believed to be at risk of work-related violence (e.g. in particular the University's Security Team have had training on conflict management).
- Arrangements are put in place to monitor the effectiveness of risk assessments and any associated control measures including any instruction, training, and supervision.
- Further advice is sought from Human Resources in respect of disciplinary action for any staff-initiated violence or aggression.

Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- Reporting any incidents of work-related violence that they either experience or witness to their line manager and to the Health & Safety Team on the [university accident/incident form](#).
- Not doing anything which purposefully may inflame a potentially abusive situation.
- Acting appropriately and in accordance with these general guidelines.
- Following any instruction or training given in relation to work related violence and will, as far as reasonably practicable, conduct themselves in a manner so as not to escalate any incident of work-related violence.

Students

Students are responsible for:

- Not doing anything which may inflame a potentially abusive situation.
- Following any instruction given intended to reduce the risk of violence or protect their wellbeing.
- Students should report any incidents of work-related violence to their Dean of School/Personal Development Tutor who should report this to the Health & Safety Team on the [university accident/incident form](#).

7. In the event of encountering violence

Some common-sense steps can be taken to minimise the likelihood of encountering violence:

- Be sensitive to the possibility that behaviour on your part may initiate or exacerbate a situation. Behaviour towards others may appear to them to be, for example, abusive or discriminatory.
- Where intruders are encountered, note relevant details (including time, place, and description) and call ext. 4444 (0131 455 4444) which will connect you to Security Control or call 999. Where available, CCTV will be used to determine risk and monitor the activities.
- If working late, you must inform security of your presence on site; lock the door, if it is safe to do so; inform Security when you leave the premises.

- The University's Security Team have attended an "Introduction to Security" course – one particular module deals with "Conflict Management (Violence) in the Workplace".

8. Where a situation has already arisen

- Act calmly and quietly and maintain a polite attitude.
- Avoid becoming physically involved.
- Contact a colleague to assist you or, if appropriate, call for University security or police assistance - ext. 4444 (0131 455 4444) will connect you to Security Control or call 999.
- In circumstances where you suffer physical assault or another person is being assaulted, use your discretion, and employ minimal force to produce effective action in the circumstances with the least possible risk of physical injury to all those involved.

9. Where any injury is sustained

Medical advice should be sought as soon as possible. Wherever practicable, immediately after the event an interview must be held to establish whether the person is fit to continue at work or whether they need to go home (accompanied, if necessary). In the latter event, it is also important to ensure that someone else will be at home to support the person. A full report must be sent to the Health & Safety Team on the [university accident/incident form](#), in order that the incident can be reported to the proper enforcing authorities. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress do not surface until about 48 hours after an incident and assistance in dealing with this should be offered at this time. Our [Occupational Health Team](#) can assist in referring the person to appropriate help, including signposting to our [Employee Assistance Programme](#).

10. Where a serious incident has occurred

A debriefing of those concerned should take place as soon as possible after the incident to consider what lessons can be drawn for the better protection of the employees concerned. The conduct of the debriefing may involve the Human Resources Director and/or Dean of School, as appropriate. Where the police have been involved, this will take place after completion of their investigations.

11. University contractors

- Will make it clear within contract specifications and induction training that violent or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Will ensure that any incident involving violence or aggression which involves an employee of a Contractor is reported to the Health & Safety Team on the [university accident/incident form](#) and to the employing contractor for further action, as necessary.

12. Training

In order to identify, eliminate, manage and support issues around violence at work, suitable training, instruction and supervision will be provided for employees believed to be at risk of work-related violence. Further awareness on violence, harassment, discrimination, bullying and victimisation is included in the University's [Dignity at Work policy](#).

13. Monitoring and reporting

The Health & Safety Team will be responsible for:

- Monitoring and reviewing this policy and the effectiveness of our arrangements.
- Reviews will be carried out every three years from the date of approval.
- Any violence incidents will be reported up through the 6 monthly Health & Safety Committee reports and the Annual Health & Safety report to Court.

14. Support mechanisms

Where the perpetrators of such acts are members of the University, then these individuals will be addressed under the University's [Dignity at Work policy](#).

Alternatively, people can report issues in confidence to [Human Resources](#), [Student Wellbeing & Inclusion](#) or the [Health & Safety Team](#) as appropriate where they feel comfortable to do so.

The University can also provide support and advice for members of the University who are experiencing violence or abuse, harassment or other unwanted behaviour. This includes the provision of counselling services and other advice and guidance to support people experiencing these issues. The University has an [Employee Assistance Programme](#) open to all.