



# UBC Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff

*Approved by: UBC Executive*

*Revision Date: May 2014*

**The University of British Columbia envisions a climate in which students, faculty and staff are provided with the best possible conditions for learning, researching and working, including an environment that is dedicated to excellence, equity and mutual respect. The University of British Columbia strives to realize this vision by establishing employment and educational practices that respect the dignity of individuals and make it possible for everyone to live, work and study in a positive and supportive environment, free from harmful behaviours such as bullying and harassment.**

## **A. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE**

The best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued. Everyone at UBC is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds these principles in all communications and interactions with fellow UBC community members and the public in all university-related settings.

## **B. THE RESPECTFUL UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT**

In the context of an academic community, responsibility for maintaining a respectful environment falls on all community members, including students, faculty, staff, and members of the public who participate in university-related activities.

Excellence in learning, research and work in the university community is fostered by promoting the freest possible exchange of information, ideas, beliefs and opinions in diverse forms, and it necessarily includes dissemination and discussion of controversial topics and unpopular points of view. Respect for the value of freedom of expression and promotion of free inquiry are central to the university's mission.

However, these freedoms cannot exist without an equally vigorous commitment to recognition of and respect for the freedoms of others, and concern for the well-being of every member of the university community. Excellence in scholarship, teaching and employment activities flows from active concern and respect for others, including their ability to participate meaningfully in the exchange of information, ideas, beliefs and opinions.

Therefore, freedom of expression and freedom of inquiry must be exercised responsibly, in ways that recognize and respect the dignity of others, having careful regard to the dynamics of different relationships within the university environment, such as between professor and student, or supervisor and employee. A respectful environment is a climate in which the human dignity of each individual is valued, and the diverse perspectives, ideas and experiences of all members of the community are able to flourish.



### **C. ACTIVITIES HARMFUL TO A RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT**

Activities harmful to a respectful environment include behaviours ranging from expressions of disrespect such as rudeness and gossip, to bullying or harassment. Disrespectful behaviour, including bullying or harassment, is harmful to a respectful environment and therefore has no place at UBC. It is not only a direct attack on the dignity and worth of the individual or group at whom it is directed, it undermines the freedoms of the whole community. For these reasons, disrespectful behaviour, including bullying or harassment, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated at UBC.

Bullying or harassment is objectionable and unwanted behaviour that is verbally or physically abusive, vexatious or hostile, that is without reasonable justification, and that creates a hostile or intimidating environment for working, learning or living. Harassment may be intentional or unintentional. While bullying or harassment usually consists of repeated acts, a single serious incident that has a lasting harmful effect may also constitute bullying or harassment.

Bullying or harassing behaviour includes cumulative demeaning or intimidating comments, gestures or conduct; verbal aggression or yelling; threats to a person's employment or educational status, person or property; persistent comments or conduct, including ostracism or exclusion of a person, that undermines an individual's self-esteem so as to compromise their ability to achieve work or study goals; abuse of power, authority or position; sabotage of a person's work; humiliating initiation practices; hazing; calling someone derogatory names; spreading of malicious rumours or lies; or making malicious or vexatious complaints about a person.

Bullying or harassment does not include the exercise of appropriate managerial or supervisory direction, including performance management and the imposition of discipline; constructive criticism; respectful expression of differences of opinions; reasonable changes to assignments or duties; correction of inappropriate student behaviour; instructional techniques such as irony, conjecture, and refutation, or assigning readings or other instructional materials that advocate controversial positions; and single incidents of thoughtless, petty or foolish words or acts that cause fleeting harm.

A determination that disrespectful behaviour, including bullying or harassment, has occurred is based not only on what the alleged perpetrator and target of the disrespectful behaviour actually experienced, knew, or understood about each other and the situation, but on what a reasonable person in each of their circumstances would have experienced, known or understood, taking into account the full context of the situation.

### **D. ADDRESSING RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT CONCERNS**

Primary responsibility for addressing respectful environment concerns, including concerns about bullying or harassment lies with all members of the UBC community who exercise supervisory or leadership roles. These individuals are well-placed to set examples for others by their own conduct, to communicate to those under their direction UBC's commitment to a respectful university environment, and to take appropriate action to preserve or restore a respectful environment if problems arise. They are expected to take steps to maintain an environment free from disrespectful behaviour, and to prevent such behaviour, where possible.



### **Reporting of Concerns / Incidents / Complaints**

Specifically, when faculty, staff or student employees have concerns about disrespectful behaviour they have experienced or witnessed, they should contact their direct supervisor or Administrative Head of Unit.

Students who have concerns outside of any employment relationship with UBC should contact their professor, Department Head or Dean's Office, if their concern relates to a course or academic matter. If the concern relates to a UBC service unit or a residence, students should contact the Unit Head of the particular service or the Vice-President, Students Office at UBC Vancouver, or the Unit Head or the Associate Vice-President, Students at UBC Okanagan.

Where the issue is not resolved or there is concern about conflict of interest, including where a faculty or staff member feels bullied or harassed by their direct supervisor, faculty and staff should contact their employee association, union, or Human Resources. In such circumstances, students should contact the UBC Ombudsperson or the Associate Vice-President, Students.

### **Investigation of Concerns/Incidents/Complaints**

Administrative Heads of Units, whether responding to a concern raised to them or taking action because they have otherwise become aware that a person may be engaging in disrespectful behaviour in their unit, are expected to act promptly to determine if behaviour contrary to the Respectful Environment Statement including incidents of bullying or harassment has occurred or is ongoing, and if so, to address the behaviour and its damaging effects. Support and advice is available from Human Resources.

### **Responsibility for Awareness and Education**

It is the responsibility of each Vice President, in cooperation with Human Resources, to ensure that those in supervisory or leadership roles in their portfolio have access to the proper training necessary to understand rights and responsibilities in a respectful working, learning and living environment, including their own responsibility to recognize, investigate, respond to, and manage complaints of harassment and to educate those they supervise or lead regarding those rights and responsibilities.

Education, increased awareness and prompt action are vital to create and maintain respectful working, learning and living environments at UBC. The university must provide training, support and resources to raise awareness about the principles of a respectful working, learning and living environment and to address concerns in a positive and effective manner when they do occur.

Detailed procedures for faculty, staff or student employees and for those who have the primary responsibility of addressing respectful environment concerns can be found at <https://bullyingandharassment.ubc.ca>.

## **E. RELATED POLICIES AND PROVISIONS**

Where policies and mechanisms for addressing unacceptable conduct already exist, whether in work, education or living contexts, this Respectful Environment Statement is intended to supplement, not to displace them.



In particular, matters relating to discrimination or harassment based on age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical or mental disability, place of origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and criminal conviction unrelated to employment are addressed in Policy #3, the UBC Policy on Discrimination and Harassment. Those with concerns that may constitute complaints under Policy #3 should refer to Policy #3 itself for information on how to proceed. Where a concern raised under the Respectful Environment Statement is appropriately addressed under another policy or provision, Administrative Heads of Units, and others responsible for addressing respectful environment concerns will direct the individual to the appropriate office.

Departmental policies regarding respectful environments can add to but not derogate from the principles in this statement.