Allegations of bullying, harassment and discrimination against students or by students are taken very seriously at UNSW. The grounds for discrimination and harassment are clearly set out in Commonwealth and State Anti-Discrimination legislation. These grounds form the basis for the University’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

If you have been discriminated against or harassed by a member of staff or another student because of your race, religion, sexuality, age, disability or gender it is important you follow the process as outlined in the Student Complaint Procedure.

What is bullying?

Bullying is when people repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions against someone or a group of people to cause distress and risk to their well-being. These actions are usually done by people who have more influence or power over someone else, or who want to make someone else feel less powerful or help-less. Bullying is not the same as conflict between people (like having a fight) or disliking someone, even though that may be the cause of bullying.

Common bullying behaviour

- Keeping someone out of a group (online or offline)
• Acting in an unpleasant way near or towards someone
• Giving nasty looks, making rude gestures, calling names, being rude and impolite, and constant negative teasing that can make onlookers laugh
• Spreading rumours or lies, or misrepresenting someone (i.e. using their Facebook account to post messages as if it were them)
• Mucking about that goes too far
• Harassing someone based on their race, sex, religion, gender or a disability
• Intentionally and repeatedly hurting someone physically Intentionally stalking someone
• Taking advantage from a position of legitimate status or power (e.g. a more senior student teasing a first year student).

Bullying can happen anywhere. It can be at uni, at College, at home, at work, in online social spaces, via text messaging or via email. It can be physical, verbal, emotional, and it also includes messages, public statements and behaviour online intended to cause distress or harm (also known as cyberbullying). But no matter what form bullying takes, the results can be the same: severe distress and pain for the person being bullied.

Types of bullying

Face-to-face bullying involves physical actions such as punching or kicking or direct verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting.

Covert bullying is less direct, but just as painful. It means bullying which isn’t easily seen by others and is conducted out of sight, such as excluding people from groups or spreading lies or rumours. It may also be in the form of ‘good-natured’ teasing or laughing along to a joke on someone. Because it is less obvious, it is often ignored by others.

Cyberbullying occurs through the use of information or communication technologies such as Instant Messaging or chat, text messages, email and social networking sites or forums. It has many similarities with offline bullying, but it can also be anonymous, it can reach a wide audience, and sent or up-loaded material can be difficult to remove. Most cyberbullies also bully off-line.

More information of bullying of a sexual nature is available on the Sexual harassment, assault and misconduct page.

What are my rights?

You have a right to feel safe and to be treated fairly and respectfully. Bullying is a serious problem with serious mental and physical impacts. It can violate many of your human rights including; Your right to be free from mental, emotional and physical violence Your right to education Your right to a safe work place.

Why do people bully?

People bully for different reasons. Those who bully persistently are likely to do so in order to dominate others and improve their social status. They may appear to have high self esteem although this may not be the case. Bullying can help them feel okay about themselves. Such people are likely to show little regret for their bullying behaviour and may not see bullying as morally wrong. They may even defend their behaviour if they are challenged. Other people may bully out of anger or frustration, they may struggle socially and could have also been victims of bullying.

What can you do to stop bullies?

If you are being bullied, you should talk to someone you know well and trust; they will give you much needed support and will often have suggestions you hadn’t considered for helping with the situation.

If you feel safe and confident, you should approach the person who is bullying you and tell them that their behaviour is unwanted and not acceptable.

You might feel more comfortable taking a friend with you to talk to the bully or when seeking help. This friend may be able to review what you want to say to the bully to ensure you are not going to escalate the aggression. Try rehearsing
what you want to say by writing it down and practising it out loud.

Video

Many people ‘Troll’. Sometimes this goes too far and becomes cyberbullying. Many cyberbullies are doing it just for their own amusement. Don’t fall for their trap.

Useful links

- UNSW social media guidelines
- Safety and security
- Stay Smart Online

External links

- Cyber bullying - The complete resource guide
- Reach Out
- Headspace
- Safe workers

See next

Self-help videos and guides
Mind smart

Individual appointments
Counselling
sexual misconduct resized

Harassment, assault, rape
Sexual misconduct

Bullying and Cyberbullying
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