



Tackling bullying and harassment

Our vision

In a world class research and innovation culture there is no place for bullying and harassment, of staff or of students, from any source. Everyone has a right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. Our vision is for environments in which everyone is supported to contribute on the basis of their talent and skills, and the wellbeing of staff and students is actively nurtured and promoted as a priority.

To achieve this vision, we will work closely with our research and innovation community, our employees, partners and stakeholders to tackle concerns, address the root causes of bullying and harassment and join up approaches to bring about positive change.

What is bullying and harassment?

UKRI defines bullying and harassment as unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended. It can include a continuum of repeated behaviours that:

- convey hostility
- force unwanted attention, objectification, exclusion, or second-class status
- have a negative effect on the targeted person
- people may find difficult to defend themselves against (for example, because of a hierarchical relationship with the perpetrator).

We are adopting this definition as a starting point and will work with others to refine it further so that it can be used to measure the problem and drive and monitor change.¹

Our action

As the largest UK funder of research and innovation, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) can and will play a significant role in tackling bullying and harassment by:

1. Setting out clear expectations of organisations and individuals we fund

As a starting point, our funding terms and conditions will articulate the types of policies, processes, support and strategies regarding bullying and harassment that we expect our funding recipients to create and adhere to.

These will include the adoption of guidance from the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), who are widely regarded as an impartial and practical advisor for UK employers and managers. Their guidelines emphasise the importance of organisation-wide approaches that include both preventative and response strategies and clear communication to ensure everyone has confidence that issues will be dealt with effectively.

We recognise that some industries and organisations may have equivalent frameworks and we will expect that they can demonstrate how these meet or exceed ACAS's guidelines.

We will also develop appropriate assurance mechanisms, which we will review on an annual basis to evaluate their impact, take into account changing practice, and ensure they are fit for purpose.

2. Providing support to the research and innovation sectors to meet our expectations – through research, evidence, resources and guidance

In July 2018, UKRI established an **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion External Advisory Group** (EAG). The EAG provides the necessary oversight and critical challenge for our three-year programme of work on bullying and harassment.

During Year 1 (2019/20), UKRI will develop a toolkit, underpinned by research from multiple sectors, to help institutions meet our expectations; for example, through the creation of a Code of Conduct for Conducting Investigations. The toolkit will build on the **Evidence Review** which identifies good practice.

¹ In preparing our definition, we consulted the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service's (ACAS) definition alongside the legal definitions for harassment that include additional protections against it for those with protected characteristics, as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The examples and language we have used were also informed by our recently commissioned evidence review on Bullying and Harassment in Research and Innovation Environments.



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As part of our Year 1 work, we will also work with our stakeholders to build our baseline understanding of the scale of the problem. This work will include a funded research programme and a review of interventions and policies across sectors with a focus on prevention. For the review, we have planned a series of visits with funded organisations to better understand how they are creating respectful environments that help their staff and students flourish.

Further research commissioned in Year 2 (2020/21) will examine how the research and innovation environment may inadvertently drive these problems and what interventions we might implement to address this.

3. Taking action where institutions do not meet our expectations

We will lead by example and continue to develop our policies for our own employees. We will be transparent in this process and present annual updates of our policy reviews and impact of our work to our stakeholders and communities.

We will work with and widely consult research and innovation organisations about the best ways to facilitate open conversations about the changes that are needed and what we together can do to drive improvement.

We will drive and support the development of mechanisms that improve transparency and reporting and will continue to work with our stakeholders, including other funders, on these systems. We plan to launch these new systems by Year 3 (2021/22).

While these developments progress, we will continue to support organisations in tackling these problems. We will set out in our next update to our funding terms and conditions in 2020 the actions we may take when our expectations are not met. Our primary interest will be to ensure organisations respond effectively, but where there is persistent evidence that institutions are not meeting the expectations of the Equality Act we will consider referring cases to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

The EHRC is a statutory non-departmental public body that independently operates as Great Britain's national equality body. Established as part of the Equality Act 2010, the EHRC has specific powers to challenge discrimination, promote equality, protect human rights and take action against those who abuse the rights of others.

Our current funding terms and conditions reflecting our expectations can be found [here](#).

We are committed to regularly reviewing and improving our approach and welcome feedback on any aspect of it.