OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND CYBER-ABUSE POLICY

Policy Statement

The OU Students Association is committed to equality for all in an inclusive and diverse community which values and respects difference. The Association’s vision is to encourage a vibrant and active student community. We promote open access and equal opportunity, within which all OU students feel a sense of belonging and where they are able to positively influence the student experience, engage and support each other. This Policy is intended to support that vision and to ensure that it is upheld by and applicable to all Association members, volunteers and staff.

This Policy applies to all Association events, both online and face to face. This includes but is not limited to; Meet-ups, Facebook Chats, Formal meetings and Committees, Facebook Live, Hustings, Forums, Volunteering and Adobe Connect sessions.

This Policy only applies to Students Association events and any incidences which occur during Open University events, should be reported using the OU dignity and respect policy. Regardless of the platform used, if a member’s behaviour is such that it brings the Association into disrepute, disciplinary action may still be taken.

For instances occurring on unofficial social media groups, pages or accounts, the Association encourages its members to follow the appropriate complaints procedure as indicated by the provider or as defined in Open University Policy.

Members of the Association are entitled to their own views and opinions, as well as the opportunity to express themselves and to respectfully disagree or debate matters with others. However, the Association are aware of times when disagreements can lead to members experiencing bullying.

Bullying is a form of harassment as defined in the Equality Act 2010 to be unwanted behaviour which causes offense or makes an individual feel intimidated or humiliated. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination. This sort of behaviour may happen repeatedly or just the once.

According to the Equality Act, behaviour that is meant to or has the effect of either:
- violating an individual’s dignity, or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
This means that as long as the incident has one of the above effects then it is considered harassment, even if the perpetrator did not mean to offend or intimidate.

For individuals who feel that they have experienced bullying in-line with this policy, we encourage the use of the following Procedure.

**Procedure**

For all members, guests and partners of the Association experiencing behaviour which is not in accordance with this Policy, the Students Association are creating support documents which will be found on our [website](#). These may offer some useful methods of helping you deal with inappropriate behaviour yourself as well as signposting to other relevant support organisations or charities. We recognise that dealing with unwanted behaviour alone is not always appropriate. If you feel unable to confront an individual or deal with a situation without further support, we encourage individuals to report inappropriate behaviour.

To report incidences you feel are not yet at the level where formal disciplinary action is required, please [contact the Association Student Support Team](#) to explore an appropriate course of action with you. It is important to include as much detail as possible, in order for the Association to identify the best course of action.

If you feel the behaviour of an individual or group warrants investigation at a higher level please follow our [Complaints and Disciplinary Policy](#).

For incidences which occur during events hosted by the Open University, please refer to the [OU’s Dignity and Respect Policy](#). Should these incidences involve representatives of the Association it is appropriate to also report these to the Association Student Support Team or make a formal complaint as detailed above.