MBChB

Student Bullying And Harassment Policy

2017-18
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Leicester Medical School does not tolerate bullying, harassment or any form of intimidation within undergraduate medical education and adopts a “zero tolerance approach” in order to maintain a positive and supportive learning environment for students regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion or ethnic origin. It aims to be a community whose members promote each other’s dignity such that appropriate respect, courtesy and consideration is the norm, not as a result of coercion, but through a ready desire, fostered by mutual example. The School believes that bullying pollutes the learning environment, damaging the wellbeing, health, confidence, morale and performance of those who are bullied and those who witness bullying. It believes that bullying undermines its aim to serve the wider community through research, education and example. It takes it to be self-evident that bullying, through its attack on the dignity of its staff, its students, and the patients it seeks to serve, erodes the effectiveness of its medical research and its training of students to become safe, effective patient-centred doctors.

The School recognises bullying to be distinct from vigorous academic debate, which is characterised as being respectful, encouraging a variety of viewpoints and having the effect of stimulating and encouraging thought and discussion. It should not be confused with constructive criticism or feedback intended to be developmental and supportive. Indeed it is recognised that professional disagreements concerning patient care are common amongst medical practitioners who will always seek to maintain the best interest of the patient in any professional interactions. Whilst students will clearly hold a wide range of differing and often opposing views on a variety issues, they would be expected to treat all members of the School community with dignity and respect and ensure that the expression of their views is not manifested in such a way that creates an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive to others.

The School seeks to tackle bullying, by appropriate engagement with the bully, the victims of bullying and witnesses to bullying or harassment, as professionally as possible, not solely through the intervention of staff entrusted with such engagement, but by promoting the engagement of all School members, such that all work toward an environment free of threat and intimidation.

The School encourages any student who genuinely considers that they have experienced bullying to take action using the procedures set out in this policy. Any member of the University who witnesses potential acts of bullying or receives a complaint of bullying or harassment must ensure that appropriate action is taken promptly, sensitively and confidentially. The School in turn commits to take seriously and thoroughly investigate any allegations of bullying that are brought to its attention. Where such an allegation is found to be true, action will be taken against the perpetrator(s). The School encourages the reporting of any subsequent victimisation of a complainant or witness because they have, in good faith, made an allegation of bullying, and will seek to act appropriately and decisively in such instances. Importantly, students who bring allegations to the School in good faith which are not subsequently borne out by investigation will not be treated less favourably by the School.
SCOPE OF POLICY

The following policy describes what is meant by bullying, states the Medical School stance on bullying, and provides guidance:

- to students who are being bullied,
- to students who are bullying, or alleged to have been bullying
- to students who are witnesses to bullying
- to staff who are entrusted with the investigation and management of reported bullying.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Behaviour is defined as bullying if:

- it is unwanted by the recipient,
- it is perceived by the recipient as violating his or her dignity and/or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment,

_Importantly the intention of the person engaging in the behaviour – whether or not they intended to bully – is not a primary factor in determining if bullying has taken place._

Bullying is therefore viewed as behaviour which, _intentionally or unintentionally_, by direct action or by omission, deprives a fellow human of the dignity to which they have a fundamental right.

Bullying may be conducted on account of gender (including gender reassignment), race, ethnic or national origin, colour, disability, sexuality, religion or belief, age, perceived intelligence, physical attribute, state of health, any ‘deviation from the norm’, or none of these. It may occur as an isolated event but is more typically persistent, developing over a period of time.

TYPES OF BULLYING

Bullying may take place physically, verbally, or by explicit facial expression. Bullies may seek to intimidate or isolate their target in a range of ways including directly in person or indirectly by phone, on the web, by e-mail, by letter, by text message or by graffiti. Bullying may involve insult, malicious or vexatious gossip: that is gossip whose primary intention is to harm or annoy, the spreading of rumours or ostracism.

Bullying can be targeted at a particular individual, but a student culture in which a more diffusely targeted disrespect towards a group can also constitute bullying by, for example, the telling of racist, homophobic or sexual jokes. ACAS describes bullying as “unwanted and usually persistent offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient”.

The following list of bullying behaviours is not exhaustive but indicates behaviour which the School would regard as unacceptable, especially if persistent:

- ridiculing and undermining behaviour, including the ridiculing of a peer’s academic contribution in a group work or clinical setting
• intimidating, coercive or threatening actions and behaviour, including ridiculing or domineering behaviour in group work or clinical setting, which fails to allow for the viewpoints of other group members or students to be heard

• undermining or destructive criticism, including criticism which lacks the necessary constructive feedback to help a peer to improve their performance

• marginalising, ignoring, non-cooperation or deliberate exclusion, including the persistent ‘singling out’ of peers in the group work or clinical setting

• setting a peer up to fail by changing the rules, expectations or goalposts without explanation, e.g. by deliberately withholding necessary information or by work overload in the group work or clinical setting

• inappropriate comments about a person’s appearance, intrusive questions or comments about a person’s private life

• inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact

• unwelcome sexual touching, advances or sexually abusive comments

• physical assault or threats of physical assault. These may be viewed as especially serious by the School

• targeted insults, shouting, name-calling, sarcasm, inappropriate jokes, swearing and threats or gestures specifically meant to offend or cause upset

• persistent use of explicit facial gestures indicating aggression or contempt, racist taunts, graffiti or gestures

• misuse of social media, text messaging and calls, and misuse of assisted technology (ie. camera and video) to share or distribute offensive images and literature, which offend or cause upset to an individual or group.
GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WHO PERCEIVE THEMSELVES TO BE BULLIED

BULLYING: WHY YOU THINK IT HAS BEEN HAPPENING TO YOU

Many students find it difficult to think clearly about a situation which is causing them distress, particularly if their self-respect has been eroded, or if they are in a new or challenging environment.

One of the first steps you might want to take is to try to review and reflect on the events that made you feel bullied, their effect on your self-esteem, and how this is affecting your ability to study. The rest of this document can help you to structure this process. Give yourself time to articulate how you feel and remember that the Medical School and University are here to support you.

GETTING SUPPORT AND ADVICE IF YOU THINK YOU ARE BEING BULLIED

If an incident has upset you, you might want to seek support by talking it over with the Medical School’s Pastoral Support Unit and/or the University’s Student Counselling Service. Staff belonging to these services will be able to give you confidential support and help you to gain perspective. They will also be able to help you decide how best to go about documenting and challenging the behaviour of the person who you consider is bullying you. You may also find a trusted friend, your personal tutor, or another member of staff to be a useful source of support.

Contact details for PSU and Counselling Services:

Pastoral Support Unit – email: psu@leicester.ac.uk, tel: 0116 2523336

University Student Counselling Service - wellbeing@le.ac.uk

FIRST STEPS IN DEALING WITH THE BULLYING: TALKING DIRECTLY TO THOSE INVOLVED

It is recommended that when possible and appropriate, and if you feel it is safe to do so, you should attempt to resolve the situation informally in the first instance. Importantly, resolution will require that the bully be challenged. This can be a difficult step to take if you choose to do it yourself but it may well be enough to bring bullying to an end. It is, however, up to you how you wish to proceed. If you do not feel that you can challenge a bullying individual or group in person your concerns should be addressed directly to the Professionalism Support Team (prof-supp@leicester.ac.uk).

You may choose to pursue your challenge in person, or through the Professionalism Support Team. Ideally, if you feel able, you should seek first to talk with the person or persons bullying you, challenging them in a civil manner. Your challenge may well be most effective if it is made as soon as the next bullying incident occurs. You may however choose to challenge at a later point or in a relatively private setting, either alone or with a witness or friend. If you make a personal challenge, then having someone else witness your challenge may constitute a useful deterrent to further bullying, but you should not discuss your allegation with other students more than is necessary to establish the identity of any witnesses to the original bullying.

Whenever you challenge the perpetrator you should clearly describe the bullying, state why it is wrong, and request that it cease. You should describe the behaviour, and when and where it happened, precisely. If you are vague or uncertain, the person causing the problem may pretend that they do not understand what you are talking about.
There is the possibility that the person you challenge may deny the incident, make a counter-accusation or recrimination or simply to minimise your concerns. You may therefore wish to let a friend or member of staff know before you approach the person concerned, even if you feel able to take this action on your own.

Be prepared to listen to any explanation or apology. It is advisable to keep a record of any discussions at this stage, as this may be useful in the event that further action becomes necessary.

**TAKING THE MATTER FURTHER IN CONFIDENCE WITH THE MEDICAL SCHOOL**

If deemed appropriate, a member of the Professionalism Support Team, will then meet with the person you have identified. The meeting will be attended by a second member of staff to act as a witness and to take minutes. The detail of your report will be presented to the alleged perpetrator, who will need to respond and may be required to make a formal written statement.

You will be informed when this meeting has taken place, though you may not necessarily be given detailed information about its content, other than its intended purpose of bringing the bullying to a halt. Separate meetings may be arranged with any witnesses, before or after the alleged perpetrator has been interviewed, at the discretion of the investigator. The aim of all meetings is to bring the bullying to a halt.

If the investigation of bullying becomes formal you should not contact the perpetrator or any named witnesses about the matter.

**WHAT TO DO IF THE BULLYING CONTINUES**

If the bullying persists, irrespective of whether or not its nature has changed, you should make an accurate written record of the bullying and the time, date and place at which it took place. You should also raise the matter directly with the Professionalism Support Team (see below).

You should e-mail the person you consider is bullying you a concise note about it. You need to save a copy and can also copy this to a member of academic staff (e.g. your personal tutor)

The note should state the time(s) at which any bullying has occurred, the nature of the bullying, why you feel it is wrong, and your request that it cease. You may wish to use the format below but do feel able to adopt your own.

**EXAMPLE FORMAT OF E-MAIL MESSAGE TO THE PERSON YOU CONSIDER TO BE BULLYING YOU**

To: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

From: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Date: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

At _ _ _ _ am/pm on _ / _ / _ you [describe bullying event here]. This made me feel [describe detrimental effect]. Please stop behaving in this way or in any other way that disregards the basic respect due to me and to others.

Optional text:

_I have copied this communication to the School so they are aware of this issue so that this can be dealt with in a transparent manner_
This direct form of words should be recognised by the person you consider is bullying you as a clear signal that you are objecting to bullying and seeking a resolution of the problem.

Again you need to keep a record of any correspondence at this stage, as it will be important evidence of your reasonable attempt to address the issue in the event that further action becomes necessary. Copies of your e-mail should not be shared with students other than the alleged bully and selected witnesses.

If the bullying persists or if you choose not to make a personal or e-mail challenge, you should inform the Professionalism Support Team (prof-supp@leicester.ac.uk). You should, in confidence, e-mail a copy of the above note together with the names of any witnesses and any supplementary information. A member of the Professionalism Support Team will arrange to meet with you or delegate a member of staff to meet with you. You may attend this meeting with a fellow student or member of staff; who should be a member of this university. The meeting will be attended by a second member of staff to act as a witness and to take minutes.

**FORMAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING**

If appropriate, disciplinary measures will be taken, in relation to the perpetrator, to promote a lasting cessation of bullying. Such measures will be proportionate, ranging from a verbal warning or written warning recorded on the perpetrator’s school file, to referral to a University Authorised Officer.

The University’s Authorised Officer will investigate the case as outlined in the University Regulations governing student discipline. The University’s Authorised Officer may refer the case to a Student Discipline Panel.

Once the University’s Authorised Officer has finished his/her investigation, if there has been found a case to answer, the student will appear before the Health & Conduct Committee which, amongst other sanctions, has the option of referring the case to the Fitness to Practise Committee. The Fitness to Practise Committee will act in line with GMC guidelines in its implementation of sanctions, which can range from remedial tasks requiring written reflection, to suspension or termination of studies.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the School’s attempt to resolve a bullying issue you may, if other options are exhausted, make a formal complaint to the University. For guidance see Senate Regulation 12: Regulations governing student complaints (http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/documents/senatereg12-complaints.pdf).

**NB:** No student should accuse another of bullying, knowing their accusation to be false; the potential consequences are serious.

**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE ACCUSED OF BULLYING**

**HOW SHOULD I RESPOND TO A CHALLENGE OF HAVING BULLIED?**

For some it can come as a surprise that another student or students feel that you have bullied them or others. Your first reaction might well be that whatever you said or did was just a part of normal interaction between students. However if another student confronts you with an accusation of bullying you should think through why this might be the case. The first thing you should do is listen to the person making the challenge and give them the time and space to say what they want to say. This is likely to save you both a lot of anxiety and lead to an early and amicable resolution. In listening carefully to their account, you may recognise that you have bullied or
find that you have unintentionally caused offence, your words or actions having been misinterpreted or misjudged.

A behaviour that you find acceptable or even friendly may be offensive to someone else and this should be respected. You should keep calm in order to try to reach an understanding with the person accusing you, this being the professional response.

Unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise, you should give assurance that the alleged bullying behaviour will not be repeated and agree with the student making the allegation what behaviour is acceptable, and what is not. Importantly, if you believe the accusation to be unfounded say so, but seek to understand where the misunderstanding has arisen and respectfully seek to resolve it, without counter-accusation, recrimination, or discussion with the wider student body.

After this you should give yourself time to objectively think about what has been said and reflect on the events as if you were an observer. Think about the effect you might have intended to have and the actual effect it had on the other person or people. If the type of interaction they have spoken about has been happening for some time, think of how this would be perceived as a pattern of behaviour.

During this reflection, you should be honest with yourself about your real motivations. If you really did intend to undermine those making the allegation then you need to be honest with yourself so that you can discuss this with the Student Support Staff and begin to address it in a professional manner.

Additionally it may be useful to formally respond to those making the allegation in email format as suggested below.

EXAMPLE FORMAT OF E-MAIL MESSAGE TO THOSE MAKING AN ALLEGATION OF BULLYING BY YOU:

To: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
From: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Date: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

You state that at _ _ _ _ am/pm on _ /_ /_ I [describe bullying event here]. I recognise your concern over this and agree to avoid any recurrence.

Optional text:

My intention was not to cause any distress or show disrespect to you or others.

I have copied this communication to the School so they are aware of this issue and so that it can be dealt with in a transparent manner.

This form of words should be recognised by the person who considers you to have bullied them, as a willingness to resolve the situation whether or not there was any intent to bully. If the issue appears amicably resolved then
you may want to leave it there. Alternatively you might want to arrange to seek advice and support as soon as possible, whether the situation is resolved informally or formally. You are required to participate in any proceedings if the situation remains unresolved.

**TAKING THE MATTER FURTHER IN CONFIDENCE WITH THE MEDICAL SCHOOL**

If you feel unduly upset by an accusation of bullying you may be wise to seek support from the Medical School’s Pastoral Support Unit or the University’s Student Counselling Service. Staff belonging to these services will be able to give support and help you to gain perspective. They will also be able to help you decide how best to proceed. If appropriate they will be able to help you decide how best to go about documenting and if necessary explaining the misunderstanding or rebutting allegations in a professional manner. You may also find a trusted friend, your personal tutor, or another member of staff to be a useful source of support.

Again, the most important thing is to be honest as you can with yourself about the issue. It may simply be that there was a misunderstanding that can easily be addressed. Alternatively there may be a bullying issue that can be addressed in a straightforward way. Bullying behaviour can cover a wide spectrum and the professional thing to do is to address it early.

If the allegations are genuinely unfounded then it is important to think about getting support by talking it over from the University’s Student Counselling Service and/or from the Medical School’s Pastoral Support Unit. Staff belonging to these services will be able to give you confidential support and help you gain perspective.

**Contact details for PSU and Counselling Services:**

**Pastoral Support Unit** – email: psu@leicester.ac.uk, tel: 0116 2523336

**University Student Counselling Service** - wellbeing@le.ac.uk

**FORMAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING**

If you become subject to a formal investigation of bullying you should not contact the complainant or any named witnesses about the allegation. You should not indulge in counter-accusation, recrimination or discussion with the wider student body.

You may request to be accompanied by a fellow student or by a member of university staff to any interview or other stage in the investigative procedure.

If you are deliberately bullying, you need to be honest with yourself. Be ready to change the behaviour causing offence. The best advice you can take is to stop it. Persistent bullying is a disciplinary offence. In addition, bullying behaviour is considered to be an area of concern relating to student fitness to practise as defined in the document: Medical Students: Professional Values and Fitness to Practise MSC/GMC 2009. Such behaviour, particularly if persistent and unresponsive to advice and actions taken to improve the behaviour, would raise questions about a student’s ability to practise as a safe, effective and compassionate doctor.

You are strongly advised to reflect, in depth, on the situation. Whether or not you understand your motivations it is appropriate to talk with a university student counsellor, with a view to developing insight and promoting a mind-set that respects the dignity of all.

You should be aware that the School encourages its members to challenge you if you are thought to be bullying, and that they are at liberty to do so in person, by e-mail, or through the Professionalism Support Team. Be aware
that a verbal or e-mail request to stop bullying means that your challenger is seeking a resolution to the problem, but does not mean that they have not already raised the issue with the Professionalism Support Team. Details of any verbal or e-mail challenge by a peer, or of any staff investigation, should not be shared with other students.

Any attempt to spread awareness of the challenge, or to discredit your challenger, may be interpreted as victimisation. Any failure to stop bullying, upon challenge by victim, witness or member of staff, is likely to be interpreted as refractory resistance to the adoption of professional values and behaviour.

If you are found to be bullying, measures will be taken to promote a lasting cessation of your behaviour. Such measures range from a verbal warning or written warning recorded on your school file, to referral to a University Authorised Officer, and referral to the Health & Conduct Committee which may lead to referral to the Fitness to Practise Committee. The Fitness to Practise Committee may implement sanctions ranging from tasks requiring written reflection, to warnings, suspension or termination of studies. It is important therefore that you do not persist in bullying or falsely deny bullying behaviour; the consequences can be serious.

You should also note that if you engage in bullying which constitutes unlawful harassment (harassment on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, gender or sexual orientation) you may also be held personally liable for your actions and be subject to prosecution under criminal law (Equality Act 2010).

Be aware that if your bullying is extreme and/or physically violent you may be reported to the police, by those you have bullied.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the School’s attempt to resolve a bullying issue you may, if other options are exhausted, make a formal complaint to the University. For guidance see Senate Regulation 12: Regulations governing student complaints ([http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/documents/2012-13/seratereg12-complaints.pdf](http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/documents/2012-13/seratereg12-complaints.pdf)).

**GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WHO WITNESS BULLYING**

For bullying to persist there is a requirement for:

- a bully or bullies,
- a target or targets of bullying and, in most cases,
- an absence of positive action on the part of those who witness the bullying or are reliably informed of its existence.

Unless the bullying is particularly discrete it is likely that other students or staff will witness it.

The School therefore strongly recommends that any member who witnesses the bullying of one of its students raise a concern promptly. The School will do all in its power to affirm the correctness of such action, and to protect someone who takes such action in good faith. A situation, in which the target of bullying has little innate ability to deter bullying, will not be seen to diminish the correctness of a bystander’s reporting of bullying, or the diligence with which anti-bullying measures are pursued.

If you wish to discuss how best to challenge bullying about which you are aware, you should talk it over with your personal tutor or a member of the School’s Pastoral Support Unit. To make a challenge you may, in the first instance, contact School staff who have a disciplinary remit (see below) but you may seek first to challenge the perpetrator yourself, doing so in a civil but assertive manner if you feel confident to do so. A prompt challenge
emphasises that the bullying is unacceptable. You may, however, choose to talk with the perpetrator at a later
time, in private, or with other witnesses.

If bullying persists, irrespective of whether or not its nature has changed, you may choose to e-mail the perceived
bully a formal note, a copy of which you should save, stating the time(s) at which the bullying has occurred, the
nature of the bullying, how it has affected the victim, and your request that it cease. You may wish to use the
format below:

EXAMPLE FORMAT OF E-MAIL MESSAGE TO THE PERSON CONSIDERED TO BE BULLYING BY WITNESS(S)

To: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
From: _ [your name or names of witnesses]
Date: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

At _ _ _ _ am/pm on _ / _ / _ you [describe bullying event and give victim’s name here]. This was bullying.
Please stop behaving in this way or in any other way that disregards the basic respect due to others.

Optional text

I have copied this communication to the School so they are aware of this issue and so that it can be dealt with
in a transparent manner.

This form of words should be recognised by the alleged bully as a signal that you are objecting to bullying and
seeking a resolution of the problem. It is advisable to keep a record of any correspondence at this stage, as this
may be useful in the event that further action becomes necessary. Copies of your e-mail should not be shared
with students other than the alleged bully and the target.

If the bullying persists, or if you choose not to make a personal or e-mail challenge, you should inform the
Professionalism Support Team (prof-supp@leicester.ac.uk). You could e-mail him/her a copy of the above note,
together with any additional pertinent information.

A member of the Professionalism Support Team will arrange to meet with you, or delegate a member of staff to
meet with you. If deemed appropriate, the team or the member of staff they designate; together with one other
member of staff to act as a witness and to take minutes, will meet with the person you have identified. There is
no obligation for staff to reveal to an alleged perpetrator who has raised the concern. The description of the
bullying event(s) will be presented to the perpetrator, who will need to respond and may be required to make a
written statement. Separate meetings may be arranged with any witnesses, either before or after the perpetrator
has been interviewed, at the discretion of the investigator. The aim of such meetings is to bring the bullying to a
halt.

If appropriate, measures may be taken against the perpetrator to promote a lasting cessation of bullying. Such
measures will be proportionate, ranging from a verbal warning or written warning recorded on a perpetrator’s
school file, to referral to a disciplinary body. The Professionalism Support Team may refer the case to a University
Authorised Officer. The University’s Authorised Officer will investigate the case as outlined in the University
Regulations governing student discipline. The University’s Authorised Officer may refer the case to a Student
Discipline Panel. Once the University’s Authorised Officer has finished his/her investigation, if there has been
found a case to answer, the student will appear before the Health and Conduct Committee who amongst other sanctions has the option of referring the case to the Fitness to Practise Committee. The Fitness to Practise Committee will act in line with GMC guidelines in its implementation of sanctions, which can range from remedial tasks requiring written reflection, to suspension or termination of studies.

Bullying has detrimental fallout effects for witnesses as well as targets. If you need personal support ensure that you contact the School’s Pastoral Support Unit and/or the University’s Student Counselling Service.

**Contact details for PSU and Counselling Services:**

Pastoral Support Unit – email: psu@leicester.ac.uk, tel: 0116 2523336

University Student Counselling Service - wellbeing@le.ac.uk

**NB:** No student should accuse another of bullying, knowing their accusation to be false; the potential consequences are serious.

**GUIDELINES FOR STAFF ENTRUSTED WITH THE INVESTIGATION AND MANAGEMENT OF REPORTED BULLYING**

Bullying is a form of harassment which can destroy a student’s self-esteem and prevent them from progressing on their course. It can have a far reaching detriment on their future psychological wellbeing. It is estimated to result in the suicide of approximately 15 British schoolchildren per year.

The intention of the person engaging in the behaviour – whether or not they intended to bully – is not a primary factor in making a judgement about whether or not bullying has taken place. The School should apply a test of ‘reasonableness’ to determine if bullying has taken place. That is, it should consider, with due regard to the circumstances, including in particular the perception of the complainant, whether the behaviour in question could ‘reasonably be considered’ to amount to bullying, e.g. could it reasonably be considered to:

- violate the complainant’s dignity, or
- create an intimidating, degrading, hostile or offensive environment for them.

Reports of bullying which are shown to be valid should be taken seriously and acted upon, promptly and incisively, accurate records being kept of all meetings. It may be necessary to give advice to both bully and target and to monitor a situation for some months after action has been taken.

Targets of bullying will vary in their ability to deter bullying. A target’s personal inability to deter bullying should not be viewed as a reason to avoid a diligent, sustained investigation of the alleged bullying, or to instigate robust, effective action designed to bring the bullying to a halt. In short, bullying should not be tolerated, irrespective of the degree to which a victim conforms to a perceived personality norm or expected level of resilience.

Interviews with students alleging bullying, with witnesses, or with alleged perpetrators, should, whenever possible, be conducted in the presence of two members of staff, one of whom should be a member of the Professionalism Support Team or the member of staff to whom the investigatory role has been designated. The second member of staff from the School’s Professional Services Team will act as a witness and to take minutes. Whenever possible the same two members of staff should conduct all interviews associated with the case.
If a formal investigation is instigated all parties should be informed that it is underway, be given the name of the investigator, and be made aware of where to find a copy of this policy. The complainant and alleged perpetrator should be informed that there should be no communication between them, either directly or indirectly, in relation to the allegation.

As the investigation develops and more information is collected it may be necessary to interview individuals on more than one occasion. As part of this process the alleged perpetrator should be given the opportunity to respond to any additional evidence that may arise during the course of the investigation.

In the case of the alleged bully a clear account of the allegations made should be provided and detailed questioning should follow, it being insufficient to simply ask if the allegation is true. It is suggested that each interviewee be required to make a brief but adequately detailed written statement about the alleged incident before the interview closes, in the knowledge that their account will be logged.

If the alleged bully refuses to attend for interview or to provide comments in response to the allegations they will be deemed to be in breach of this policy and therefore liable to disciplinary measures. Witnesses, named by the complainant may not be required to attend but should give a valid reason if they choose not to do so.

Allegations of bullying should be investigated as confidentially as possible, information about the allegation being released only to who need to be aware that an investigation is taking place. As part of the investigation, witnesses may need to be given details of the allegation. Where this is the case they should be made aware that the details must not be disclosed to others.

### SITUATIONS IN WHICH EVIDENCE OF BULLYING IS INSUFFICIENT TO JUSTIFY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CORRECTIVE SANCTIONS

Situations may well arise in which a student alleges bullying which is denied by the alleged perpetrator, there being no witnesses. In such instances it is important that the student who alleges bullying should not be told that nothing can be done, or has been done, by School staff. The student should be told that the alleged bully has been informed that whilst there is no corroborating evidence of their having bullied, and that while they may be completely innocent of any bullying, any further evidence that comes to light showing that the described bullying did take place, or any substantive evidence of other bullying, will have serious consequences, up to and including course termination.

In a situation of this type, in which one student’s word stands against another, the student alleging bullying should be informed that, whilst they are always encouraged to challenge bullying themselves, any further reports of bullying to the School are appropriate and will be investigated (the caveat being given that truthfulness and accuracy are paramount, there being serious consequences for deliberately untruthful accusations).

### SITUATIONS IN WHICH EVIDENCE OF BULLYING IS SUFFICIENT TO JUSTIFY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CORRECTIVE SANCTIONS

In situations in which the alleged bully admits to bullying behaviour or in which there is corroborating evidence which shows bullying to have occurred, beyond reasonable doubt, corrective actions to correct their behaviour should be implemented.

The bullied target, and any witnesses who have formally raised concern, should be informed that corrective measures have been implemented with the expectation that the bullying cease. Staff are not obliged to give
details of corrective measures, but should make clear to both the complainant and corroborating witnesses that their alerting the School to any further bullying is appropriate and will be taken seriously.

**FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR A STUDENT WHO HAS BULLIED**

It is recognised that bullying behaviour can sometimes be a result of a perpetrator’s insecurity or other psychological issues. If there is any suggestion that this is the case the individual will be strongly advised to discuss their situation with staff of the Medical School’s Pastoral Support Unit or the University’s Student Counselling Service. It should be made clear that the student in question need not divulge detail of their bullying behaviour in either setting but that they should explore its origin and resolution. Advice to seek help in this way is compatible with the simultaneous implementation of corrective sanctions. Should the student be shown to bully again, their compliance with the above advice should be investigated.

**FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR A STUDENT WHO HAS BEEN BULLIED**

Students may, to their psychological detriment, endure persistent bullying before raising a concern. A prompt cessation of the bullying is the most pressing issue in such circumstances. In such cases, however, the student can usefully be alerted to the opportunity to seek help from staff of the University’s Student Counselling Service and/or the Medical School’s Pastoral Support Unit. It may be beneficial to alert staff at the Pastoral Support Unit to their situation if it is thought that an initial approach by the Unit might be helpful.

Individuals may be bullied randomly, because the perpetrator holds prejudice or because their response to bullying is ineffective. If there is any suggestion that the student could benefit from a more assertive response to bullying, then non-judgemental advice that they contact staff of the University’s Student Counselling Service and/or the Medical School’s Pastoral Support Unit should be seriously considered.

**NB:** In no instance in which bullying has taken place, should referral of the targeted student to counselling or support substitute for the need for staff to take decisive and incisive action to bring the bullying to a prompt halt.
APPENDICES

• UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER DIGNITY AT WORK

The University of Leicester, in its Human Resources document regarding staff harassment, (http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/hr/policies/diff-sits/dignity-at-work) states that it, “wishes to establish a working environment free of harassment, and one in which people respect one another’s human integrity.” It also states, with regard to staff, that, “All members of the University are responsible for helping to ensure that individuals do not suffer from unacceptable behaviour and that they are encouraged and supported in any legitimate complaint.”

• CYBERBULLYING

A WORKING DEFINITION OF CYBERBULLYING AND ABUSE

Cyber abuse is any form of harassment, bullying, vitriol, discrimination, intolerance or hate expressed online or digitally that embarrasses, hurts or intimidates another person. This abuse can be posted via websites, social networking sites, chat rooms, message boards, webcams, smartphone apps, instant messaging, emails and text messages.¹

EXAMPLES OF CYBERBULLYING INCLUDE

• Harassment, stalking, outing and denigration of others (such as another student, member of staff, patient, relative, carer or visitor)
  o Posting offensive or threatening comments.
  o Posting inappropriate photographs or videos.
  o Posting with the intent to leave the person feeling humiliated, ignored or gossiped about.
  o Pressurising others to join or leave online groups.
  o Posting sensitive personal information.
  o Posting fake, damaging or untrue material.

• Impersonation
  o Hacking into someone’s e-mail or social media account and using the person’s online identity to post offensive, threatening, humiliating or fake material.

• Exclusion
  o Setting up another student to underachieve by intentional exclusion from digital work group discussions.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU ARE BEING CYBERBULLIED

Follow the guidelines in the University of Leicester Medical School Student Bullying and Harassment Policy.

As with bullying in person, it is very important to keep a record of the instances of bullying and/or harassment which occur online or electronically.

¹ Definition from All Rise Say No To Cyber Abuse website.
Digital communication gives you the chance to record bullying messages or content by taking a screenshot before it can be deleted by the sender. This can be done using the print screen button on a keyboard. Paste the image into a draft email or a Word document. Always record the time and date the message was sent.

On mobile devices there are a variety of ways to take a screenshot, search online for how to take a screenshot on your device type.

If you decide to raise your concerns with the Medical School, you should provide the example(s) of the bullying to the Professionalism Support Team (prof-supp@leicester.ac.uk).

Look in to how to report instances of cyberbullying on platforms like Twitter and Facebook and how to set your privacy settings on various social media platforms to help stop unwanted communication reaching you. Information on how to do this for Twitter and Facebook can be found at:

https://support.twitter.com/articles/15794
https://www.facebook.com/help/116326365118751

The GMC also provide guidance on doctors' use of social media and can be found at:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/21186.asp