

# Bullying Prevention and Management Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) The objectives of this policy are:

- a. to convey clearly to all members of the University community that bullying will not be tolerated at Victoria University;
- b. to state VU's duty to proactively identify and address bullying behaviour; and
- c. to set out how the University will address incidents of bullying of which it becomes aware.

## Section 2 - Scope / Application

(2) This policy applies to:

- a. all staff across the University, on all domestic and offshore locations, including student residences, and while engaged in all work-related activities such as conferences and work-sponsored social occasions;
- b. all contractors and consultants performing work on University sites or on behalf of the University;
- c. all onshore and offshore students enrolled in any University program, including people with provisional enrolment status and people whose enrolment or provisional enrolment was completed or terminated within the six months prior to the bringing of their complaint under this policy;
- d. visiting academics, honorary, adjunct and exchange staff;
- e. the Council and its committees;
- f. any volunteer in the workplace and study environment.

## Section 3 - Definitions

(3) Bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour, directed towards a person or a group of people that creates a risk to health and safety, and includes behaviour by verbal, written, cyber or electronic means. Bullying behaviour may not be intentional.

(4) Repeated behaviour refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour, not the specific form the behaviour takes. Behaviour is considered repeated if an established pattern can be identified.

(5) Unreasonable behaviour means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard for the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.

(6) For the sake of clarity, bullying does not include:

- a. a single incident of unreasonable behavior;
- b. low-level workplace conflict;

- c. the legitimate exercise of reasonable managerial or supervisory actions carried out in a fair and reasonable manner.

## Section 4 - Policy Statement

(7) Victoria University believes that all members of the University community should work and learn in an environment free from bullying.

(8) The University has a legal responsibility to provide a safe environment for work and study. The University will act to investigate and address any incidents of bullying that come to its attention.

(9) VU recognises its duty to ensure that those with control make themselves aware of the potential for bullying to occur and to put controls in place to prevent it.

(10) Indications that such behaviour might be occurring may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Complaints (note that these do not need to be formal complaints; once a leader becomes aware of the potential they have an obligation to act).
- b. High turnover of staff or lower than average retention rates for students.
- c. Increased levels of sick leave.
- d. People that suddenly become disengaged, withdrawn or isolated.
- e. Evidence of interference with another's work.
- f. Decreased productivity and quality of work or assessment.

(11) Anyone at VU who has people they are responsible for needs to look for circumstances that might foster bullying and take action to minimise the risk of bullying occurring.

(12) All members of the University community are required to:

- a. Comply with this policy;
- b. Behave in an appropriate manner at all times;
- c. Behave in a manner which does not constitute bullying;
- d. Promote a climate of mutual respect;
- e. Promptly report any experienced or observed bullying within the University;
- f. Maintain confidentiality concerning any complaint or investigation.

(13) University staff with teaching, supervisory or managerial responsibilities are required to:

- a. Model an appropriate standard of personal conduct;
- b. Maintain an environment that encourages communication and respect;
- c. Assess and monitor the work environment to ensure that bullying risk factors (for example negative leadership styles, poor workplace relationships and vulnerable workers) that may exist are appropriately managed and do not lead to bullying behaviours;
- d. Identify and take action to redress potential problems expeditiously and at an early stage;
- e. Alert People & Culture to any potentially serious bullying situations and liaise with them to address issues of concern;
- f. Provide confidential advice and information to anyone who has concerns about bullying, including acting upon any complaints that are made or lodged, in accordance to University policies or procedures.

## **Breaches of this policy**

(14) All reports of this type of behaviour will be treated seriously, in accordance with the Procedure.

(15) The consequences for substantiated breaches of this policy will depend on the seriousness of the case. Outcomes may include, but are not restricted to the following:

- a. Disciplinary action in accordance with the relevant industrial instrument(for staff) or [Student Misconduct Regulations](#) (for students).
- b. Dismissal from employment (in the case of staff) or termination of enrolment (in the case of students) against a person found responsible for bullying.
- c. Disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal or termination of enrolment, against a person making a complaint of bullying if, after investigation, the complaint is found to have been malicious or vexatious.

(16) Disciplinary action may also be taken against anyone who retaliates against or victimises a person who has made a complaint.

(17) Very serious bullying may constitute a criminal offence. In some circumstances matters will be referred to Victoria Police.

## **Section 5 - Procedures**

(18) See [Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Management Procedure](#).

## **Section 6 - Guidelines**

(19) Nil

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	13th October 2014
<b>Review Date</b>	1st June 2017
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Vice-Chancellor
<b>Approval Date</b>	13th October 2014
<b>Expiry Date</b>	4th June 2018
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