

PETERHOUSE
CAMBRIDGE

To All Junior Members in Residence

Racial and Sexual Harassment Policy

The College issues the following advice to Junior Members about racial and sexual harassment. It is intended to ensure that all Junior Members in the College are made aware of their obligation to ensure that the College provides a working environment that is free from all unlawful discrimination, including racial and sexual harassment. Any complaints will be investigated thoroughly and without delay. The College authorities will respect the particular sensitivity and confidentiality of complaints about racial and sexual harassment and their consequences.

1. The College policy

The College is committed to creating and maintaining a working and learning environment free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and regards racial and sexual harassment as unacceptable.

The following principles guide the College's actions:

- (a) Racial or sexual harassment of one member of the College community by another is wholly unacceptable behaviour; it is the College's policy to take any incidents seriously and to act appropriately.
- (b) When reported, complaints will be considered expeditiously and the College will take appropriate action as quickly as possible. Wherever it is feasible complaints will be dealt with through the informal procedures outlined in Section 3 of this advice.
- (c) Though cases of harassment may often be resolved informally, harassment may provide grounds for disciplinary action against individuals.
- (d) The College regards confidentiality as very important in all matters concerning allegations or complaints of harassment. Cases of alleged harassment will be investigated impartially by the College. An alleged harasser will be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a friend or supporter and will be given a clear account of the allegation so that the alleged harasser may state the case.
- (e) If a complaint is not resolved informally, the College may be obliged by a court or tribunal to disclose information received in confidence.
- (f) Unless there has been notification of a situation involving harassment the College may not be able to take steps to prevent or eliminate harassment; it is therefore important that the College authorities be kept informed of any potential complaint.

2. Definition of racial and sexual harassment

Racial harassment and sexual harassment are difficult to define in terms of what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. Either form of harassment may consist of behaviour taking place over a period of time or of a single incident. The following statements may help.

Racial harassment has two elements:

- (a) A hostile or offensive act or expression or a series or combination of such acts or expressions against a person, relating to colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origins. It also includes incitement to commit such an act or expression. Such behaviour includes derogatory name-calling, insults and racist jokes, racist graffiti, verbal abuse ranging from belittling or suggestive remarks to threats, physical attack, and ridicule of an individual for cultural differences.
- (b) The effect of such acts or expressions on the recipient is to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for employment, for study, or for social life, of which any reasonable person could justifiably complain. Racial harassment can occur *even if offence is not intended*. Differences of attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as racial harassment by one person may not seem so to another. The defining features, however, are that the behaviour is offensive or intimidating to the recipient, is unwanted by the recipient, and would be regarded as racial harassment by reasonable people.

Sexual harassment has two elements:

- (a) It always involves unwanted attention or treatment which emphasises sexual status or which has a sexual element. It includes harassment or discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Although it is most often found that it is women who are harassed by men, sexual harassment between members of the same sex or of men by women does also occur. It can be physical, ranging from suggestive looks to indecent assault or rape, or verbal, ranging from belittling or suggestive remarks and compromising invitations to aggressively foul language or unwanted demands for sexual intimacy, or displays of sexually suggestive or degrading pictures in the workplace. It also includes inciting or attempting to incite a person to commit an act of sexual harassment.
- (b) The effect of such behaviour on the recipient is to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for employment, for study, or for social life, of which any reasonable person could justifiably complain. Any behaviour that makes the recipient feel viewed as a sexual object, or which treats the recipient less favourably on the ground of his or her sex, is liable to cause offence, *even if the offence is not intended*. An aggravating feature in some cases of sexual harassment may be the abuse of a position of authority or trust. Differences of attitude or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as sexual harassment by one person may not seem so to another. The defining features, however, are that the behaviour is offensive to the recipient, is unwanted by the recipient, and would be regarded as sexual harassment by reasonable people.

3. Action to take if you are racially or sexually harassed

Any Junior Member of the College who is being racially or sexually harassed should follow the advice given below.

It is important not to allow the behaviour to continue to a point where it becomes intolerable. By taking action early it is often possible to minimise the harmful effects of harassment on the individual. If you think that you are being subjected to racial or sexual harassment in any form, do not feel that it is your fault or that you have to tolerate it. The problem will be treated sympathetically and in strict confidence. This is what you can do:

- (i) You may seek confidential advice from any of the persons listed in Section 5. It would be advisable to do this before taking any other steps. Any discussion will be confidential, and further action involving you will not be taken without your express permission. In particular, the other person or persons will not be given your name without your permission.
- (ii) You may wish to make an informal or formal complaint about the behaviour which you have experienced. If you choose to do so, the steps you should take are set out in the Junior Members Complaints Procedure.
- (iii) You may not wish to speak to the person causing the offence about this behaviour but, if you are able to do so, approach the person, explain that the behaviour is unacceptable to you, and ask the person to stop. You may wish to have support from a friend or supporter in taking this action.
- (iv) It is important to note that the possibility of counter-accusation or recrimination exists. Given that this is so, it may be wise to alert someone else to your problem before you approach the person concerned.
- (v) If you feel that you cannot make a direct approach, if the behaviour does not stop, if it resumes, or if you are still unhappy and believe you have cause for complaint, keep a record of the details of any relevant incidents that distress you, including a note of the ways in which the incidents cause you to change the pattern of your work or social life. If you feel unable to tackle the person concerned, this does not constitute consent to the harassment nor will it prejudice any complaint you may bring.

4. Cases of physical assault, whether involving a racial or sexual element or not

Unfortunately, there will be times when individuals may suffer physical assault. Although you may be shocked and upset, it is important that, if you have been attacked, you should seek help immediately. In particular, you should report the attack to the police and to your Tutor or to the Senior Tutor. Any one of the suggested contacts on the list in Section 5 will willingly give you support and help you to decide what to do. If you go to any of these people further action will not normally be taken without your express permission, although the police may require further information if criminal proceedings are to be taken. You will be advised on what to do but you have the choice. If you decide to go to the police you need not go alone, unless you so wish.

The foregoing information applies equally if you have been sexually assaulted or raped; in addition, you should seek medical help and advice immediately. If you think you may want to report a sexual assault to the police, it is advisable not to wash, brush your teeth, have a cigarette, eat or drink, change your clothes (or keep them safely to one side), or clear up anything from the area of the incident. If possible, try not to go to the toilet. But if you have already done some of these things, do not worry: it is still quite possible that there is evidence to collect as well as injuries that can be documented.

Information on locally available advice and help for people who have experienced sexual assault or rape is provided in Section 5.

5. Sources of help

Your Tutor
The Senior Tutor
The Dean
The College Nurse
The Women's Adviser
Members of the University Counselling Service (Cambridge 322865)
Linkline (Cambridge 67575)

Rape Crisis (England and Wales) <<http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/>> is a registered charity and the national umbrella organisation for Rape Crisis Centres across the country. It provides a national helpline service which is open every day, from 12 - 2.30pm and 7 - 9.30pm, on 0800 802 99 99.

The Oasis at Rivergate - the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Cambridgeshire. They can provide care, help and support for anyone who has experienced sexual assault, abuse, rape or sexual violence. You can have a forensic and medical examination at your local SARC (including tests for sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy). They can store the forensic results until you make up your mind whether to report to the police or not. SARC's have specially trained experienced professionals who can give you medical help and advice. They can also help and support you through the immediate trauma. You should call in advance to let them know you are coming - the Oasis helpline number is 0845 089 6262. Website: <http://www.oasiscentre.org/>

The Student Advice Service <<http://www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk/>> offers free, confidential and independent support to all students at the University of Cambridge. Email: advice@studentadvice.cam.ac.uk; Tel: 01223 746999

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22.5.13