



## UBC Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff

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Approved by: UBC Executive  
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**The University of British Columbia envisions a climate in which students, faculty and staff are provided with the best possible conditions for learning, researching and working, including an environment that is dedicated to excellence, equity and mutual respect. The University of British Columbia strives to realize this vision by establishing employment and educational practices that respect the dignity of individuals and make it possible for everyone to live, work, and study in a positive and supportive environment possible.**

### **A. Statement of Principle**

The best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued. Everyone at the University of British Columbia is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds these principles in all communications and interactions with fellow UBC community members and the public in all University-related settings.

### **B. The Respectful University Environment**

In the context of an academic community, responsibility for maintaining a respectful environment falls on all community members, including students, faculty, staff, and members of the public who participate in University-related activities.

Excellence in learning, research and work in the university community is fostered by promoting the freest possible exchange of information, ideas, beliefs and opinions in diverse forms, and it necessarily includes dissemination and discussion of controversial topics and unpopular points of view. Respect for the value of freedom of expression and promotion of free inquiry are central to the University's mission.

However, these freedoms cannot exist without an equally vigorous commitment to recognition of and respect for the freedoms of others, and concern for the well-being of every member of the university community. Excellence in scholarship, teaching and employment activities flows from active concern and respect for others, including their ability to participate meaningfully in the exchange of information, ideas, beliefs and opinions.

Therefore, freedom of expression and freedom of inquiry must be exercised responsibly, in ways that recognize and respect the dignity of others, having careful regard to the dynamics of different relationships within the university environment, such as between professor and student, or supervisor and employee. A respectful environment is a climate in which the human dignity

of each individual is valued, and the diverse perspectives, ideas and experiences of all members of the community are able to flourish.

### **C. Activities Harmful to a Respectful Environment**

Personal harassment, which is sometimes referred to as psychological harassment or bullying, is harmful to a respectful environment and therefore has no place at UBC. It is not only a direct attack on the dignity and worth of the individual or group at whom it is directed, it undermines the freedoms of the whole community.

Personal harassment is objectionable and unwanted behaviour that is verbally or physically abusive, vexatious or hostile, that is without reasonable justification, and that creates a hostile or intimidating environment for working, learning or living. Personal harassment may be intentional or unintentional. While personal harassment usually consists of repeated acts, a single serious incident that has a lasting harmful effect may constitute personal harassment.

Personal harassment behaviour includes persistent demeaning or intimidating comments, gestures or conduct; threats to a person's employment or educational status, person or property; persistent comments or conduct, including ostracism or exclusion of a person, that undermines an individual's self-esteem so as to compromise their ability to achieve work or study goals; unwarranted and excessive supervision or criticism of an individual; abuse of power, authority or position; sabotage of a person's work; hazing; spreading of malicious rumours or lies; or making malicious or vexatious complaints about a person.

Personal harassment does not include the exercise of appropriate managerial or supervisory direction, including performance management and the imposition of discipline; constructive criticism; reasonable changes to assignments or duties; correction of inappropriate student behaviour; instructional techniques such as irony, conjecture, and refutation, or assigning readings or other instructional materials that advocate controversial positions; and single incidents of thoughtless, petty or foolish words or acts that cause fleeting harm.

A determination that personal harassment has occurred is based not only on what the alleged perpetrator and target of the harassment actually experienced, knew, or understood about each other and the situation, but on what a reasonable person in each of their circumstances would have experienced, known or understood, taking into account the full context of the situation.

### **D. Addressing Respectful Environment Concerns**

Primary responsibility for addressing respectful environment concerns, including concerns about personal harassment, lies with those members of the UBC community who exercise supervisory or leadership roles. These individuals are well-placed to set examples for others by their own conduct, to communicate to those under their direction UBC's commitment to a respectful university environment, and to take appropriate action to preserve or restore a respectful environment if problems arise.

Specifically, faculty or staff who have concerns about personal harassment should contact their direct supervisor or Administrative Head of Unit. Students should contact their professor, Department Head or Dean's Office, if their concern relates to a course or academic matter. If the

concern relates to a UBC service unit or a residence, students should contact the Unit Head of the particular service or the Vice-President, Students Office at UBC Vancouver, or the Unit Head or the Associate Vice-President, Students at UBC Okanagan.

Where the issue is not resolved or there is concern about conflict of interest, faculty and staff should contact their employee association, union, or Human Resources. In such circumstances, students should contact the UBC Ombudsperson (UBC Vancouver) or the Associate Vice-President, Students or Student Union (UBC Okanagan).

Administrative Heads of Units, whether responding to a concern raised to them or taking action because they have otherwise become aware that a person may be engaging in personal harassment in their unit, are expected to act promptly to determine whether personal harassment has occurred or is ongoing, and if so, to address the conduct and its damaging effects. Support and advice are available from Human Resources, including Faculty Relations.

It is the responsibility of each Vice President, in cooperation with Human Resources, to ensure that those in supervisory or leadership roles in their portfolio, have access to the proper training necessary to understand rights and responsibilities in a respectful working, learning and living environment, including their own responsibility to investigate, respond to, and manage complaints of harassment and to educate those they supervise or lead regarding those rights and responsibilities.

Education, increased awareness and prompt action are vital to create and maintain respectful working, learning and living environments at UBC. The University must provide training, support and resources to raise awareness about the principles of a respectful working, learning and living environment and to address concerns in a positive and effective manner when they do occur.

#### **E. Related Policies and Provisions**

Where policies and mechanisms for addressing unacceptable conduct already exist, whether in work, education or living contexts, this *Respectful Environment Statement* is intended to supplement, not to displace them.

In particular, matters relating to discrimination or harassment based on age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical or mental disability, place of origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and criminal conviction unrelated to employment are addressed in Policy #3, the UBC *Policy on Discrimination and Harassment*. Concerns that may constitute complaints under that policy should be addressed to the Equity Office (UBC-Vancouver) or Human Rights and Equity Services (UBC-Okanagan)

Where a concern raised under the *Respectful Environment Statement* is appropriately addressed under another policy or provision, Administrative Heads of Units and others responsible for addressing respectful environment concerns will direct the individual to the appropriate office.

Departmental policies regarding respectful environments can add to but not derogate from the principles in this statement.