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# **The Royal Australasian College of Physicians**

**Respectful Behaviour in College Training Programs**

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# The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Respectful Behaviour in College Training Programs

## 1 Purpose

This statement sets out the standards of behaviour the RACP expects of Fellows and trainees involved in RACP training programs.

The RACP expects that its Fellows and trainees will observe and maintain the highest possible standards of behaviour and ethics, and treat all Fellows and trainees of the RACP community with fairness, dignity, and respect. The RACP further expects that its Fellows and trainees will not engage in any form of bullying, harassment, physical or verbal conduct that a reasonable person would deem to be unwelcome, offensive, humiliating, or intimidating.

The RACP acknowledges that trainees will have regular interactions with Fellows of the RACP nominated to be their supervisor (**supervisor**) for the purpose of RACP accredited training programs. These interactions will occur as part of the normal interaction between staff in the workplace in which the trainee and supervisor are employed. While the RACP does not have a direct involvement in, or control over, the working relationship and interactions between a trainee and their supervisor, the RACP is concerned to ensure that any unreasonable behaviour of its Fellows does not adversely impact the wellbeing of trainees or harm the RACP's reputation.

## 2 Unacceptable conduct

Bullying and harassment is not acceptable to the RACP. This conduct can be unlawful and also contravenes the standards of conduct required of members of the RACP under the Code of Conduct.

### 2.1 What is harassment?

Harassment is any type of behaviour that:

- is unwelcome and unsolicited
- the person considers the behaviour to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening
- a reasonable person would consider the behaviour to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening.

### 2.2 What types of behaviour could amount to harassment?

There are many types of verbal, non-verbal and physical behaviours that could amount to harassment. The basic rule is that if someone else finds a behaviour to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening, then it could be harassment.

These types of behaviours are not tolerated in the workplace and should not occur between participants in RACP training programs.

Harassment may include the following types of behaviours that may be regarded as workplace harassment if the behaviour is repeated or occurs as part of a pattern of behaviour. This is not an exhaustive list however it does outline some of the more common types of harassing behaviours. Examples include:

- verbally abusing a person loudly, usually when others are present
- repeated threats of dismissal or other severe punishment for no reason
- constant ridicule and being put down
- leaving offensive messages on email, social media or the telephone
- yelling, screaming or offensive language

- sabotaging a person's work, for example, by deliberately withholding or supplying incorrect information, hiding documents or equipment, not passing on messages and getting a person into trouble in other ways
- maliciously excluding and isolating a person from workplace activities
- persistent and unjustified criticisms, often about petty, irrelevant or insignificant matters
- humiliating a person through gestures, sarcasm, criticism and insults, often in front of clients, management or other workers
- spreading gossip or false, malicious rumours about a person with an intent to cause the person harm.

### 2.3 What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any form of unwelcome sexual attention. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship between people. Interactions that are consensual, welcome and reciprocated do not amount to sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment involves humiliation or offence to the victim. It's not fun, flattering or flirting. Sexual harassment can happen to anyone and it's against the law wherever and whenever it occurs.

Sexual harassment could be:

- unwelcome physical touching, hugging, massaging or kissing
- sexual or suggestive comments, jokes, taunts or name calling
- unwelcome requests for sex
- insinuations about a person's private or sex life, or sexual preference
- offensive gestures or staring
- sending unwelcome SMS messages or emails
- unwelcome or uncalled for remarks or insinuations about a person's appearance
- posting of inappropriate comments, pictures, video's or blogs on websites
- the display or circulating of clearly sexual material (such as photos, pin-ups, screensavers or pictures) or reading matter (such as emails, faxes, social media links or letters).

Sexual harassment does not have to be repeated or ongoing to be against the law. Some actions or remarks are so offensive that they are clearly sexual harassment, even if they are not repeated. Other incidents, such as an unwanted invitation or compliment, are probably not harassment if they are "one-offs".

Sexual harassment doesn't have to be deliberate. It can also occur in cases where a reasonable person would have expected that the behaviour was going to be offensive. Some sexual harassment matters, such as sexual assault, indecent exposure and stalking are also criminal offences.

### 2.4 What is Bullying?

A worker is bullied at work if:

- a person or group of people repeatedly acts unreasonably towards them or a group of workers
- the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety.

It may involve any of the following types of behaviour:

- aggressive or intimidating conduct
- belittling or humiliating comments
- spreading malicious rumours
- teasing, practical jokes or 'initiation ceremonies'
- exclusion from work-related events

- unreasonable work expectations, including too much or too little work, or work below or beyond a worker's skill level
- displaying offensive material
- pressure to behave in an inappropriate manner.

This behaviour must be repeated and unreasonable and must create a risk to health and safety in order for it to be bullying. Unreasonable behaviour includes victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening. Whether behaviour is unreasonable can depend on whether a reasonable person might see the behaviour as unreasonable in the circumstances.

## 2.5 What is NOT Bullying?

The use of respectful questioning to promote trainee learning and professional development is not bullying.

A supervisor can make decisions about performance or provide justified and reasonable negative feedback to a trainee and this will not constitute bullying.

Reasonable management action that is carried out in a reasonable way is not bullying.

## 3 What to do if you feel you have been bullied or harassed

### 3.1 Raise the issue in the workplace

If you feel you have been bullied or been the victim of harassment in your workplace, you should follow your employer's policies and processes on bullying and harassment.

If you have any questions about your employer's process you may wish to discuss this with your employer's human resources department.

Other people and resources you may find useful if you are experiencing bullying or harassment include:

- any employment assistance program your workplace may offer
- your indemnity insurance provider.

### 3.2 Raise the issue with the RACP

The RACP has no day-to-day or practical control over the workplace, and its relationship with the employer of a trainee/supervisor is typically limited to accreditation for training purposes. Most employers have substantial support through designated contact officers and human resources departments to appropriately investigate and resolve issues. Most are handled through self-management techniques which highlight the behaviour that is not appropriate and clearly requesting that it does not happen again.

All complaints of workplace bullying and harassment in the context of training that are raised with the RACP will be referred to the employer for action in accordance with the employer's relevant policies and procedures. By making a complaint to the RACP about workplace bullying and harassment you consent to the College sharing details of your complaint with your employer.

The RACP offers a Support Program for members. This is a confidential counselling service available to all Fellows and trainees of the RACP. Support is available 24 hours, seven days a week and is free to all members. To speak to a consultant or make an appointment call **1300 687 327 (AU) or 0800 666 367 (NZ)**. Further information about the RACP Support Program is available on the RACP website [www.racp.edu.au/Fellows/resources/support-helpline](http://www.racp.edu.au/Fellows/resources/support-helpline)

The College Training Support Unit ([trainingsupport@racp.edu.au](mailto:trainingsupport@racp.edu.au)) can provide assistance and support for trainees who may be encountering difficulties during training.

### 3.3 External agencies

You may also raise your concerns with external agencies established to resolve issues relating to bullying or harassment claims.

In **Australia**, advice is available from:

Australian Human Rights Commission  
[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au) phone: 02 9284 9600

Fair Work Australia  
[www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) phone: 13 13 94

Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW  
[www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.antidiscrimination.justice.nsw.gov.au) phone: 02 9268 5555

NT Anti-Discrimination Commission  
[www.adc.nt.gov.au](http://www.adc.nt.gov.au) phone: 1800 813 846

Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland  
[www.adcq.qld.gov.au](http://www.adcq.qld.gov.au) phone: 1300 130 670

Equal Opportunity Commission South Australia  
[www.eoc.sa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.sa.gov.au) phone: 1800 188 163

Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner - Tasmania  
[www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au](http://www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au) phone: 1300 305 062

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission  
[www.eoc.vic.gov.au](http://www.eoc.vic.gov.au) phone: 1300 891 848

Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia  
[www.eoc.wa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au) phone: 1800 198 149

In **New Zealand**, advice is available from:

The New Zealand Human Rights Commission  
[www.hrc.co.nz](http://www.hrc.co.nz) phone: 0800 496 877