THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Dignity at Study Policy

1. Scope

1.1. This Policy relates to all students registered on University of Kent courses and taught at University of Kent campuses, and operates in the context of their academic work and relations with staff and students.

1.2. The outline procedures for pursuing complaints against staff and students are summarised in Appendix 2 of this document.

1.3. There is a separate Dignity at Work policy applicable to University staff in relation to other members of staff in a work context.

2. General Principles

2.1. The University of Kent is committed to a working and learning culture that encompasses dignity, courtesy, respect and consideration for all. All staff and students have a responsibility to create an environment that is free from harassment, bullying, unlawful discrimination and victimisation.

2.2. The University is committed to supporting a positive learning culture through the provision of:
   - a wide range of training for staff to provide a better understanding of dignity at study and work;
   - clear guidance on appropriate behaviours and conduct to support a positive culture of dignity at study;
   - appropriate mechanisms to address concerns about behaviour which may breach this Policy.

2.3. Academic and Professional Service managers have a responsibility to promote an environment which supports dignity at study for all and to follow appropriate procedures when concerns are raised. Kent Union has a responsibility to raise the awareness of all students about their responsibilities with regard to dignity at study.

2.4. All allegations will be taken seriously and appropriate action will be taken.

2.5. Initial remedial action will focus on informal resolution to enable relationships to continue in a positive and acceptable environment wherever possible. All allegations will be taken seriously and appropriate action will be taken.

2.6. Disciplinary action will be taken where there are serious or repeated breaches of the Dignity at Study Policy.

3. Definitions

3.1. Harassment is unwanted behaviour or conduct which is related to a legally protected characteristic defined in the Equality Act 2010 (as detailed below). It has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Whether it is deliberate or unintentional, the salient
point is that the individual feels it is unwelcome and unwanted. It may be against an individual by an individual or involve groups of people.

3.2. **Protected characteristics** are legally defined as age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. The complainant does not necessarily have to possess the characteristic. **Harassment by perception** is where the conduct or behaviour is based on the perception that an individual has a protected characteristic, and **Harassment by association** is where an individual is treated less favourably because of that person’s association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

3.3. **Bullying** may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Examples of bullying could be:

- abuse of power or authority
- verbal, written and/or physical intimidation e.g. threats, derisory remarks
- persistent unjustified criticism
- public humiliation
- the setting of impossible deadlines or intolerable workload burdens
- having responsibilities or decision-making powers withdrawn without good reason or explanation
- unwarranted exclusions

Vigorous speech and comment, academic debate and legitimate management of the performance of staff or students can be distinguished from bullying behaviour. However care should be taken to ensure that neither staff nor students are made to feel intimidated.

3.4. **Victimisation** occurs where an individual is subjected to detrimental conduct or behaviour because that person has raised a complaint of discrimination, or because the person has supported another person in raising a complaint of discrimination. This may involve groups of people.

3.5. **The Student/Teacher Relationship** is one of special trust. Teaching staff are required to recognise their professional and ethical responsibilities to protect the interests of students, to respect the trust involved in the staff/student relationship and to accept the obligations inherent in that responsibility. The University’s Personal Relationships Policy may be found at: [http://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-staffinformation/policies/relationships.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-staffinformation/policies/relationships.html).

3.6. **The protection of young people, under the age of 18, and vulnerable adults** is governed under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. All members of the University have a duty to raise concerns about behaviour that may be harmful to young people and vulnerable adults.

3.7. **Third party harassment** concerns the conduct and behaviour of people who are not students of the University but who are on campus for academic or other purposes. Examples would include students of other universities visiting to attend research seminars or to discuss
their work with Kent students or staff. Where the University is aware that third party harassment has taken place it will take reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

4. Examples of behaviour

The following is an indicative list of positive or negative behaviours provided for guidance purposes only.

4.1. Positive behaviours which can work with the principles of dignity at study include:

- respect for an individual’s differences;
- value being placed on an individual’s contribution;
- no tolerance of prejudice;
- every individual has a responsibility to behave in a way that is not offensive to others and to acknowledge that views and opinions held by others may differ from their own.

4.2. Negative behaviours which may work against the principles of dignity at study include:

- open and obvious, for example, shouting at people, threats or physical intimidation, personal/offensive remarks, inappropriate physical touching;
- hidden, disguised or not immediately apparent, for example, innuendo, excluding someone or other methods of ostracism, intrusively questioning a person regarding his/her personal circumstances;
- through verbal exchanges, face to face conduct, or the display or circulation of physical material in any media, which could be offensive and is not approved for academic purposes;
- harassment or intimidation arising from current or historical conflict between people of different ethnic or religious groups;
- deliberate or unintentional harassment brought about by differing perceptions of attitude, culture and/or the misrepresentation of social signals. What one person believes is harassment or bullying may not seem so to another, however the underlying factor is whether the behaviour is unwanted or unwelcome in the recipient’s perception.

4.3 This list is by no means exhaustive.

4.4. All university staff play a critical role in demonstrating appropriate behaviour and setting the expectations they have of students and colleagues. They should demonstrate professional behaviour and foster an inclusive University culture which encourages positive, supportive and open interactions.

4.5 Further information on student behaviour can be found at Appendix 1.

5 What to do if I have concerns?

5.1. Where possible, there should be an initial approach to the person responsible for the behaviour to advise the person that you find it inappropriate, unacceptable or unwelcome.
Advice can be sought from a variety of different sources as detailed in section 8 of this document. The focus for initial discussions should be to identify steps to address any concerns and the provision of support and advice.

5.2. Concerns about the behaviour of a student may be taken forward under the Regulations on Student Discipline on Non Academic Matters by the appropriate Master of a College. Where a breach of this policy is solely related to the use of IT, the Regulations for the Use of Information Technology (IT) Facilities at the University of Kent, and the IT Code of Conduct should be followed.

5.3. Beyond 5.1 above, concerns about a member of staff may be raised with the line manager of the member of staff concerned and subsequently as set out in the Complaints Procedure for Students.

5.4. A flowchart summarising the above is attached as Appendix 2.

5.5. The support networks outlined in section 8 of this document are available to those who are subject to a complaint as well as the complainant.

6 Confidentiality

6.1. All discussions regarding complaints under this Policy will be treated confidentially unless the safety of students or members of staff is at risk.

6.2 All individuals should recognise that to address concerns through the appropriate procedures it is necessary to share some information regarding the specific complaint with the person or people against whom the complaint is made. This sharing of information will be kept strictly to those directly involved in the investigation or remedial processes and will be discussed with the person raising the complaint in the first instance. Individuals who consider that they are subject to bullying or harassment should not discuss this widely but should follow the appropriate procedure to raise their concerns.

7. Monitoring and Review

7.1 Anonymised information, including the number and type of cases, level of action, and outcomes, will be used to provide annual reports to the Student Experience Committee to identify how the University’s Policy and practice can be improved.

7.2 This Policy will be reviewed by the Student Experience Committee on a regular basis.

8 Sources of Advice and Support

8.1 Harassment Contacts
The University has a network of Harassment Contacts to provide advice to anyone subject to inappropriate behaviour or who wishes to report that another person is subject to such behaviour. A conversation with a harassment contact will not lead to formal action without the consent of the complainant except in cases where there are concerns about the complainant’s safety and well-being. Further information can be found via the HR Equality and Diversity website at: http://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-equalityanddiversity/
8.2 The role of the harassment contact is to:

- offer a ‘listening ear’
- offer support, guidance and advice as to whether the alleged behaviour falls within this Policy
- talk through and advise on the process for resolving the problem, including providing guidance on speaking or writing to the alleged harasser
- refer the matter to another source of help or pursue more formal action.

8.3 Other sources for advice and support for students are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Web page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Tutor or Student</td>
<td>Local to School/Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Master</td>
<td>see web page</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kent.ac.uk/studentservices/masters-office/">http://www.kent.ac.uk/studentservices/masters-office/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Service</td>
<td>01227 823206</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kent.ac.uk/counselling/">http://www.kent.ac.uk/counselling/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Canterbury)</td>
<td>01634 888875</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Medway)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Centre</td>
<td>01227 823583</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kent.ac.uk/medical/">http://www.kent.ac.uk/medical/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Canterbury)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplaincy</td>
<td>01227 827491</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kent.ac.uk/chaplaincy/">www.kent.ac.uk/chaplaincy/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Canterbury)</td>
<td>01634 888959</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Medway)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Union Vice-President,</td>
<td>01227 824217</td>
<td><a href="mailto:union-welfare@kent.ac.uk">union-welfare@kent.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Additional Advice on Cases of Serious Assault and Rape

9.1 A student who has been attacked may seek help at the Canterbury campus from the University’s Medical Centre/Campus Watch/College Receptionists. At the Medway campus help should be sought from the College Master’s Office. These staff will be able to contact someone from a trained Emergency Response Rota who can stay with you and offer information about the personal support available.

9.2 The following support services are also available for you to approach at a later date, if no action is taken at the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Medical Centre (Canterbury)</td>
<td>01227 823583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Watch (Canterbury)</td>
<td>01227 823300 or 01227 823333 (in emergency situations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Master’s Office (Medway)</td>
<td>01634 202903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Office (Medway)</td>
<td>01634 883138 (in emergency situations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Kent Rape Line</td>
<td>01227 450400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Other relevant policies, procedures and documents

Complaints Procedure for Students
Regulations on student discipline in relation to non-academic matters
Information Services: Regulations for the use of information technology facilities at the University of Kent
Information Services Computer Misuse/Abuse Disciplinary Procedure for Students, Staff and External Users
Student Charter
University Policy Statement concerning Alcohol
University Policy Statement concerning Drugs (Substance Misuse)
Fitness to Study Procedures
Personal Relationships Policy
Equality and Diversity Policy
Anti Bribery and Corruption Policy
Fraud Prevention Policy
Whistleblowing Policy

(Last Updated: 20.01.2015)

KJL 24.01.13
WLC 21.02.13
WLC 20.05.2013
WLC 13.06.2013
WLC 05.07.2013
KJL 21.01.2015