

University of Kent – Statement on Unacceptable Behaviour

The University of Kent is committed to providing a fair, consistent and accessible service for everyone who interacts with our services and works to provide a high standard of experience for all.

In addition, the University of Kent is committed to fostering a positive working environment where all staff and students are treated fairly, with dignity, courtesy, respect and consideration, and where staff have a safe environment in which to work. This statement is part of this commitment, to provide clear guidance on appropriate behaviours and conduct to support a positive culture of dignity at work.

Whilst it is recognised that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress, we will not tolerate behaviour which is deemed to be unacceptable.

What is unacceptable behaviour?

Unacceptable behaviour means acting in ways that are not respectful or considerate, which undermine or threaten staff safety or dignity, and which can be seen as unreasonable, regardless of the level of someone's stress, frustration, or anger. It may involve acts, words or physical gestures that could cause another person distress or discomfort. There are other behaviours that may be considered abusive, aggressive, harassing, or unreasonable.

For example, we won't accept aggressive behaviour like:

- Swearing and/or offensive, abusive or inflammatory language
- discrimination like racism, sexism or homophobia
- Shouting, aggressive language or being violent or threatening violence
- Personal comments, or unsubstantiated allegations against staff members or other individuals
- Seeking out staff members on social media platforms with the intention of contacting them

Similarly, we won't accept unreasonable demands and level of contact. While not a complete list of examples, for clarity, the following behaviours are defined as unreasonable demands:

- Multiple and repeat contacts about the same issue.
- Demands for responses in unreasonable timescales.
- Long or frequent telephone calls within a short period of time (e.g.) in a day or over the lifespan of a complaint.

- Recording conversations without the explicit consent of the University staff member
- Repeated messaging via email – particularly multiple messages within a short period of time that serve to overwhelm the recipient.
- Providing the same information multiple times, providing information that is not relevant to a specific issue, or providing information that is materially inaccurate, false or without evidence.
- Insisting on only seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff (where this has not been agreed with the respective team).
- Repeatedly changing the substance of your issue.
- Demanding unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes in response to your issue.
- Persistent refusal to accept a decision once a procedure has been exhausted.

What we'll do if your behaviour is unacceptable

If we believe that your behaviour is becoming or has become unacceptable, we will highlight this to you clearly within our interactions. We'll then give you a chance to change your behaviour. But if you continue, we may action one or more of the following (as appropriate):

- Stop face-to-face interactions and only help you by phone or via email, limiting our contact to written correspondence if appropriate.
- Limit how much time we spend on the phone with you, and end any conversations where you are acting in unacceptable or unreasonable ways.
- Limit our contact to specific days and/or times, or limit your contact to specific staff members as designated by the team.
- Cease replying to any or all of your communications (in particular, not providing further responses if the issues have been previously considered).