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SVMS student guide on harassment or bullying at EMS placements

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SVMS is committed to addressing any inequalities and creating an inclusive and diverse culture and environment where individuals are able to thrive, no matter what their personal characteristics are.

The aim of this document is to provide guidance to the SVMS students regarding harassment and bullying at the placements and raise awareness. The document has been put together by SVMS EDI committee from various sources of information available including University of Nottingham EDI guidance and British Medical Association guidance on harassment at placements.

Harassment

Harassment is legally defined in the England, Scotland and Wales through the Equality Act 2010 which describes it as unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic (such as age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It can be either a pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident. It is not necessary to prove conduct was intended to have a negative effect on the recipient.

Sexual harassment can take the form of ridicule, sexually provocative remarks or jokes, comments about dress or appearance, the display or distribution of sexually explicit material, sexual advances or physical contact, demands for sexual favours, or assault.

Racial harassment may include jokes about, or gratuitous references to a person's colour, race, religion, or nationality; and assumptions based on racial stereotypes. It can also include offensive remarks about dress, culture, or customs that have the effect of ridiculing or undermining an individual or fostering hatred and/or prejudice towards individuals or particular groups.

Harassment of people with disabilities can take the form of individuals being ignored, disparaged or ridiculed because of mistaken assumptions about their capabilities. Their disability rather than their ability can become the focus of attention and harassment can include inappropriate personal remarks, jokes or inappropriate reference to an individual's appearance. People may be wrongly excluded from activities because their requirements have not been considered.

Harassment on the grounds of a person's sexuality may be aimed at heterosexuals but is more usually experienced by gay, lesbians, transsexuals or bisexuals. Examples of harassment relating to sexuality include homophobic remarks or jokes, offensive comments relating to a person's sexuality, threats to disclose a person's sexuality to others or offensive behaviour/abuse relating to HIV or AIDS status.

Harassment on the grounds of age may include jokes about a person's age or the age of those with whom the individual associates. It may not be targeted at an individual(s) but consist of a general culture which, for instance, appears to tolerate the telling of ageist jokes. Harassment may also take the form of individuals being ignored or overlooked because of mistaken assumptions about the person's capability and/or willingness to take part in activities, for example, exclusion of those near retirement from training and development opportunities.

Harassment on the grounds of religion or belief may include any behaviour, language or conduct relating to a person's religion or belief, or to their not following a religion or belief. Examples of harassment include offensive remarks or jokes about items of clothing and religious artefacts; refusing to work with a person because of their religion or belief; or excluding someone from workplace activities.

Bullying:

Bullying is the exercise of power over another person through negative acts or behaviours that undermine him/her/them personally and/or professionally. It is often characterised by inconsistent treatment of people. Bullying can be threatening, insulting, abusive, disparaging or intimidating behaviour; placing inappropriate pressure on the recipient, which can affect self-confidence or has the effect of isolating or excluding them. It involves behaviour that is unacceptable to the recipient and creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for employment, study or related social activities. Bullying may consist of a single incident, sporadic events or a continuing process. Behaviour that may appear trivial as a single incident can constitute bullying when repeated.

Examples of bullying can include:

- Aggression, threats and shouting;
- Constant belittling, marginalising or ridiculing;
- Excessive criticism about minor things;
- Excessive monitoring of someone's work or inaccurate accusations about quality of work;
- Public humiliation;
- Taking credit for someone's work but never taking the blame if something goes wrong;
- Twisting things someone says or does;
- Withholding information from or deliberately supplying incorrect information to employees so they are less able to do their job;
- Setting impossible objectives or constantly changing someone's work remit;
- Isolation or non-co-operation at work, exclusion from social activities or conversation;
- Spreading malicious rumours;
- Failure to deal with the issue of an individual consistently being given an excessive workload compared with colleagues;
- Preventing individuals from progressing, by intentionally blocking training opportunities.

The University's Responsibilities

The University has a responsibility to you whilst you are a student. In the periods other than those spent on external placements, this responsibility is outlined by the University Policy on Bullying and Harassment:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/complaintsgrievanceanddignity/dignity/documents/dignity-at-nottingham-policy-update-12-2019.pdf>

Whilst you are on placements, the University continues to have a duty of care towards you, but internal University policies are not applicable. SVMS staff are, however, still available to give you advice and assistance should you feel you are the victim of either harassment or bullying within your placements.

A letter will be sent to the EMS hosts which highlights our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity, as well as our zero-tolerance stance on harassment and bullying.

What to do if you experience harassment or bullying

1. **Seek support:** If you have or are experiencing harassment/bullying, an important first step is to speak with someone. This will help to give you clarity and start to build confidence to deal with the issue. If you speak to someone, the person should be someone you trust and feel comfortable with, and one who will actively and patiently listen to you and not rush to judgement. Also, contact the EMS placement office and your Personal Tutor or Senior Tutor or EDI Director. All academic staff are required to attend a basic equality awareness training/development. These guidelines have also been disseminated to your personal tutors any staff involved in work-based and placement learning so that they will know how to respond to a request for advice from you.

Staff in the Counselling Service, Students' Union Advice Centre and University Dignity advisors can also provide advice and support on a confidential basis.

2. **Keep a record:** It is worth starting to keep a record of incidents as this will help if you do get to the stage of reporting or formally complaining. It might be difficult to find time to write things down on a placement, so consider writing or recording voice notes on your phone to remind yourself, while ensuring these are protected and secure. Keep things simple and stick to the facts too.

Date	
Time	
Where	
Who was there?	
What happened?	
How I felt?	

3. **Challenge behaviour (if possible):** If you feel able to challenge the behaviour, a calm and non-confrontational approach often works best. This gives the other person a chance to apologise, reflect and learn. Focus on the behaviour rather than the person and use 'I...' rather than 'you...' statements. For example, saying something like 'When you said... I felt...' rather than 'you're a racist' or 'you're a bully' which may make them feel immediately defensive, close down the conversation and escalate conflict. Consider escalating the issue if your attempt to challenge behaviour is not effective and the person's behaviour continues to harm you or others. You can do this by speaking to someone with authority at SVMS, such as the EMS Sub-dean or your Personal Tutor or Senior Tutor or EDI Director or Dignity Advisor. Many cases can be resolved without recourse to formal proceedings.
4. **Report behaviour and complain:**

A student is advised to make use of local systems or policies within the host organisation in the first instance. Students will often be able to access an organisation's policy and a local/informal resolution will be possible.

If such policy is not available, report the concern to your Personal Tutor, or a Senior Tutor or the EMS Sub-dean, who could provide the host organisation with a copy of the University's Student Bullying and Harassment Procedure and suggest that an appropriate resolution is sought.

A member of University staff cannot resolve a complaint of bullying or harassment on your behalf, because they have no jurisdiction to do so in an external organisation or placement. However, they will provide you with advice about the steps open to you. For example, they can

assist you in finding out if there are procedures in place in the organisation. They should signpost you to the right person in the organisation who will know how such matters are dealt with.

If a student withdraws from placement on the grounds of a case of harassment, they will still be required to meet any work-based course requirements. The Placements office will assist in finding an alternative placement host, but it remains the student's individual responsibility to fulfil RCVS requirements for EMS completion. Therefore, it is suggested that any student wishing to withdraw from a placement speaks to the EMS Placements office, their Personal tutor or a Senior Tutor as soon as possible.

Schools will keep records relating to any reports of harassment to identify if there are any issues including recurring issues that need addressing further.

What if you witness harassment?

Active bystanding:

Active bystanders show that certain types of behaviours are not widely accepted by others and break the silence that has previously allowed them to thrive. Active bystanding to address behaviour targeted at minority or marginalized groups and is also very important in demonstrating support and inclusion.

There are multiple ways you can step in and provide support. For example, it may mean giving a disapproving look when racist jokes or comments are made. You might feel confident enough to say something like 'that's not okay'. Or you could help the targeted person to get to a safe place and report it to someone in authority. It's okay if you don't feel safe or comfortable to step in.

The ABC approach is useful to remember before you step in:

Assess for safety: if you see someone in trouble, ask yourself if you can help safely in any way.

Be in a group: it is safer to call out behaviour or intervene in a group, and where this is not possible, report the behaviour to others who can act.

Care for the person who may need help and ask them if they are okay.

How You Can Intervene Safely:

When it comes to intervening safely, remember the four Ds – direct, distract, delegate, delay. There isn't just one strategy or way that is correct. It is all situationally dependent

Direct action

Call out negative behaviour, tell the person to stop or ask the victim if they are OK. Do this as a group if you can. Be polite. Don't aggravate the situation - remain calm and state why something has offended you. Stick to exactly what has happened, don't exaggerate. You can say things like "That's inappropriate," "That's disrespectful" or "That's not OK." The most important thing is to keep it succinct.

Distract

Interrupt start a conversation with the perpetrator to allow their potential target to move away or have friends intervene. Or come up with an idea to get the victim out of the situation – tell them they need to take a call, or you need to speak to them; any excuse to get them away to safety. Alternatively, try distracting, or redirecting the situation. For example “Ask time”

Delegate

If you are too embarrassed or shy to speak out, or you don't feel safe to do so, get someone else to step in. Someone with authority in SVMS e.g. EMS Sub-dean or Senior Tutor or EDI Director. This also helps create a shared sense of responsibility

Delay

If the situation is too dangerous to challenge then and there (such as there is the threat of violence or you are outnumbered), just walk away. Wait for the situation to pass, then ask the victim later if they are OK. Tell them you're sorry about what happened. Ask how you can help. You can report it when it's safe to do so – it's never too late to act.

If you believe the situation poses a high risk of harm towards the victim or anyone nearby please call the Police on the emergency number 999.

List of Useful Contacts:

EMS placement office: veterinary-placement@nottingham.ac.uk

Diane Hill (svzdmh@nottingham.ac.uk, 0115 9516479)

Victoria Doggett (svzvd@nottingham.ac.uk, 0115 9516439)

Ian Wood (svziw@nottingham.ac.uk, 0115 9516482)

EMS Sub-dean: Steve Brogden (svzsb@nottingham.ac.uk)

University Park Security Office: 0115 951 3013 (for out of hours)

Personal Tutor

Senior Tutors: Mike Targett (svzmpt@nottingham.ac.uk)

Adelle Bowden (svzab4@nottingham.ac.uk)

Jess Tomlinson (svzjt@nottingham.ac.uk)

Peter Graham (svzpg@nottingham.ac.uk)

EDI Director: Jasmeet Kaler (jasmeet.kaler@nottingham.ac.uk)

Dignity Advisor:

(<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/hr/guidesandsupport/complaintsgrievanceanddignity/dignity/dignity-at-nottingham.aspx>)

Counselling service:

(<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling/>)