STUDENT
BULLYING

This fact sheet covers

- What is bullying?
- Examples of bullying
- What is not bullying?
- What is cyber-bullying?
- Addressing bullying behaviours
- Getting advice
- Lodging a complaint

Bullying is not tolerated at Deakin University. The University has a Student Complaints procedure and complaints of bullying can be made under that procedure. We are committed to a supportive, inclusive, fair and safe learning environment for all.

This fact sheet defines bullying and provides information about what you can do to stop bullying, what may constitute bullying, and where to get advice and further information.

As a Deakin student

You have the right to:
- study and work in an environment free from bullying
- be respected and valued regardless of your personal characteristics or background
- have opportunities to reach your full potential and participate in all aspects of university life
- make a complaint if you feel you are being bullied
- protection from victimisation if you make a complaint.

You have the responsibility to:
- treat your fellow students with dignity and respect
- respect the opinions and beliefs of others
- engage in appropriate and rational discussion in areas of disagreement
- avoid any behaviour that may offend, humiliate, intimidate, exclude or cause injury to others.
What is bullying?

Bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour, directed towards a person or group, which creates a risk to their mental or physical health and safety.

Within this definition
- Unreasonable behaviour means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.
- Repeated behaviour refers to the persistent nature of the behaviour and can involve a range of behaviours over time. It does not include a single incident.
- Risk to health and safety includes risk to the mental or physical health of the person bullied.

Examples of bullying
Repeated behaviours that constitute bullying include:
- verbal or written abuse in emails or other forms of electronic communication, including abusive, insulting, belittling, intimidating or offensive language; spreading rumours; teasing; displaying offensive posters or graffiti
- threats of violence, intimidation and harmful or offensive initiation practices (contact Police, Security and/or Safer Communities)
- homophobic slurs, gestures or other hostile behaviour relating to gender or sexuality
- making someone the brunt of pranks or practical jokes
- encouraging others to participate in bullying behaviour
- excluding members of a study group where it is not reasonable to do so
- interfering with another person’s materials, equipment or personal effects.

What behaviours are not bullying?
Behaviours that are not bullying include:
- providing constructive criticism or advice
- differences of opinion or interpersonal conflicts.

What is victimisation?
Victimisation means threatening a person or subjecting them to any form of detriment because he or she has lodged a complaint or proposes to make a complaint.
What is cyber-bullying?

Online and social media participation is an important aspect of studying at Deakin.

Cyber-bullying can take many forms including:

- publicly posting hurtful comments on Facebook or other social media
- abusive or offensive messages or images on mobile phones, social media or online discussion boards
- sending emails that vilify, demean or cause humiliation to a person or group
- posting embarrassing photos on social networks
- setting up hate websites or blogs to vilify someone
- using chat rooms, instant messaging or gaming areas to harass someone.

Once material is published online it creates a ‘digital footprint’ which can last indefinitely. Search engines will show posts years after their publication date and comments can be forwarded worldwide in seconds.

There is no such thing as a private social media site. Even if inappropriate posts are made after hours and on a personal computer or mobile phone, disciplinary action may result if a connection can be reasonably made between the post and study at Deakin.

This would be the case, for example, where a disparaging or threatening remark can be seen by other students and staff and reported to the target of the comment.

What to do about bullying

Consider addressing the issue directly

Telling someone that you find their behaviour inappropriate can be an effective way to resolve some concerns, especially where inappropriate behaviour is caused by ignorance or insensitivity rather than being deliberate.

Case study

A small group of students were working together on a project. They socialised outside University as well as studying together.

Using a University computer, they created a Facebook group to support a lecture series.

When a disagreement occurred between members of the group, a series of abusive messages were exchanged and inappropriate images were posted online.

Other students were being affected by the dispute, which negatively influenced their learning and their health and wellbeing.

The University’s good reputation was also being affected.

The matter was raised with the Head of School and resulted in the person who was sending abusive messages being required to undertake coaching on bullying and appropriate behaviours.

The situation could also have resulted in formal disciplinary penalties being applied.
If you take direct action to resolve bullying, try to:

- stay calm
- seek advice prior to acting on your complaint
- be clear on the outcome you seek
- focus on the behaviour, not the person
- talk about the effects of the behaviour on you
- make a clear request that the behaviour needs to stop.

In the first instance:

1. **If the behaviour is directed to you**
   - Write details of the behaviour in your diary. Include the time, date, name of person(s), location, what was said, witnesses’ names, etc.
   - Save all the evidence. Keep timed and dated records and copies of messages, photos, websites, texts or online conversations.

2. **If the behaviour is cyber-bullying directed to you**
   - Block and report – use online features to block messages. Keep copies and report the abuse to the eSolutions Service Desk and/or the owner of the Social Media site.
   - Save all evidence – keep timed and dated records and copies of messages, photos, websites, texts, online conversations.
   - Don’t retaliate.

3. **If you witness the behaviour**
   - Offer support to the person who has been bullied.
   - Consider writing a post that points out the inappropriate content and behaviour.

**Get advice or support**

For advice and support about how to manage incidents of unfair and unreasonable behaviour, including bullying, there are people you can speak to:

- Unit Chairs (if it affects a particular Unit)
- Deakin counsellors [deakin.edu.au/counselling](http://deakin.edu.au/counselling)

**Consider making a complaint**

If the matter cannot be directly resolved or direct action has been unsuccessful, ask the relevant Faculty/School or Administration services Complaints Contact for advice about lodging a formal complaint. To make a complaint you will need to download a complaint form from the Student concerns and complaints webpage [deakin.edu.au/students/student-complaints](http://deakin.edu.au/students/student-complaints)

Deakin University will ensure that all complaints of bullying and cyber-bullying are treated in a sensitive, fair, and timely manner; that privacy and confidentiality of all parties is respected; and that people involved in all aspects of the resolution of complaints are protected from victimisation. Penalties can be applied to perpetrators of bullying and cyber-bullying including formal disciplinary proceedings for misconduct.

**Make a complaint** [deakin.edu.au/students/student-complaints](http://deakin.edu.au/students/student-complaints)