

BULLYING



This fact sheet covers:

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

Bullying is not tolerated at Deakin University. The University has a Student Complaints Procedure. Complaints of bullying can be made under that procedure. Deakin University is 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
- Not be victimised 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 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 expect to humiliate, intimidate, undermine or threaten.
- Repeated behaviour means an established pattern of behaviour and not a single incident
- Risk to health and safety includes risk to the mental or physical health of the person bullied.

Bullying can occur between peers or between students. It may be perpetrated by a student towards a staff member or by a staff member towards a student.

Examples of bullying

Repeated behaviours that constitute bullying include:

- Verbal or written abuse in emails or other forms of electronic or written communication; including abusive, insulting, belittling, intimidating or offensive language, spreading nasty rumours, cruel 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
- Teasing or 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 reasonable to do so
- Interfering with another student's materials and equipment or another person's personal effects

What is not bullying?

Behaviours that are not bullying include:

- Providing constructive criticism
- Mutual conflict
- Single incidents
- Social rejection or dislike
- 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 bullying complaint.

Everyone has a right to:

- Study in an environment free from bullying
- be respected and valued at University
- make a complaint if they feel you are being bullied
- not be victimised for making 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
- Posting abusive 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 and blogs to vilify someone
- Using chat rooms, instant messaging and 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; for example, a disparaging or threatening remark which 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 deliberately?

If you take direct action to resolve bullying, try to:

- stay calm
- seeking advice prior to acting on your complaint
- being 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.

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 Faculty Head of School and resulted in the person sending abusive messages being required to undertake coaching on bullying and appropriate behaviours. Two factors provide a link or connection back to Deakin: the use of University IT facilities to establish the Facebook group, and the impact of the dispute on the learning environment. **The situation could also have resulted in formal disciplinary penalties being applied.**

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 which points out the inappropriate content and behaviour.

Get advice or support

Speak to the Unit Chair, the [Designated Complaints Contact](#) in your Faculty/School, or a Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officer deakin.edu.au/current-students/services/complaints/.

For information and support about how to manage incidents of unfair and unreasonable behaviour, and bullying, speak to a DUSA Welfare Officer www.dusa.org.au/support/advocacy/ or a counsellor in the Division of Student Life.

Consider making a complaint

If the matter cannot be directly resolved or direct action has been unsuccessful, ask the Unit Chair, Head of School, Student Complaints Manager or a Designated Complaint Contact in your School for advice deakin.edu.au/current-students/services/complaints/. To make a complaint you will need to [download a complaint form](#).

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/current-students/services/complaints/.