Students' Dignity at Study Policy and Procedure

The University's Policy and Procedure on Harassment, Bullying, Discrimination, Victimisation and Sexual Misconduct

Issued by the Quality Transformation Unit
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Technical updates of this document take place on an annual basis to reflect changes to the University of Greater Manchester's organisational and management structure and to incorporate earlier, approved amendments to related policies, procedures and regulations.

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Purpose and Scope

The University of Greater Manchester is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and aims to ensure all students have the right to be treated with respect during their time at the University. The University is passionate about fostering diversity among our staff and student population and in delivering a supportive, inclusive environment for all members of our community.

We expect all staff and students to actively contribute to the elimination of discrimination and harassment, and to support the promotion of equality of opportunity, whether in access to services, employment, or in support for student welfare and education.

Alongside these commitments, the University recognises and upholds the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom, within the boundaries of the law.

The University is committed to protecting the dignity of all students whilst also securing freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law. These duties are complementary and will be applied in a balanced and proportionate manner.

The University will take reasonably practicable steps to secure lawful freedom of speech for students, staff, visiting speakers and members of the University community in accordance with the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, the Education (No.2) Act 1986 and the University's Code of Practice Relating to Freedom of Speech.

Students should expect to encounter ideas, opinions, teaching, research and academic debate that they may find challenging, controversial or offensive. Lawful expression will not normally constitute bullying or harassment simply because offence has been caused.

Nothing within this policy should be interpreted as preventing lawful freedom of speech or academic freedom. Equally, freedom of speech does not extend to unlawful harassment, discrimination, victimisation, threats of violence or other unlawful conduct.

The University aims to deal with any concerns at an early stage promptly, impartially, effectively and with sensitivity. The University will not tolerate harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct of any kind. All allegations of these unwanted behaviours will be investigated unless such allegations are reported anonymously. The University will not tolerate victimisation of a person raising allegations of harassment, bullying, discrimination or sexual misconduct in good faith.

Any form of harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct that is proven and or any report made may lead to the implementation of other University policies which could include the University Student Non-Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, Fitness to Practice Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Procedure or Health Wellbeing and Supported Study Policy (note this is not an exhaustive list).

This policy and procedure applies to all students who are enrolled at the University of Greater Manchester including satellite centres and partner organisations of the University. The policy applies to behaviour and conduct whether expressed orally, in writing or electronically, occurring on university premises or elsewhere, including social networking sites, blogs,

websites or other media if the perpetrator of such behaviour is also a member of the University community. If you are unsure whether to use the staff or the student policy, please refer to Appendix 4.

Harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct may be physical, verbal or non-verbal, e.g., by letter, e-mails, text messages, social media, or by attitude or behaviour.

Bullying or harassment relating to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 is unlawful discrimination even if it is by association or perception, as defined in Appendix 1: Definitions.

Differences of attitude, culture, background or misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment or bullying by one person may not be perceived in the same way by another person. The University expects everyone to be sensitive to the needs of others and to respect individual differences.

In its investigation of allegations of harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct the University will apply the concept of reasonableness to its handling of such matters.

Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be accepted as an excuse for any form of inappropriate behaviour.

Definitions of the terms used in this Policy and Procedure can be found in Appendix 1: Definitions.

If the incident is being investigated by the police, the University procedures may be suspended until the police have completed their investigations.

If the incident is related to academic studies, then please see student complaint procedure https://greatermanchester.ac.uk/student-policy-zone.

Freedom of Speech Decision-Making Principles

Where a complaint arises wholly or partly from speech, expression, teaching, research or academic discussion, the University will ensure that decision-makers consider:

- whether the speech is lawful;
- whether the conduct forms part of legitimate teaching, learning, research or academic debate;
- whether the legal definition of harassment has been met;
- whether any proposed restriction upon speech is lawful, necessary and proportionate.

Complaints will not be upheld solely because lawful speech is considered controversial, unpopular or offensive.

The University will balance its statutory duties relating to freedom of speech, equality, safeguarding and student welfare when considering all complaints involving speech.

Apprentices and Placements

Where, as part of their studies, a student is required to engage in a placement outside of the University or is in employment as apprentice, they shall use the reporting mechanisms applicable at that provider/employer unless the alleged perpetrator is also another member of the University community. The University will endeavour as part of its assessment of placement providers/employers to ensure that appropriate policies are in place. Should you experience any unwanted behaviour from someone who is not a member of the University community whilst on placement or in work you can still access support (see section 3 and appendix two).

Where the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff or representative of the placement provider or employer, the student should report the matter through the placement provider's or employer's relevant policies and procedures. The University does not ordinarily investigate matters relating to staff employed by the placement provider or employer.

Where the alleged perpetrator is a member of the University community, including a member of University staff, the matter should be reported to the University and will be managed in accordance with the Dignity at Study Policy and Procedures.

The University will endeavour as part of its assessment of placement providers/employers to ensure that appropriate policies are in place.

Regardless of the reporting route, students undertaking a placement or apprenticeship can access appropriate support from the University. This may include signposting to relevant University support services and consideration of any appropriate measures to support the student in continuing their studies or placement, where applicable. Should you experience any unwanted behaviour from someone who is not a member of the University community whilst on placement or in work you can still access support (see section 3 and appendix two).

Sources of Support

The University recognises that incidents of harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct can be very distressing and can impact on both a student's personal and academic activities. Students who have witnessed or experienced any of these unwanted behaviours can access support as identified in Appendix 2. Support from the University or the Students' Union will also be extended to any student alleged to have undertaken any of these inappropriate behaviours.

This support can include academic support and staff who can advise on the implementation of this policy will be able to provide information, advice and guidance on such matters including Mitigating Circumstances.

Support is also available to any University of Greater Manchester student who is or has experienced any unwanted behaviours even if the alleged perpetrator of these is not a member of the University community as outlined in Appendix 2.

The University of Greater Manchester may offer therapeutic interventions to any student who is affected by any unwanted behaviours. More information on mental health and wellbeing support is available here: https://greatermanchester.ac.uk/student-life/student-support/life-lounge.

The Procedure

Where a report concerns speech, expression or academic debate, the investigating officer will distinguish between protected lawful expression and conduct capable of constituting harassment or other misconduct. Investigations involving speech will also take account of the University's Code of Practice Relating to Freedom of Speech.

Reporting

Illustrative guidance of the process for reporting and managing Students' Dignity at Study Policy and Procedure is provided in Appendix 3.

Students can report an incident of harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct where the alleged perpetrator is a student, a member of staff, a visitor or a contractor appointed by the University i.e., another member of the University community by:

- Reporting in person to a member of staff within the Life Lounge, T2 Eagle Tower
- By emailing dignityatstudy@greatermanchester.ac.uk
- By Telephoning 01204 903566
- Online by means of one of three forms (see below).

The website https://greatermanchester.ac.uk/student-area/student-safety/dignity-at-study has three reporting forms which can be used to report any incidents of harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct where the alleged perpetrator is a student, a member of staff, a visitor or a contractor appointed by the University i.e., another member of the university community.

When reporting individuals can choose between one of three reporting options:

- a report of harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct can be submitted anonymously (via the Anonymous Reporting Form)
- alternatively, victims can report with their personal details (via the Self Reporting Form)
- additionally reports can be made on behalf of victims (via the Reporting on Behalf of a Student Form)

An anonymous reporting form allows an individual to inform the University on harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct i.e., unwanted behaviours occurring within the University. This information allows us to collate, monitor and analyse incidents to inform initiatives and to improve the institutional culture.

We understand that there are times when an individual wishes to choose this option and that they will not give any personal details to the University. This anonymous option will mean there will not be an opportunity for resolution of the incident and that follow up support and advice will not be able to be offered, however any student can still access support as identified in Appendix 2 if they report anonymously.

If a student chooses to report with personal details, they will fill in the reporting form which captures:

- brief information about the student who is reporting the incident and if not the same person this form will also capture brief details of the victim of any unwanted/unacceptable behaviours
- the alleged perpetrator/s of the unwanted behaviours
- details of the unwanted behaviours/incident
- details of any witnesses (if applicable).

In addition, there is a reporting form, Reporting on Behalf of a Student, that allows other members of the university community or known to the victim to make a report on the victim's behalf. In such circumstances the person submitting the report is strongly encouraged to obtain the consent of the victim.

Following any report submitted by means of any of the three online reporting forms the person making the report will be provided with an automated on-screen response which includes information on sources of support internal and external to the University.

Actions following a report including personal details

We aim to respond to all reports that include personal details within 5 working days. On receipt of a report that includes personal details the Policy Co-ordinator will triage the report and either take on the case or assign a Dignity at Study Champion, who is another member of the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Team.

Either the Policy Co-ordinator or the Dignity at Study Champion will contact the student to explain the policy and what is involved in the informal and formal procedures. Where a report is made on behalf of a student who has not consented for the submission of the report, the Dignity at Study Coordinator and/or Dignity at Study Champion will treat the report with great care. No action will be taken with the student whom the report relates to without first considering the privacy, safety, and wellbeing of all parties

Once contacted the student who is the victim of unwanted/unacceptable behaviours will have an opportunity at this point to decide how they wish to proceed.

The Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion will assess at the point of report if an informal response is appropriate. Informal approaches may not be suitable in all cases,

especially those where the incident reported could constitute a criminal offence. Should the informal approach not be deemed suitable the student who made the report will be informed of the potential course of action, which would be to raise a formal complaint through the Student Complaints Procedure.

In addition, the Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion will signpost to appropriate practical and emotional support tailored to the student's circumstance including signposting to external partners, for instance the police or sexual assault referral centres (SARCs).

If the nature of the issue/s warrants an informal procedure, the Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion will explore the informal approaches for allegations in the first instance to clarify:

- Why the recipient considers the behaviour is unwanted, unsolicited, offensive and distressing;
- The distinction between incidents of bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination or sexual misconduct which are unintentional and regretted, and more offensive acts which appear intended and persistent;
- whether the complaint concerns lawful speech requiring consideration under the University's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice.

Informal Procedure

If the Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion recommends an informal approach and the student agrees that an informal approach is appropriate the student will be encouraged and empowered to attain a resolution to the concern raised at the earliest opportunity. The informal approach is unlikely to be followed if the incident/s of bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct could constitute a safeguarding concern or incidents which could indicate a criminal offence has taken place i.e., in the event of a hate crime, sexual assault or incident of domestic abuse.

Informal Procedure

Stage 1. Support with direct communication

If the informal approach is deemed appropriate the student will be supported and empowered in the first instance to communicate directly and informally to the person whom they believe is harassing, bullying or victimising them and explain clearly what aspect of the person's behaviour is unacceptable, or is causing offence, and request that it stop. It may be that the person whose conduct is causing offence is genuinely unaware that their behaviour is unwelcome or objectionable and that a direct approach can resolve the matter without the need for further action.

If a student has already approached the person(s) directly regarding their behaviour, or is unwilling to do so, the Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion will explain to the student the further options that can be taken.

Where concerns relate to lawful expression, informal resolution should seek to improve understanding and resolve conflict without unnecessarily restricting lawful freedom of speech or academic freedom.

Stage 2. Mediation

It may be appropriate on occasions for either the student or the University to consider the role of mediation (see Appendix 1 for the definition) in enabling the complainant to reach an informal resolution. The Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion will help to explain what mediation involves. For mediation to work the alleged perpetrator will need to be informed of the allegations and all parties i.e., the student who is the victim and the alleged perpetrator will need to agree to proceed with mediation. Mediation for students is provided by the qualified staff within the University.

Stage 3. Informal Investigation

Following mediation, if applicable, and if the unwanted behaviour persists, students may be reluctant to pursue the formal route. In such cases, the Policy Coordinator or Dignity at Study Champion may suggest that the student consider an Informal Investigation. This process can be led by the Policy Coordinator or their nominee, which may include staff from relevant academic department.

The Informal Investigator will gather facts separately from all parties involved and then share these findings with each party individually. Please note that direct referrals to an Informal Investigation Officer are not permitted.

Throughout the process, support is available to all parties to help increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. If issues remain unresolved after the facts have been presented, the Informal Investigation Officer will discuss with the complainant the option of further mediation to work towards an informal resolution.

Formal Procedure: Student Complaints Procedure

Where the informal methods fail to resolve the bullying, harassment or victimisation or in the event that the informal approach is deemed not to be suitable, the Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion can help to explain that the next course of action available is to raise a formal complaint through the Student Complaints Procedure/Non-Academic Conduct Policy.

If the student has previously followed the informal process and an informal investigation has been undertaken or the Policy Coordinator or Dignity at Study Champion has obtained relevant information, this can be supplied to support the submission of a formal complaint and to negate the need for the student to have to recount/provide this information again. The Policy Co-ordinator or Dignity at Study Champion will support the student with the collation of this information and advise the student of the submission process. Staff cannot write or submit the complaint on behalf of the student but can support with this. The student who is the victim will also need to provide a short statement to indicate what they are expecting in terms of any outcome.

Where allegations relate to speech or expression, investigators must consider:

- whether the speech is protected by law;
- whether the legal threshold for harassment has been met;
- the context in which the speech occurred;
- whether the speech formed part of teaching, research, academic discussion or lawful debate;
- whether any proposed action represents a lawful, necessary and proportionate response.

Investigation reports should demonstrate how freedom of speech considerations have been balanced alongside safeguarding, equality and student welfare obligations.

The Student Complaints Procedure can be obtained from the Student Centre, Student Union or can be downloaded from the Student Policy Zone.

For formal reports, timely submission will be encouraged. Where there are significant delays, and reasons for them will be considered, the University may be unable to take the formal report through the Student Complaints Procedure.

Should the complaints process be followed and an allegation is upheld/found to be true then sanctions may be imposed in accordance with the Non-Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Process and/or Fitness to Practice Policy. Appendix A of the Non-Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Process includes a non-exhaustive/illustrative list of unacceptable behaviours and the possible sanctions that could be applied for example:

- Harassment of any student, staff member, or visitor—whether racist, sexual, bullying, or intimidating in nature
- Defamation of character or slander
- Disruption of an individual's lawful right to freedom of speech, lawful assembly, or expression of ideas
- Harassment, intimidation, or discrimination based on protected characteristics, including:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Marriage or civil partnership
  - Pregnancy or maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief (including non-belief)
  - Gender
  - Sexual orientation
  - Gender reassignment

Such conduct may result in expulsion from the University.

Any subsequent harassment, bullying or sexual misconduct incident after a formal complaint has been received will be treated as a separate case.

Vexatious Complaints

If during either the informal or formal process it is found that a student has made a vexatious complaint of bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct i.e., the complaint is found to be malicious or mischievous, it will provide grounds for disciplinary action against the complainant through the Student Non-Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Variations to the Procedure

The University reserves the right to vary any stage of this procedure as it deems appropriate after consultation with the Students' Union, if appropriate, in order to comply with any current legal obligations and best practice.

Where mention is made in this procedure of action by a specific post holder or role holder this action may be delegated to an appropriate nominee were warranted by the circumstances, for example, where there is or may be any potential conflict of roles or interests, or the specific post holder or role holder is absent, so long as the nominee has appropriate experience to be able to act on behalf of the specific post or role holder.

Safeguarding Individuals

Safeguarding is the protection of people from harm and includes the protection of children and adults at risk of harm.

If a student follows the formal procedure and submits a complaint then the Head of Quality Transformation Unit or their nominee may make preliminary enquiries with other areas of the University such as the reporting party's and alleged perpetrators Head of School, Support Services, Students' Union and staff with a named safeguarding role. Such enquiries will be used to consider how best to safeguard all individuals of the University community.

Preliminary Risk Assessments

The Head of Quality Transformation Unit or their nominee with support of appropriate staff will be responsible for conducting a preliminary risk assessment or documenting the reasons why such an assessment was not undertaken.

It will first be considered if precautionary recommendations would be sufficient to mitigate any risk around a case. Recommendations may relate to study arrangements, facility access, accommodation arrangements, support, contact between parties and limiting disclosure of the case (e.g., online posts). If recommendations are not sufficient, or are not adhered to, consideration will be given to more formal conditions through a suspension under the Non-Academic Conduct Policy and Disciplinary Procedure.

Where precautionary measures relate to speech or expression, any restriction must be evidence-based, necessary, proportionate and consistent with the University's statutory duties relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom.

Following a risk assessment, the alleged perpetrator will be advised in writing by the Head of Quality Transformation Unit, their nominee or the relevant Head of School of any recommendations made or formal conditions set through the linked procedures above. Where appropriate, either before or after the written communication, a meeting may be arranged to

deliver the notification verbally to support the alleged perpetrator and answer any immediate procedural questions they might have. It is likely that any recommendations or conditions will remain in place until the conclusion of an investigation and/or and disciplinary processes, unless there are developments in the case or an individual's circumstances which lead to the conditions being reviewed sooner.

The student who made the report will be kept informed of all progress including any formal conditions set.

The alleged perpetrator of any unwanted behaviours will still be able to access support from university professional support services and/or the Students' Union and this will be confirmed in writing.

Criminal Proceedings, Non-Academic Conduct and/or Fitness to Practice

Where there are active criminal proceedings relating to the case, the University will normally be limited to taking precautionary steps only, rather than being able to conduct its own investigation or take a case through the entire full formal procedure of the Non-Academic Conduct Policy and Disciplinary Procedure. The University will attempt to liaise with the relevant police force where applicable. Alleged perpetrators of unwanted behaviours will at least be expected to comply with any bail conditions and to keep the University informed of their external case. Any decision by the police or Crown Prosecution Service to take no action over a criminal matter, or an acquittal at trial, does not preclude the University from taking action.

Where the alleged perpetrator is on a programme of study leading to professional membership, acceptance or ability to practice in a profession, they will also be subject to the Fitness to Practise Policy (or equivalent local procedure).

In the event that a report constitutes a safeguarding concern then the University will act in accordance with the University Safeguarding Policy and Procedure or Fitness to Practice Policy and information may be shared with relevant authorities external to the University in accordance with its statutory duties.

Responsibilities

The University of Greater Manchester will:

- Treat all complaints of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct seriously and in a sensitive and objective manner, with due respect for the rights of all parties involved;
- Provide students with an opportunity to easily make a report or raise a complaint;
- Deal with complaints in a confidential manner; however, the student should be aware that there are times when it is in the best interest of the student to break confidentiality under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 i.e. if the incident constitutes a safeguarding concern;
- Offer support and assistance to all involved including offering advice to students on their options;

- Invoke where appropriate the University of Greater Manchester Student Non-Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, Fitness to Practice Policy and Procedure and/or the Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure when there is evidence that there has been a breach of expected behaviours and conduct which include bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct or where allegations are made in bad faith (see vexatious complaints);
- Promote this policy to all staff by including information about the policy and its values in the induction processes for all new staff; staff transferring or seconding to different roles; and staff being promoted to managerial positions;
- Promote this policy to all students including information about its values via multiple routes including but not limited to student induction processes, student training and through signposting by staff and the Students' Union;
- Provide training for staff to foster awareness of this policy and procedure, to assist when responding to allegations and or investigating allegations, noting training will be the responsibility of Human Resources;
- Offer training or other interventions where appropriate to staff and students who have been found to be responsible for using unacceptable behaviour; the aim being to foster a healthy working and learning environment;
- Evaluate incidents reported in order to identify any trends which need to be addressed or investigated further;
- Seek to make reasonable adjustments for students with a disability in undertaking any aspect of this procedure;
- take reasonably practicable steps to secure lawful freedom of speech;
- ensure complaints involving speech are assessed consistently with the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice;
- monitor the application of this policy to ensure an appropriate balance between dignity, equality and freedom of speech.

Students should:

- Act promptly and seek support if they perceive that they are being harassed or bullied and should not wait until it reaches an intolerable level or their wellbeing is jeopardised;
- Report any instances of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation, sexual misconduct or any incidents of unacceptable behaviour that they have witnessed; students should not ignore these matters and should encourage other student/s concerned to report what they have witnessed using the reporting forms on the website https://greatermanchester.ac.uk/student-area/student-safety/dignity-at-study;
- Ensure that they treat other students, staff, and visitors fairly and in accordance with the University of Greater Manchester's conditions of enrolment and in accordance with the Students' Union Pledge;
- Be aware that behaviour which impacts negatively on fellow students, staff or visitors or is in any way disruptive or offensive, is not acceptable within the University community and may be subject to the Student Non-Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures or Fitness to Practice Policy;

- Participate with all training that is deemed mandatory unless they have opted out due to lived experiences;
- Ensure any complaints are made in good faith, are true and not vexatious or for personal gain;
- Students are expected to respect the rights of others to express lawful opinions and participate in academic debate, even where those opinions differ from their own.

Staff will:

- Refer a student with a complaint of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct to the reporting forms on the website https://greatermanchester.ac.uk/student-area/student-safety/dignity-at-study. They must also ensure the student is made aware of this policy and are offered appropriate support. A list of support services and options is included in Appendix 2: Support Services;
- Watch for signs of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct by others and be aware of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour;
- Maintain an appropriate professional relationship between themselves, colleagues and students;
- Judge student performance based on fair, objective and measurable criteria;
- Participate in bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct awareness training as directed by Human Resources to ensure awareness of the policy;
- Avoid dealing with the incident themselves unless supported by the Dignity at Study Policy Coordinator to ensure consistency of the policy;
- Staff responsible for receiving or investigating complaints must distinguish between lawful expression and unlawful harassment and apply the University's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice where appropriate.

Policy Coordinator will:

- Provide support to the Dignity at Study Champions and assign mediators as required and if appropriate;
- Monitor onward referrals to the Dignity at Study Champions to ensure reports are acted on in a timely manner (see details below);
- Monitor and record outcomes through liaison with the Dignity at Study Champions;
- Collate records and present data to relevant staff and committees on the number of reports received, timeframes and outcomes;
- Share information with other appropriate staff in order to safeguard individuals, this could include but is not limited to Heads of Schools, Security, colleagues in the Quality Transformation Unit.

The Policy Coordinator will aim to assign all new reports to a Dignity at Study Champion within five working days of the reports receipt. The Policy Coordinator will send an email to the person making the report to confirm once a champion has been assigned.

To note: Dignity at Study Policy Coordinator may need to break confidentiality in extreme circumstances under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Dignity at Study Champions or the Policy Coordinator will:

- Listen without judgement;
- Explain the informal and formal procedures and the mediation process;
- Ensure all student cases are dealt with in accordance with the procedures and principles laid out in this document;
- Signpost the students named within a report, including any alleged to have undertaken unacceptable behaviours, to appropriate support services and if applicable make these referrals;
- Support the complainant with direct communication (stage 1 of the informal approach);
- Ensure all parties understand that the nature of the complaint and the name of the complainant will need to be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator(s) and the response of the alleged perpetrator(s) will need to be shared with the complainant, in order to achieve a successful outcome from the informal process;
- Liaise with the alleged perpetrator if mediation is being considered and seek agreement from all parties for mediation to be implemented; this will include making the alleged perpetrator aware of the complaint and the request from the complainant to engage in mediation;
- Liaise with the alleged perpetrator if an informal investigation is being undertaken;
- Participate in regular training on bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct issues;
- Promote and share good practice in dealing with bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct issues;
- Liaise with the Policy Coordinator, staff identified to undertake mediation and/or any investigating officer to minimise the need for the student making the complaint to have to repeat information to other members of staff involved in the procedures set out within this policy;
- Where complaints involve speech or expression, Champions should ensure appropriate advice is obtained and that the Freedom of Speech considerations are incorporated into the assessment process.

Dignity at Study Champions will aim to contact the student making the report within 2 to 5 working days of being assigned a case by the Policy Coordinator.

It is not the Dignity at Study Champion's role to:

- Investigate the incident unless they are fulfilling the role of the Informal Investigator;
- Offer an opinion on what students or staff should do;
- Act as an advocate; students wishing to be accompanied to any meeting can request
- representation from the Students' Union;

- Accompany a student to an investigation meeting;
- Provide counselling to students.

To note: Dignity at Study Champions may need to break confidentiality in extreme circumstances under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Informal Investigation Officer will:

- Listen without judgement;
- Gather and keep records of factual information;
- Ensure all student cases are dealt with in accordance with the procedures and principles laid out in this document;
- Participate in regular training on bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct issues;
- Promote and share good practice in dealing with bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct issues;
- Signpost students to specialist internal and external services;
- Ensure all parties understand that the nature of the complaint and the name of the complainant will need to be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator(s) and the response of the alleged perpetrator(s) will need to be shared with the complainant, in order to achieve a successful outcome from the process;
- Keep accurate records that can be used to support a student who has made the complaint if the formal procedures are to be followed. This could include providing the complainant with details of their investigation and any findings.

It is not the Informal Investigation Officer's role to:

- Offer an opinion on what students or staff should do;
- Act as an advocate;
- Provide counselling to students.

All stakeholders will:

- Ensure their behaviour is consistent with this policy and that they behave in a way that is regarded as lawful and acceptable that does not cause offence, humiliation, embarrassment or distress;
- Ensure they have read the policy and comply with its terms and the procedures;
- Ensure the University environment is kept free from any literature, posters, notices etc. which may encourage discriminatory attitudes and behaviour whilst recognising the importance of Freedom of Speech;
- Foster a working and studying environment where everyone is treated with equal respect and dignity. Staff and students are expected to contribute to preventing bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct through self-awareness, and by supporting students and work colleagues who experience such difficulties by challenging all discriminatory behaviour and attitudes;

- Challenge gossip and rumour which can contribute to discriminatory behaviour and attitudes by informing their manager or other appropriate member of staff confidentially when incidents occur that cause concern.

Students' Union Support

The Students' Union will support all students at all stages of this policy. Students can seek advice from the Students' Union either before or after making a complaint/report in accordance with this policy.

If a student, including those who are alleged to have undertaken any of the inappropriate behaviours identified within this policy wishes to be accompanied to any meeting during either the informal or formal stages they can request a representative from the Students' Union.

Equality Impact Assessment

The University of Greater Manchester is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to the protected characteristics of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months to judge its effectiveness and updated in accordance with changes in the law by the University Safeguarding and Prevent Working Group.

Related Polices

All related University policies are accessible via the University of Greater Manchester Policy Zone available here: https://greatermanchester.ac.uk/student-policy-zone. Examples of related policies include the following (non-exhaustive list):

- University Student Non-Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure;
- University Fitness to Practice Policy;
- Student Complaints Procedure;
- Student Social Media Guidance;
- University Safeguarding Policy and Procedure;
- Health Wellbeing and Support Study Policy;
- Dignity at Work;
- Policy on Consensual Relationships;
- Code of Practice Relating to Freedom of Speech;
- Equal Opportunities Policy.

Statement on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

The principles of academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law (and our equalities duties) are very much embedded in the University Teaching Intensive, Research Informed Assessment Enabled (TIRIAE) philosophy and our organisational culture. They provide a basis for providing all members of the University community with the opportunity to think critically and engage with diverse perspectives whilst at the same time enable the University to drive forward research and innovation – as we advance knowledge, understanding and truth.

The University of Greater Manchester takes its responsibility to protect and promote both freedom of speech and academic freedom, strengthened by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, seriously and the principles are embedded into our key people policies, procedures and practices.

All members of the University community at all levels within the University have an obligation to understand, uphold and promote these principles. The University provides training/support and other resources to employees in support of this agenda. Any colleague who is not clear on these obligations should speak with their respective Head of Service/School.

The University will ensure that complaints considered under this policy are determined consistently with the University's statutory duties relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom. Decision-makers must balance the University's obligation to protect students from harassment with its obligation to secure lawful freedom of speech. Any restriction upon lawful expression must be justified, evidence-based and proportionate.

The University will investigate and take both reasonable and proportionate action with respect to any allegations that go against these fundamental key principles. Where breaches by staff are uncovered the University will take action under the Disciplinary Procedure (or other appropriate procedure), which if allegations are proven could result in a sanction up to and including dismissal or expulsion.

Dissemination of and Access to the Policy

This policy will be published on the University of Greater Manchester's website to be available to all staff, students, visitors and contractors on https://greatermanchester.ac.uk/student-policy-zone.

Summary – REPORT TITLE	
Reference Number: QTU /	
Version number	9
Version Date	September 2026
Author	Senior Wellbeing Coordinator
Owner	Student Services and Experience
Responsible person	Head of Student Support and Wellbeing
Approving Committee	University of Greater Manchester Safeguarding and Prevent Working Group
Date Approved	June 2025
Effective From	1 July 2011
Dissemination Method	Web pages
Review Frequency	12 months
Consultation History	Students Union; Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct Working Group; Organisational Development, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
Document History	March 2022: The original document from 2011 has been reviewed in line with the University structure and other supporting and related policies. February 2025 – May 2025: Version 7, has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the University structure and other supporting and related policies. The policy is also now inclusive of Sexual Misconduct. Definitions have now been added within appendix 1. Version 8 reflects the relocation of this work to the Life Lounge alongside considering Condition E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. The document was developed in consultation with the Students' Union and following obtaining student feedback.

	September 2026 – The policy has been updated to align with the revised Dignity at Work Policy following implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and Office for Students Regulatory Advice 24. The amendments clarify the interaction between freedom of speech, academic freedom and the University's procedures for responding to bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation and sexual misconduct. Other technical updates include: Appendix 3; removal of the Contents page.

Appendix 1: Glossary/Definitions

Harassment including sexual harassment is summarised in the Equality Act 2020, includes sexual harassment, unwanted behaviour or conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment because of, or connected to, one or more of the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.'

In addition to the summarised section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 - a course of conduct conducted on at least two occasions that harasses one other person, or a course of conduct that harasses two or more persons at least once each. References to harassing a person include alarming the person or causing the person distress.

These definitions include tests that are designed to establish, objectively and reasonable, whether conduct could be considered harassment.

This requires us to take into account:

- the perception of the person who is at the receiving end of the conduct
- the other circumstances of the case
- whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have the effect under scrutiny.

Under section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, an offence is committed only if:

- the person knows the conduct amounts to harassment of the other, or
- a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounted to harassment of the other person.

Freedom of Speech means the freedom to express lawful opinions, ideas, beliefs and academic views without unlawful interference. The University recognises that lawful speech may be challenging, controversial or offensive and that offence alone does not constitute harassment.

In determining whether speech amounts to harassment, the University will consider:

- the legal definition of harassment;
- the perception of the complainant;
- the circumstances of the case;
- whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have had the alleged effect;
- the University's duties relating to freedom of speech and academic freedom.

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power which undermines, humiliates or injures the person on the receiving end.

Associated discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (excluding marriage and civil partnership). For example, a student whose child has attention

deficit hyperactivity disorder, is excluded from social activities organised by their peers because of fears about the child's behaviour.

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic when they do not have that protected characteristic (excluding marriage and civil partnership). For example, a student refuses to work on a group assignment because they believe another student in the group is gay irrespective of whether the student is gay or not.

Victimisation is deliberately treating someone less favourably than others because they have complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint. For example, a student alleges that they have encountered racism from another student on their course, and as a result they are ignored by other students on their course.

Sexual misconduct relates to all unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. This includes, but is not limited to:

i. Sexual harassment (as defined by Section 26 (2) of the Equality Act 2010)
ii. Unwanted conduct which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (as defined by the Equality Act 2010)
iii. Assault (as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003)
iv. Rape (as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003)
v. Physical unwanted sexual advances (as set out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission: Sexual harassment and the law, 2017)
vi. Intimidation, or promising resources or benefits in return for sexual favours (as set out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission: Sexual harassment and the law, 2017)
vii. Distributing private and personal explicit images or video footage of an individual without their consent (as defined by the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015).

Consent is the agreement to participate in a sexual act where the individual has both the freedom and capacity to make that decision. Consent cannot be assumed on the basis of a previous sexual experience or previously given consent, and consent may be withdrawn at any time.

Freedom to consent: For consent to be present, the individual has to freely engage in a sexual act. Consent is not present when submission by an unwilling participant results from the exploitation of power, deception, coercion, pressure or force, regardless of whether there is verbal or physical resistance.

Coercion or Force includes any physical or emotional harm or threat of physical or emotional harm which would reasonably place an individual in fear of immediate or future harm, with the result that the individual feels compelled to engage in a sexual act.

Capacity to consent: Free consent cannot be given if the individual does not have the capacity to give consent. Incapacitation occurs when an individual is asleep, unconscious,

semi-conscious, or in a state of intermittent consciousness, or any other state of unawareness that a sexual act may be occurring. Incapacitation may also occur on account of a mental or developmental disability, or as the result of alcohol or drug use.

Alcohol and/or Drug Use: Incapacitation arising from alcohol or drug consumption should be evaluated on the basis of how the alcohol/drugs have affected the individual; signs of incapacitation may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following: slurred speech, unsteady gait, bloodshot eyes, dilated pupils, unusual behaviour, blacking out, a lack of full control over physical movements, a lack of awareness of circumstances or surroundings, and/or an inability to communicate effectively. Intoxication is never a defence for committing an act of Sexual Violence and Misconduct, or for failing to obtain consent. If there is any doubt as to the level or extent of one's own or the other individual's incapacitation, the safest approach is to not engage in a sexual act.

Stalking is a specific type of harassment which involves a pattern of unwanted, fixated, repetitive or obsessive behaviour that is intrusive and causes fear or distress. Stalking can take many different forms, including online and in person.

Domestic Abuse is defined as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer.

Mediation is a process where a neutral person, the Mediator, works with people who have a disagreement to help them to find their solution and reach an agreement that will assist them to resolve their problem, improve the situation or enable them to work together effectively. The mediator does not take sides or judge who is right or wrong. A student can request mediation from a Dignity at Study Champion who can then arrange this. There are two levels of mediation under this policy (as outlined below).

Informal Mediation will involve both parties either separately or together where the Informal Mediator will ask questions that will help to uncover underlying problems, assist the parties to understand the issues and help them to clarify the options for resolving their conflict/issue. No formal notes will be taken and neither parties will be asked to sign a document. Their role is to purely facilitate a conversation between the two parties involved. Our Informal Mediators will have been trained in mediation skills but will not hold a formal mediation qualification.

Formal Mediation will involve both parties being present at the meeting and the Mediator will take formal notes around the meeting. All parties will be asked to sign this document as part of the formal process. Our Formal Mediators are qualified and have been trained by The TCM group.

Bystander is a person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part.

Appendix 2: Support Services

Support in an Emergency

If you or another person are at immediate risk of harm, please contact the Police on:

- 999 (Emergencies)
- 101 (non-emergency)

If you are on campus and are at immediate risk of harm, please also contact security on 01204 903700 or speak with any member of staff advising them you need urgent assistance.

Advice on bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct

If you have witnessed or experienced bullying, harassment, victimisation or sexual misconduct please speak with a member of university staff or the Students' Union. If the perpetrator of these unacceptable behaviours is known to you and is a member of the University community you will be advised on your options on how to report the incident and support that is available. If the perpetrator is not a member of the University community, then support is still available to you.

For informal advice on this policy without/or before making a report speak with either:

- Student Advisor, Student Services, Chancellor's Mall Tel: 01204 903733;
- Life Lounge, T2 Eagle Tower Tel 01204 903566 or;
- Students' Union, Chancellor's Mall Tel: 01204 900850 – to note the Students' Union is also a Hate Crime Reporting Centre.

Internal Support

The following list of support services is available to any student who has witnessed, experienced or has concerns about bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct:

- Student Advisor, Student Services, Chancellor's Mall Tel: 01204 903733 or email studentadvisors@greatermanchester.ac.uk
- Students' Union, Chancellor's Mall Tel: 01204 900850 or email info@ugmsu.com
- Life Lounge (Student Mental Health and Wellbeing), T2 Eagle Tower Tel: 0124 903566 or email lifelounge@greatermanchester.ac.uk
- You can always speak with your programme leader or personal tutor if you have witnessed or experienced any bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or sexual misconduct
- LEAP Online – this includes online modules on Healthy Relationships, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Consent and Safeguarding.

External Support

Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Web: https://www.gmp.police.uk

Tel: 999 (Emergency) or 101 (non-emergency)

National Bullying Helpline – Information and Advice for anyone dealing with bullying

Web: https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk

Tel: 0300 323 0169 (Helpline) or 0845 225 5784 – Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Stop Hate UK – National organisation working to challenge all forms of Hate Crime

Web: https://stophateuk.org

Victim Support – Free, independent support to help victims of crime

Web: https://victimsupport.org.uk

Tel: 0808 503 9054

St. Marys Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) – Comprehensive and coordinated forensic, counselling and aftercare service to men, women and children who have experienced rape or sexual assault

Web: https://stmaryscentre.org

Tel: 01304 276 6515 (24 hours helpline)

Greater Manchester Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Support Centre – Service for women only who have experienced sexual abuse

Web: https://manchesterrapecrisis.co.uk

Tel: 0161 273 4500 (Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm and Wednesday and Thursday Evening 6pm to 9pm)

Rape Crisis England – Feminist charity working to end sexual violence and abuse

Web: https://rapecrisis.org.uk

Tel: 0808 802 9999 (8am to midnight 365 days a year)

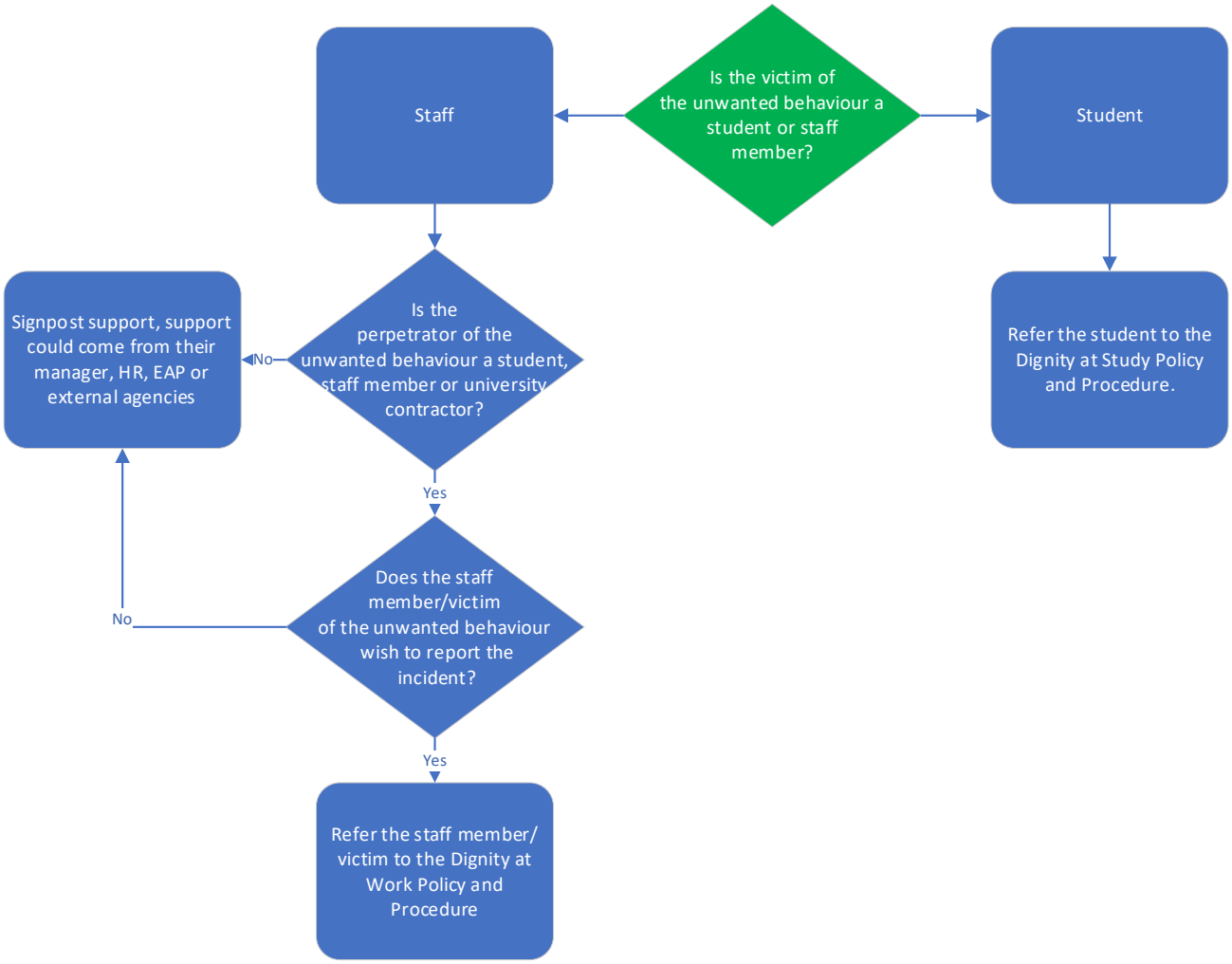
Survivors UK – Service for men, boys and non-binary who are survivors of sexual violence that offers counselling and practical support

Web: https://www.survivorsuk.org

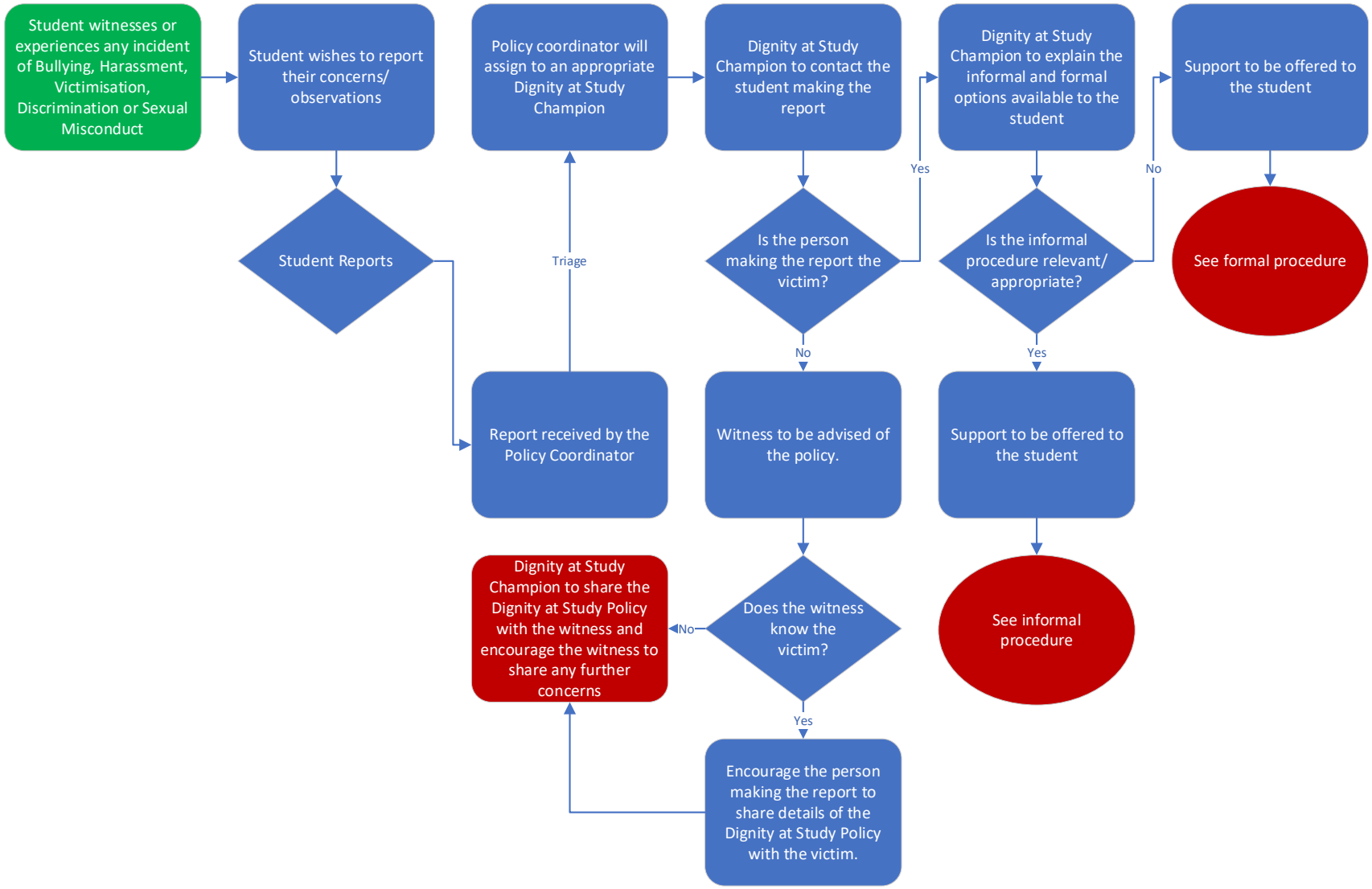
Appendix 3: Policy Contacts/Roles

Position	Post Holder	Contact
Enquiries and Support		Tel: 01204 903566 Email: dignityatstudy@greatermanchester.ac.uk
Policy Owner	Charlotte Jones, Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager, Safeguarding Officer	Tel: 01204 903566 Email: C.jones2@greatermanchester.ac.uk
Policy Coordinator	Meg James, Senior Wellbeing Coordinator, Deputy Safeguarding Officer	Tel: 01204 903829 Email: M.james@greatermanchester.ac.uk
Dignity at Study Champions	Toni Meredith, Wellbeing Advisor, Senior Designated Safeguarding Champion	Tel: 01204 903566 Email: T.meredith@greatermanchester.ac.uk
	Sana Ahmed, Wellbeing Coordinator, Senior Designated Safeguarding Champion	Tel: 01204 903067 Email: s.ahmed2@greatermanchester.ac.uk
	Tania Lopez, Wellbeing Coordinator, Senior Designated Safeguarding Champion	Tel: 01204 903566 or 01204 903214 (Medical School) Email: T.lopez@greatermanchester.ac.uk
Mediators	Kay Loxham (Academic Skills Coordinator, Student Services and Experience)	Tel: 01204 903838 Email: K.J.Loxham@greatermanchester.ac.uk
	Luke Evans (Academic Skills Coordinator, Student Services and Experience)	Tel: 01204 903839 Email: L.Evans@greatermanchester.ac.uk

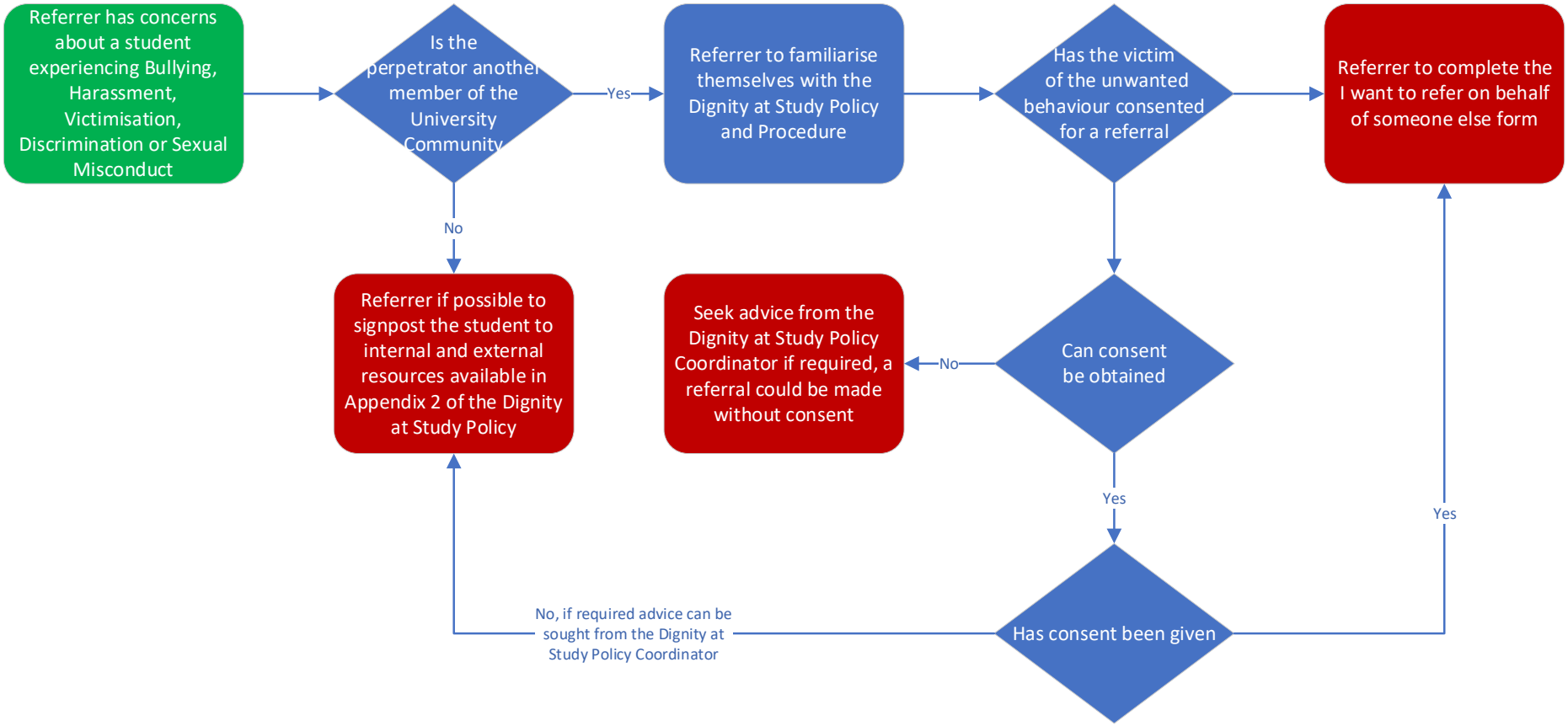
Appendix 4: Dignity at Study or Dignity at Work



Appendix 5: Student options – Reporting with Personal Details

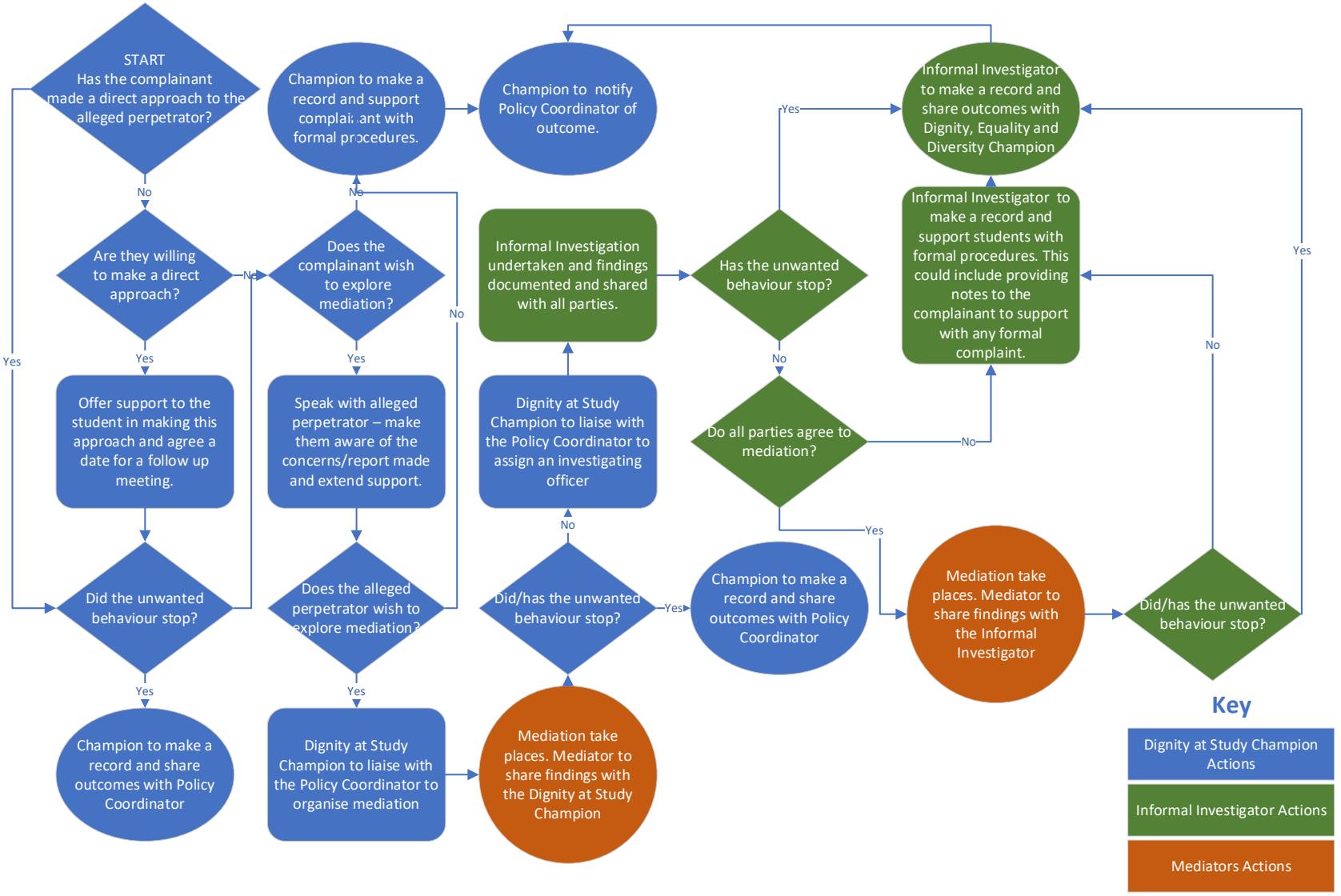


Appendix 5: Student options – Reporting on behalf of another person



University of Greater Manchester

Appendix 5.1: Informal Process



Appendix 5.2: Formal Process

