

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy document outlines the Glasgow Business Club’s harassment & dignity policy.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

This policy shall be understood and followed by board members, members, speakers, and visitors.

3. POLICY

3.1 Glasgow Business Club takes the issue of harassment and bullying very seriously and is committed to a networking environment that is free from discrimination and intimidation, and in which the dignity of the individual is paramount. The purpose of this policy is to assist in developing a networking environment in which:

- 3.1.1 Harassment and bullying are considered to constitute conduct that is unacceptable. Such will include harassment and bullying on the grounds of disability, ethnic origin, marital status, nationality, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical/mental disability or offending background.
- 3.1.2 Individuals have the confidence to complain about harassment and bullying should it arise.
- 3.1.3 Individuals have confidence that any concerns they may have will be dealt with fairly and appropriately.

3.2 Harassment is “unwanted conduct that violates people’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.”

3.3 All board members, members, speakers, and visitors have responsibility for respecting the feelings of others at events, and behaving in a way, which does not cause offence. Harassment can be intentional or unintentional, however, it is the duty of board members, members, speakers, and visitors to be aware of the impact their conduct may have on others. Harassment is always unacceptable whether intentional or not, and all reported cases should be investigated by the board.

3.4 The following are considered as harassment, although this list is not exhaustive it is intended to act as a guide to illustrate types of unacceptable behaviour: -

- 3.4.1 Verbal or written comments of an offensive nature, spreading malicious rumours; written comments include SMS text messages and remarks and comments made on any social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat and X.
- 3.4.2 Lewd, suggestive or over familiar behaviour;
- 3.4.3 Displaying or circulating sexually suggestive material or other offensive material;
- 3.4.4 Insulting, ridiculing or subjecting a person to any other detriment because of his or her disability, ethnic origin, marital status, nationality, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical/mental disability or offending background.
- 3.4.5 Criminal acts such as indecent exposure, physical attack or sexual assault.

3.5 Bullying is a serious form of harassment. It may involve actions, comments, physical contact or behaviour that is found to be objectionable. Personal vindictiveness against an individual(s) is also a factor. Bullying can be defined as persistent actions, criticisms or personal abuse either in public or private, which humiliates, intimidates, undermines or demeans the individual(s) involved. Bullying is always unacceptable whether intentional or not, and all reported cases should be investigated by the board.

- 3.6** The following are considered as bullying, although this list is not exhaustive it is intended to act as a guide to illustrate types of unacceptable behaviour: -
- 3.6.1 Using abusive language;
 - 3.6.2 Unreasonably removing areas of responsibility;
 - 3.6.3 Continually ignoring or excluding an individual;
 - 3.6.4 Deliberately undermining a person by overload and constant criticism;
 - 3.6.5 Picking on one person when there is a common problem;
 - 3.6.6 Frightening someone with physical or other threats;
 - 3.6.7 Shouting at or humiliating an individual in front of people or in private;
 - 3.6.8 Preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking opportunities.
- 3.7** This policy recognises that conduct constituting harassment and bullying has a negative impact on the networking environment. Some examples of the possible impact on board members, members, speakers, and visitors who may be the subject of harassment and bullying are given below.
- 3.7.1 Physical Effects - Feeling sick, tearful, sweating, shaking, disturbed sleep, palpitations, loss of energy, stomach/bowel problems, severe headaches, minor aches and pains
 - 3.7.2 Emotional Effects - Anxiety, irritability, panic attacks, depression, anger, aggressive feelings, lack of motivation, loss of confidence, feeling of isolation, reduced self-esteem
- 3.8** Board members have a responsibility to ensure that members, visitors and speakers behave to acceptable standards. Board members also have a responsibility to issue reasonable instructions and expect them to be carried out. Board members should:
- 3.8.1 foster a climate that discourages the occurrence of harassment;
 - 3.8.2 pay attention to style of dealing with people, ensuring that members, visitors and speakers are treated with dignity and respect;
 - 3.8.3 act upon potential breaches of this policy and unacceptable behaviour despite the absence of a formal complaint;
 - 3.8.4 ensure that members, visitors and speakers have an understanding of this policy and know where to seek help (e.g. Board members).
- 3.9** Individual members, visitors and speakers have a role to play by:
- 3.9.1 helping to create a climate that discourages harassment. Making it clear that they find such behaviour unacceptable;
 - 3.9.2 supporting colleagues. This may include challenging the harasser at the time of the incident, offering support in any other way and co-operating in any investigation; ensuring no victimisation of complainants occur.
- 3.10** Differences in culture, attitudes and experience, or misinterpretation of social signals, can mean that what is perceived by the person experiencing the behaviour as bullying and harassment, may be perceived by others as normal. Board members, members, speakers, and visitors should be aware that they may need to modify their behaviour in response to the feelings and sensitivity of others.
- 3.11** If a board member, member, speaker, or visitors feels that they are being harassed or bullied, they should wherever possible raise the matter with the alleged harasser or bully themselves. They should describe the behaviour, which they find offensive, explain how the behaviour makes them feel, and most importantly, ask for the behaviour to stop.
- 3.12** If the complainant does not feel able to tackle this on their own, they may choose to speak to a board member or member, either of whom may accompany them or make the approach on their behalf. Should this be the case the complainant or their representative must also approach a board member to inform them as to the circumstances prior to the meeting.
- 3.13** An individual wishing to lodge a formal written complaint under the Harassment and Dignity policy should do so as soon as possible after the event and without unreasonable delay.
- 3.14** Practice has shown that most complaints can be informally resolved and mediation at this stage may be appropriate. However, in situations where the matter remains unresolved due to non-acceptance of the allegation made, or because the behaviour continues, then formal procedures should be invoked.

- 3.15** If the complainant does not feel able to use the informal procedure, or the seriousness of the incident(s) makes it inappropriate, the informal stage can be omitted and the formal stage started.
- 3.15.1 If not already done so, the complainant (accompanied as above if they wish) should contact the President (or a board member if the case involves the President) setting out the details of the harassment or bullying in writing.
 - 3.15.2 The President is responsible for appointing an investigating officer to cases. The investigating officer should be impartial and should have had no previous substantial involvement with the grievance.
 - 3.15.3 Care should be taken to ensure that the Investigating Officer will not be a disciplinary procedure decision-maker, in case the complaint is serious and becomes subject to the disciplinary procedure.
 - 3.15.4 The Investigating Officer must investigate the complaint as soon as possible. If the Investigating Officer cannot investigate it personally within such a timescale, it should be assigned to another board member who is competent and able to do so. During their investigation, the Investigating Officer should ensure that strict confidentiality protects the rights of the parties involved.
 - 3.15.5 The investigation process must be completed as quickly as possible, and should usually take no more than 10 days, ensuring that all sides have the opportunity to present their side.
 - 3.15.6 In some cases, after the initial investigation, the Investigating Officer may decide that the complaint may be resolved informally. Alternatively, conciliation with the persons and a third party may be appropriate. The person has the right to be represented by a colleague at this meeting. During the conciliation, a record must be made of any discussion and actions agreed.
 - 3.15.7 If the complaint appears more serious, further action will be taken in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.
- 3.16** The complainant can use the Grievance Procedure if they believe the Harassment and Dignity procedure has not been conducted thoroughly or concluded adequately and, as a result, the original complaint has not been responded to properly. In these circumstances, it is likely that the grievance will start at the appeal stage.
- 3.17** The alleged harasser can appeal against any disciplinary action or decision taken under the appeals procedure of the Disciplinary Procedure. They could also appeal under the Grievance Procedure if they feel that the complaint may have been made maliciously or there were flaws in the investigative process.
- 3.18** Investigators must keep written records of meetings and discussions relating to the formal dignity procedure. These must be written during, or as soon after the event as possible, to ensure the accuracy of the record. Written records must be signed and dated by all parties. Copies of all final meeting records must be given to board and their representatives. Written confirmation of the outcome of any meetings will be sent to the person and their representatives for their information and a copy kept on the employee's personnel file in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Records should include:
- 3.18.1 the nature of the grievance;
 - 3.18.2 what was decided and actions taken;
 - 3.18.3 the reason for the actions;
 - 3.18.4 whether an appeal was lodged;
 - 3.18.5 the outcome of the appeal; and
 - 3.18.6 any subsequent developments.
- 3.19** Board members, members, speakers, and visitors may also wish to keep records of events to support their case.
- 3.20** It is recognised that on occasions, complaints are made maliciously with no basis in fact and are purely attempts to damage the alleged harasser in some way. If this is the conclusion of the Investigating Officer, he/she will need to consider whether it is appropriate for formal disciplinary action to be taken against the person making the complaint.

- 3.21** Malicious complaints may be regarded as gross misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken.
- 3.22** Wherever possible a Harassment and Dignity at Work case should be dealt with before an employee leaves employment.