



RESPECT AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

Introduction

We are committed to running a Society where all Fellows, Members, supporters, visitors, staff, contractors and other stakeholders feel safe and are respected by other members of the BIS community. This means that everyone who come into contact with the BIS in the course of our work is treated with dignity and respect regardless of gender, sexual orientation, transgender status, marital or family status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, creed, culture, religion or belief, age, or disability. Ensuring that the Society is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is critical to us.

This policy and procedure is intended to support this commitment in practice and to provide guidance to all involved on how to deal with concerns, except for staff. There is a separate but complementary policy for staff members. It should be noted that for Fellows and Members, concerns raised under this policy would fall within Article 15 of our governing document, be considered “conduct which, in the opinion of the Council is likely to be detrimental to the Society”, and handled under our disciplinary procedure.

Policy

We will not tolerate bullying or harassment, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether done purposefully or not, and whether it takes place at BIS HQ, at a BIS related event or exhibition, virtually, or in any other setting. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. Retaliation or victimisation will also constitute detrimental conduct, which may in appropriate circumstances lead to sanctions.

Types of Bullying and Harassment

- Discriminatory
- Personal and physical,
- Verbal/written
- Psychological
- Power / abuse of power
- Third party harassment
- Cyber bullying
- Sexual harassment
- Retaliation

As a global organisation, we encourage our membership to be aware that in the UK, if a court or tribunal finds that you have bullied or harassed someone, in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment. Any form of assault is a criminal offence, and such an allegation will be reported to the Police for them to investigate.

We will take appropriate action if any of our Fellows, Members, supporters, visitors, staff, contractors, and other stakeholders are bullied or harassed by another.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously and will be investigated. The Chief Executive and a Vice President will lead on such investigations. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. If, after an investigation, we decide that any Fellow or Member has harassed or bullied someone who has raised a complaint, then the Fellow or Member will be subject to disciplinary action, which could lead to being excluded from activities or membership being rescinded. If an employee has harassed or bullied someone, that will be handled under the staff policy.

Anyone who makes allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result. False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Everyone has a responsibility not to make false allegations. False allegations made in bad faith will be treated as harassment or bullying in their own right, and handled under this policy – this includes reports made to the Society, or through social media.

What type of treatment amounts to bullying or harassment?

Bullying or harassment is something that has happened that is unwelcome, unwarranted and causes a detrimental effect. If a Fellow, Member or any other individual complains they have been harassed, then they have a grievance which must be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition. The Equality and Human Rights Commission provide guidance on harassment, which can include inappropriate comments, sexual misconduct, unwanted advances, or offensive banter:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-harassment-and-victimisation>

Bullying can cover a range of behaviours, which may be less obvious. This can range through name-calling and public ridicule to persistent criticism, nit-picking or devaluing another's work. Abuse of power, such as being over-bearing or issuing unreasonable demands, can also fall into bullying.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable. We expect all Fellows and Members, and anyone who comes into contact with the BIS, to treat each other in a respectful manner.

Unacceptable behaviour may be in person (for example at the HQ or at an event), through a virtual forum (such as video conferencing) or online (such as through social media, direct messaging or email). It may be physical, written or verbal.

Bullying does not include appropriate criticism of behaviour or proper performance management.

How does the Society ensure awareness of what constitutes bullying or harassment?

We encourage all Fellows and Members to be aware of this policy, which is made available on our website and signposted. We also include a link to this document in the email to new Members.

Our Council Members, who constitute the Directors and Trustees of the Society, must undertake online Equality and Diversity training which is provided by ACAS. Council Members are also asked to sign a Code of Conduct. One Vice President takes a lead on bullying and harassment related matters.

All staff complete mandatory Equality and Diversity training, which is the same course provided by ACAS.

Reporting Concerns

What you should do if you witness an incident you believe to harassment or bullying: If you witness such behaviour you should report the incident in confidence to the Chief Executive or a Vice President. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.

What you should do if you feel you have been bullied or harassed: If you have suffered bullying or harassment you should inform the Chief Executive or a Vice President. You will have two options that you can ask us to take.

Informal Channels

If you have suffered bullying or harassment and you consider this to be something you would like resolved informally, you may feel that you want to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to our policy and must stop. You can ask the Chief Executive or Vice President to support you in this, or you can ask a colleague or friend to do so. You can do this whether this has taken place during regular activity or at an event, or any other circumstances.

If you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, you should raise it with the Chief Executive or a Vice President. They will discuss with you the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by:

- Telling the alleged perpetrator(s), without prejudging the matter, that there has been a complaint that their behaviour has had (or is having) an adverse effect on an individual;
- That such behaviour is contrary to our policy;
- That the continuation of such behaviour could lead to action under Article 15 of our governing document.

It may be possible for the Chief Executive or Vice President to have this conversation with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. They will also stress that the conversation is confidential. If the harassment has taken place at an event, this conversation may need to take place at that event.

You do not have to accept the informal route. You can ask for this to be a formal complaint.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as a serious allegation of sexual or racial harassment or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. We will consult with you before taking this step, but we will have an obligation to report the matter to the Police if a crime has taken place, such as assault.

Where an informal route is taken, a note will be placed on the membership record of any Member or Fellow for two years, and then deleted. This is to ensure that if there are multiple complaints about any individual within any two year period, indicating a pattern of unacceptable behaviour, action may be taken. Where this happens, the Member will be notified that this is in place. Those in membership are reminded that they are entitled at any time to request a copy of their membership record. After two years this note will be deleted.

Raising a Formal Complaint

You can choose to make a formal complaint about the harassment or bullying to the Chief Executive or a Vice President. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s).

We will first investigate the complaint. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided):

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s),
- The nature of the harassment or bullying,
- The occasion the harassment or bullying occurred,
- The date of the occasion,
- The names of any witnesses and
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally.

We will normally aim to start the investigation within three working days of you providing this information. The alleged perpetrator(s) would need to be told your name and the details of your complaint in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively

as possible. The Council may decide that it is necessary to suspend a Fellow or Member from any honorary duties that they hold whilst such an investigation takes place. The investigation will include conversations with the alleged victim(s), the alleged perpetrator(s) and any witnesses. Written notes will be kept of these interviews for a period of two years.

We will seek to complete the investigation quickly, but in some complex cases this may not be possible. After the investigation, or otherwise within two weeks, we will meet with you to consider the complaint and the findings of the investigation. At the meeting, you may be accompanied by a colleague or other companion.

After the meeting (and normally within five working days), we will write to you to inform you of our decision and to notify you of your right to appeal to the President or a previously uninvolved Past President if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You should put your appeal in writing explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with our decision. You should submit your appeal within five working days of receiving written confirmation of our decision. If you submit an appeal, you will be invited to attend a meeting to consider it. Once again you may be accompanied by a colleague or other companion. We will write to you afterwards to confirm our final decision.

Formal complaints in relation to an event

If you wish to make a formal complaint and need action taken during the event, you should report this to the Chief Executive or a Vice President, or otherwise any other Council Member or senior staff member. Whoever you report it to must inform the Chief Executive or a Vice President.

Action taken during the event will depend on the severity, and may range from the Chief Executive or Vice President telling the alleged perpetrator that their behaviour must stop, through to the alleged perpetrator being told to leave the event.

Sanctions

Harassment and bullying constitute serious misconduct. During an investigation, the alleged perpetrator may be suspended from voluntary or honorary duties, including Committee Membership, writing or speaking for the Society in publications or at events, volunteering at the building or events, attending events, or other forms of representing the Society. This is to protect all involved.

If we believe there is a case to answer and misconduct has occurred, Article 15 of our governing documents will be invoked, within five days of the conclusion of the investigation. This will mean that a Fellow or Member who is accused of bullying or harassment will be given seven days' notice to attend either Council or a Disciplinary Committee of Council, or alternatively to provide a written statement in response to the allegations. The Council holds the ability to rescind membership or fellowship of the Society for the most serious offences. Other sanctions available include written warnings, barring individuals from attending BIS events (whether they are in membership or not), or removing them from honorary or voluntary duties for a set period or permanently.

If there is a report made during an event, the Chief Executive or Vice President may ask the alleged perpetrator to leave the event immediately, even if there is no time to investigate. Our priority is to protect the victim, and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff, volunteers, those in membership or participants in our activities. The decision whether to do so will depend on the severity of the report, whether this has been witnessed, and whether in the opinion of the Chief Executive or Vice President the distress caused to the victim would be increased if the person is not asked to leave. The authority of the Chief Executive or Vice President in this matter is final.

Disclosure and confidentiality

We will treat personal data collected during this process in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing data is provided in the Privacy Notices on our website.

Public statements

The Society is aware of the legal requirement to protect information and data relating to both the victim and the alleged perpetrator in any such case. We are also aware of the interest that can be generated through social media about such cases, and due to data protection legislation, we may not always be able to give the amount of information that other interested parties may like to see. It is therefore our policy normally not to publish public statements regarding action taken in individual cases, other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Any exception to this policy should not be taken as an implied change in that policy. Public statements made by individuals do not change these requirements or the burden on the Society.

Council Members are bound by these legal requirements for data protection, and we ask all Fellows and Members, should they become aware of related information, to be mindful of data protection regulations related to personal data, especially online. This includes not pre-judging the outcome of any investigation, or publishing information online about investigations.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by Council.