

What should I do if someone says I have bullied, sexually harassed or discriminated against them?

The Centre for Environmental Policy (CEP) at Imperial College London is committed to championing a safe, open and inclusive university environment in which all staff, students and visitors are treated with the utmost respect, dignity, consideration and courtesy.

Being accused of bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination can be as stressful as being bullied, sexually harassed or discriminated against. CEP will act impartially and fairly towards you. These are serious accusations and even if you feel that they are unjustified, it is important not to become angry with the complainant. Try to remain calm. Seek advice. The College and the Department have many pathways to help and support you.

The most important thing is to listen to the perspective of the complainant and try to understand how your behaviour has affected them. Remember it is the other person's reaction to your behaviour which is important, not your intention nor the reaction you think they should have.

Try to be open-minded rather than defensive and do not confront the complainant about their allegations: this will only make the situation worse and your behaviour could be misinterpreted. Do not consider revenge or retaliation; this will only count against you. Instead, try to understand why it is that the person has made these allegations.

In most situations, simply understanding the cause of the other person's discomfort is enough to find a way to resolve the situation. Many cases arise from simple misunderstandings.

Offensive actions may even be unconscious. That happens because we make quick assessments of people and situations. We are all subject to unconscious biases: they can affect our behaviours and decision-making and are influenced by our backgrounds, personal experiences, societal stereotypes and cultural context. By focusing on conscious thinking and by creating inclusive work cultures, we can learn to improve our conscious judgements and the impact of bias.

In some instances, advice and common sense may not resolve the situation. If an investigation is warranted, the College will investigate the allegations confidentially, promptly, thoroughly and with sensitivity. CEP will support you (as well as the complainant) and will aim to resolve the allegations as quickly and effectively as possible. You will be kept informed of proceedings and will have the opportunity to respond throughout the investigation.

CEP has a zero-tolerance stance towards bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination and will take immediate action to ensure that these behaviours are addressed.

CEP acknowledges that this can be a very traumatic and uncertain time, especially if you feel that you have been unfairly accused. Before concluding you've done nothing wrong, consider the impact of your behaviour on others, even if it may seem inoffensive to you. Racist, sexist, homophobic or other derogatory or insulting remarks or jokes may seem trivial to you but may well be upsetting and offensive to others. Similarly, inappropriate touching, staring or innuendos may be seen as harassing by others but not by you.

CEP recognises the serious impact that being accused of bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination can have on your health, relationships and career. Unjust or false allegations can lead to loss of confidence, anxiety, worry and upset. Our dedicated Advisors are available to support you through this difficult time.

What you should do

- ▶ Listen carefully to the accusation and the particular concerns expressed.
- ▶ Review your behaviour. You may have upset other colleagues who have not made a complaint. The offense may have been entirely unintentional.
- ▶ Try to remain calm and open-minded.
- ▶ Do not confront the complainant or consider revenge.
- ▶ Immediately stop the behaviour that is causing offense. If you are found to have bullied, harassed or discriminated against someone after the objection has been made, the fact that you persisted will make the offence more serious.
- ▶ Contact one of the CEP or College Advisors (see below).
- ▶ Be honest.

- ▶ **Embrace change.** You might need to adjust your behaviour and style of communication to avoid similar situations in the future.
- ▶ **Cooperate with any formal investigations.**

Support at Imperial College

Staff can:

- ▶ Contact Imperial's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre (EDIC) for support equality@imperial.ac.uk
- ▶ Contact Human Resources Advisor: r.nyarko@imperial.ac.uk
- ▶ Contact Occupational Health [LINK ↗](#)
- ▶ Contact Confidential Care Assistance Provider on 0800 085 4764
- ▶ See FoNS Health and Wellbeing [LINK ↗](#)

- ▶ Contact one of the Imperial Staff Networks

Able@Imperial [LINK ↗](#)

Imperial600 [LINK ↗](#)

Imperial as One [LINK ↗](#)

- ▶ See Respect for Others: A Guide for Staff [LINK ↗](#)

Students can:

- ▶ Talk to their personal tutor or supervisor
- ▶ Contact the student counselling service on 020 7594 9637
- ▶ Contact Imperial's Student Advisors at the Students Union on 020 7594 8060 or advice@imperial.ac.uk

Staff and students can:

Contact CEP's Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Advisors. Trained Advisors are available at CEP to help support and guide you through the experience under strict confidentiality. They can help clarify your options and address your behaviour.

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Remember all members of the CEP community have a right to work or study in an environment that is safe, respectful, rewarding and free from inappropriate behaviour. You have a responsibility to consider the thoughts and feelings of others, to be polite and civil and to be aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour. You also have the right to know what you have been accused of, and to respond appropriately.