

# **Anti-bullying and Peer on Peer Abuse Policy for Students**

**September 2021**

(Next review date August 2022)

# 1. Policy Statement

SupaJam Education in Music and Media (SupaJam) is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students to enable them to learn in a secure environment.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at SupaJam. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to tell a staff member and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. This means that anyone who knows of any bullying taking place is expected to tell a member of staff.

Any form of harassment or bullying is entirely inappropriate and can seriously undermine relationships. At a personal level it can cause extreme distress and anxiety and can affect health and the continuation of studies. In some cases, it is unlawful and a criminal offence. SupaJam is committed to:

- Ensuring that all students are treated with dignity by promoting a culture where harassment or bullying is neither condoned nor tolerated where it is found to exist
- Providing a climate where students have the confidence to report incidences of harassment or bullying without fear of further victimisation
- Ensuring that any complaints are investigated quickly, effectively and sensitively
- Ensuring that all students are aware that incidents of bullying or harassment as well as malicious claims of harassment or bullying are regarded seriously, can amount to gross misconduct and as a consequence, can be grounds for disciplinary action, including exclusion
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students receiving education or training on college premises, any partnership providers and work placements.

## 2. What is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)

- **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Racial:** taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual:** unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive comments or the unwanted showing of sexual images to an individual
- **Homophobic:** because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber:** the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet if used to deliberately upset someone else. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, but it differs from other forms of bullying in significant ways: -
  - It can be 24/7 – invading the home and personal space
  - It may be perceived as anonymous, the actual identify of the perpetrator can be hidden
  - Participants can be unconscious perpetrators without understanding the consequences
  - The circulation of electronic messages is difficult to control
  - The size of the potential audience can be huge

### 3. What is Harassment?

Harassment causes distress and anxiety. It interferes with the student's ability to work and study and may be so serious and unrelenting that the student who is being harassed may feel it necessary to change their course or college. It is uninvited, may be personally offensive and is always unwelcome.

SupaJam takes harassment to include any behaviour that is offensive, intimidating or hostile; that interferes with the students' working environment or which induces stress, anxiety, fear or sickness on the part of the harassed person. The defining features would be that the behaviour is offensive or intimidating to the learner and would be so regarded by any reasonable person.

It is important to remember that differences of attitude, background or culture and the misinterpretation of social signals can mean that what is perceived as harassment by one person may not seem so to another. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be admitted as an excuse for harassment.

### **Examples of Harassment:**

- Physical contact ranging from touching to serious assault Policy Statement
- Verbal and written harassment through jokes, offensive language, gossip and slander, letters, etc
- Visual display of posters, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags, bunting and emblems
- Isolation or non-co-operation in class, exclusion from social activities
- Sexual harassment (see below)
- Racial harassment (see below)

It does not necessarily need to be persistent behaviour to be deemed as harassment.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment involves unwanted attention which emphasises sexual status over status as an individual, client or colleague. It can occur in a variety of circumstances but always has a distinctive feature: the inappropriate introduction of sexual comments or activities into learning and teaching situations.

### **Racial Harassment**

Racial harassment is any hostile or offensive act or expression by a person of one racial or ethnic origin against a person of another, or incitement to commit such an act. Those who may be particularly affected are students who are in a small minority who find it difficult to raise an issue.

Any difficulty in defining what constitutes sexual and racial harassment should not deter the learner from complaining of behaviour that causes them distress. Nor should anyone be deterred from making a complaint because of embarrassment or fear of intimidation or publicity. SupaJam will respect the particular sensitivity of sexual and racial harassment complaints and their consequences as well as the need for the utmost confidentiality.

Everyone can contribute toward preventing harassment through an active awareness of

the issues involved and also by ensuring that standards of conduct for themselves and for friends and colleagues do not cause offence.

## 4. Why is it important to respond to bullying and harassment?

Bullying hurts. No student deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

Everyone has a responsibility not to behave in a way that is offensive to others. College staff have a responsibility to provide a culture free from unacceptable behaviour and to react to any allegations of bullying as quickly as possible. Both staff and students have the responsibility to take appropriate action when they witness an incident.

## 5. Objectives

Teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents should have an understanding of:

- What constitutes bullying/harassment
- Know what our policy on bullying/ harassment is
- Follow our policy on bullying/harassment when it is reported

At SupaJam, we take these matters very seriously. Students and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying/harassment is reported and that it will not be tolerated.

## 6. Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

A student may indicate by signs of behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Teaching and non-teaching staff should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a student:

- Is frightened of walking or travelling to and from SupaJam
- Begins to truant from SupaJam
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence

- Attempts to threaten suicide or runs away
- Does not complete assignments and their college work begins to suffer
- Has possessions which are damaged or “go missing”
- Asks for money or starts stealing money
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other students or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous and jumpy when cyber messages are received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

## 7. Peer on Peer Abuse

There are four key definitions of Peer on Peer Abuse:

- Domestic Abuse - young people who experience physical, emotional, sexual and/ or financial abuse and coercive control in their intimate relationships as well as family relationships
- Child Sexual Exploitation - those who are sexually abused in the context of exploitative relationships, contexts and situations, by a person of any age, including a young person

- Serious youth violence - any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled violence - wounding with intent, rape, murder and GBH
- Harmful Sexualised behaviour - young people displaying sexualised behaviours that are outside the normal expectations of a young person of that age.

Although Peer on Peer Abuse can be seen as similar as bullying or harassment, it is important to note that it can be a short-term abuse, whereby bullying and harassment tends to span over a longer time period. Therefore, Peer on Peer abuse can be “missed” by professionals, and therefore not acted upon in the same way as bullying or harassment.

In the case of Peer on Peer Abuse, staff must report the abuse to a DSL immediately who will take the appropriate action.

## 8. Procedure

This procedure has been designed to deal with complaints of bullying/harassment which need to be handled in a sensitive manner. The procedure, therefore, seeks to ensure minimal stress for the complainant, timely resolution of complaints and a degree of flexibility appropriate to individual circumstances.

This procedure is separate from the Code of Behaviour for Students policy which may be used following the results of the investigation under this procedure. For serious incidents or where there is sufficient evidence, consideration will be given to proceed straight away with the disciplinary procedure. False allegations of harassment or bullying will be taken seriously and further action might be considered.

If you believe that you are the subject of bullying in any form, do not feel that it is your fault or that you have to tolerate it. The steps you can take are as follows:

## 9. Personal Action

If you feel you are being bullied or harassed, you are advised to keep a record detailing the event/s. Try to write down any details as soon as possible after they occur while they are still fresh in your mind. Include times and dates if possible.

If you are able, tell the person that their behaviour is causing you offence; their behaviour is unacceptable to you and interferes with your learning. They may not realise that their behaviour is offensive. Or, you may find it easier to do this by letter. Alternatively, you may wish to get support from a friend or a member of staff to help explain your feelings towards

the person harassing you. If you feel unable to confront the person concerned this does not constitute consent to the harassment.

## 10. Informal Action

If you feel unable to deal with the bullying/harassment or if their behaviour continues after you have made him/her aware of the situation, you should approach your teacher, or any member of SupaJam staff to notify them of the situation. At any stage, you may be accompanied by another person of your choice.

At this stage, most recipients of bullying/harassment simply want the behaviour to stop. Meeting with the bully/harasser and another person of your choice may be enough to bring the situation to an end. This type of approach is most effective when someone does not realise their behaviour is causing offence.

The resolution of the problem should be the focus and not whether someone is guilty or innocent. Therefore, if the alleged perpetrator agrees to modify or change their behaviour but refuses to accept the term bullying or harassment, this should be acceptable to all. The changes should be clearly identified and agreed by both parties. This will allow for both parties to monitor the situation going forward. Meeting minutes will be taken in order to remove ambiguity later.

The objective of the informal practice is to allow both parties to agree a framework where they will be able to continue to work together.

If the informal procedure fails to work or the complainant prefers not to use it, then the formal procedure should be used.

### **Note:**

When a member of staff has been accused of harassment or bullying a student, the Centre Manager will investigate the matter and may refer the matter to the CEOs of SupaJam.

## 11. Formal Action

If informal action fails, you can then request to have the matter escalated. You should submit written details of your complaint including details of what has happened and how you have been affected.

An investigation will be undertaken by a member of SLT of SupaJam. The outcome of the investigation will be one of the following:

- No further action is taken as the allegation has not been substantiated
- Disciplinary action is initiated under the Code of Behaviour for Students policy
- At any point if staff implications emerge then Human Resources could be contacted.

### **Potential Outcomes**

- The bully/harasser may be asked to apologise
- If possible, the students will be reconciled
- In serious cases, suspension or exclusion will be considered
- After the incident has been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure that repeated bullying/harassment does not take place

## **12. Strategies for Prevention**

- Staff training to raise awareness regarding bullying behaviour and appropriate management strategies
- Peer support networks including peer mentoring
- Drama opportunities using external groups and the opportunity for students to explore issues and work co-operatively through role play
- Signing of a Student Code of Conduct
- Encourage discussions about bullying and why it matters during tutorials

In the case of witnesses, this notification should clearly state that they are being called as witnesses and that they are not otherwise involved nor is any allegation being made against them. The terms of reference should also be included.

All parties including witnesses should also be informed that they have the right to bring a representative or a colleague with them, should they so desire. They should also be made aware that they have the right to have their witness statements confirmed to them either at the end of the interview or in writing, prior to the report being compiled. Witnesses should be made aware that they will not receive a copy of the report or be made aware of the findings.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the report as outlined in the policy should be forwarded to both the claimant and the alleged perpetrator.

If the complaint is upheld then the perpetrator will be subject to the Code of Behaviour for Students policy within SupaJam. The disciplinary procedure will then become the relevant procedure for the further processing of the complaint.

## 13. What to do if you are accused of harassment

Harassment is an issue that must be taken seriously. An accusation of harassment does not signify a judgement and there will need to be a discussion with the student to establish the true nature of the situation. The perception of the person complaining of harassment is, however, an important factor in determining whether or not harassment has taken place.

You may contact your course teacher or any member of SupaJam staff. The aim of the person you contact will be to facilitate discussion with a view to resolving the problem at source, if possible. You have the right throughout any discussions or formal actions, to be accompanied by a friend or parent.

In many cases, the problem will be solved informally through discussion. The student will be asked to reflect on behaviour and the possibility that they might be at fault, whether consciously or not. A simple discussion between the student and the person with a complaint may set matters right.

Details relating to the circumstances that gave rise to the complaint, the existence of witnesses and the nature of the professional relationship between the person complaining and yourself, will all be taken into account. If the complaint is taken to a formal stage, this will ensure that any formal procedures are fairly and properly followed.

Throughout any informal or formal procedures, the principle objective is that of identifying the underlying issues and eliminating the cause of offence as quickly as possible and with minimal recrimination.

## 14. Bullying and Harassment Policy – Guidelines

These guidelines are given to ensure that the policy is implemented in a fair and consistent manner throughout SupaJam.

The parties to any complaint are as follows:

1. The complainant – the person who makes the complaint
2. The alleged perpetrator – the person whom the complaint is made against
3. Witness – the person or persons who may be identified by either part as having witnessed events or being able to contribute to the investigation in some form or other
4. SupaJam - has a duty of care for its students and a definite role to play in the implementation of the anti-bullying and harassment policy.

Each of these parties have specific rights and entitlements under the Policy and also under the Principles of Natural Justice. The Principles of Natural Justice are simply: “Do unto others as you would have them done unto you”.

**In the event of a complaint, SupaJam will:**

- Present in full all allegations whether oral/written against the student
- Afford the student a right to representation if they so wish
- Allow the student to state his/her case, by way of reply
- Hear the case being made by the student
- Only form a judgement after all the facts disclosed have been considered
- Give the student sufficient time to prepare for any hearing/meeting
- Allow him/her to call witnesses on their behalf and the right to be shown any relevant documentation or written accusations.