
U3A Bendigo Policy – Sexual Harassment

URL: http://u3abendigo.com/policies/U3A_Bendigo_Sexual_Harassment_Policy_2015.pdf

Introduction

1. U3A Bendigo recognises it is the right of every member to attend classes, activities or functions, and/or to perform their duties as a volunteer within a U3A Bendigo environment without being subjected to any form of sexual harassment.

Purpose

2. The purpose of this document is to set down U3A Bendigo's policy on sexual harassment and the process that will be followed should any complaint of sexual harassment be received.

Policy

3. Sexual harassment can be experienced by both men and women. *Sexual harassment* refers to any unwelcome sexual advance or request for sexual favours, or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated, and where that reaction is reasonable in the circumstances. Lack of intent is no defence in sexual harassment cases. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- intrusive enquiries into a person's private life
- reference to their physical appearance or sexuality
- unwanted brushing against another person's body, body touching or physically molesting a person
- standing too close
- obscene, suggestive or offensive communications, including electronic mail
- pornographic or offensive posters, handouts or screensavers
- sexual jokes or anecdotes
- leering or staring
- unwanted sexual compliments or excessive flirting.

4. U3A Bendigo will not tolerate sexual harassment. Responsibility lies with every member to ensure that sexual harassment does not occur. No member should be subject to any form of sexual harassment.

5. No member will be treated unfairly as a result of lodging a complaint. Disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who victimises or retaliates against a person who has complained of sexual harassment or against any member who has been alleged to be a harasser.

6. All members have the right to seek assistance from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission in the resolution of a sexual harassment incident.

7. The principles set out in this policy are intended to apply to any U3A-related context, including classes, auspiced social functions, meetings, conferences, holiday trips and U3A workplaces.

8. A breach of this policy will result in disciplinary action.

9. Some forms of sexual harassment (e.g. sexual assault, stalking and indecent exposure) may constitute criminal conduct. While U3A Bendigo is committed to handling most sexual harassment complaints at the local level, more extreme forms of harassment are not suited to internal resolution and should be handled

by the criminal justice system. It is not the duty of U3A Bendigo to report such matters to the police on behalf of the complainant.

Procedures

10. U3A Bendigo strongly encourages any member who feels sexually harassed to take immediate action. Where circumstances permit, the aggrieved person should make it clear that such behaviour is unwelcome and offensive. Alternatively, or in addition, they may follow the procedures for reporting the behaviour.
11. A complaint of sexual harassment may be made to any member of U3A Bendigo's Committee of Management. The Committee Member will inform the President immediately.
12. We will handle a complaint of sexual harassment promptly, seriously and sensitively. There will be no presumption of guilt and no finding will be made until an investigation has been completed.
13. A Case Manager will be appointed by the Committee of Management. The Case Manager will contact the complainant to: provide support; explain his/her rights and responsibilities under this policy; ascertain the details of the complaint and the complainant's expectations of the complainant process.
14. The complainant has the right to: influence how the complaint is handled; have support or representation throughout the process; discontinue a complaint at any stage of the process.
15. The alleged harasser has the right to: be made aware of the allegations; have support or representation throughout the process; respond fully to any formal allegation made.
16. Where agreed with the complainant, informal intervention will be initiated by the Case Manager, using conciliation and/or mediation techniques. The informal intervention will be complete when the parties agree on action/s or outcome/s to be implemented. When agreement is not reached, a formal intervention will be initiated and the Committee of Management will appoint a person ('the Investigator') to conduct an investigation into the complaint.
17. The Investigator will:
 1. interview the complainant to ascertain the facts and what they expect as a result of the complaint
 2. interview the respondent to ascertain their response/defence
 3. identify and interview other persons who may be able to assist
 4. examine any relevant documents
 5. determine relevant previous behaviours or issues.
18. The Investigator will reach a finding, assemble all of the evidence gathered and provide these to the Case Manager. The assembled evidence may include, but is not limited to:
 - records of interviews conducted
 - supporting evidence provided by a doctor, counsellor, family member, etc
 - complaints/information provided by other persons about the respondent's behaviour
 - records kept by the complainant
 - information on whether the evidence appears credible and consistent.
19. The Case Manager will submit the Investigator's findings and evidence to the Committee of Management and recommended a course of action to follow. Recommended actions will be influenced by:
 - the wishes of the complainant
 - the severity and frequency of the harassment
 - the weight of the evidence

- the level of contrition
- whether there have been any prior incidents or warnings.

20. Possible disciplinary actions may include but are not limited to:

- formal apology and undertaking that the behaviour will cease
- counselling
- official warnings
- cancellation of membership
- removal from a volunteer or leadership role

21. Where there is insufficient evidence to determine whether or not the harassment occurred, the Committee of Management will remind those involved of expected standards of conduct and monitor the situation.

22. Any questions about this Sexual Harassment Policy should be referred to the Secretary.

Responsibilities

23. U3A Bendigo's Committee of Management is responsible for:

- developing, adopting, implementing and publishing this policy
- ensuring that all members are aware of this policy and of their obligations in relation to contributing to a U3A environment that discourages harassment and victimisation and set an example by their own behaviour
- treating all complaints seriously and confidentially
- taking immediate and appropriate corrective action if they become aware of any offensive action
- investigating complaints about sexual harassment
- monitoring and revising this policy as and when the need arises.

24. A Committee Member who receives a complaint of sexual harassment is responsible for referring the matter to the President immediately.

25. The Secretary is responsible for receiving enquiries about this policy.

Authorisation

26. This policy was adopted by the Committee of Management of U3A Bendigo and minuted as such, on 02/11/2015. This policy replaces the December 2011 Sexual Harassment Policy.

27. This policy will be published by the Committee of Management of U3A Bendigo on its website within 4 weeks of the date of this authorisation.

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Related Policies

U3A Bendigo's Privacy Policy