

Institute of Microbiology and Infection

Code of Conduct

The Institute of Microbiology and Infection (IMI) is committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive and safe community for all. We expect co-operation and support from all staff, students and visitors to help ensure a harassment-free environment where everyone is treated with courtesy, respect and dignity.

Harassment, bullying and research misconduct are contrary to the culture of IMI and will not be tolerated.

IMI's policy on harassment and bullying

Harassment is any behaviour that is unwelcome and affects the dignity of those subjected to it. By law (Equality Act 2010), [there are three types of harassment within the workplace](#): sexual harassment, harassment related to certain protected characteristics and less favourable treatment as a result of harassment.

[The University of Birmingham's Harassment and Bullying policy](#) defines harassment as 'Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them'. The protected characteristics are age, disability (physical or mental), gender reassignment, race (including ethnic and national origins, colour and nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, pregnancy/maternity/paternity, marriage/civil partnership and sexual orientation. Certain types of harassment do not have to be related to protected characteristics for example sexual harassment. [Sexual harassment](#) can happen to men, women and people of any gender identity or sexual orientation. It can be carried out by anyone of the same sex, a different sex or anyone of any gender identity.

Bullying is defined as unwanted 'offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Typically, bullying is one person against another, or a group of people against an individual.

Examples of harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to:

- offensive comments, including inappropriate jokes, related to age, body size, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and religion;
- insults, name-calling and offensive language and gestures;
- deliberate intimidation, including shouting and screaming at persons;
- harassing photography or recording;
- inappropriate physical contact;
- unwelcome sexual or other forms of attention;
- isolation, non-cooperation or deliberate exclusion;
- ridiculing and undermining behaviour.

Please note that conduct may be harassment whether or not the person intends to offend. For example,

something intended as a ‘joke’ may offend another person. It may not be clear in advance that some forms of behaviour would be unwelcome to, or could offend, a particular person, e.g. certain “banter” or flirting. With unintentional harassment, the focus needs to be on *the effect* of the behaviour on the person on the receiving end, not the motivation of the perpetrator. Typically, for behaviour to be considered harassment, it [must be persistent and continue or develop over a period of time](#). However, a one-off incident that is particularly serious can in itself constitute harassment.

It is also worth noting that bullying and harassment may also take place online, either through social media or other means of electronic communication such as email, text or instant messaging (e.g., WhatsApp) see section 7.5 of the [Harassment and Bullying Policy](#).

IMI’s policy on research integrity

Research integrity means conducting research in such a way that allows others to have confidence and trust in the methods and the findings of the research. It relates both to the scientific integrity of conducted research and to the professional integrity of researchers.

Key elements of research integrity include:

- honesty;
- rigour;
- transparency and open communication;
- accountability.

These elements should be present at all stages of research. Research ethics is a key criterion of research integrity.

The IMI dedicates itself to maintaining the highest standards of scholarly and scientific integrity in its research. It expects all students, members of staff, and other researchers using Institute facilities or researching under the auspices of the Institute to work to these standards (outlined in detail by the UK Research Integrity Office in their [Code of Practice for Research](#)). Researchers and other members of staff have a duty to report any breach of the policy on research integrity, where they have good reason to believe scientific misconduct is occurring to the IMI Code of Conduct liaisons or the IMI Directors. Further information on research integrity policies of the University of Birmingham is available [online](#).

Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Should anyone experience or witness behaviour contravening the IMI Code of Conduct, please intervene if you feel comfortable doing so. Everybody in IMI should feel empowered to be an ally and stand up against inappropriate behaviour. If you feel like you are being treated poorly because you stood up against inappropriate behaviour, this is also considered a breach of the IMI Code of Conduct.

If you want to speak to someone to disclose breaches of the Code of Conduct, please contact a colleague from the liaison list below. These staff cover the different Colleges that make up IMI and they will attentively listen, be non-judgemental and be impartial. Liaisons will outline follow-up actions that are available to you, these are:

1. You could decide to do nothing (which in most cases, there isn’t anything we can do about the breach of the Code of Conduct), however the liaisons will listen and take notes. In cases where

multiple individuals have experienced harassment, we may have a duty of care to report this to the Co-Directors of the IMI and for action to be taken where deemed necessary. Reports on scientific misconduct will always have to be reported to the IMI Co-Directors. In all cases, the report can first be made by the liaison rather than the individual reporting behaviour contravening the IMI Code of Conduct.

2. Liaisons can have an informal discussion with the Co-Directors of IMI and, subsequently, the line manager of the individual that has potentially breached the Code of Conduct (most likely the Head of the School of Biosciences or the Head of Department of Microbes, Infection and Microbiomes). Liaisons will represent you at this meeting. The next step then is for the Co-Directors of the IMI and the line manager to try to resolve the situation informally.
3. You can make a formal complaint. There are different processes for students and staff. Procedures are outlined in these documents

[For staff](#)

[For students](#)

Report and Support

The Code of Conduct covers both staff and students in the IMI and complements the University's Report and Support initiative. This is an online tool where staff, students and others can report bullying, harassment, discrimination and other issues. Reports can be made anonymously or with named details. [Report and Support](#) also provides information about internal and external support, policies and procedures.

PGR students can also contact their PGR leads within their Department/School and there are [Wellbeing Officers](#) in each College who can also offer support.

Code of Conduct liaisons

Dr Megan McDonald (Assistant Professor, LES): m.c.mcdonald@bham.ac.uk

Rachel Howes (IMI Operation Manager, LES): r.howes@bham.ac.uk

Dr Amanda Rossiter (Assistant Professor, MDS): a.e.rossiter@bham.ac.uk

Dr Mike Cox (Assistant Professor, MDS): m.j.cox@bham.ac.uk

Dr Sara Jabbari (Reader, EPS): s.jabbari@bham.ac.uk

Alison Iboro Offong (PA to the IMI Director & Administrator, LES): a.iborooffong.1@bham.ac.uk

Dr Jan Ulrich Kreft (Associate Professor, LES): j.kreft@bham.ac.uk

Hannah Grover (Operations Manager IMI, MDS): H.Grover@bham.ac.uk