



Anti-bullying Policy for Students

Introduction

Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training is a college of Further Education and Training operated under the auspices of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board. Carlow Institute of Further Education and Training is governed by a Board of Management, which is a subcommittee of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board.

Carlow Institute is committed to ensuring that students and staff can work and learn in a positive and safe environment which is free from all forms of bullying. Bullying in any form is not acceptable and will not be tolerated, whether it is carried out by a member of staff or a student. All staff and students have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and the college strives to nurture and promote a culture of tolerance which respects diversity.

This policy has the following rationale:

- To state clearly and unequivocally that Carlow Institute does not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination among the college community
- To lay out clear procedures for addressing complaints of bullying between students which uphold the rights of both the complainant and the person against whom the allegation is made
- To empower students to resolve interpersonal issues at the lowest effective level
- To provide guidance to students on appropriate methods of resolving conflicts and disagreements that may prove useful to them during their time in college and as they progress into the workplace

It should also be noted that complaints will be treated with fairness, sensitivity and as confidentially as possible. A complainant's rights are protected under this policy and he/she will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. If, however, it is found that the complaint was brought maliciously, it will be treated as misconduct under the Carlow Institute Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures for Students.

Scope

This document applies to all students at the Institute. This policy has been developed specifically to deal with the allegation of harassment or bullying of a student or group of students.

Allegations of bullying against a member of staff are dealt with under the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (The Teaching Council, 2007) or The Code of Practice for dealing with Complaints made by Parent/s, Guardian/s of a student or by a student (who has reached the age of eighteen) currently enrolled in a school/centre, against a Staff Member employed by an Education and Training Board (ETB).

In cases where the Institute IT and internet resources have been misused, any breaches of such policies and regulations by a student may also be dealt with under the Carlow Institute Code of Conduct and

Disciplinary Procedures for Students. This policy applies to all acts of bullying on all Carlow Institute premises and all Institute-related events. Where a student has not yet reached 18 years of age, the Institute recognises the need to co-operate with and keep parents/guardians informed of any incidents of bullying.

Definitions

Complainant: the person who makes a complaint of bullying or harassment against a student.

Respondent: the student who is alleged to have bullied or harassed the complainant.

What is bullying?

The definition of bullying adopted for the purpose of this policy is as follows:

Bullying is **repeated** inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to a person's dignity, and can be addressed as such, but, as a one-off incident, is not considered to be bullying.

The following behaviour does not constitute bullying:

- The proper exercise of authority by Institute staff
- Constructive and fair criticism of a student's conduct or work performance. This feedback may be from a staff member or from a peer in a group work situation

Specific examples of breaches of the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures for Students, in relation to bullying

Behaviour that constitutes bullying may be physical, non-physical or verbal. The determining factor of whether bullying has occurred is the repeated and persistent nature of the unwanted and offensive behaviour against an individual or group.

Physical forms of bullying may include (list is not exhaustive):

- Shoving, jostling and/or prodding
- Interfering with personal property or workstation

Non-physical and verbal forms of bullying may include (list is not exhaustive):

- Private or public humiliation, deliberate exclusion
- Repeated use of offensive language directed at an individual or individuals
- Personal insults, such as name-calling
- Repeated put-downs, offensive jokes

- Repeated verbal abuse
- Derogatory graffiti
- Threatening and/or aggressive behaviour
- Repeated bullying behaviour which is based on age, race, ethnic origin or colour, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, ability, religion, appearance or circumstance.

The effects of bullying are varied. Bullying can be devastating and destructive for the victim, in college, work and personal life. It affects the physical and mental well-being of the victim. Long-term exposure to bullying may result in loss of self-confidence, low self-esteem, stress and depression. The effect of the bullying behaviour on the recipient is important rather than the intention of the perpetrator. It is up to each individual person to decide for themselves what behaviour is unwelcome, irrespective of the attitude of others to the matter.

Responsibilities of Institute Staff

It is the responsibility of all staff of the Institute to:

1. Familiarise themselves with this Institute policy
2. Promote awareness of the policy among students
3. Communicate procedures outlined in the policy at Student Induction
4. Respond sensitively and confidentially to a student who makes a complaint of bullying and refer them to a Guidance Counsellor

Communication of the Policy

Carlow Institute is committed to educating all students in raising awareness of bullying and the effects of this type of behaviour. The student council will annually promote an anti-bullying week. Our commitment is to bring the policy to the attention of management, staff and students. This policy is made available through the Carlow Institute website, through Moodle (the student Virtual Learning Environment) and is referenced in the learner handbook issued by Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board. Communications of the policy will be achieved by:

- Student familiarisation with the policy at Student Induction
- Reference to the policy in the KCETB Learner Handbook
- The display of the policy in designated areas around the Institute
- The availability of the policy to read on Moodle
- Reference to the policy during induction training for staff

Guidance Counselling

Given the personal nature of bullying, the complainant or respondent may need to discuss his/her concerns in confidence with someone else, in a safe environment. The Guidance Counselling Service can

be contacted directly at any stage for counselling, support and guidance throughout the process. This service is available in a support role to all students, at all stages.

Responsibilities of Students

Every member of the Institute shares a responsibility for ensuring that the Institute environment is free from any form of bullying. This individual responsibility extends to an awareness of the potential impact of being a bystander or observer of bullying behaviour, failing to intervene or act on behalf of a victim, and how a student's failure to act may be construed as bullying behaviour.

All students must comply with the policy and ensure that their behaviour does not cause offence to fellow students or any person with whom they come into contact in the course of their studies. Students should confidentially inform a member of staff if they are concerned that a fellow student is being bullied or harassed and be prepared to co-operate fully with any investigation set up under these procedures.

Procedure for addressing complaints of bullying between students

Allegations of bullying are addressed through the Institute's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures for Students. Any student that is concerned that they are experiencing behaviours from other students that they consider might count as bullying are encouraged to raise this concern as soon as possible with the Institute. A student may approach their Subject Teacher, Class Teacher, Programme Co-Ordinator, Guidance Counsellor, Faculty Head or Senior Member of Staff to raise a concern and to seek support.

The processes of the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures for Students will guide Institute staff to address any concern raised. The student complainant will be offered available supports, and asked to submit a formal written complaint. Where bullying, as defined in this policy, is identified it will be dealt with in line with the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures for Students. At all times, this policy will uphold the rights of both the complainant and the person against whom the allegation is made, and pastoral supports will be made available to all parties involved.