Work-Related Violence Policy

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Contents

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Policy is to set out London Metropolitan University's arrangements to prevent, manage and respond to work-related violence. University Management supports this Policy and the University will not tolerate any instances of work-related violence, including verbal abuse, on University premises. All employees have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity, and respect.

This Policy applies to all staff working on our premises, including security staff, contractors, and delivery personnel, other visitors and students should read this policy in conjunction with the University's Disciplinary procedure and the University Student Conduct Regulations.

2. Definition

Work-related violence is any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened, or assaulted by a member of the public (including students)/other employee, in circumstances arising out of the course of their employment. This is based on the Health and Safety Executive's definition.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

As employer, the University has a legal duty to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of workers. This includes protecting them from work-related violence. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require employers to assess the health and safety risks to workers, including the risk of work-related violence.

The University delegates these duties to managers in Schools and Professional Service Departments.

3.1   Managers

All managers have a responsibility to implement this policy and to make sure their staff are aware of it and understand it. Managers should also:

a) Identify any members of staff who are potentially likely to be at risk of work-related violence as a result of their jobs at the university (section 5.2 refers) and conduct a risk assessment of relevant activities, see section 4 below. Managers are advised to seek support from the Health and Safety (H&S) team.
b) Treat any reports of work-related violence, threats, or abuse seriously and respond to them promptly.
c) Monitor incidences of violence and abuse and initiate appropriate action if more measures/escalation are needed.
d) Record details of the incident where appropriate and give all employees involved in the incident full support[1] during the whole process.

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[1] This support should include reminding staff about the support available to them from our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

e) Respond and seriously consider any suggestions made by staff about how to improve violence prevention and management, and give feedback to staff about their suggestions, including whether they will be taken forward and if not, why not.

f) Set a positive example by [reporting all incidents](#) of violence and abuse and not tolerating abusive behaviour from colleagues, students and members of the public.

g) Ensure that their staff follow [specific policies](#), including Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy and Harassment Policy.

h) Encourage other staff members to support their colleagues, including those that might have witnessed the incident. If victims are particularly traumatised by the event, provide support where possible and seek advice from the H&S team, Employee Assistance Programme, or Human Resources.

i) If an investigation is required, work with the police and offer any assistance needed to help in their enquiries.

Managers have a responsibility to act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence. Any manager found to be encouraging or inciting violence or not resolving potentially violent or abusive situations may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the University's [Disciplinary procedure](#).

3.2 Staff

All staff have personal responsibility for their own behaviour and for ensuring that they comply with this policy.

There are several things that staff can do to help prevent work-related violence:

a) Comply with University Policies, including this one and other specific policies, including Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy and Harassment Policy.

b) Undertake relevant training offered by the Staff Development team on conflict management and dealing with difficult situations.

c) Recognise the potential for/early signs of work-related violence and take action to resolve it early on. Staff should take positive action and, for example, contact a manager if they think a student or member of the public might cause problems.

d) Do not accept instances of work-related violence directed towards themselves or others. Staff should report any instances of violence, threats, or abuse, including any details about when it happened, who was involved and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident via [online Incident Reporting form](#).

e) Be supportive of colleagues who are victims or witnessed work-related violence.

f) Suggest additional measures to managers, which might help to prevent and manage work-related violence.

Staff have a responsibility to conduct themselves professionally and appropriately at all times and to take appropriate action if they witness any inappropriate conduct during the course of their duties.

Staff and managers should also work with trade unions, where relevant, in preventing, addressing, reporting, and responding to incidents of work-related violence.

4. Risk Assessments

Risk Assessments undertaken must consider the risk of work-related violence where this is foreseeable. This may be incorporated into a risk assessment with a wider scope (i.e. for reception desk operations).

The risks should be assessed by talking to staff, reviewing the incident data, and considering the work environment and job design. If staff believe a risk factor has not been covered by the assessment or have ideas on further prevention measures, they should discuss these with their manager.

The contents of the risk assessment must be communicated to all staff and appropriate training given. Please refer to the [Risk Assessment Policy](#) for details of the risk assessment process and to H&S team for support.

5. Prevention and Management Measures

There are several measures in place that can be implemented following risk assessment. These fall under the areas of work environment, working practices and training.

5.1 Work Environment

The physical environment may affect the likelihood of violent incidents and the ease at which people can respond to them. In order to ensure that the work environment is as safe and secure as possible, risk assessments should consider:

- Space and layout – consider good visibility and avoid trapping points and blind spots where workers cannot be seen.
- Lighting, decoration, and furnishings – it is important to create a relaxing environment, but consider what furnishing could be used as weapons.
- Noise – banging doors, trolleys, public announcement (PA) systems etc. can cause distress. Sound absorbing surfaces and materials may reduce ambient noise levels.
- Information – people can become annoyed if information is not available. Consider clear signage and visual displays to inform people and manage their expectations.
- Staff security – consider building security, access to isolated areas and security systems such as CCTV, fixed alarms, personal alarms, and communications devices.
- Processes - Consider places where tension can grow and implement suitable process to manage this, eg implementing a suitable queuing system and informing people of delays / problems.

5.2 Working Practices or Activities

Staff involved in certain activities may be at increased risk of violence and aggressive

behaviour:

- Working alone.
- Working outside of normal hours.
- Offsite working and travelling in the community.
- Handling cash, valuables, medications and substances or deliveries.
- Exercising authority.
- Working with people who appear to be experiencing emotional or mental health difficulties or who have a mental health condition.
- Working with people who are under the influence of drink or drugs.
- Working with people under stress.
- Dealing with complaints or direct engagement with the public.

5.3   Training

Training in the prevention and management of violence/aggression, such as dealing with difficult situations, can provide employees with appropriate skills to reduce or diffuse potential incidents and the right level will be identified through the risk assessment process.

Where such training is identified (see training matrix in the Appendix of the Health and Safety training policy) then discussion with Staff Development team should take place and all affected staff are expected to attend.

Note: eLearning Personal Safety (available via MyLearn) considers identification of work-related violence, reducing the risk of violence, what to do if a situation becomes violent and tools, techniques, and procedures to protect lone workers.

6. Actions following an incident

If a staff member is being abused, threatened, or attacked, they should retreat to a safe area and approach their manager or a colleague for help. Managers should respond to the situation by talking to the perpetrator, explaining that their behaviour is not acceptable. They should try to de-escalate/resolve the problem. Following de-escalation techniques can be used to calm situations down and prevent violence and aggression:
- be polite and use a clear, calm voice
- relax your posture and keep your hands by your side
- keep a safe distance and allow personal space
- face the person and maintain eye contact
- show empathy and that you are listening and acknowledging their feelings
- avoid raising your voice and arguing
- offer alternative solutions to their problem so the person has a way out other than aggression

If the situation does not feel safe, and de-escalation is not working, contact Security who will escort the person from University where required.

Medical assistance should be provided immediately where required through one of our first aiders or by calling Security Control room emergency number 2073203333, or if

necessary, by calling 999.

The police should be informed via the Security team immediately of a serious incident involving physical attack or serious cases of threatening or verbal abuse. Police should also be informed of persistent cases of violence, threats, and abuse.

CCTV records of incidents should be kept in case the police need them. All incidents should be reported to the H&S team via the online incident reporting form.

Staff members will be encouraged to provide support to any victims or witnesses of violence, threats or abuse through appropriate training, and managers should provide support, including, where needed, allowing time off work for individuals to recover. All staff can obtain confidential advice and support 24 hours a day from our externally provided Employee Assistance Programme.

7. References

HSE Website: http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/