



Psychosocial Hazard Quick Guide

BULLYING

Bullying can happen in any workplace. If not addressed effectively, it can create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment that can lead to psychological or physical injury for those affected, especially if experiences are severe, prolonged or frequent. Bullying occurs when **repeated or unreasonable behaviour is directed toward an individual or group**, creating a safety and health risk.

A quick guide to managing the risk of bullying is summarised below to help you understand how to spot and address this in your teams.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Example signs of bullying include (but are not limited to) the following:

WORKPLACE RISK FACTORS

- Tension in the team or poor workplace relationships
- Managers and other team members not taking reports of bullying seriously or discouraging reporting
- Presence of other work stressors or psychosocial hazards (e.g. *low job control*)
- Strict workplaces where decision-making control is restricted to few individuals

SIGNS OF BULLYING

- Offensive language or comments
- Exclusion of team members from activities
- Spreading rumours or providing misinformation
- Setting unreasonable expectations of others (e.g. *above skill-set*)
- Withholding job information or resources (e.g. *consultation or supervision*)
- Language that undermines others or is intended to cause reputational damage



POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF BULLYING

If instances of bullying are severe, prolonged or frequent, they can increase the risk of:



Psychological distress and physical illness (e.g. *anxiety, depression, disturbed sleep, headaches*)



A hostile working environment leading to decreased morale, job satisfaction, and turnover

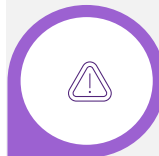


Damage to organisational reputation and/or team member trust



Increased absenteeism and turnover

When considering the level of risk for this hazard in your team or workplace, remember to ask yourself:

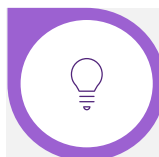
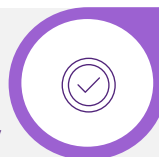


1. How **LONG** have issues been occurring?
2. How **OFTEN** are they occurring?
3. How much do these issues **IMPACT** your team members?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Some actions you could take as a leader to help prevent and minimise the risk of bullying:

- ▶ **Communicate a clear 'zero tolerance' policy** toward bullying within your team
- ▶ **Act promptly, treat all matters seriously**, ensure procedural fairness and maintain the confidentiality of the parties involved when responding to workplace bullying
- ▶ **Encourage respectful working relationships** that reward mentoring and supportive team interactions
- ▶ **Educate yourself regarding UQ's policies and procedures** about bullying and make sure your team access and review these too
- ▶ **Intervene early** in workplace conflict to avoid the conflict escalating
- ▶ **Explore ways to redesign work to reduce conflict** where possible (e.g. *review workloads, and tasks that cause frequent conflict*)
- ▶ **Clearly define jobs** and seek regular feedback from your team members about their roles and responsibilities



GOOD PRACTICE

Managing this risk effectively is a continuous process and you should review your knowledge and the effectiveness of your actions regularly.

Keep these tips in mind:



Get ahead of the risk: Are there areas of potential risk in your team that you can address before issues escalate? (e.g. *topics of repeated disagreement*)



Foster a protective culture. Teams with honest and open communication are less likely to experience ongoing conflict



Be clear on what does and does not constitute bullying. Reasonable managerial action and performance management is not bullying



Encourage team members to speak up about instances of concern by taking reports seriously and protecting confidentiality of those involved