

# University of Limerick

**Designated Contact Persons**

**Code of Practice**

**(As per the Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures for Students and Employees)**

1. **Introduction and University Policy**

The University of Limerick is committed to the development and maintenance of a positive working environment, in which all employees are treated with dignity and respect. In pursuit of this, it is the policy of the University to provide all employees with an environment that is free from bullying and/or harassment in any form.

The University has in place a robust *Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures for Students and Employees* whichcan be found on the [UL Policy Hub](https://www.ul.ie/policy-hub/). It is important for all employees to be familiar with the Policy and Procedures.

The University strives to deal with dignity and respect issues locally as soon as possible in a low-key, non-confrontational manner, in order to avoid, where possible, unnecessary escalation of perceived problems and increased anxiety for the people involved.

To further support this policy stance, the University has in place a voluntary panel of trained “*Designated Contact Persons*” (DCPs) to provide a voluntary informal resource for confidential support and information to employees who are experiencing behaviours in relation to workplace dignity and respect. The list of DCPs can be found here: <https://www.ul.ie/hr/current-staff/hr-procedures-processes-forms-z#d>

The Purpose of this Code of Practice is to provide guidance on the role of the *Designated Contact Persons*.

1. **Designated Contact Persons – Context, Role and Responsibilities**

You may have experienced an incident of bullying or harassment for the first time and want information on trying to prevent further incidents from occurring. Or you may be suffering a prolonged period of bullying or harassment in silence and feel that it cannot continue. Whatever the circumstance, there are people available to help you throughout the University.

In most cases the most effective way for a person who feels they are experiencing workplace dignity and respect behaviours is to speak directly with the person concerned as early as possible. This is most appropriate where the employee feels comfortable in addressing the issue directly and simply wants the offensive behaviour to stop. Again, it is important to refer to the University of Limerick *Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures for Students and Employees* for additional guidance on recommended steps and the procedures to be followed initially, or with regard to making a complaint.

In circumstances where someone finds it difficult to approach the other person(s) directly, help and information may be sought from a *Designated Contact Person*. *Designated Contact Persons* are also available to employees against whom allegations of bullying and/or harassment have been made, or indeed to a witness or bystander who may wish to assist a colleague experiencing unwanted dignity and respect issues. It is best practice that different parties involved in the same matters are supported by different *Dignity and Respect* *Persons* in order to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

*Designated Contact Persons* are trained to listen, to be supportive and to discuss the various options that are open to the employee concerned. *Designated Contact Persons* do not get involved in any way in any complaints procedure and will not act as an advocate for either party. They do not offer advice; rather they may serve as a “sounding board” for employees who wish to consult in a confidential, supportive, and informal setting.

The following further outlines the role of *Designated Contact Persons:*

* To act as a listening ear, and to provide non-directive and independent advice, information and support to employees who feel they are experiencing difficulties of bullying, or harassment in a non-judgemental and confidential manner.
* To act as an information source and support contact for anyone who feels that they are being harassed or bullied, for anyone against whom allegations have been made, or for witnesses / bystanders who may wish to assist a colleague further themselves.
* To discuss issues with employees to help them determine if the issue is indeed a Dignity and Respect issue, to help employees to establish for themselves what behaviours may be occurring with a view to establishing the options available and facilitating an employee’s decision on the best course of action.
* To signpost other relevant services or policies to the employee as appropriate.
* Meetings should normally take place during normal working hours and should not normally exceed forty-five minutes to one hour. No more than 3-4 meetings should be necessary. Beyond this, the Designated Contact Person may be entering into a Counselling role which is beyond their remit. No home or personal mobile numbers should be exchanged unless deemed appropriate and necessary by both parties. Ideally, communications should be limited to business contact details only.
* The *Designated Contact Person’s* line manager will be aware of their role and that time will be required to facilitate meetings.
* The *Designated Contact Person* will not act as an advocate or representative on behalf of any party, nor will they act as an intermediary between parties.
* The *Designated Contact Person* will not be involved in any stage of procedures invoked under policy, whether informal or formal, but may provide support relevant to their role during this time.
* This support role only applies to bullying and harassment situations and does not extend to other workplace issues, such as grievances.
* No notes will held by the *Designated Contact Person* who will treat all information with strict confidentiality. They will not report any specific information to the Human Resources, but may seek additional guidance in a completely anonymous and scenario based manner.
* Designated Contact Persons are advised to remind employees of University’s independent and confidential [Employee Support Service](https://www.ul.ie/hr/current-staff/employee-relations/employee-support-service) and to recommend it wherever it may be helpful.

1. **Other Contacts and Relevant Information:**

* [Designated Contact Persons Panel](https://www.ul.ie/media/52498/download?inline)
* [Employee Support Service](https://www.ul.ie/hr/current-staff/employee-relations/employee-support-service)
* [Human Resources Contacts](https://www.ul.ie/hr/about-hr-division)
* [UL Unite the Union](https://www.ul.ie/unite/)
* [UL Dignity and Respect Policy and Procedures for Students and Employees](https://www.ul.ie/policy-hub/policies)
* [Dignity & Respect, Sexual Violence & Harassment Formal Complaints Investigation Procedure](https://www.ul.ie/hr/current-staff/hr-procedures-processes-forms-z#d)