RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UBC SCHOOL OF NURSING TO ADDRESS BULLYING WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS

PROCEEDURES TO IMPLEMENT UBC’S RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT STATEMENT AT THE SCHOOL OF NURSING

“The best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued. Everyone at the University of British Columbia is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds these principles in all communications and interactions’... Bullying or harassment are behaviours that prevent us from [this] kind of respectful and productive environment.”

PURPOSE

• The purpose of this document is to articulate the procedures available for UBC School of Nursing students if they witness, or experience, bullying during their educational program.
• These procedures are geared specifically towards mechanisms that provide direction for reporting bullying.
• Students’ accountability for their own behaviours are covered elsewhere (see: BSN Professional Conduct Policy; Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses; College of Registered Nurses in British Columbia).
• The contexts in which bullying occur include - but are not limited to - clinical practice settings as well as classroom, online, and clinical skills lab learning environments (please see Recommendations to the UBC School of Nursing BSN Program based on A Study of Educational Institutions’ Processes and Resources addressing Bullying experienced by Nursing and Health Care Professional (HCP) Students).
• In addition to the aforementioned study, these recommendations align with, and support, the implementation of WorksafeBC Legislation related to Bullying and Harassment and the UBC Respectful Environment Statement for Students, Faculty and Staff. School of Nursing policies can add to, but not deviate from, the principles in this statement.
• This document does not provide procedures for issues related to UBC Policy 3: Discrimination and Harassment which refers to “discrimination and harassment that is related on one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out in the BC Human Rights Code. The grounds currently are (actual or perceived) age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical or mental disability, place of origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation and criminal conviction unrelated to employment”. This category of human rights harassment is handled at UBC through the Equity and Inclusion Office. If the bullying you witnessed or experienced is related to one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out in the BC Human Rights Code, please contact the UBC Human Rights Advisor, Roshni Narain, at humanrightsadvisor@equity.ubc.ca for confidential informal or formal consultation.
• Students may contact the UBC SVPRO (Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office) if the bullying they witnessed or experienced is sexual in nature. Call 604-822-1588 or email
As a first step in recommending procedures for nursing students who witness or experience bullying, it is crucial to have a guiding definition of the issue at hand. In this context, and supported by UBC’s Respectful Environment Statement for Students, Faculty and Staff, WorksafeBC\textsuperscript{7} (2016) defines Bullying and Harassment as:

\begin{quote}
“a)…any inappropriate conduct or comment by a person towards a worker that the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that worker to be humiliated or intimidated but b) excludes any reasonable action taken by an employer or supervisor relating to the management and direction of workers or the place of employment”\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

Thus, bullying excludes the provision of constructive feedback to students unless it is given in a way that “the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that [student] to be humiliated or intimidated”.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

All parties have the responsibility to be self-reflective about the role(s) they may play in bullying and all parties have the right to confidentiality to the extent possible.

Responding to bullying that is witnessed or experienced by nursing students requires:

- Clearly articulated roles and responsibilities for students, faculty members, Clinical Instructors, and leadership team;
- A respectful, professional, supportive, fair, and ethical environment in which students may report concerns;
- Reporting mechanisms and implementation guidelines that are accessible and communicated widely to all relevant parties;
- Reporting mechanisms that fall within a continuum of informal discussion to formal complaint/processes;
- Supportive resources, or referrals, for students during, and following, a report;
- “Administrative Heads of Units …are expected to act promptly to determine if behaviour contrary to the Respectful Environment Statement including incidents of bullying or harassment has occurred or is ongoing, and if so, to address the behaviour and its damaging effects;”\textsuperscript{1}
- Follow up by the leadership team. In the BSN Program, this may include the relevant Clinical Instructor or Course Leader, Student Advisor, Program Coordinator, Associate Director of the BSN Program, or Director of the School of Nursing. Closing the loop and follow-up are important to consider in the context of confidentiality;
- Confidentiality is of utmost importance and it will be maintained unless there are risks of harm to the student or others.
• Education for students and faculty members, including Clinical Instructors, about the nature of bullying, its prevalence in nursing education, and ways to address it; and
• Regular evaluation of the procedures within the School of Nursing to ensure they meet the needs of all concerned.

PROCEDURES FOR BSN STUDENTS

• “It is good practice to keep a journal of each incident, noting the time, date, location, and a brief description. Try and be as accurate as possible. Also, be sure to note the names of those who directly observed each incident.”2

• Students who witness or experience bullying are encouraged to approach the individual(s) engaging in bullying behavior(s) IF they feel comfortable to do so.

• Students who witness or experience bullying within a specific course context should contact the Clinical Instructor or Course Leader for the relevant theory, practice or clinical skills course.

• Students who witness or experience bullying in any context are invited to contact the BSN Student Advisor, Program Coordinator, or Associate Director to discuss their experiences, to reflect on what resolution might look like and to consider options. (See Who’s Who and Flow Chart on the BSN Nursing Students’ blog).

• Depending on the nature or context of the situation, support for students may range from an initial meeting with the first point-of-contact faculty member with no required follow-up to a formal complaint that is written and signed by the student.

• Where there is concern about conflict of interest, including where a student feels bullied by a faculty member, Clinical Instructor, or Course Leader, students should contact the Associate Director of the BSN Program, or Director of the School of Nursing (See Who’s Who on the UBC Nursing Students’ blog).

• Students may contact the UBC Human Rights Advisor, Roshni Narain, at humanrightsadvisor@equity.ubc.ca in the Equity and Inclusion Office if they experience ‘discrimination and harassment that is related on one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out in the BC Human Rights Code.’ 2

• Students may contact the UBC SVPRO (Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office) if the bullying they witnessed or experienced is sexual in nature. Call 604-822-1588 or email gethelp@svpro.ubc.ca Students do not have to go to the hospital or make a police report to use SVPRO services. SVPRO services are free and confidential.

PROCEDURES FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

Education, increased awareness and prompt action are vital to create and maintain respectful working, learning and living environments at UBC. The University must provide training, support and resources to raise awareness about the principles of a respectful working, learning and living environment and to address concerns in a positive and effective manner when they do occur.

________________________________________________
Faculty members receiving a complaint should follow the following procedures:

- “Listen to the [student] and take the information presented seriously. Acknowledge the difficulties bringing such a complaint forward and be conscious of body language and tone of voice.

- Agree to treat the complaint with the utmost confidentiality to the extent possible.

- Ask the [student] to describe what happened in detailed, chronological order. What led to the complaint? What behaviour does the student consider harassing or bullying? Did this behaviour occur more than once? [Where did it occur?] Has this happened to anybody else? If the complaint was not filed right away, what were the reasons for delay? How has the behaviour affected [the student]? What does resolution look like? Is there anything else [the faculty member] needs to know?

- Take careful notes and identify areas requiring further clarity. Ask the [student] to check meeting notes to ensure that they are accurate. In some cases, it may be advisable to have the student submit their complaint in writing.

- Offer support resources information to the student”

Discuss guidelines for moving forward in these procedures. Faculty members have a responsibility to follow up directly, consult with, or refer to, appropriate colleagues. Depending on the nature of the issue, one or more of the following procedures may be discussed. Please note that levels do not indicate progression or sequence.

- **LEVEL 1: INFORMAL DISCUSSION.** Student discusses the situation with one of the ‘Go To’ (see flow chart) faculty or staff and feels supported through the initial discussion. No further complaint action required. Student can remain anonymous.

- **LEVEL 2:** Student discusses the situation with one of the ‘Go To’ faculty or staff. No further complaint action required but student requires further support from individual(s) with whom they have consulted or referral for support within the School of Nursing (Student Advisor) or UBC (Wellness and Counselling). Student can remain anonymous.

- **LEVEL 3:** Student wishes to bring a complaint forward within the School of Nursing. Where there is concern about conflict of interest, including where a student feels bullied by a faculty member, Clinical Instructor, or Course Leader, students should contact the Associate Director of the BSN Program, or Director of the School of Nursing (See Who’s Who on the UBC Nursing Students’ blog) Others (for example, faculty relations) may be consulted on a
‘need to know’ basis. Student can no longer remain anonymous and must put their complaint in writing to the Associate Director, BSN Program and the Director of the School of Nursing.

○ Depending on the situation, the Associate Director of the BSN Program or the School of Nursing Director’s responsibilities will include the facilitation of two interviews: one with the student and one with the reported individual if they are a UBC member.

○ Once the situation has been explored from both perspectives, decisions will be made regarding how to proceed. Of particular importance is the development and implementation of corrective actions to prevent future incidents. Closing the loop and follow-up should occur in the context of confidentiality.

○ If the reported individual is employed by a partner organization (e.g. health authority) the Associate Director or Director will follow up on an individual basis.

○ Student may need further support from individual(s) with whom they have the consulted or referral for support within the School of Nursing (Student Advisor) or UBC (Counselling).

 LEVEL 4: Where the issue remains unresolved at the School of Nursing, the student may seek advice from the UBC Ombudsperson whose office “works with all UBC community members to ensure students are treated fairly and can learn, work and live in a fair, equitable and respectful environment”. Student may continue to need support within the School of Nursing (Student Advisor) or UBC (Counselling).

 LEVEL 5: Students may contact the UBC Human Rights Advisor, Roshni Narain, at humanrightsadvisor@equity.ubc.ca in the Equity and Inclusion Office if they experience ‘discrimination and harassment that is related on one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination as set out in the BC Human Rights Code.’ 2 Student may continue to need support within the School of Nursing (Student Advisor) or UBC (Counselling).

 LEVEL 6: Students may contact the UBC SVPRO (Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office) if the bullying they witnessed or experienced is sexual in nature. Call 604-822-1588 or email gethelp@svpro.ubc.ca Students do not have to go to the hospital or make a police report to use SVPRO services. SVPRO services are free and confidential. Student may continue to need support within the School of Nursing (Student Advisor) or UBC (Counselling).

PLEASE NOTE: As employees of the Ministry of Advanced Education, “students completing the practicum portion of their studies are eligible for workers’ compensation if they experience work-related illness or injury [for example, psychological harm caused by workplace bullying or harassment] while doing their practicum.” 8,9,10

 DOCUMENTATION:

 LEVEL 1 & 2: No formal documentation required.

 LEVEL 3: All Level 3 complaints must be documented and stored in an encrypted file in the School of Nursing’s Addressing Bullying file held by the SSO (Student Service Office). Restricted access on ‘a need to know’ basis only.

 LEVEL 4, 5, 6: External to the School of Nursing

“Be gentle on the person but hard on the behavior” (Original author unknown)

REFERENCES


2University of British Columbia (UBC, nd.). Working Together to Prevent Bullying and Harassment. Available at: http://bullyingandharassment.ubc.ca/

3University of British Columbia School of Nursing (nd) Professional Conduct Policy (nd). Available at: https://nursing.ubc.ca/sites/nursing.ubc.ca/files/documents/policies/BSN%20Professional%20Conduct%20Policy_1.pdf


7Worksafe BC. Workers Compensation Act and related Guideline: Section relating to Bullying and Harassment. Available at: http://www.worksafebc.com/


These set of procedures are informed by numerous literature sources, nursing and other health care professional (HCP) educational institutions’ and professional organizations ‘public websites, CRNBC Professional Standards, C.N.A. Code of Ethics, and a qualitative study conducted by UBC faculty and students (O’Flynn-Magee et al.) entitled: Educational Institutions’ Processes and Resources addressing Bullying experienced by Nursing and Health Care Professional Students

RELATED POLICIES

University of British Columbia (UBC) School of Nursing Beliefs Framework. Available at: https://nursing.ubc.ca/sites/nursing.ubc.ca/files/documents/policies/Beliefs%20Framework%202003_0.pdf


University of British Columbia (UBC) University Counsel, VP, HR (1997; revised 2017) Policy 95 Investigations. Available at: https://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2017/06/policy95.pdf