CODE OF PRACTICE

FOR THE PANEL

OF

DIGNITY AND RESPECT COLLEAGUES

(UNDER THE UNIVERSITY’S DIGNITY & RESPECT POLICY)

June 2015

Organisation Design and Diversity, UCD HR
The Panel of Dignity and Respect Colleagues plays a vital role in the University’s Dignity and Respect Policy as they provide support and information to staff on the informal and formal processes under the Dignity and Respect policy. This code of practice acts as a guide for the role of the Dignity and Respect Colleague in addition to that laid down in the Dignity and Respect Policy. It also includes information on the formation of the panel.

Section I: The Role of the Dignity and Respect Colleague

1. Role Definition

The Dignity and Respect Colleagues are staff members of the University who have been appointed on a voluntary basis under the Dignity and Respect Policy. They act as a listening ear, and are trained to provide non-directive advice, information and support to staff who feel they are experiencing difficulties of a bullying or harassment nature across the nine grounds. They provide information on the formal and informal processes under the Dignity and Respect policy, as well as providing support and guidance to the staff member around the informal options which can include approaching the person causing offence.

They treat all contacts made on a strictly confidential basis, and no information is passed to any third party without the permission of the staff member. The commitment to treat information with complete confidentiality however cannot be absolute where there may be a risk of suicide, threat to life or potential harm to another party. In these instances the Dignity and Respect Colleague will need to seek advice immediately as to how to proceed in these circumstances from relevant parties.

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1 The nine grounds are gender, age, race, disability, civil status, sexual orientation, religion, family status, membership of the travelling community
2 Sources of information include: Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and Compliance (SIRC) Office, Organisation Design and Diversity Unit, HR Partner, Employee Relations Programmes Office, UCD Legal Office and/or the Employee Assistance Programme
All parties (the staff member experiencing difficulty, the person causing offence, and any witnesses) can approach the Dignity and Respect Colleague, and where feasible they will be facilitated. It would be normal practice that the different parties involved would see different Dignity and Respect Colleagues.

The Dignity and Respect Colleagues report to the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit, who provides a co-ordinating and facilitator role for the panel, as well as being a source of support.

The following outlines the key responsibilities of a Dignity and Respect Colleague:

- To act as the first point of contact for someone who believes that he or she is being treated in a bullying manner or being harassed. They can also act as an information source for the person causing offence.
- To listen and provide independent, unbiased, non-judgemental support and information about sources of help, and the options open to the staff member.
- To work with the staff member to help them determine if the issue is a Grievance or a Dignity and Respect issue, and to direct to the relevant services as appropriate.
- To support and guide the staff member in informally resolving the issue, which may include the staff member approaching the person causing offence.
- To support the person causing offence in meeting with the staff member experiencing the difficulty.
- To provide copies of the Dignity and Respect policy and Harassment complaints procedures.
- To promote the Dignity and Respect Colleague service through contribution to the development and implementation of a communications plan.
- To complete the relevant monitoring forms for statistical purposes only, and to submit an annual statistical report.
- To keep up to date with any developments in the Dignity and Respect policy and relevant legislation.

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3 The different parties would see different Dignity and Respect Colleagues.
There are a number of areas that would be outside the remit of a Dignity and Respect Colleague. A Dignity and Respect Colleague would **NOT:**

- Act as advocate or representative for either party or get involved in any way in the Harassment Complaints procedure or formal process
- Have a role in the management of the complaint or a responsibility to intervene on behalf of the staff members
- Provide legal advice or a solution to the issue
- Provide counselling (UCD has an [Employee Assistance Programme](#) in place provided by an external provider that provides a counselling service)

There are certain characteristics that a Dignity and Respect Colleague would be expected to have in order to carry out the role effectively. These include the following:

- Non-judgemental, unbiased and objective
- Approachable, respected and trusted
- Ability to listen
- Calm and empathetic
- Skilled around dealing with conflict and relationships
- Supportive but clear around boundaries and roles.

2. Meetings

i. **Meetings with Staff**

The following are considerations when meeting with staff members:

- Dignity and Respect Colleagues meeting a staff member will meet in a private area during working hours in a suitable venue to be agreed by both. If there is difficulty finding a suitable location, the Organisation and Design unit should be contacted.
- A maximum of three to four meetings should be sufficient, obviously the number will vary depending on the situation but avoiding a dependency relationship is a consideration.
• Home or private mobile phone numbers of Dignity and Respect Colleagues will not be given out to staff.

• Dignity and Respect Colleague would not meet with both the staff member experiencing difficulty and the person causing offence, they should be referred to another Dignity and Respect Colleague

• In the first instance the Dignity and Respect Colleague should set out with the staff member the remit of their role. A briefing document is available for the panel on conducting meetings with the staff member.

ii. **Meetings of the Dignity and Respect Colleagues Panel**

Panel meetings are structured in the following way:

• The panel will normally meet 4-6 times a year on campus. The meetings will usually last up to one hour (approx) and normally take place during lunchtime hours.

• The meetings will be facilitated by the Organisation Design and Diversity unit.

• Meetings can include training in the form of a speaker, case studies, group work etc.

• Attendance at meetings is mandatory except in exceptional circumstances. There is a requirement to attend at least 80% of meetings.

3. **Training and Support**

The Dignity and Respect Colleagues will receive comprehensive training at the outset that will provide them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to carry out their role in an effective manner. On completion of this training, the Panel will:

• Be aware of the relevant features of the equality legislation governing bullying and harassment, i.e. Employment Equality Act, Equal Status Act and Principles of Natural Justice.

• Understand the University’s policy on Dignity and Respect, and the Harassment Complaints procedure.
• Be aware of the protocol around record keeping, Data Protection and Freedom of Information.
• Understand the role and responsibilities of the Dignity and Respect Colleague, the boundaries of the role, and have developed the skills to carry out the role in an effective manner.
• Understand the roles and responsibilities of others involved in the implementation of University’s policy on Dignity and Respect, i.e. Managers, UCD HR.
• Understand the various options available as an informal approach, including mediation.
• Have developed listening, advisory and support skills.
• Have an understanding of the impact of the alleged bullying and harassment on the staff member making contact and the respondent.
• Understand the boundaries of confidentiality.
• Have an awareness of the Employee Assistance Programme as a source of support.

All Panel members are required to attend on-going formal and informal training and support/information sessions on a regular basis as provided.

The Panel members will be a resource/support for each other. They will attend panel meetings and from time to time, panel members may contact each other or the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit for advice. Strict confidentiality must be maintained at all times, with no identifying details of any case being given.

If due to other commitments or a situation has arisen whereby they are not in a position to continue to fully carry out their duties, the Dignity and Respect Colleague should notify the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit and request time off or withdraw from the panel.

4. Record Keeping and Monitoring

Notes of meetings, in general, should not be kept. However, if the case is on-going, it is
recognised that such notes are useful as an aide memoire. Records should be kept confidential with no names or school/unit mentioned, and the Panel should be aware that where notes exist, they may be subject to an access request by the subject of the notes under Data Protection and/or Freedom of Information legislation. Records should be kept in a secure environment. If this is not possible, the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit will arrange for secure storage for the files. Anyone who leaves their position, must shred or handover their files (which will normally be statistical files) to the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit.

For the purposes of monitoring, and with the assistance of the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit, the Dignity and Respect Colleagues panel will complete a Confidential Monitoring form within seven days of the closing of each file. This form will not include any identifying details and the information is recorded purely for statistical purposes.

A panel member can be requested to withdraw from the panel if they cannot fulfil the duties of the role.

Section II: Formation of the Panel of Dignity and Respect Colleagues

The following sets out the recruitment, selection and appointment process of the Dignity and Respect Colleagues to the panel.

5. Recruitment

i) Criteria

UCD seeks to attain the broadest spectrum of Dignity and Respect Colleagues for appointment to the Panel in order to be as representative of the university community as possible. Ideally the Panel will comprise of staff from each of the following:

- various levels of the organisation
- a broad range of schools/units
- both faculty and staff
- diverse group across the nine grounds
- good gender representation.

There should be a sufficient number of Dignity and Respect Colleagues to provide choice for staff. Up to a maximum of ten positions will be available. A reserve panel will also be created. An appointment however will only be made from the reserve panel if they meet the criteria of the panel member being replaced.

**ii) Considerations**

It is strongly recommended that those intending to apply consider the weight that this role carries, and that this resource is available to all University staff seeking support under the Dignity and Respect Policy.

It is a voluntary role which requires a time commitment as follows:

- training and networking events - approx 2.5 days per year
- lunchtime meetings (between 12.30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.) – 4 to 6 times a year
- meetings with staff members who wish to seek information and support under the Dignity and Respect policy.

Before applying, staff members should consider if this role is in conflict with any other roles the Dignity and Respect Colleague may have in the University. If they are unsure, they should contact the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit.

**iii) Advertising**

Positions will be advertised to all staff by means of the Equality & Diversity website, the HR website, the staff e-Zine, and other appropriate fora. The application process is open to all staff currently employed by UCD, with a contract of three years or longer from the appointment date in order to be in a position to fulfil the three year term.
iv) Applying for the Position

Staff may:
- Self-nominate
- Be invited by the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit to apply
- Be nominated by their Manager to apply.

Staff will need to complete an Expression of Interest form and send it to the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit. Further information on the process, and this form, can be obtained from the Equality and Diversity website, www.ucd.ie/equality or by contacting the Organisation Design and Diversity unit. Applicants will also be requested to supply details of one referee internal to the University. A staff member considering applying must discuss their intention with their Head of School/Unit in the first instance, and permission from the Head of School/Unit is requested on the application form. Applicants must also participate in an awareness training session, otherwise they will not progress to the next stage of the application process.

6. Selection and Appointment

Selection is carried out by a group comprising of a member of the Organisation Design and Diversity unit, a UCD staff member, and an external representative.

Once applicants are short-listed, those shortlisted will be invited to meet with the group individually to discuss their suitability for the post. Referees will also be contacted.

Successful applicants will be contacted after the selection process is complete and they will be required to:
- sign up to the Code of Practice and the time commitment involved
- attend initial classroom based training prior to taking up the role and complete it to the satisfaction of the selection committee
• commit to completing the e-Learning “Living Equality and Diversity” (LEAD) programme on taking up the role.

Dignity and Respect Colleagues will be appointed by the President (or nominee) for 3 years in the first instance. At the end of the three year period there will be an option, on discussion with the Organisation Design and Diversity Unit, for resubmission of the Dignity and Respect Colleagues to act in this capacity for a further two year period.