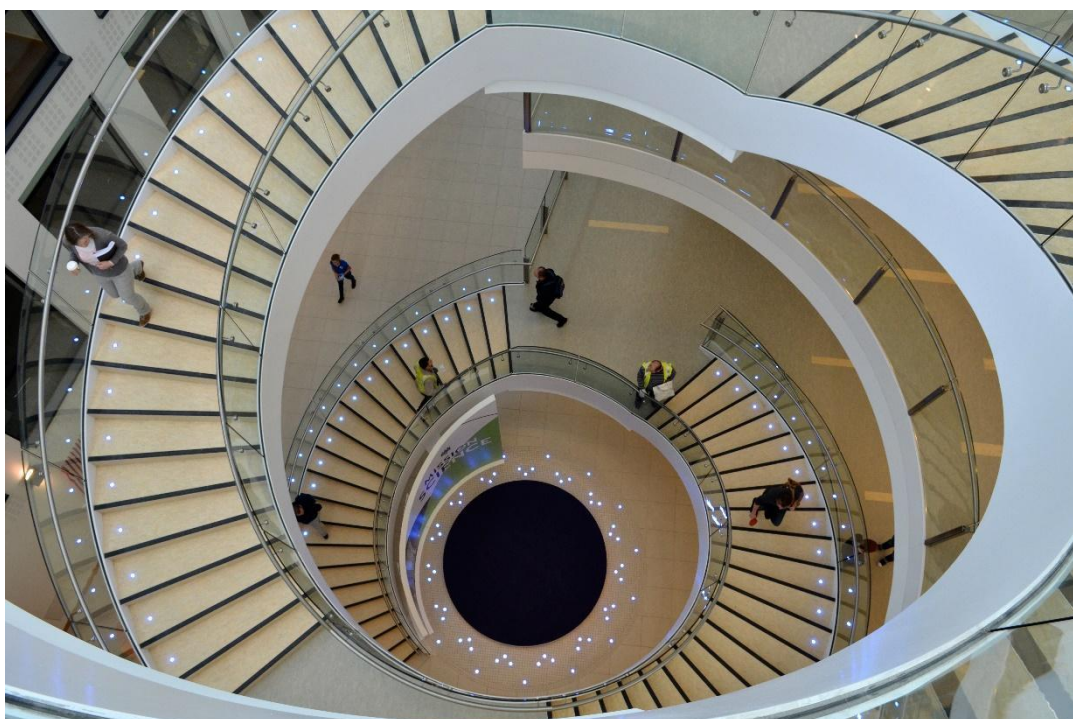


# UCD DIGNITY & RESPECT SUPPORT COLLEAGUES: CODE OF PRACTICE\*

JUNE 2022



\*(Under the University's Dignity & Respect Policies)

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## UCD Dignity & Respect Support Colleagues: Role Description

The Panel of Dignity and Respect Support Colleagues plays a vital role in the implementation of University College Dublin's (UCD) Dignity and Respect Policies<sup>1</sup>. This code of practice acts as a guide for the role of the Dignity and Respect Support Colleagues, in addition to that laid down in the Dignity and Respect Policies. It also includes information on the formation of the panel.

The Dignity and Respect Support Colleagues are employees of the University who have been appointed on a voluntary basis by the President of UCD (or nominee). Support Colleagues are trained to provide support under UCD's Dignity and Respect Policies.

The Dignity & Respect Support Colleagues are managed and supported by the UCD Dignity & Respect Support Service. The Dignity & Respect Support Service also provides a co-ordinating and facilitator role for the Support Colleagues.

All parties (the reporting person, the person being reported and any bystanders/witnesses) can approach a Dignity and Respect Support Colleague, and where feasible they will be facilitated. It is best practice that the different parties involved are supported by different Dignity and Respect Support Colleagues, to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

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<sup>1</sup> UCD's Dignity & Respect Policies include both the Bullying & Harassment Policy 2021 and the Sexual Misconduct Policy 2021

## Role of the Dignity & Respect Support Colleague

The following outlines the service provided by the Dignity and Respect Support Colleagues:

- To act as a listening ear, and to provide non-directive advice, information and support to employees who feel they are experiencing difficulties of bullying, sexual misconduct or harassment (across the University's ten equality grounds), as defined in UCD's Bullying and Harassment and Sexual Misconduct policies.<sup>2</sup>
- To act as an information source and support for *either* the person reporting, person being reported or witness/bystander.
- To work with the employee to help them determine if the issue is a Dignity and Respect issue, and to direct to the relevant services as appropriate.
- The role of the Support Colleague is *not to advocate* for an individual but instead, to listen and provide independent, unbiased, non-judgemental support and information about sources of help, and the informal and formal options open to the employee.

Other key responsibilities of Support Colleagues:

- To have in-depth knowledge of the informal options available and how to submit a formal complaint.
- To guide individuals to appropriate supports such as the Employee Assistance Programme<sup>3</sup>.
- To have in-depth knowledge of the UCD Dignity & Respect website in order to direct individuals to the various sources of information, resources available and relevant areas of the Dignity & Respect website.
- To promote the UCD Dignity and Respect Support Service through contribution to the development and implementation of a communications plan.
- To promote themselves/the Dignity & Respect Support Colleagues panel in their own areas in order for employees to be aware of the existence of their role, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> The ten grounds are gender, age, race, disability, civil status, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, family status, membership of the travelling community

<sup>3</sup> The UCD Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is a 24/7 free and confidential support service designed to assist UCD employees in dealing more effectively with any personal or work-related problems you might be facing: <https://www.ucd.ie/engage/employeerelations/employeeassistanceservice/>

- To outline the scope of data collection (i.e. that Support Colleagues record statistical anonymous data) to individuals approaching them, and to complete the relevant data monitoring form (for statistical purposes only).
- To treat all contacts made on a strictly confidential basis, with no identifiable information passed to any third party without the consent of the employee. There are limited exceptions to this rule, for example, where an employee is considered a danger to themselves or others, where there may be a risk of suicide or threat to life, where a crime is being investigated, where disclosure is required by law (See Appendix A).
- To keep up to date with any developments in the Dignity and Respect policies and relevant legislation.
- To attend training as organised by the Dignity & Respect Support Service or EDI Unit.
- To attend panel meetings, arranged by the Dignity & Respect Support Service.

## What Lies Outside the Scope of the Role?

There are a number of areas that would be outside the remit of a Dignity and Respect Support Colleague. A Support Colleague would not:

- Act as advocate or representative for any party or get involved in any way in the formal process.
- Have a role in the management of a complaint.
- Provide legal advice.
- Provide a solution to an employees' issue. The employee approaching a Support Colleague makes the decision on how they wish to proceed, with the informal and formal options available to them. A Support Colleague can assist the employee in working towards a resolution to their issue, without imposing a solution.
- Provide counselling<sup>4</sup> (UCD has an Employee Assistance Programme which provides counselling services to employees).
- Provide accompaniment to any informal or formal meetings.
- Be involved in any informal resolution directly.

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<sup>4</sup> UCD has an Employee Assistance Programme which provides counselling services to employees.



## Characteristics of a Dignity & Respect Support Colleague

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

- Non-judgemental and objective
- Unbiased and impartial (always recognising that as a Support Colleague, you are only listening to one side of a story and do not have all of the facts)
- Approachable, respected and trusted
- Ability to listen
- Calm and empathetic
- Skilled around dealing with conflict and relationships
- Supportive but clear around boundaries and roles

## Supporting Employees: Meetings

The following are considerations when Dignity & Respect Support Colleagues meet with employees:

- Dignity and Respect Support Colleagues meeting an employee will meet in a private area during working hours in a suitable venue (virtual or in-person) to be agreed by both.
- The Dignity & Respect Support Service has two consultation rooms for appointments which are available to the Support Colleagues for use. To book one of these rooms, contact a member of the Dignity & Respect Support Service who will reserve a room for you.
- In the first instance, the Support Colleague should set out the remit of their role. An 'introductory meeting' **document** is available for the panel on conducting meetings.
- A maximum of two meetings (of a duration of up to 50 minutes for each meeting) should be sufficient. The number of meetings can vary depending on the situation but avoiding a dependency relationship is a consideration.
- In recognition that the Dignity & Respect Support Colleague position is a voluntary role, it would be advisable to refer the person on to the professional Dignity & Respect Support Service should additional support be required.
- Home or private mobile phone numbers of Support Colleagues will not be given out.
- Support Colleagues would not meet with both the person reporting and the person being reported.

- If a Support Colleague is contacted by both parties, one party should be referred to another Support Colleague or the Dignity & Respect Support Service.
- Support colleagues would not meet with a close colleague but would refer the person to another Support Colleague.



## Panel Meetings of the Dignity & Respect Support Colleagues

The purpose of scheduling meetings for the Dignity & Respect Support Colleagues Panel is to maintain peer-to-peer support, share experiences anonymously and raise any queries/concerns with the UCD Dignity & Respect Support Service.

Panel meetings are structured in the following way:

- The panel will normally meet 4 times a year. The meetings will usually last up to one hour (approximately) and will take place in a mixed format between in-person and online, to accommodate all panel members.
- Consideration will be given to the timings of meetings where possible, in light of panel members' differing work hours schedules and any caring commitments/responsibilities.
- Meetings will take place within core hours [core hours](#) (defined as **9:30am-4pm** in UCD).
- The meetings will be facilitated by the Dignity and Respect Support Service.
- Meetings can include training in the form of a speaker, case studies, group work etc.
- Attendance for at least three out of every four meetings annually is mandatory except in exceptional circumstances.

## Training and Support

The Dignity and Respect Support 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, harassment and sexual misconduct, i.e. Employment Equality Act, Equal Status Act and Principles of Natural Justice.
- Understand the University's policies and procedures on Dignity and Respect.
- Be aware of the protocol around record keeping, Data Protection/GDPR and Freedom of Information.
- Understand the role and responsibilities of the Support Colleagues, 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 policies on Dignity and Respect, i.e. the Dignity and Respect Support Advisers, Managers, Student Advisers, Students' Union, UCD HR, EDI.

- 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, harassment and sexual misconduct on all parties (i.e. the person reporting and the person being reported).
- Understand the boundaries of confidentiality.
- Have an awareness of the various resources and sources of support that UCD offers.

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

Panel members will be a resource/support for each other. They will attend panel meetings and panel members may contact each other for support or the Dignity and Respect Support Service for support and guidance.

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

## Record-keeping and Monitoring

Notes of meetings should not be kept. However, if the case is ongoing, it is recognised that such notes are useful as an aide memoire. Notes should be kept confidential with no names 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 GDPR and/or Freedom of Information legislation. Notes should be destroyed following every meeting. The shared secure data collection form should be updated as soon as possible, following each individual interaction.

## Forming the Panel

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

### Recruitment

#### Criteria

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

- Various levels of the organisation
- A broad range of schools/units
- Both faculty and staff (including Researchers and Technical Staff)
- A diverse group across the University's 10 grounds including gender balance

There should be a sufficient number of Dignity and Respect Support Colleagues to provide choice for UCD employees<sup>5</sup>.

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 employees seeking support under UCD's Dignity and Respect Policies.

#### Considerations

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

- Training and networking events.
- Support Colleagues' panel meetings 4 times per year
- Meetings with employees who wish to seek information and support under the Dignity and Respect policies.

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<sup>5</sup> Employees have the option of approaching any of the Dignity and Respect Support Colleagues

Before applying, employees should consider if this role is in conflict with any other roles they may hold within the University. If they are unsure, they should contact the Dignity and Respect Support Service who can advise.

## Advertising

Positions will be advertised to all employees by means of the Dignity and Respect Support Service website, Equality & Diversity website, the HR website, the staff e-Zine, and other appropriate fora. The application process is open to all employees 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.

## Applying for the Position

Employees may:

- Self-nominate
- Be invited by the EDI Unit/Dignity & Respect Support Service to apply
- Be nominated by their manager to apply.

Employees will need to complete an Expression of Interest form and send it to the Dignity and Respect Support Service. Further information on the process, and this form, can be obtained from the Dignity & Respect Support Service website. Applicants will also be requested to supply details of one referee internal to the University. An employee considering applying must discuss their intention with their Head of School/Unit in the first instance. Permission from the Head of School/Unit is requested on the application form. Applicants must also participate in an awareness session, otherwise they will not progress to the next stage of the application process.

## Selection and Appointment

Selection is carried out by a group comprising of a member of the Dignity and Respect Support Service, a current Dignity and Respect Support Colleague and one other representative (selection panel).

Once applicants are short-listed, each applicant will be invited to meet with the selection panel to determine their suitability for the post. Referees will also be contacted.

Successful applicants will be contacted after the selection process and they will be required to:

- Sign up to this Code of Practice and the time commitment involved
- Attend initial training prior to taking up the role and complete it to the satisfaction of the selection committee
- Commit to completing relevant EDI-related awareness-raising training e.g. UCD's Dignity & Respect Awareness Training and Unconscious Bias Training, etc.

At the end of the three-year period, applications will be invited from the University to form a panel. Dignity & Respect Support Colleagues are limited to a maximum of two consecutive terms.

# Appendix A

## Exceptions to Confidentiality

This appendix lists all of the limited exceptions to confidentiality. Confidentiality is a key principle underpinning UCD's Dignity & Respect Policies. Confidentiality will be observed as far as practicable and in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2003-2018 and the Children First Act, 2015 (which covers child protection). However, confidentiality cannot always be absolute and there are certain circumstances where UCD Dignity & Respect Support Colleagues reserve the right to share information should this be deemed necessary.

These exceptional circumstances may include:

- If information is disclosed that may indicate risk to children (under 18) or the employee reporting the issue.
- If it is believed there is an immediate or urgent risk to someone's life or health.
- If an employee gives information which indicates that a crime has been committed.
- In circumstances where UCD is requested to provide information about the employee by the Gardai or any other government or judicial body pursuant to a lawful order of a court or under such other legislative or statutory powers as may be applicable to the body.

Please refer to [UCD's Bullying & Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policies](#) for further details.