

Document title	Countering Bullying, Undermining, and Harassment Strategy
Version	2.1
Effective Date	September 2025
Date for review	Academic Year 2028/29
Policy Owner	Student Life and Guidance Manager
Developing committee/board	Student Life and Guidance Board
Approved by/date	V2 Universities Joint Quality Committee/ September 2020 V2.1 Student Life and Guidance Board/June 2025

Countering Bullying, Undermining, and Harassment Strategy

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Relationship with other Policies, procedures and guidance:	3
3. Our aim	3
4. Our understanding of bullying, undermining and harassment	3
5. Racial Harassment.....	4
6. Our commitment.....	4
7. Our expectations	5
8. How we work with our staff and students	5
9. How students can raise concerns	6
10. How we learn from reported concerns.....	6
11. Our understanding of Academic and Professional Debate	6
12. How we work with stakeholders.....	7

1. Introduction

1.1. Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) adopts a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, undermining, harassment, or any form of intimidation. Such behaviour has a detrimental effect on training through compromising the dignity of our students, staff, and patients. It compromises our work in ensuring our students become safe and effective doctors. This behaviour is unacceptable. KMMS have [seven core values](#) which underpin the School's ethos and which we expect students and staff to adhere to in their interactions with others.

2. Relationship with other Policies, procedures and guidance:

2.1. This Policy complements and supports the following policies, procedures and guidance of KMMS, Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent:

- Canterbury Christ Church University Equality and Diversity
- Canterbury Christ Church [Student Prevention of Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
- University of Kent [Respect at Kent Policy](#)
- KMMS Non-Academic Discipline Procedure
- KMMS Low-Level Concerns, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practise Policy & Low-Level Concerns, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practise Procedures
- [KMMS Social Media Guidance](#)

3. Our aim

3.1. KMMS aims to foster a community where members promote each other's dignity. Training students and staff is integral to our strategy. Each staff member agrees to promote EDI upon the signing of their contract. In addition, we have an overall EDI Lead and ED vertical theme Curriculum Lead to aid with our strong promotion of EDI throughout the School and within the curriculum. Designated staff are also active members of the MSC EDI Alliance.

4. Our understanding of bullying, undermining and harassment

4.1. Bullying, undermining and harassment can be difficult to define. They can be subjective matters. Often these terms are regarded as interchangeable. This is a reflection that these behaviours are complex. They can take many

different forms. These behaviours are difficult to measure objectively. They are often defined through the recipient's perceptions. This means that the range of different people's perceptions is important in understanding why people feel bullied or undermined.

4.2. We are aligned with the General Medical Council in their [National Training survey](#)

4.3. What we understand as bullying:

- Bullying is behaviour that hurts or frightens someone who is less powerful, often forcing them to do something they do not want to do. Bullying can relate to protected characteristics.
- These are defined by the Equality Act 2010 as: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.
- Undermining is behaviour that subverts, weakens or wears away confidence.
- Harassment can be any unwanted attention or behaviour that a person finds objectionable or offensive and which makes them feel threatened or uncomfortable, leading to a loss of dignity or self-respect.

5. Racial Harassment

5.1. The British Medical Association (BMA) have produced a [charter for medical schools to prevent and address racial harassment](#). KMMS is committed to incorporating the guidance of the charter into policies and procedures and supporting students by taking action to prevent and address racial harassment. We aim to support students by:

- encouraging students to speak up through our Raising and Escalating Complaints/Concerns Procedure, and our Complaints procedure.
- incorporating equality, diversity and inclusion across the learning environment
- addressing racial harassment on placement
- encourage students to use Freedom to Speak Up guardians ([National Guardian Freedom to Speak Up](#))

6. Our commitment

6.1. We believe that bullying, undermining and harassment compromises the learning environment and can affect patient safety. It also adversely affects the mental and physical health of individuals and undermines morale. Our

commitment is to a culture of healthcare where everyone sees this kind of behaviour as unacceptable. We see everyone as having a part in improving practice.

7. Our expectations

- 7.1. We expect KMMS students and staff to demonstrate exemplary professional behaviour. This is to ensure they do not bully, undermine, or harass students, colleagues and patients, either deliberately or inadvertently

8. How we work with our staff and students

- 8.1. We encourage everyone to reflect on their own behaviour. This includes recognising that tackling unacceptable behaviour is everyone's problem, as well as the need to take personal ownership in stamping it out. We promote this through using visible Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, drawn from our staff and students.
- 8.2. At each induction of new KMMS staff and students, the designated member of staff highlights to all that they must not tolerate any bullying, undermining or harassment. The induction includes information about our approach to empowering our staff and students to raise concerns.
- 8.3. For our students, the designated member of staff explains how students can seek assistance through the Notification system, Report and Support, Student Life and Guidance (SLG), Personal Academic Tutors (PATs) and Clinical Academic Tutors (CATs), or any other staff member. In addition, the designated staff member sets out how students can get support from outside the Medical School. This support is available through the University of Kent Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) and the Students' Union at both universities.
- 8.4. For our staff, the designated member of staff explains assistance is available through line managers and University of Kent Human Resources.
- 8.5. Information provided to returning students at the beginning of the Academic Year reinforces the importance of acting on any issues and the means of seeking advice and support.
- 8.6. All students are required to complete the 'Expect Respect' e-learning module which outlines the behaviours expected of our students and guidance on how

to raise concerns and access the right support.

8.7. We ensure that feedback on behaviours is collected. A question focusing on opportunities to raise bullying, undermining or harassment concerns is part of all 'student evaluation of teaching' questionnaires issued at the end of modules. Students can raise concerns at any point in the programme via the [Notification system](#) and on placement via the mid and end of module student evaluation questionnaires.

8.8. Various training for staff and students is provided.

9. How students can raise concerns

9.1. We are committed to students, staff and patients being able to raise and resolve any concerns that they have promptly and thoroughly. The School has a single, widely accessible pathway via the [Notification form process](#). Details of policy and process around raising concerns is described in the Speaking Up in Practice Environments Policy and Procedure, the KMMS Student Complaints Procedures and the KMMS Low-Level Concerns, Fitness to Study and Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure, all found on the [KMMS policy page](#).

9.2. Students may also wish to discuss their concerns with the KMMS Student Life and Guidance (SLG Team), their Personal Academic Tutor (PAT), their Clinical Academic Tutor (CAT) or the University of Kent Student Support services in the first instance.

10. How we learn from reported concerns

10.1. We file concerns to ensure we can identify any repeated patterns of behaviour which would ignite prompt action. We also maintain firm communication channels through relationships with student representatives through the KMMS governance system and our Student-Staff Liaison Committee to ensure all work environments are healthy.

11. Our understanding of Academic and Professional Debate

11.1. KMMS views vigorous academic debate as different from bullying, undermining and harassment. Debate encourages expressing a variety of viewpoints. It stimulates reflection and professional discussion.

- 11.2. There will be professional disagreements concerning patient care. However, practitioners maintain the interest of the patient in any professional interactions. In the School, students and staff will hold differing, even opposing, views on a variety of issues. However, the expectation is to treat professionals with dignity and respect. This means ensuring expressing views does not create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- 11.3. Constructive criticism or feedback differs from bullying. The purpose is developmental and supportive. We will work with our staff and students to understand the difference between academic freedom and offensive behaviour. Our staff seek to deliver difficult messages about progress and provide feedback on performance in a way which is constructive and could not be seen as bullying.

12. How we work with stakeholders

- 12.1. We review our arrangements to ensure that the systems in place adequately address concerns about bullying, undermining and harassment. This includes a review of student feedback mechanisms in partnership with placement partners. A question focusing on opportunities to raise patient safety and bullying or undermining concerns forms part of all 'Student Evaluation of Placement' questionnaires.
- 12.2. Both student inductions to placement and quality visits include sections on bullying and undermining behaviour. This is to ensure that students are aware of the processes and that any instances are identified.