

## **Dignity in the Workplace; Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy**

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) is committed to maintaining an environment that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work. All individuals, whether directly employed or contracted by the SEC, are expected to respect the right of each individual to dignity in their working life. All will be treated equally and respected for their individuality and diversity. Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Contract personnel, engaged for the conduct and delivery of the state examinations, have a duty and a responsibility to uphold the right to dignity in the workplace.

Bullying at work is defined, for the purposes of this policy, as *‘repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s right to dignity at work’*. Bullying puts at risk the safety, health and welfare of people at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour in this definition may be an affront to dignity, but as a once-off incident is not considered to be bullying. Bullying at work does not include reasonable and essential discipline arising from the good management of the performance of an individual at work or actions taken which can be justified as regards the safety, health and welfare of the employees/contract staff. For example, an individual whose performance is regularly signalled at a level below required targets may feel threatened and insecure in their work but this in itself does not indicate bullying.

Harassment and sexual harassment are defined in the Employment Equality Acts. Harassment; *“any form of unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds”* and sexual harassment; *“any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature”*, is conduct that in either case has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person.

Contract staff engaged by the SEC have the right to be treated with dignity and respect in the course of their duties and not to have their safety, health or welfare put at risk through bullying or harassment by other staff of the SEC (contracted or directly employed) or by other persons. They have a right to complain if bullied or harassed and not to be victimised for so doing. They also have a right to be represented in raising complaints of bullying or harassment with the SEC.

Just as contract staff have a right to dignity at work, they also have a duty to respect the same right for others. Contract staff should, in their dealings with other contract staff and with direct employees of the SEC, conduct themselves in a manner that respects the dignity of those persons. Contract staff should also cooperate in supporting these rights by providing any relevant information when an allegation of bullying or harassment at work is being investigated, whether at informal or formal stage.

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) has adopted an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy that applies to the Civil Service “Dignity of Work” - the Civil Service wide policy on harassment, sexual harassment and bullying in the work place, in dealing with complaints of bullying and harassment from among its contract staff. A copy of the policy is available from the *Information for Contract Staff* Section of [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie)