



University of Copenhagen - Action Plan for Bullying and Harassment

1. Background for the action plan

The University of Copenhagen wishes to have a good healthy working environment in which employees can develop and use their multifaceted talents. Bullying and harassment are symptoms of the opposite in a working environment.

In 2008 - 2009, the University of Copenhagen carried out a workplace assessment which among other things involved mapping employee mental health and their psychological working environment. The provisional result of the mapping process has shown that nine percent of the employees who participated in the workplace assessment responded that they had been subjected to bullying within the past year. Most had only experienced it once in a while but about two percent had been subjected to more systematic bullying.

Immediately this result was known, the Rector decided in conjunction with the rest of the management and the Central Collaboration Committee to make it clear that bullying and harassment are unacceptable and that action would be taken against employees who bully or in some other way harass other people. The committee also decided to review the initiatives that it could take with respect to bullying and harassment. Even before the results were released, the committee had drawn up guidelines for the psychological working environment, which included how to deal with bullying.

When problems arise, it is important for action to be taken locally. That is where they need to be sorted out. However, many people are not sure about how to tackle such a problem. So the committee has decided to draw up **guidance for an action plan** against bullying and harassment, which the Faculties and Departments can use when drawing up their own specific action plans against bullying and harassment.

HR and Organisation will also be making various tools available on [KUnet](#).

2. Why draw up an action plan against bullying and harassment?

Experience from other workplaces has shown that bullying and harassment do not arise just by themselves and equally, neither do they disappear by themselves. It demands positive action to create a culture that will help prevent bullying or other harassment from occurring. Experience has shown that an action plan against bullying and harassment is a good tool for preventing and dealing with bullying in the workplace. For an action plan to work, it needs to cover **all** employees and also to express what the workplace feels about bullying and how employees should be expected to behave towards each other.

3. Who should draw up an action plan?

At the University of Copenhagen, it is expected that action plans against bullying and harassment are to be drawn up by **all** collaboration committees. It is important that management as well as employees take part in the process of drawing up action plans and take responsibility for making them work in practice. The closer plans are to employees, the more relevant they will be regarded. Collaboration committees are therefore urged to involve all employees in drawing up action plans, for example by holding meetings, focus group interviews or the like. Action plans are to have been drawn up by 1 July 2010. The Central Collaboration Committee will follow up on the action plan process to stop bullying and harassment once a year.

4. How should the guidance be used?

So as to make it a little easier to address the wording of action plans, the Committee has drawn up guidance for how an action plan could look (pp 3-5). The guidance gives suggestions about how an action plan against bullying and harassment could be worded. The collaboration committee can use it as inspiration as part of their consideration of what should be done locally and can then draw up their own action plan.

The collaboration committee could also choose to use the entire guidance as their action plan with any additions or amendments that may be necessary. In other words, the guidance is not an exhaustive checklist of the issues an action plan should address and neither is it a form that should just be complied with.

However, collaboration committees should at the very least indicate where employees who feel bullied or harassed can go to with their problems. Department/ unit management and union representatives have a special responsibility for dealing with bullying and harassment and they should at the very least be the contacts for cases of bullying. But you should also be aware of whether you know that employees would be confident in contacting certain people in your Department and who would therefore be ideal contacts. It could also be a good idea to refer to a contact that is independent of the Department, such as a special resource person at the Faculty level or the occupational health and safety consultants in the HR&O Section for Occupational Health and Safety and Collaboration. All employees should be able to access the list of contact personnel.

5. Background and purpose

The guidance has been drawn up on the basis of an article by Anne Eik Ismer, Maj Wissing and Annie Høgh of the National Research Centre for the Working Environment called: "Preventing bullying in the workplace: Proposals for an action plan." The article builds on the work of three Norwegian researchers (Bille, Skogsted and Einarsen, 2008). They reviewed scientific articles and other professional/academic sources and identified a range of core issues that should be included in an action plan against bullying and harassment. The emphasis in this guidance is on these core issues.

Considered and adopted at the Central Collaboration Committee meeting on 25 November 2009.



Ralf Hemmingsen
Rector and Chairman of the
General Collaboration Committee

and



Poul Erik Krogshave
Deputy Chairman of the
General Collaboration Committee

Guidance on an action plan.

Action plan against bullying and harassment at [insert the name of the Department or unit].

Statement of purpose

Bullying and other harassment is unacceptable in our Department. Bullying is not just a matter between individuals but affects the whole workplace. We are aware that bullying does not only affect the person being bullied and the person doing it but also those who witness it. It is important that all of us, management and employees, make an effort to have a good psychological working environment in our workplace.

We all share the goal of wanting everyone to enjoy their work and to be able to be confident in working with their colleagues and management. This requires a working environment that is free of bullying and other harassment.

It is up to management to promote a culture in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity and management is also required to intervene if they become aware of bullying or other harassment.

Management expects all employees to take a thorough interest in the action plan and to actively promote compliance.

Union representatives will be working with management to develop and implement an action plan in the Department. The collaboration committee is responsible for the psychological working environment and will therefore be making regular reviews to check whether the action plan is working.

Definition of bullying and harassment

The University's "Guidelines for the psychological working environment, including stress and bullying" give the following definition of bullying:

"Being bullied means people being subjected at work, regularly and over time, to unpleasant, degrading or hurtful treatment by one or more others and that they find it difficult to defend themselves. Teasing that both parties regard as good-natured or as isolated conflicts is not harassment."

Legislation and guidelines

In accordance with Sec. 9a of the Danish Working Environment Authority's Order No.559 - of 17 June 2004 on working, it must be ensured that *"work does not lead to the risk of mental health being affected as a result of the bullying, including sexual harassment."*

Copenhagen University's "Guidelines for the psychological working environment, including stress and bullying" also state that: *"The University regards bullying, sexual harassment and attacks of any kind, verbal, electronic, physical or mental, as unacceptable. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that there is a good psychological working environment."*

How we will tackle specific cases of bullying and harassment

The collaboration committee wishes for all cases of bullying and other harassment to be handled so that, going forward, there is an improvement for the individual employee and for the whole Department as a workplace. So it is important that employees in the Department who feel they are being subjected to bullying or other harassment or employees who witness bullying or other harassment, are not left to deal with the issue themselves but ensure that other appropriate personnel in the Department are made aware of the matter and thus have the chance to do something about it.

One of the following people should be notified (in no particular order):

Section, Name, Tel, E-mail

Head of Department

Vice Head of Department

Union representative for X

Union representatives for Y

Other resource personnel at the Department (e.g. a union representative)

Resource personnel at the Faculty

Occupational health and safety consultants (T: (+45) 3532 2802, amos@adm.ku.dk)

Bullying and other harassment may be employee on employee, management on management or between employee and management. Dealing with specific cases depends to a large degree on relations between the parties involved. In [the Employee Guide](#) on KUNet, we give specific advice on how an employee, union representative or manager should deal with instances of bullying and harassment.

When you get in touch with one of the Department's contact personnel, you can expect them to:

- Treat all contacts on bullying and other harassment seriously and with the necessary discretion.
- Be aware that bullying is a shared challenge in the workplace and to place the current case in the general context.
- Notify departmental management that there has been bullying.
- In agreement with the employee who made the claim and in conjunction with the person being bullied and/or witnesses or the person doing it, to arrange for the case to be tackled.
- Be aware of the University's psychological consultancy scheme (Prescriba) and to provide information on where the employee can obtain further advice and support.

Information and training for employees of the Department

All employees at the Department should be aware of what is in the action plan. The plan should be available to all employees on the Department's website at [www.\[ENTER THE ADDRESS OR USE SOME OTHER ELECTRONIC MEDIUM, E.G. A COMMON PC DRIVE TO WHICH ALL EMPLOYEES HAVE ACCESS\]](http://www.[ENTER THE ADDRESS OR USE SOME OTHER ELECTRONIC MEDIUM, E.G. A COMMON PC DRIVE TO WHICH ALL EMPLOYEES HAVE ACCESS])

At least once a year, the Department is to review the topic of bullying and harassment at a personnel/themed meeting for all employees at which they are briefed on the plan and have the opportunity to comment and provide input for what should be in it.

Management and the collaboration committee are required to ensure that contact personnel have the necessary competencies to undertake their responsibilities and to consider whether any further training might be needed. This is to be done in dialogue with the contacts themselves. PUMA for example runs courses in conflict management and in holding difficult discussions.

What we do to stop bullying and harassment

If there is a specific case of bullying and harassment, we will ensure that assistance is provided for the employee who is being subjected to bullying but also the employee(s) doing the bullying or who have witnessed it. We will take the matter seriously and investigate it thoroughly, which would include trying to identify the underlying problem. On the basis of its investigations, management will make the decision on how to stop the bullying.

Counselling and support for those involved are important

Employees who are subjected to bullying may often need help in dealing with the mental and physical impacts that bullying can cause. We would therefore urge those involved in bullying to get in touch with Prescriba for professional psychological counselling. All University employees can contact Prescriba 24/7/365. Contacts are anonymous and neither the Department nor the University will be notified of specific contacts.

Prescriba can be contacted on:

T: (+45) 7022 1266 or raadgivningen@prescriba.com

The unions provide counselling and support for their members in cases of bullying and harassment. Employees who feel they are being bullied or otherwise harassed could also contact their unions. This can be done either via the local union representative or by contacting the union direct.

Reviewing / revising the action plan

- The plan should be reviewed once a year or as required.
- When undertaking a review, the emphasis should be put on the following:
 - Is the plan working as intended or are amendments needed?
 - Have there been organisational changes at the Department which mean the action plan should be revised?
 - Does the plan need to have a higher profile for employees?
 - For example, might courses or workshops (or other ideas) be required to ensure better compliance with the plan?

Further guidance

[The Bullying toolkit](#) in the Employee Guide on KUnet

[Working Environment Authority Guidance D.4.2 of March 2002 on Bullying and Sexual Harassment](#)

(In Danish).

[Working Environment Authority Order No 559 - 17 June 2004 on working.](#) (In Danish)

"[Preventing bullying in the workplace: Proposals for an action plan.](#)" Anne Eik Ismer, Maj Wissing and Annie Høgh, National Research Centre for the Working Environment, 2009. (IN DANISH)

Effective date

The plan will take effect on [Insert DATE, MONTH, YEAR]

Date

Chairman Deputy Chairman