

Student Bullying Prevention Policy (QMS:624)



Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure IMVC students are provided with a positive learning environment and culture where bullying, cyberbullying and harassment is not accepted.

Students have a right to respect from others, and to feel safe and secure while they learn. Students are not likely to achieve academic and personal potential if they are subjected to bullying and harassment. The IMVC has a responsibility to protect students from harm or the threat of harm, and to provide a safe and supportive learning environment.

Scope

This policy applies to all students of the IMVC.

What is bullying and harassment?

Bullying can occur when a person, or a group of people, hurt you with their words and actions, and they do it again and again.

Bullying can upset or create a risk to another person's health and safety, either psychologically, physically or to their property, reputation or social acceptance. Bullying is a series of repeated incidents, involving the same student, or to a group of students.

Harassment is unwanted behaviour that offends, humiliates or intimidates a person and targets them on the basis of a characteristic such as gender, race or ethnicity. If the harassment is of a sexual nature it is called sexual harassment.

Bullying and harassment can include:

- Physical (fighting, kicking, punching, pushing etc.)
- Verbal (teasing, swearing, put-downs, spreading rumours, name calling etc.)
- Extortion (threats used to take food or money)
- Visual (insulting notes, emails, graffiti, SMS, Facebook or other cyber entries)
- Exclusion (deliberately ignoring, excluding from participation in activities etc.)
- Sexual (rude jokes about a person, obscene gestures to a person etc.)
- Racial (comments about social or cultural differences designed to be put-downs etc.)

Types of bullying and harassment include:

- Face to face – verbal abuse, physical aggression
- Covert bullying – is not seen by others and conducted out of sight of others
- Cyberbullying – using technology to repeatedly intimidate another person

What is not bullying or harassment?

Bullying and harassment does not include reasonable instructions from a trainer or other IMVC staff member and does not include disciplinary action.

Bullying is not the same as a conflict between people, such as a verbal disagreement or disliking someone.

Consequences of bullying and harassment

Consequences of bullying can include:

- Psychological or physical harm to the victim which may lead to avoidance of attending class and lost future opportunities
- The effects on the student may be long-term leading to self-harm or even suicide
- Bullies may miss out on life opportunities as a result of developing anti-social behaviour
- Staff members fail in their duty of care if they are not attentive to the possibility of bullying being a cause of a student's withdrawn or erratic behaviour or absence. This may include legal consequences
- The culture and values of the IMVC may be undermined

The rights of students with respect to bullying at the IMVC

All students have the right to:

- Feel safe and secure in class and anywhere in IMVC workplace and learning environments
- Socialise and move from place to place within IMVC workplace and learning environments without being harassed or bullied
- Travel to and from the IMVC safely without being harassed or bullied
- Be treated with fairness and respect regardless of gender, race or disability
- Have personal and IMVC property respected
- Expect a resolution of their problems, to be able to tell their side of the story in a dispute within a supportive environment and to be taught strategies to solve problems

The responsibilities of students who witness incidents of bullying

Students have the responsibility to:

- Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation. If present when bullying occurs the student should report the incident or suspect to a teacher or other IMVC staff member
- Help make the IMVC a happy and safe place
- Treat everyone (students, parents, teachers and others) with consideration, tolerance and respect
- Respect the property of others and the IMVC
- Seek to resolve conflict in a positive and co-operative manner

The responsibilities of parents/guardians

The IMVC recommends that parents:

- Watch for signs of distress in their child, e.g. unwillingness to attend class, pattern of headaches, damaged clothing or bruising etc.
- Take an active interest in their child's social life and acquaintances
- Advise their child to tell an IMVC staff member about bullying incidents
- Do not encourage the child to retaliate
- Communicate to their child that parental involvement, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation
- Be willing to attend interviews at the IMVC if their child is involved in a bullying incident
- Be willing to inform the IMVC of any cases of suspected bullying even if their own child is not directly affected

What the IMVC will do to address bullying

The IMVC will implement a range of bullying prevention strategies including:

- Ensuring staff are role models in word and actions at all times
- Being observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
- Make efforts to remove occasions for bullying by supervising during break periods and by supervising effectively within the premises
- Take steps to help the victim and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk
- Report suspected incidents to the appropriate IMVC staff member who will intervene with appropriate strategies
- Contact parents regarding incidences of bullying
- Provide information and opportunities for students to learn how to behave cooperatively and in a respectful manner to others
- Regularly remind staff and students during staff meetings and class activities about the importance of preventing bullying
- Make this policy available to staff, students and parents/guardians via the Student and Parent Handbook

If bullying occurs

Tell them to stop

If you believe someone is bullying you, and if it is safe to do so, tell the other person to stop their behaviour. Let them know that their behaviour offends you. They may not realise this.

Talk to a trusted adult

If the behaviour does not stop or you are not sure what to do, report it to a trusted adult, such as a teacher, another IMVC staff member or Coordinator. Remember, you are not alone. If you have a problem or complaint, talking to someone, especially your parents can help. You have the right to talk about it. This is not “dobbing”.

Cyberbullying

If you are being cyber-bullied you can ignore them by closing any computer screens or applications straight away.

If you experience repeated cyber-bullying try to save copies of any evidence or messages. Most cyber-bullying can easily be traced to find the person responsible.

Other information and advice

If you do not want to talk to anyone about it, you can find more information at:

Kids Helpline	Website: http://www.kidshelp.com.au/	Ph: 1800 55 1800
Lifeline	Website: https://www.lifeline.org.au/	Ph: 13 11 14

Reporting Bullying

Students are encouraged to report bullying to a trainer or other IMVC staff member or Coordinator. Students can also report bullying by lodging **QMS:600-20 Student Complaints and Appeals Form**. When a case of bullying is reported by a staff member or student, it will be referred to an appropriate VCAL staff member to investigate the matter.

Handling Bullying

Incidents of bullying will be handled under **QMS:625 Student Complaints, Appeals and Resolution Policy and Procedure**. Bullying complaints may be lodged by staff members on behalf of students.

All cases of reported bullying incidents will be recorded, including copies of interviews and filed in **QMS:630 Complaints and Appeals Register**.

Actions against bullying

A meeting with the persons involved will be held in accordance with **QMS:625 Student Complaints, Appeals and Resolution Policy and Procedure**.

The parents or guardians of the students involved will be contacted and involved in resolving the situation. Incidents of bullying may result in interventions to change the thinking and behaviour of the person reported for bullying, such as through sharing the feelings of the individual being bullied.

The student being bullied and the person reported for bullying may be offered counselling in relation to the incident. If there has been property theft or damage, the person reported for bullying will be required to return or replace the item.

Disciplinary action resulting from a bullying complaint will be filed in the students file, or in the case of a staff member, on their personnel file. Disciplinary actions may include the removal of privileges.

IMVC will monitor how the complaint was resolved and the wellbeing of those involved. Further action will be taken if the problem behaviour continues. Repeated or serious bullying such as assault will be dealt with severely including the possibility of suspension or immediate termination of enrolment or employment.

Reactions to bullying that are not acceptable at the IMVC

"I was just mucking around. Can't they take a joke?"

This is the most common response to attempts to stop bullying. It is not a joke to put someone down, ridicule them, to make them feel uncomfortable, push them around or take their things.

"I'll ignore it and it will go away."

If anything, ignoring bullying will make it worse. It gives the impression that bullying is okay with you and that you agree with what the bully is doing.

"I don't want to cause trouble."

Students have the right to feel safe. You are not causing trouble if you want to stand up for yourself in a calm and non-violent way.

"It's just a natural part of growing up."

There is nothing natural about being bullied. Students have a right to feel safe at IMVC, as well as at home.

"No-one can do anything about it."

Most cases of bullying can be sorted out very simply, especially if it is reported straight away. IMVC is committed to stopping bullying.

"Only wusses dob."

It takes courage and strength of character to stand up for your rights and those of others. Students gain respect through dealing with the problem rather than allowing it to continue. Bullying continues when people do nothing.

Associated documents

- QMS:600-20 Student Complaints and Appeals Form
- QMS:625 Student Complaints, Appeals and Resolution Policy and Procedure
- QMS:630 Complaints and Appeals Register

Version control details

Revision history

Date	Version	Author	Change Reference
04/05/2020	2.0	M. Van Looy	Updated to fit with new QMS version control guidelines and to include both the Procedure in with the Policy

Reviewers

Date	Version	Approved By	Next Review Date
04/05/2020	2.0	P. Vakakis	04/05/2022