WORKPLACE CIVILITY AND RESPECT

PURPOSE

Ryerson University is committed to creating a culture of respect and civility that is free of harassment, where all members of the community share a commitment to academic freedom, open inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge.

Incivility and disrespect in the workplace can be a barrier to effective communication, coaching, and performance. The impact can be severe as it may result in employee turnover, low productivity, reduced morale, diminished loyalty, and physiological impacts such as stress and depression that can lead to increased absenteeism. Incivility can escalate and may lead to more severe behaviours including harassment and violence.

This Policy establishes the University's commitment to the maintenance of a civil workplace. Through this Policy, the Guide to Civility and the Discrimination & Harassment Prevention Policy, the University maintains a comprehensive harassment prevention policy and program as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

PRINCIPLES

1. Workplace disputes and conflicts should be addressed using approaches that foster clear communication and candor, facilitate respectful interactions and yield solutions of mutual agreement.

2. Guidelines and actions taken under the policy should serve to strengthen University recruitment and retention of highly qualified and diverse faculty and staff.

3. Promoting civility and respect and early intervention will reduce the risk of incivility, including workplace harassment and violence.

DEFINITIONS

Civility: civility involves treating others with dignity and respect, and acting with regard to other's feelings.

Disrespect must not be confused with legitimate comment and/or advice from managers and supervisors on the work performance or work-related behaviour of an individual or group. Feedback on work performance or work-related behaviour differs from incivility or harassment in that feedback is intended to assist employees to improve work performance or the standard of their behaviour.

Civility requires that even the most critical feedback be delivered respectfully, privately, and courteously.

Incivility: incivility deals with a broad range of behaviours including but not limited to, unprofessional behaviour; rudeness; shouting or swearing; intimidation or bullying; threatening comments or behaviours/ actions; unsolicited and unwelcome conduct, comment (oral or written including email communication), gesture or contact which causes offense or humiliation, or physical or emotional harm to any individual.
Incivility can be subtle or overt. It may be a single event or may involve a continuing series of incidents, and may involve the abuse of authority or position. Uncivil behaviour may be unintended or deliberately directed at another individual. In any case, the impact on that individual is what must be addressed.

Specific actions that are considered uncivil, for example, polite or rude, can vary dramatically by place, time and context. Differences, including but not limited to, social role, gender, social class, religion and cultural identity may all affect the perception of a given behaviour. Consequently, a behaviour that is considered perfectly acceptable by some people, and in some cultures, may be considered rude by others.

Although incivility may be subjective or unintentional, this does not excuse the behaviour. Rather, these factors may provide an explanation that can help to resolve a complaint and guide future behaviour.

Many of the behaviours described above may fall within the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Occupational Health and Safety Act definitions of harassment. Harassment under the Ontario Human Rights Code occurs if the defined behaviour is related to a protected personal characteristic under the Code, for example, comments or conduct related to religion, race, disability, sex, gender or sexual orientation.

Workplace Violence: the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act defines workplace violence as,

a) the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker,

b) an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker,

c) a statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

Manager: a manager is the person to whom an employee directly reports concerning matters related to their employment. Examples include, Dean, Chair, Director, Supervisor, Supervising Instructor, etc.

POLICY

All faculty, instructors, managers and staff have a responsibility to act in good faith and be active participants in contributing to the creation and enhancement of a community culture of respect, inclusion, civility, dignity and understanding for the people with whom they work. This requires taking action to deal with incidents of incivility. All parties, at a minimum, are required to be open about concerns and listen to each other’s point of view. Incidents of incivility cannot be ignored and must be addressed.

The Discrimination and Harassment Prevention policies and procedures apply when comment or conduct is related to protected personal characteristics under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Environmental Health and Safety Management System policy provides a framework for addressing harassment and violence from a health and safety perspective. Incidents of workplace violence are managed under the University’s Violence Prevention & Response Program.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to impinge upon the academic freedom provisions specified in University collective agreements or policies. However, faculty, instructors and others, who have academic freedom rights, have a responsibility to exercise these rights in a civil and respectful manner.
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers

Managers are responsible for creating and maintaining a positive and productive work culture. A manager’s area of responsibility includes any matter that involves, impacts or potentially could impact the workplace. This includes dealing with inappropriate behaviour of, or towards, contractors, volunteers, students or others.

Managers are accountable for identifying and addressing issues in a timely and fair manner. This involves coaching and counseling their employees and, if appropriate in the circumstances, taking disciplinary action. Actions taken must adhere to the principles of progressive discipline, as well as policy and collective agreement provisions, and established procedures for investigation of complaints. Details about dealing with incidents of incivility are available in the Guide to Civility.

Agreements with contractors or volunteers should include the requirement to adhere to this policy and provisions to take action in cases of non compliance.

In situations where employees are subjected to uncivil behavior, including harassment, by employees from other areas, their manager should discuss the situation and determine appropriate action in conjunction with the manager(s) of the employee(s) from the other area(s).

Incidents of workplace violence and behaviors that may indicate a risk of workplace violence must be reported as required by the University Violence Prevention & Response program.

Managers may seek advice and assistance from their manager/supervisor or Human Resources Management Consultant.

Employees

It is recommended that, whenever possible, employees should address incidents of incivility towards them directly with the individual responsible for the behaviour.

Employees may seek advice and assistance from their Manager, Human Resources Management Consultant, their unions or associations, and/or Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Services in matters of discrimination and harassment under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Details about dealing with incidents of incivility are also available in the Guide to Civility.

All parties involved have a responsibility to act in good faith, communicate openly and listen to each other’s points of view, and to try to resolve the complaint informally, where possible.

Incidents of workplace violence and behaviours that may indicate a risk of workplace violence must be reported as required by the University Violence Prevention & Response program, including reporting incidents to a manager.

In addition, any incidents of harassment, as defined under the Occupational Health and Safety Act must be reported to a manager, even if the behaviour is by, or directed at a coworker, student or visitor.

NOTE: If the complaint is about a manager, the concern should be raised with the manager’s manager.
SCOPE

This policy applies to all faculty, instructors and staff, as well as other individuals subject to the policy under terms of contracts or agreements. Issues of uncivil behaviour, including harassment, by students should be raised with the Student Conduct Officer.

This policy applies to any uncivil behaviour that impacts faculty, students, instructors, staff, contractors or visitors, regardless of whether or not persons responsible for the incivility are employees of the University. Managers and employees must fulfill their responsibilities as indicated in this policy, regardless of whether or not the actions or individuals involved are directly related to the workplace.

NOTE: The term “faculty” includes deans, chairs/directors and other academic administrators and the term “staff” includes managers, supervisors, directors and other senior administrators.

JURISDICTION

This policy falls under the jurisdiction of the Vice President, Administration and Finance. The application and interpretation of the policy is the responsibility of the Human Resources department.