

### What does bullying in academia consist of?

Bullying in academia could be displayed through one or more of the following acts. This isn't a comprehensive list of negative behaviours, and such a list probably doesn't exist. We've pooled resources and sought suggestions from the academic community to put this list together. For all of the examples listed below, the phrase "the person" could refer to a colleague, supervisor, professor, supervisee, mentee, student, support staff, or anyone else in the workplace.

It is important to understand that not all bullying is inflicted by someone who is in a position of authority or power such as a supervisor or a senior academic. Instances of bullying can occur when a student is bullying a fellow student or when someone from the teaching staff is bullying a colleague from the administrative staff.

#### Physical Bullying

- Physical intimidation resulting in discomfort, embarrassment, and/or injury.
- Physical assault (ex: striking, kicking, pushing, shoving, pinching, slapping, punching, etc.).
- Deliberately damaging the person's property and/or work space.
- Deliberately meddling with and damaging the person's work projects, work space, lab and lab equipment, experimental apparatus, hard copies of data and other documents, etc.
- Deliberately ruining or compromising the person's experiments with contaminants.
- Deliberately restricting or trying to control the person's basic life functions to make their work life difficult, frustrating, and unbearable (ex: not allowing food breaks or unreasonably short food breaks, not allowing the person to freely visit the restroom, timing their restroom visits, making them seek permission for basic things, etc.).
- Restricting the person's movement at work and forcing them to stay confined to one particular space (ex: locking the person in an office or in the lab and not allowing them to leave without permission).

#### Verbal Bullying (Spoken or Written)

- Verbal abuse (using abusive or foul language, screaming or shouting at the person, using crass language to intentionally hurt, belittle, insult, or embarrass the person, etc.).
- Deliberately insulting the person with words.
- Verbally picking on the person, either in private or in the presence of others, such as during lab meetings, via emails or other communication to a group, etc.
- Using rude or impolite language while communicating with the person.
- Threatening to poorly evaluate or fail the person or deliberately block them from passing a test, examination, or course.
- Giving the person hostile warnings and threats in order to dissuade them from signing up to a course, taking a class, applying for a position, etc.
- Commenting on or making jokes on a person's physical appearance (could be related to weight, beauty, clothes, piercings, tattoos, skin color, etc.) at the workplace or outside of the workplace, making them feel uncomfortable.
- Indulging in name-calling or using negative labels while interacting with the person, referring to them while in a group, or directly addressing them (the labels used could be damaging, demeaning, derogatory, insulting, belittling, rude, defamatory, homophobic, etc.).
- Using unkind, insulting, or downright cruel words to convey feedback to the person.

- Directing backhanded insults at the person.
- Using racist words, terms, or phrases; making racist comments; using racist labels; or mentioning racist stereotypes while interacting with the person.
- Deliberately taunting the person.
- (As a representative of a university) Shouting at the person to go away or leave campus because they *could* have COVID-19 (with little or no reason to suspect that), and forcing them to visit a doctor.

### Non-Verbal Bullying

- Making negative, hurtful, or insulting physical gestures and/or facial expressions while interacting with the person or referring to the person in a group while they are present.
- Deliberately mimicking the person to ridicule, mock, embarrass, or hurt them.
- Deliberately invading the person's privacy (ex: personal space, personal belongings, confidential documents, private work-related documents, etc.).

### Emotional Bullying (Verbal or Written)

- Emotional abuse – deliberately indulging in actions that would upset the person, deliberately inflicting pain or distress on the person, trying to control or manipulate their emotions with the intention of causing them harm or hampering their productivity and/or the quality of their work.
- Gaslighting – invalidating a person's experiences and emotions, telling them that they're making things up, projecting a one-sided and potentially inaccurate worldview on them, etc.
- Deliberately making working conditions toxic and unbearable for the person, to the extent that they are driven to quit their position and/or leave academia altogether.
- Using fear and threats to get the person to do something you want them to do.
- Forcing the person to endure bullying silently and not speak up, and threatening them with negative consequences if they do speak up or report it.
- Deliberately undermining, belittling, or ignoring the person's work, efforts, achievements, successes, ideas, or opinions.
- Deliberately shaming the person, either in private or in the presence of others.

### Cyber Bullying

- Being verbally abusive, or bullying the person on online platforms.
- Being aggressive or passive-aggressive in emails or messages sent via platforms such as chat rooms or social media.
- Conveying threats over email, social media, or other online channels.
- Circulating without the person's knowledge or consent, personal information, lies/rumors, or other sensitive information or material via online channels with the intent to embarrass, defame, insult, or create issues for the person.
- Mocking or ridiculing the person's work or academic publication(s) on social media or other online channels.

- Cyberstalking – could manifest as liking every single post the person puts out; posting inappropriate, defamatory, aggressive, insulting, or hurtful comments on their social media profiles; persistent messages via social media meant to upset, insult, harass, threaten, etc.
- Posting online comments intended to cause distress to the person.
- Creating a fake online profile(s) with the intention of tarnishing the person’s reputation, creating problems for them, implicating them in misconduct, etc.

### **Social Bullying**

- Deliberately isolating or ignoring the person either individually or in a group.
- Encouraging others in the group to isolate, exclude, or discriminate against the person.
- Deliberately excluding the person from group events or gatherings (either work or social) with the intent of making them feel alone and isolated.
- Making the person feel like they are being excluded just because they’re a member of a certain group with respect to country, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, hobbies, extracurricular activities, etc.
- In the person’s absence, gossiping, spreading malicious rumors about them to undermine their achievements, defame them, hurt their feelings, turn the rest of the group against them, etc.
- Publicly humiliating the person.
- Working as a group or individually to tarnish the person’s personal or professional reputation via gossip, misrepresentation, lies, gaslighting, setting them up for failure, etc.
- Playing pranks and making nasty jokes designed to humiliate, insult, or hurt the person, and then passing it off as fun or fooling around.
- Intentionally treating the person (who is at a lower position or academic career stage) differently from peers (ex: being rude with students and cordial with peers/superiors).
- Pitting two or more people against each other for personal gain or advancement or simply to create issues for them.
- Deliberately excluding the person from group decisions or projects just because they opt out of social interaction and gatherings.
- Making overt or hidden threats to the person’s career advancement if they don’t attend or keep up with the group’s social engagements, punishing them for missing out, etc.
- Making the person or a group of people the butt of most/all jokes constantly/regularly.

### **Career-Related Bullying**

- Deliberately limiting or blocking the person’s career opportunities or professional development.
- Denying the person role advancement due to a personal bias even if the person is sufficiently qualified and a suitable candidate.
- Threatening the person with job loss, demotion, potential blocking of promotion opportunities, a bad recommendation letter, visa cancellation, etc. if they don’t comply with your demands.
- Unreasonably expecting the person to be like you - just as fast, productive, etc., and punishing/reporting them, pegging them as lazy, unproductive, not passionate enough, etc. if they don’t comply.

- Making the person feel guilty and/or ashamed for not doing something exactly the way you want them to, for not following unreasonable/toxic work standards such as working extremely long hours, taking little to no breaks, working weekends, never taking a day off, etc.
- Threatening to reduce/redirect/block/remove the person's funding.
- Deliberately sabotaging the person's chances of succeeding at work, getting a job, career advancement, etc.
- Deliberately withholding information and/or resources which the person requires in order to effectively do their job and/or succeed at it.
- Deliberately interfering with the person's career progress through acts such as writing inaccurate/negative recommendation letters, not assigning credit to the person who deserves it, omitting and/or taking credit for their work, etc.
- Forcing the person to work longer hours than their contract requires them to and/or longer hours than they are paid for.
- Deliberately making the person share authorship, stealing their work or authorship, forcing them into an inappropriate authorship position, changing or replacing the person's authorship position without their knowledge and/or consent, and threatening to remove their name from the manuscript, despite the work and efforts they've put in.
- Setting up the person for failure by giving them impossible workloads or setting unrealistic and/or unachievable deadlines/targets.
- Not paying the person at all, paying them poorly, paying them a salary that is not on par with their achievements and qualifications, paying them a salary that is not appropriate for their role and responsibilities, expecting them to take on additional tasks and projects without fair compensation, delaying their salaries, forcing them to pay from their own pockets first and then get reimbursed at an unspecified later time, etc.
- Unreasonably expecting the person to be available at all hours (odd hours, non-working hours, late at night), on off days and weekends, and also when they're on leave.
- (As a supervisor) Being deliberately unavailable, difficult to reach for consultation or advice when your supervisee needs you.
- (As a supervisor) Being deliberately unresponsive to your supervisee or deliberately delaying your responses to them.
- (As a supervisor) Deliberately negating or disagreeing with your supervisee's ideas or suggestions for their thesis topic.
- (As a supervisor) Telling your supervisee what to do and/or giving them orders and direction instead of mentorship and guidance.
- (As a supervisor) Withholding information about your decision to discontinue your supervisory role with respect to your supervisee and keeping them in the dark about this.
- (As a supervisor) Threatening to discontinue supervision if the supervisee doesn't comply with your demands, or behave in a prescribed (often unreasonable) manner.
- (As a supervisor) Deliberately delaying internal reviews of your supervisee's work so that they miss deadlines and face other negative consequences.
- Forcing the person to sign away or surrender intellectual property or authorship rights.
- Forcing the person to engage in research misconduct or jeopardize the scientific integrity of the research project, just to accelerate the pace of the project.
- Deliberately criticising the person even though they are competent, taking away their responsibilities, forcing them to perform/assigning them trivial tasks.
- Deliberately ignoring and/or excluding the person from work activities/projects.

- Withholding information so that the person doesn't find out when a meeting with collaborators is happening.

### **Sexual or Sexualized Bullying**

- Physically objectifying or sexualizing the person either at the workplace or outside of it.
- Making inappropriate and unwelcome comments about the person's physical appearance and/or clothing.
- Directing unwelcome sexual advances towards the person.
- Directing flirty and/or romantic comments, subtle, or obviously sexual comments towards the person.
- Deliberately making the person feel physically uncomfortable by invading their personal space, initiating unwelcome physical contact, calling for unnecessarily private meetings, calling for meetings in isolated locations, locking doors during one-to-one meetings, etc.
- Verbal bullying of a sexual nature, including jokes referring to sexual acts, using sexual innuendos, suggestive language/comments/remarks, making inappropriate comments of a sexual nature while interacting with the person.
- Sending the person inappropriate text messages and/or emails that are increasingly personal and/or intimate.
- Initiating unwelcome and unwanted sexting with the person and/or pressuring them to engage in sexting.
- Pressuring the person to have an intimate relationship, and threatening to negatively influence their career progress or professional opportunities if they do not comply.
- Quid pro quo – Directing requests for sexual favors towards the person in return for job/career-related perks or advancement such as a promotion, to be the lead on a sought-after project, authorship, funding, etc.
- Unwelcome, inappropriate, or unwanted physical contact, touching, grabbing, deliberately bumping into the person, pushing them into a corner, etc.
- Unwelcome and uncalled for disclosures about one's personal life, personal relationships, sexual encounters and/or fantasies, etc.
- Initiating unwelcome sexualized communication of any form (verbal, non-verbal, written) with the person.
- Directing insults at the person about their sexuality or supposed promiscuity.

### **Other miscellaneous actions**

- Transphobic micro-aggressions, such as deliberately misgendering the person, ignoring their preferred pronouns or deliberately using the wrong ones, and then suddenly getting it right when someone else is within earshot.
- Singling out the person just because they identify as a certain gender, and using this as a reason to exclude, reprimand or insult them, negatively evaluate their work, etc.
- Sustained hostile behaviour directed towards the person (could involve repetition of one or a combination of the behaviours, acts, or communication styles mentioned in this list).
- Departmental abuse where the person is bullied by a group - encouraging others in the workplace to ignore bullying behaviour directed at the person, or even inviting others to join in the bullying/mistreatment.

- Boundary-blurring behaviours, i.e., those that “transgress (often tacit) professional boundaries”. Grooming is “a pattern of these behaviours over time between people in positions of unequal power” (Bull & Page, 2021). Grooming, in this context, is “the process that an abuser uses to desensitise you – to make you less likely to reject or report abusive behaviour” (Survivors UK 2020).

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