

Am I being bullied?

Everyone has the right to a learning and working environment free of bullying and personal harassment.

Workplace Bullying and Personal Harassment is prohibited conduct at BCIT. Please see BCIT's [Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#) for the formal definitions.

Personal harassment, generally refers to unwelcome remarks, behaviours, or communications directed toward an individual or group which misuses authority, or abuses the power. Misuse or abuse of power occurs when it has the effect or purpose of seriously abusing, threatening, demeaning, or intimidating the individual or group of individuals, and interferes with work or educational performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Bullying and Harassment includes any inappropriate conduct or comment by a person towards an employee that the person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause that employee to be humiliated or intimidated.

It is important to note however, that not all negative interactions are considered bullying or personal harassment. Often, what may feel like bullying is actually a result of interpersonal conflict, poor communication skills, or lack of clear expectations.

Examples that *may* constitute bullying or personal harassment (especially if repeated):

- Yelling at someone
- Name calling
- Swearing at someone
- Sabotaging someone else's work
- Making threats
- Unwanted physical touching
- Vandalizing personal belongings
- Spreading malicious rumours

In some cases, if the behaviour or comment is severe (such as that involving violence) one single comment or action may constitute bullying or harassment. However, it is important to note that usually one incident that may be inappropriate or disrespectful, does not necessarily meet the threshold to be considered harassment or bullying. Generally, for comments or behaviour to be considered harassment or bullying there needs to be a pattern of repeated conduct.

The British Columbia Institute of Technology acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish Nations, including the territories of [Skwxwú7mesh](#) (Squamish), [səlilwətaʔ](#) (Tseil-Waututh), and [xwməθkwəyəm](#) (Musqueam).

Examples that do not usually constitute bullying or personal harassment:

- Reasonable action taken by an employer, supervisor, or instructor relating to the management or direction of students or employees
- Providing criticism or feedback on work and assignments
- Sharing differing opinions
- Performance management
- Having a brusque attitude or generally unfriendly demeanour
- Filing legitimate complaints through appropriate channels
- Asking questions regarding job duties, workload, and deadlines
- A co-worker or classmate not doing as much work as you think they should
- Allocating work
- Following-up on work absences
- Requiring performance to meet job standards
- Supervisory mistakes

Tip:

Check your assumptions

Identifying and checking our assumptions and giving the other person an opportunity to identify and check out their own assumptions is an important step in conflict resolution.

How do you check out an assumption? Ask direct questions. For example:

- What did you want to achieve when you did that?
- What information were you given about my role?
- What is your understanding of our assigned task?

What should I do if I've experienced unwelcome behaviour or comments?

It isn't necessary for you to determine if the behaviour does or does not violate BCIT's policy. If you observe or experience anything that has a negative impact on you consider addressing the comment or behaviour directly with the person who made it if you feel safe to do so.

Addressing behaviours with the other person can be empowering. Instead of viewing conflict as scary, remind yourself that working through conflict and clarifying expectations for respectful and effective communication is a step towards building trust. Often conflict can result from misunderstandings and assumptions.

The RDI office has created a [workplace conflict conversation checklist.pdf](#) that is useful to review when addressing conflict. Additionally, we have created a resource guide on [how to give and receive feedback.pdf](#) which may also help you in addressing a conflict.

You can also seek support from any of the following:

- Your Instructor, Program Head, or Associate Dean (for students)
- [The Student Life Office](#) (for student)
- Your direct manager, or if that is the individual who is the subject of your concern, report to their manager (for employees)
- [Student Wellness Advocate from the Student Association](#) (for students)
- [Human Resources](#) (for employees)
- Shop steward or union representative (for unionized employees)
- [The Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion \(RDI\) Office](#) (for staff or students)