

# Dealing with Discrimination

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## What to do if you experience discrimination:

There are many different avenues you can take, and no one option is more correct than the other. It is very much an independent choice based on how comfortable you are to take action.

Below are a list of options that you may want to explore. These options are not exclusive. You can select and pursue multiple options should you deem it appropriate.

- Firstly, recognise that your feelings are valid. Even if you think it too small to be a concern, so big that it is scary to tackle, or anything in between, your feelings are completely natural and valid.
- Consider making a record of the incident, write it down (see template [here](#)) or record a speech note, making sure to include as many practical details such as date, time, location, as well as how it made you feel. If you don't feel comfortable, you need not act on it, but it is helpful to have evidence if/when you do.
- You can report the incident. You may either reach out to someone in authority who can advise or guide you through the process of reporting, or you can undertake it yourself.
  - At Loughborough University, the Online Reporting Tool is a centralised system that can both officially log a reported incident, direct it to the necessary people and provide you with any support. If you wanted an appointment with an adviser for emotional or practical support, that can be arranged too. Visit here for more information:  
<https://www.lboro.ac.uk/internal/online-reporting/>
  - After your report has been submitted it will be viewed by a member of the Student services team. It is likely they will follow up the report by contacting you to discuss your options. If you have opted not to be contacted, an advisor will look at potential actions that the University can make in response to your report. The University may investigate the incident themselves or they may choose to contact the Union management to instigate an internal investigation.
- Only ever deal with the incident directly with the perpetrator if you feel comfortable doing so. If you feel you may escalate the severity of the situation and put yourself in harm's way, avoid doing so.
- Reach out for support – this can be in the form of family, friend, a community or social support group, or you can also reach out to Sections and Services. A list of [services both internal and external to Loughborough can be found here](#).

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## What to do if you witness discrimination:

The advice is largely similar. You can take your own action if you want to, but you must never pressure someone else into doing so.

- Consider making a record of the incident, write it down (see template [here](#)) or record a speech note, making sure to include as many practical details such as date, time, location, as well as how it made you and the recipient of discrimination feel. If you or the recipient do not feel comfortable reporting, you need not act on it, but it is helpful to have evidence if/when you do.
- You have every right to be offended by discriminatory acts, even if you don't belong to the perpetrated group or were not targeted yourself. In this instance, consider calling out the behaviour in the moment if you feel comfortable doing so and it would **not** put you in harm's way. Sometimes, the privilege of not being the targeted group or person may aid you in confronting the behaviour.
- If you were present when someone else was targeted, you can help remove them from the situation and support them.
  - Help to validate their feelings and understand their perspective. You may also support them in reporting the incident or making their own record or evidence of the incident.
  - Help signpost them to support services or resources. [These are listed here](#). If you are unsure, Welfare and Diversity can help share contacts to the relevant trained professionals. You can contact Welfare and Diversity by on this email: [welfareo@lsu.co.uk](mailto:welfareo@lsu.co.uk)
- Do not try to pressure the other person into recording evidence or reporting. You may cause more distress.
  - It is useful, however, if part of your support makes them aware of their options. They could report anonymously or wait to make a decision. Either way, the priority should be supporting the person.
- If the person is **not** comfortable reporting the incident, you are still able to assemble evidence yourself and report it yourself if you were witness to the behaviour.
  - This can be through the Online Reporting Tool, which is a centralised system that can both officially log a reported incident, direct it to the necessary people and provide you with any support. If you wanted an appointment with an adviser for emotional or practical support, that can be arranged too. Visit here for more information: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/internal/online-reporting/>
- There does not need to be a 'victim' of discriminatory behaviour for it to become an issue. If you were witness to generally discriminatory behaviour, where no person present is 'targeted', you can still take similar steps to challenge and/or report.

## What to do if someone **reports** discrimination to you within your LSU

### Leader capacity:

If you do not directly witness discrimination but somebody comes to you for advice within your LSU Leader capacity, you should largely follow the advice on page 2. The following steps can also help you within your role.

- Believe them. Try to provide a non-judgemental environment where they are able to feel safe.
- Listen to them. Don't rush them as they speak or try to tell them how they feel.
- Reassure them. Nobody ever deserves to be bullied, victimised or to feel they are being treated differently or less favourably, on the basis of their protected characteristics.
- Respond to them. You might feel unsure of how to proceed in the conversation. Some useful phrases to help you get started might be: "I am glad you felt able to tell me" "I'm sorry that this happened" and "There is support available to you."
- Ensure their safety. If the discrimination, bullying or harassment has been ongoing you might ask them if there is a threat to their safety. If the answer is yes, you can call security or the online reporting tool can be utilised.
- Outline their different options as per page 2.
- Whilst you should take care of your own wellbeing and be careful not to take on the responsibility of a trained professional, you may wish to check in with the student later. Following up on the conversation, or sending them an email to see how they are getting on can help demonstrate they have allies and are welcome in the Loughborough community.

## How to Speak up

Speaking up is a matter for your own personal judgement. You have the right to be offended language or behaviour. You also have the right not to feel able to address it. The safety and wellbeing of yourself and of others should always be a priority.

If you do decide to address the situation, consider how and when you want to proceed. Often addressing the comment, proposal or action at the time of occurrence is best. However, there will be situations where you might feel it would be better to speak to the person later (depending on factors such as who is present, how many people are present and the power dynamics of the witnesses).

You do not need to apologise for speaking up, nor do you need to minimise their transgression, however, it can help to try to speak in a calm and non-accusatory manner to articulate why their behaviour is unacceptable. Try to label the action or terminology rather than the person. For example: Instead of saying 'You are racist' consider saying 'That language is racist'. Instead of saying 'You are homophobic' consider saying 'That decision alienates and excludes our LGBTQ+ community'.

You may want to address the situation, but may not feel able to be as direct as the examples listed above. You can demonstrate your objection to unacceptable comments through actions such as creating a long pause in the conversation to allow for the speaker to reconsider their actions, or by stating that you do not understand the comment and asking the speaker to explain what they mean.

Loughborough University's Professor Stokoe in her role as an expert in social interaction is in the process of creating a resource to outline 8 different potential responses to advise how you can speak out against microaggressions or discriminatory remarks. This resource will be available before the start of the 2020 Academic year. It will be available on the training academy and the Welfare and Diversity website.

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