# DPIR Code of Conduct

## 1. Purpose

The Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) Code of Conduct sets standards of behaviour and good practice for staff, students, researchers, and visitors. Our aim is to foster an **inclusive, safe, and supportive environment** where everyone feels respected and valued.

**Our Core Values**

As a member of DPIR, we expect you to:

- **Create a safe and supportive environment** to work, teach, learn and research.
- **Treat others with dignity and respect.**
- **Be honest and take responsibility** for what you do.

We recognise that everyone comes from different backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures. We commit to being aware of our assumptions and working constructively to understand other perspectives.

## 2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

DPIR's Code of Conduct sits under the relevant University policies and procedures including:

- Equality Policy
- Harassment Policy
- Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

These are all guided by UK legislation and higher education regulatory requirements, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty): protecting against discrimination based on protected characteristics.
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023: ensuring lawful free expression on campus.
- Employment Rights Act 1996 and related worker protections safeguarding staff who raise concerns or complaints in good faith.
- Office for Students (OfS) Condition E6: requiring universities to take effective and credible steps to prevent and respond to harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023: imposing a duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974: ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of all members of the Department.

- Protection from Harassment Act 1997: prohibiting persistent harassment or intimidation.
- Data Protection Act 2018/UK GDPR: ensuring secure, confidential handling of personal data related to complaints and reporting.

These frameworks underpin our commitment to a safe, inclusive, respectful, and legally compliant environment for all.

## 3. General Behaviour

We are committed to treating others with dignity and respect, recognising that people come from diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures. These differences can sometimes result in varying expectations, interpretations of behaviour, and potential misunderstandings.

We expect all members of the DPIR community to strive to be aware of their implicit assumptions and work together constructively to better understand the perspectives and beliefs of others. This commitment includes:

- **Positive personal interactions:** Always showing respect for personal space, valuing all forms of diversity, and being considerate of others.
- **Respect for individual expression:** Acknowledging and respecting each person's right to share their opinions and feelings. Taking the time to listen and appreciating that others' reactions may differ from our own personal or cultural expectations.
- **Inclusive and supportive environment:** Ensuring everyone feels included and supported. Comments or jokes about protected characteristics are never appropriate, as they may offend or exclude others.

Everyone in DPIR including staff, students, and visitors is an integral part of our community and are responsible for maintaining this commitment. Student conduct in the Department follows the guidelines set by the University.

## 4. Meetings, Lectures, Seminars, and Conferences

Open discussion, debate, and challenge are fundamental to academic engagement, and they thrive only when all participants interact with respect and consideration, whilst ensuring we comply with the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. Please also see the DPIR Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy.

All interactions should uphold equal opportunities and fair treatment. The Department does not tolerate any behaviour whether intentional or unintentional that constitutes intimidation, harassment (including sexual harassment), or discrimination (see Section 8).

The Department's Seminar Speaker Guidance outlines goals for enhancing speaker diversity and fostering a learning environment conducive to the open exchange of ideas and academic debate. This guidance applies to all lectures, classes, and seminars within the Department:

- **Focus on ideas, not individuals:** Challenges should target ideas, not the person presenting them. Participants must avoid aggressive or intimidating language and disruptive behaviours, such as persistent interruptions or repeated remarks or questions. They should also respect requests from the presenter.
- **Support for less experienced participants:** Students and early-career researchers for example may have less experience in meetings or seminars. For less experienced presenters, it may be appropriate to allow only clarification questions during their presentation, with additional questions reserved for afterward.
- **Responsibilities of organisers and chairs:** Event organisers and chairs are responsible for promoting and upholding these principles. Participants should be reminded of the importance of respectful engagement, for example through brief opening remarks or references to this Code of Conduct in event materials.

You should also familiarise yourself with the DPIR Classroom Guidelines.

## 5. Emails

As a rule, emails should be sent and responded to during standard working hours (8.00am – 6.00pm weekdays). If a message is sent outside these hours, the sender should make it clear that no immediate response is expected. Emails should always be professional, considerate, and respectful in tone, recognising others' workloads and differing roles or responsibilities. Bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment), or any misuse of email will not be tolerated.

Email correspondence should be clear, concise, and proportionate. Group emails and the "reply all" function should only be used when necessary. Sensitive or confidential information must not be shared by email unless it is appropriately secured, and all communications must comply with University IT policies and data protection regulations, including GDPR. Staff and students are expected to check and respond to emails within a reasonable timeframe or to use an automatic reply when unavailable, maintaining professionalism and courtesy in all communications.

Further practical advice can be found in Appendix A – Email Etiquette.

## 6. Teaching and Supervision

Teaching and supervision should take place in an inclusive environment that encourages active participation. Organisers are responsible for ensuring that everyone is invited to contribute and feels welcome.

Staff and students are expected to interact respectfully. Staff should be mindful of the inherent power dynamics in teaching relationships. Any critique or feedback should focus on the work itself and be appropriate to the recipient's level of experience.

Faculty should consider the diverse perspectives of their audience when delivering lectures and when selecting examples or study materials.

All members of the Department are encouraged to reflect on their communication in lectures, seminars, and meetings, and to consider the impact it may have on others.

## 7. Social and Networking Events

Social and networking events organised as part of departmental activities such as team-building sessions should adhere to the same principles. Organisers and participants alike should ensure these events promote inclusivity and respectful interactions.

## 8. Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination

DPIR does not tolerate any form of harassment (including Sexual Harassment), bullying, or victimisation. All members of the Department community, including visitors and contractors, are expected to treat one another with respect, courtesy, and consideration, in line with the University's policy on Bullying and Harassment.

Discrimination is the prejudicial treatment of any individual based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, or sexual orientation. DPIR does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. The Department adheres to the University's Equality Policy and is committed, under the Equality Act 2010, to ensuring that no member of our community is unlawfully discriminated against based on any protected characteristics.

If a member of DPIR experiences bullying or harassment, support and guidance are available through established departmental and university processes.

DPIR has a team of trained Harassment Advisors who provide confidential guidance and support. They can explain the options available to Department members whether as a victim or as an active bystander.

Meeting with a Harassment Advisor is an informal, confidential conversation. It does not initiate a formal process but provides a safe, supportive, and non-judgemental space to discuss concerns and receive guidance on next steps.

If you are unsure whom to contact or prefer to speak with someone outside the department, please reach out to the central Harassment Support Team at harassment.line@admin.ox.ac.uk.

Detailed information on the Department's approach to preventing bullying and harassment (including sexual harassment) can be found on the Department's website including specific guidance for students – Understanding Harassment and Sexual Misconduct: What you need to know.

Staff should also consult - Responding to Student Disclosure of Harassment and Sexual Misconduct for Staff

## 9. Reporting Concerns

If you experience bullying or harassment (including sexual harassment), or witness behaviour that falls short of the standards outlined in this Code of Conduct, we encourage you to report it as soon as possible. Multiple reporting options are available, allowing you to choose the approach that feels most appropriate and manageable.

The Department is committed to addressing such issues promptly and providing support to ensure a swift resolution. Your wellbeing and the maintenance of a respectful environment is our highest priority.

Complaints regarding Departmental facilities should be directed to the Department's Operations and Officer Manager or Head of Administration and Finance. If you are unable to approach these individuals, you may contact the Head of Department.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may escalate your concern by submitting a formal complaint to the Proctors under the University Student Complaints Procedure.

If your concern relates to teaching or other college-provided services, you should raise it with your tutor or the appropriate college officer, such as the Senior Tutor or Tutor for Graduates. Your college can also advise you on how to escalate the matter if you are not satisfied with the outcome of their consideration.

**Confidentiality:** All reports are handled in accordance with **UK GDPR and** University data protection policies.

## 10. Wellbeing

The department is committed to creating an environment where everybody is supported to achieve their full potential. Our wellbeing webpages have been created to help you look after yourself and your colleagues.

## 11. Disclaimer

In the event of any inconsistency or contradiction between this document and University policies or regulations, the relevant University policies and regulations shall take precedence

## 12. Monitoring and Review

The EDI Committee will review the code annually and recommend amendments to the General Purposes Committee (GPC).

| Governance | Detail |
|---|---|
| **Guidance Owner** | Matthew Gooch, EDI Officer |
| **Reported to/Noted by** | EDI Committee |
| **Approved by** | General Purposes Committee |
| **Guidance Date** | November 2025 |
| **Review Frequency** | Annually |
| **Next Review Date** | November 2026 |
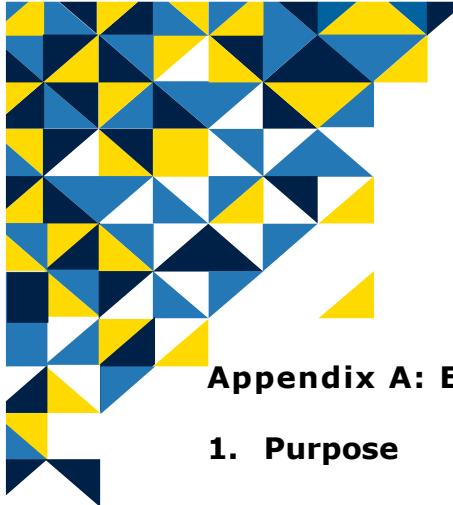
**Appendix A: Email Etiquette**

**1. Purpose**

To provide practical advice on good practice.

**2. Respecting Working Hours**

2.1 If you need to draft emails late at night, consider using "delay delivery" so they arrive during working hours (8.00am-6.00pm weekdays).

2.2 Never send negative or sensitive feedback (to students or colleagues) late at night or at weekends.

**3. Tone and Professionalism**

3.1 If you wouldn't say it face-to-face, don't write it in an email.

3.2 Avoid excessive use of CAPITALS or "high importance" flags, which may feel aggressive.

3.3 Always treat professional services staff with the same respect as academic colleagues.

**4. Clarity and Brevity**

4.1 Keep emails concise and to the point.

4.2 Use clear subject lines so the recipient knows what the email is about.

4.3 Provide several working days' notice when sending documents that require attention prior to meetings.

**5. Group Communication**

5.1 Use "Reply all" only if every recipient genuinely needs your response.

5.2 Be thoughtful when copying others into messages (CC/BCC) — avoid creating unnecessary pressure or embarrassment.

**6. Confidentiality and Security**

6.1 Avoid including sensitive personal details in the body of an email.

6.2 Use password protection/encryption for attachments containing personal data.

6.3 Think carefully before forwarding emails outside the University.

**7. Responsiveness**

7.1 Check and acknowledge important emails promptly, even with a holding reply.

7.2    Use automatic replies when you are away, making clear when you will next respond.

7.3    If you are extremely busy, you may set a temporary autoreply to manage expectations but use sparingly.

## 8.    Quick Reference: Top 10 Tips

1.    Think before you send - if you wouldn't say it face-to-face, don't write it.
2.    Respect working hours - don't create pressure to respond out of hours.
3.    Keep emails concise - too much information gets lost.
4.    Use clear subject lines - they're the window to your message.
5.    Use "Reply all" only when needed.
6.    Copy (CC/BCC) only those who genuinely need to see the email.
7.    Watch your tone - avoid CAPITALS, excessive urgency, or unkind phrasing.
8.    Protect confidentiality - follow GDPR and IT policies.
9.    Give colleagues reasonable notice - don't send urgent tasks at the last minute.
10.   Be professional - every email represents you and the University.