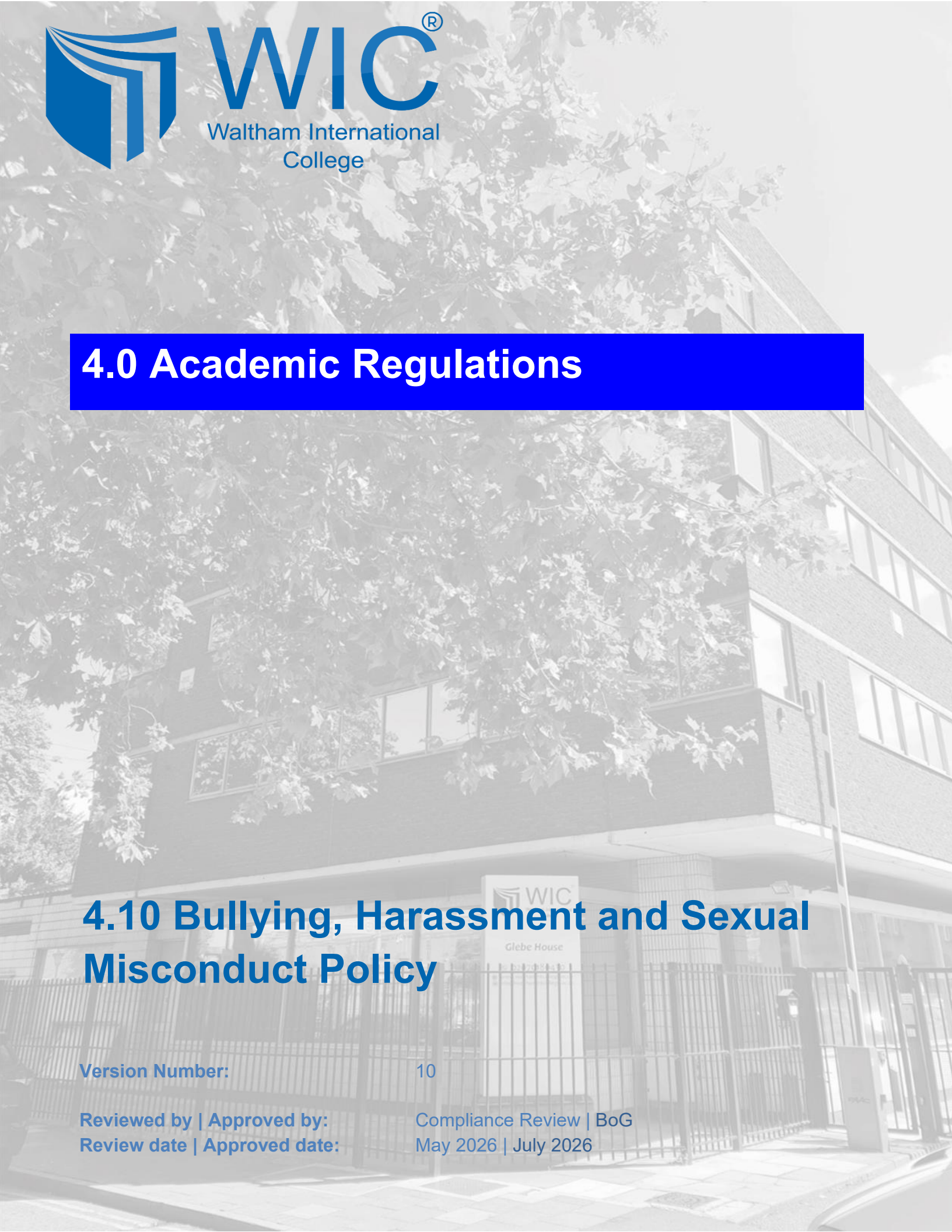
Waltham International College

4.0 Academic Regulations



4.10 Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy

Version Number:	10
Reviewed by | Approved by:	Compliance Review | BoG
Review date | Approved date:	May 2026 | July 2026

Compliance Alignment Statement

This version of the Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy has been aligned to current UK and Office for Students requirements as of May 2026. The substantive changes are listed below.

Version Control Statement

Version	Date	Changes	Reason	Author	Next Review
1	14/12/2017		New Policy	Academic Manager	December 2018
2	17/12/2018	Aligned policy to the new structure	Annual Review	Director of Studies HE	December 2019
3	July 2019	Minor changes	Annual Review	Director of Studies HE	July 2020
4	May 2020	Policy revised in line with Policy Formats after September 2019 Roles revised in line with the current structure Added Internal and External Reference Points	Annual Review	Head of HE	Jul/Aug 2021
5	July 2021	Minor changes	Annual Review	Head of HE	July 2022
6	July 2022	Minor changes and grammar check.	Annual Review	Head of HE	July 2023
7	Feb 2024	Added Introduction, Added informal and formal procedures Added Support available Appendices- types of harassments moved and key contacts	Annual Review	Head of Student Services	July 2024
8	September 2024	Minor amends for clarity of reading Inclusion of Sexual misconduct content	Annual Review	QA Lead	August 2025
9	July 2025	Minor amends to reflect OfS E6 Definitions & Outcomes & Consequences added	Annual Review	QA Lead/ Head of Student Support Services	August 2026
10	May 2026	- Textual revisions made throughout to bring the policy into compliance with applicable regulations - Updated External Reference List - Added Appendix 4 – Flowcharts	Compliance Alignment 2026 (OfS)	QA Compliance Review	August 2027

External Reference Points

- OfS Regulatory Framework 2018 (as amended) – Condition E6 (Harassment and Sexual Misconduct)
- OfS Condition E6: requires registered providers to have effective systems to prevent and respond to harassment and sexual misconduct
- OfS Condition B5: student engagement and partnership
- Equality Act 2010 – prohibited conduct: direct discrimination, harassment, victimisation; protected characteristics
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Human Rights Act 1998 – Article 3 (protection from degrading treatment); Article 8 (privacy); Article 10 (expression)
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2022
- QAA UK Quality Code 2024
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
- Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on preventing violence against women)
- Consumer Rights Act 2015 and CMA Guidance for HE Providers 2023

Related Policies and Documents

Affects all other policy documents. This document should however be read together with the following documents:

- 1.16 Freedom of Speech, Academic Freedom and External Speakers Policy
- 4.06 Complaints Policy
- 4.07 Academic Appeals Policy
- 4.09 Non-Academic Misconduct Policy
- 4.11 Fitness to Study Policy
- 4.12 Fitness to Practice Policy
- 4.14 Student Code of Conduct
- 4.15 Extenuating Circumstances Policy (including Extensions and Deferrals)

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1. Purpose

This Policy sets out WIC's approach to preventing and responding to bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct within the College community. It establishes the procedures for reporting, investigating, and resolving incidents, and defines the support available to those affected. WIC is committed to a victim-centred, trauma-informed approach in all matters covered by this Policy.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all students enrolled at WIC and to all College staff. It covers conduct occurring on College premises, during College-related activities and events (whether on-campus or off-campus, including placement settings), and online (including social media and other digital platforms) where the conduct has a direct and material impact on the safety or welfare of members of the College community.

Where conduct occurs outside College premises or College-related activities, WIC's ability to take formal disciplinary action may be limited. However, the College will always provide support to those affected and will take all reasonable steps to protect the safety and welfare of any member of the College community where there is an ongoing risk.

3. Introduction

Waltham International College (WIC) is committed to fostering a higher education environment that is safe, inclusive, and free from all forms of bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct. The College recognises that such conduct causes significant harm to individuals and to the broader college community, and that addressing it effectively is both a legal obligation and an institutional priority.

This Policy has been fully reviewed and updated in May 2026 to align with OfS Condition E6, which places specific requirements on registered providers to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct, to handle reports fairly and in a trauma-informed manner, and to publish an annual report on outcomes. It also reflects the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Sexual Offences Act 2003, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2022.

This Policy should be read alongside WIC's related policies including the Student Code of Conduct, Non-Academic Misconduct Policy, the Complaints Policy, and the Fitness to Study Policy, and forms part of WIC's wider Academic Regulations.

This Policy is aligned with OfS Condition E6, which requires registered providers to have effective systems to: prevent harassment and sexual misconduct; handle reports of harassment and sexual misconduct in a fair, transparent, and trauma-informed manner; and produce and publish an annual report on their work to address harassment and sexual misconduct. WIC takes all reports seriously and is committed to a victim-centred, trauma-informed approach.

4. Definitions

4.1 Bullying

Bullying is repeated, unwanted behaviour that is designed to hurt, intimidate, exclude, or undermine an individual. It may be physical, verbal, psychological, or digital (cyberbullying). Bullying need not be related to a protected characteristic.

4.2 Harassment

Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Protected characteristics for the purposes of this definition include age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Conduct may amount to harassment even if unintentional.

4.3 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. It includes, but is not limited to: unwanted sexual comments or jokes; displaying sexually explicit material; unwanted sexual touching; requests for sexual favours; and sexual advances that are not welcome.

4.4 Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct encompasses a range of behaviours of a sexual nature that are unwanted, non-consensual, or coercive. This includes sexual assault, rape, intimate partner abuse, coercive control, stalking, and image-based sexual abuse ("revenge pornography"). WIC recognises the severity of these behaviours and the significant impact they can have on victims. Sexual misconduct may constitute criminal conduct and will be referred to the police where appropriate.

4.5 Victimisation

Victimisation is treating someone unfavourably because they have made, or are suspected of having made, a complaint or disclosure under this Policy, or because they have supported someone else in doing so.

4.6 Consent

A person consents to a sexual interaction if they agree by choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Consent cannot be assumed on the basis of a previous sexual experience or previously given consent, and it may be withdrawn at any time. Consent must be ongoing and clearly communicated.

A person cannot give consent if they are asleep, unconscious, or too intoxicated to make a free choice. Engaging in sexual activity with someone who has not consented, or who lacks the capacity to consent, constitutes a serious criminal offence under UK law regardless of any prior relationship between the parties.

5. WIC’s Commitments Under OfS Condition E6

In compliance with OfS Condition E6, WIC commits to:

- Publishing a clear and accessible policy setting out how WIC prevents and responds to harassment and sexual misconduct
- Providing training to all staff on responding to disclosures in a trauma-informed, victim-centred manner

- Having a designated Safeguarding Lead responsible for overseeing implementation of this Policy
- Ensuring students can report harassment and sexual misconduct through multiple channels, including an anonymous reporting option
- Providing appropriate support to students who make disclosures, including signposting to external specialist services
- Investigating all formal reports fairly, promptly, and in compliance with the principles of natural justice
- Publishing an annual report on WIC's work to address bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct, including data on reports received and outcomes
- Reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of this Policy at least annually

This Policy applies to all members of the WIC community, including both students and staff. Staff-to-staff conduct falls within the scope of this Policy where it has an impact on students or the college environment. Staff who wish to raise a formal complaint against a colleague should do so in accordance with the designated HR Disciplinary and Grievance procedure, and may at any stage seek assistance from the HR team.

WIC takes all reports seriously and will act on every complaint made in good faith. However, any allegation that is found to be malicious or vexatious will be noted and the individual responsible may be subject to action under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy or, in the case of staff, the relevant HR Disciplinary and Grievance procedure.

6. Types of Harassment (Examples)

The following are examples of conduct that may constitute harassment under this Policy. This list is not exhaustive:

- Racial abuse, racist language, or derogatory comments about a person's ethnicity, nationality, or culture
- Homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic language or conduct
- Disability-related harassment, including mocking a person's impairment or condition
- Religious harassment, including ridiculing or denigrating a person's faith or beliefs
- Sexist comments, unwanted sexual advances, or gender-based harassment
- Cyberbullying, including targeted online abuse, sharing of intimate images without consent, and harassment via social media
- Stalking or persistent unwanted contact
- Intimidating or threatening behaviour

7. Reporting Options

Students who have experienced or witnessed bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct can report it through the following channels:

- Anonymous reporting: via the College's online reporting tool (link available on the VLE and College website)
- Informal disclosure: speaking with the Head of Student Support Services, a Personal Tutor, or any trusted member of College staff
- Formal report: completing the Harassment and Misconduct Report Form, available from Student Support Services or the VLE
- External reporting: students may report criminal matters to the police at any time. The College will support students in doing so if they wish

WIC will not require students to choose between reporting to the College and reporting to the police. Students may do both or either. WIC will provide support regardless of whether a formal report is made.

8. Support Available

WIC is committed to providing comprehensive support to anyone who discloses bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct, regardless of whether they choose to make a formal report. Support available includes:

- Access to the College's Wellbeing Advisor and counselling service
- A designated support person throughout any investigation or formal process
- Practical adjustments such as changes to timetables, study arrangements, or physical proximity to the alleged perpetrator
- Signposting to external specialist services, including Rape Crisis, Galop (for LGBTQ+ people), and national domestic abuse helplines
- Academic support to minimise the impact of the experience on the student's studies, including consideration under the Extenuating Circumstances Policy

9. Informal Resolution

For lower-level concerns, informal resolution may be an appropriate first step. Early intervention, while not mandatory, can often resolve matters by fostering open and constructive dialogue, allowing those affected to articulate the impact of hurtful behaviour and offering the alleged perpetrator the opportunity to understand the consequences of their actions.

Students who have experienced bullying or harassment may speak directly to the alleged perpetrator where this feels safe and appropriate. Students who do not feel comfortable doing so may seek support from a Personal Tutor, Programme Manager, or the Student Support Team. Staff may initiate

a discussion with the relevant line manager to facilitate constructive dialogue, or seek assistance from the HR team.

Mediation is available as an informal and voluntary option, facilitated by a neutral third party appointed to help the parties resolve their dispute. Students wishing to explore mediation should contact Student Support Services. Staff referrals for mediation should be made through HR. Mediation is not appropriate in cases involving sexual misconduct or serious harassment. Mediation is also not appropriate where there is a significant power imbalance between the parties, for example where the alleged conduct involves a member of staff and a student.

Individuals will not face any disadvantage or retaliation for raising a concern in good faith, whether through informal or formal routes.

10. Procedure for Formal Reports

Where a report is made anonymously, the College will assess whether a formal investigation can be conducted without identifying the reporting person. In some cases, the nature or seriousness of the alleged conduct may require an investigation to be opened on the basis of an anonymous report alone, particularly where there is a risk to the safety of others. Where an investigation is opened on this basis, interim measures may be applied in accordance with section 11. An anonymous reporter will not receive a formal outcome notification but may contact the Harassment Lead to receive general information about the outcome where this is possible without compromising the privacy of either party.

10.1 Stage 1 – Receipt of Report and Initial Response

All formal reports are received by the Safeguarding Lead within 3 working days. The Safeguarding Lead will make an initial assessment of the report, offer immediate support to the reporting person, and take any necessary interim protective measures to safeguard the welfare of the reporting person and others. The person(s) named in the report will be notified that a report has been made as soon as it is safe to do so.

10.2 Stage 2 – Investigations

- An independent investigating officer who was not involved in the matter reported will be appointed to conduct the investigation. The investigation will gather evidence from all relevant parties in a fair and trauma-informed manner. Both the reporting person and the respondent have the right to be accompanied at any interview or meeting, to present evidence, and to be informed of the outcome and reasons for it.
- Throughout the investigation, the designated support person will maintain regular contact with the reporting person to ensure they are aware of the progress of the investigation and are accessing appropriate support. Where the investigation is likely to have an impact on the reporting person's ability to engage with their studies (including meeting assessment deadlines or attending examinations) the support person will actively facilitate a referral to the Extenuating Circumstances process under the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure (4.15). Students do not need to wait until the investigation has concluded before applying for extenuating circumstances; applications may be made at any point during the investigation where the impact on studies is being experienced.
- The investigation will normally be completed within 40 working days of the appointment of the investigating officer. Where the investigation is likely to take longer, for example due to the

complexity of the case, the number of witnesses, or any parallel criminal proceedings, both parties will be informed of the revised timescale and reasons in writing.

10.3 Stage 3 – Outcomes and Sanctions

- Where a finding of bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct is made, sanctions will be applied in line with the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.
- Sanctions may range from a formal written warning to exclusion from the College.
- All outcomes are proportionate to the severity of the misconduct.
- The reporting person and the respondent are informed of the outcome in writing.

10.4 Stage 4 – Appeal

Both the reporting person and the respondent have the right to appeal the outcome within 10 working days on the grounds of:

- procedural error or irregularity that materially affected the outcome
- bias or improper conduct on the part of a panel member or investigating officer
- misleading or incorrect information provided to the student about the process that materially disadvantaged them
- new evidence not reasonably available at the time of the Panel hearing
- disproportionate sanction

The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Safeguarding Lead within 10 working days of receiving the written outcome, setting out the ground(s) relied upon and providing any supporting evidence. The appeal will be heard by an Appeal Panel comprising a senior manager not previously involved in any stage of the proceedings (who will act as Chair), and one other independent member appointed by the Principal. Both the reporting person and the respondent will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing. Both parties may be accompanied by a person of their choice, who may not be a practising legal representative.

The outcome of the appeal is communicated to the student in writing within 10 working days of the hearing, with reasons. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final within WIC. Following the conclusion of all internal processes, WIC will issue a Completion of Procedures letter within 5 working days of the final decision. The student may then refer their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) within 12 months.

11. Interim Measures

WIC may take interim protective measures pending the outcome of any investigation where there is a risk to the safety or welfare of any member of the College community. Interim measures may include no-contact arrangements, changes to timetables or teaching groups, or temporary exclusion from campus. Interim measures are without prejudice to the outcome of the investigation.

12. Freedom of Speech

This Policy is applied in a manner consistent with WIC's duty to protect freedom of speech under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2022. WIC recognises that free expression is a

fundamental value of academic life. However, expression that constitutes unlawful harassment, discrimination, or sexual misconduct is not protected by the right to freedom of expression.

13. Data Protection

Information collected during harassment and misconduct proceedings is processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Data is handled sensitively and shared only with those who need to know for the purposes of investigation and support.

14. Annual Reports and Monitoring

In compliance with OfS Condition E6, WIC will produce and publish an annual report on its work to address bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct. The report will include:

- the number and type of reports received;
- outcomes of investigations;
- actions taken to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct;
- and plans for further improvement.

The report is reviewed by the Academic Board and submitted to the OfS as part of the Annual Monitoring Return.

15. Appendices

15.1 Appendix 1 – Forms of Harassment

The following provides further detail on the forms of harassment that may be covered by this Policy. This list is illustrative and not exhaustive.

15.1.1 Racial Harassment

Racial harassment is any behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, about race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins, which is directed at an individual or group and creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Examples include derogatory name-calling, racist jokes, display of racially offensive material, exclusion from activities, verbal threats, and physical attack.

15.1.2 Harassment on Grounds of Sexual Orientation

This includes any unwanted conduct based on actual or perceived sexual orientation directed at individuals who are, or are thought to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered. Examples include offensive jokes, ridicule, verbal threats, derogatory comments, intrusive questioning about domestic circumstances, gossip, physical attack, unfair allocation of work, and exclusion from activities.

15.1.3 Harassment on Grounds of Religion or Belief

Any behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, relating to religion, religious belief, or similar philosophical belief, which constitutes unwanted conduct violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Examples include offensive jokes, ridicule, and display of offensive material.

15.1.4 Harassment on Grounds of Disability

Harassment based on a person having a physical or mental impairment, learning difficulty, or disfigurement. This can include offensive or patronising language, inappropriate jokes or comments, questions which offend the individual, and display of offensive material.

15.1.5 Harassment on Grounds of Age

Ageism can affect anyone regardless of their age. Harassment on grounds of age may include assumptions regarding inability to learn, offensive remarks, and exclusion based on age.

15.1.6 Harassment on Grounds of Gender Reassignment

This can include suggestive remarks or sounds, unwanted comments on dress and appearance, and verbal threats directed at individuals on the basis of gender reassignment.

15.1.7 Online and Cyber Bullying

Online or cyberbullying involves the use of technology, including texting, instant messaging, and social media platforms, to harass or intimidate others. Making or posting offensive remarks and material online may constitute bullying and harassment under this Policy. The College expects all students and staff to comply with its code of conduct regarding the use of information technology.

15.2 Appendix 2 – Sexual Misconduct: Further Examples

Sexual misconduct is any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, whether occurring in person or via letter, telephone, text, email, or other electronic or social media. It includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Pressuring or forcing someone to engage in sexual activity
- Engaging in, or attempting to engage in, sexual activity with a person without consent, or with a person who is too intoxicated or is asleep or unconscious to give consent
- Recording and/or sharing intimate images or recordings of another person without their consent
- Touching inappropriately without consent, including kissing
- Inappropriately exposing sexual organs to another person
- Unwanted sexting – sending sexually explicit texts or images without consent
- Unwanted sexual attention, including wolf-whistling and making sexualised comments about a person's body
- Repeatedly following another person without good reason (stalking)
- Organising or participating in events that could reasonably be expected to cause degradation or humiliation to those who have experienced sexual violence

15.3 Appendix 3 – Support Organisations

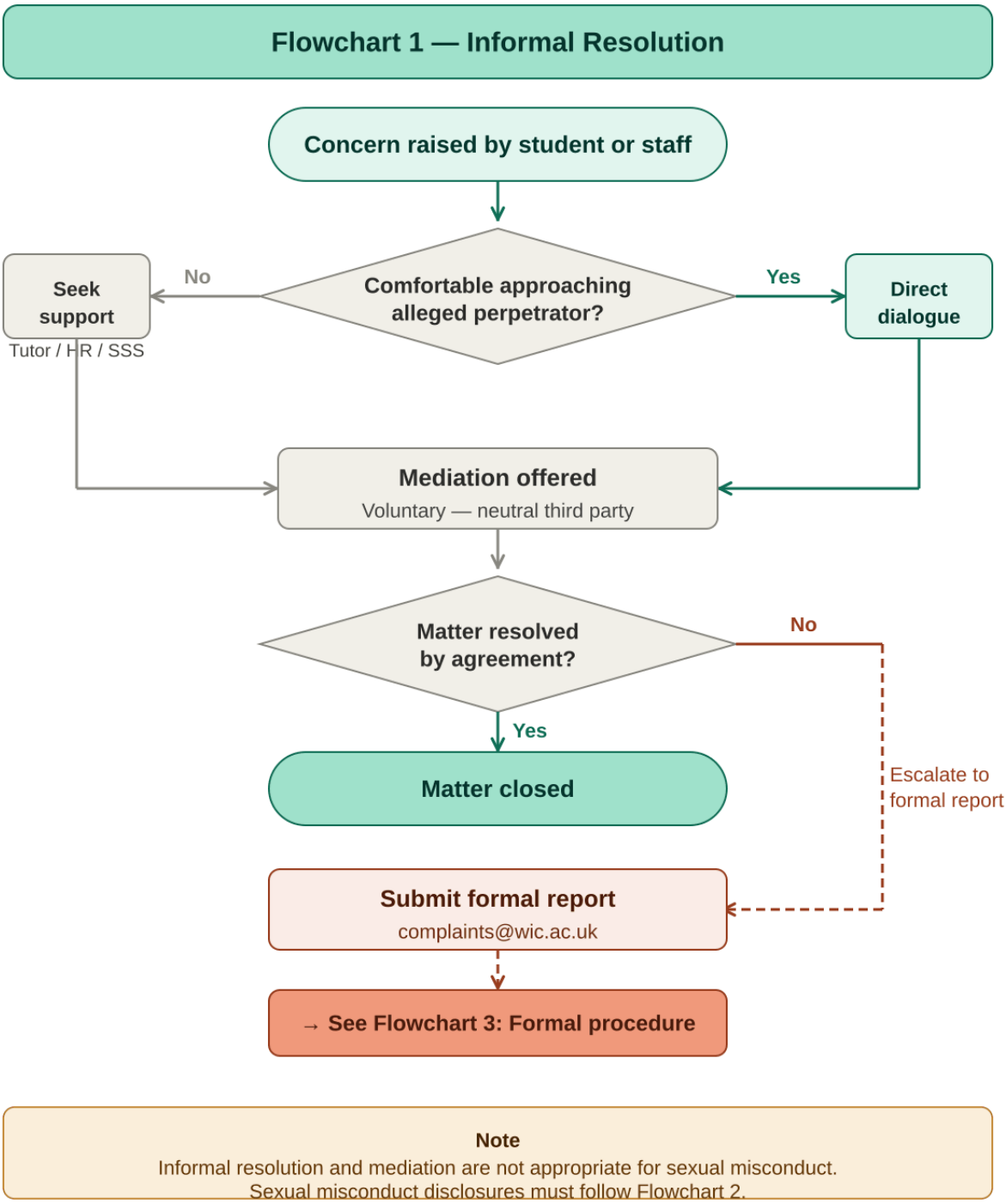
The following external organisations can provide independent support and advice. WIC does not endorse any specific service; this list is provided for information and signposting purposes only.

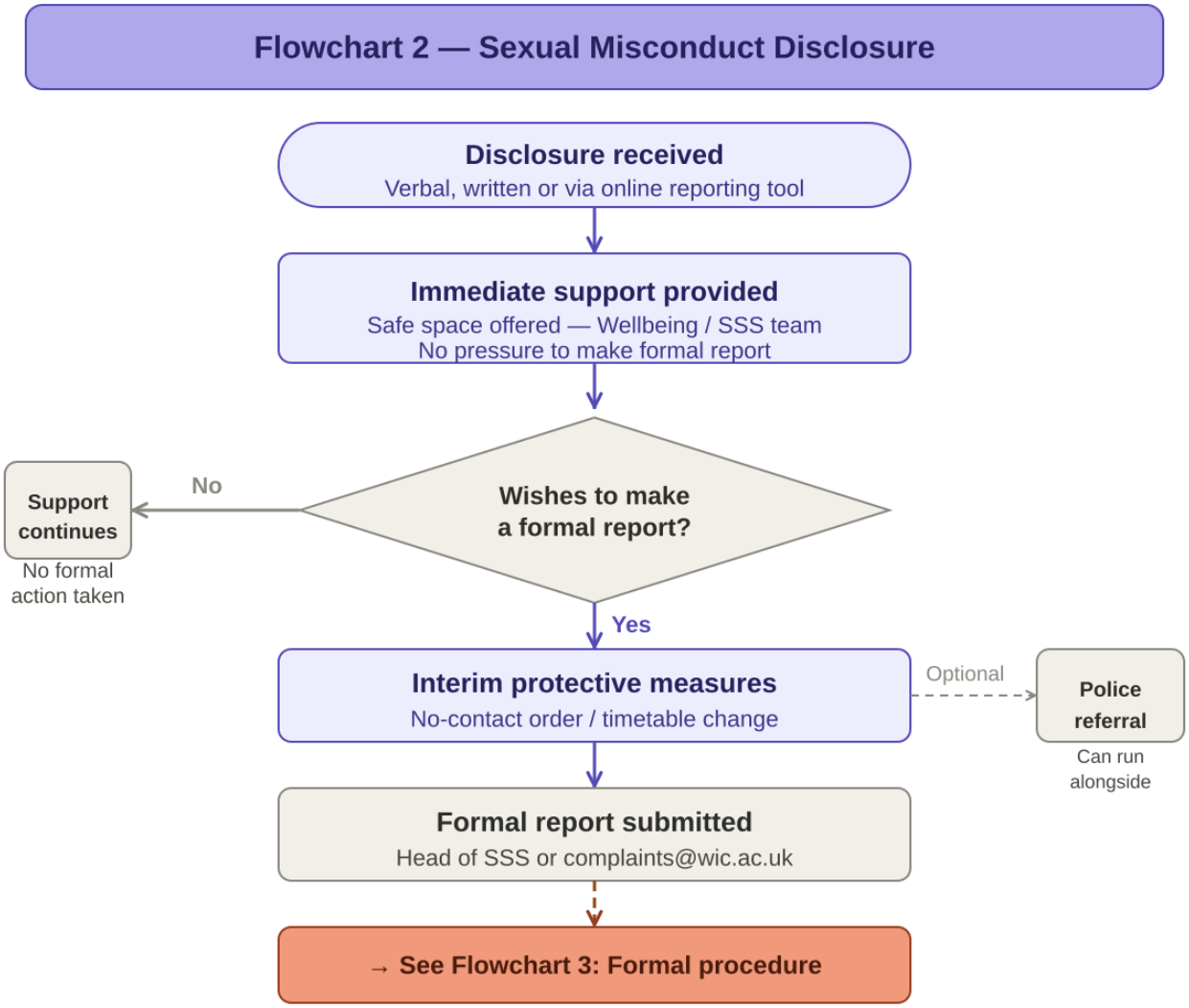
- Rape Crisis England and Wales – rapecrisis.org.uk
- Galop (LGBT+ sexual violence support) – galop.org.uk
- Survivors UK (male rape and sexual abuse) – survivorsuk.org
- The Samaritans (general emotional support, 24/7) – samaritans.org | Tel: 116 123
- Victim Support – victimsupport.org.uk
- Stonewall (LGBT support services) – stonewall.org.uk
- TellMama (anti-Muslim abuse reporting) – tellmamauk.org
- Disability Rights UK (disabled students' helpline) – disabilityrightsuk.org
- NSPCC Abuse in Education Helpline – nspcc.org.uk
- Citizens Advice – citizensadvice.org.uk

For urgent internal support, members of the WIC community should contact Wellbeing@wic.ac.uk

15.4 Appendix 4 – Reporting Pathway Flowcharts

The three flowcharts below illustrate each reporting pathway and how they connect. Flowchart 1 (Informal Resolution) and Flowchart 2 (Sexual Misconduct) both feed into Flowchart 3 (Formal Procedure) via dashed escalation arrows.



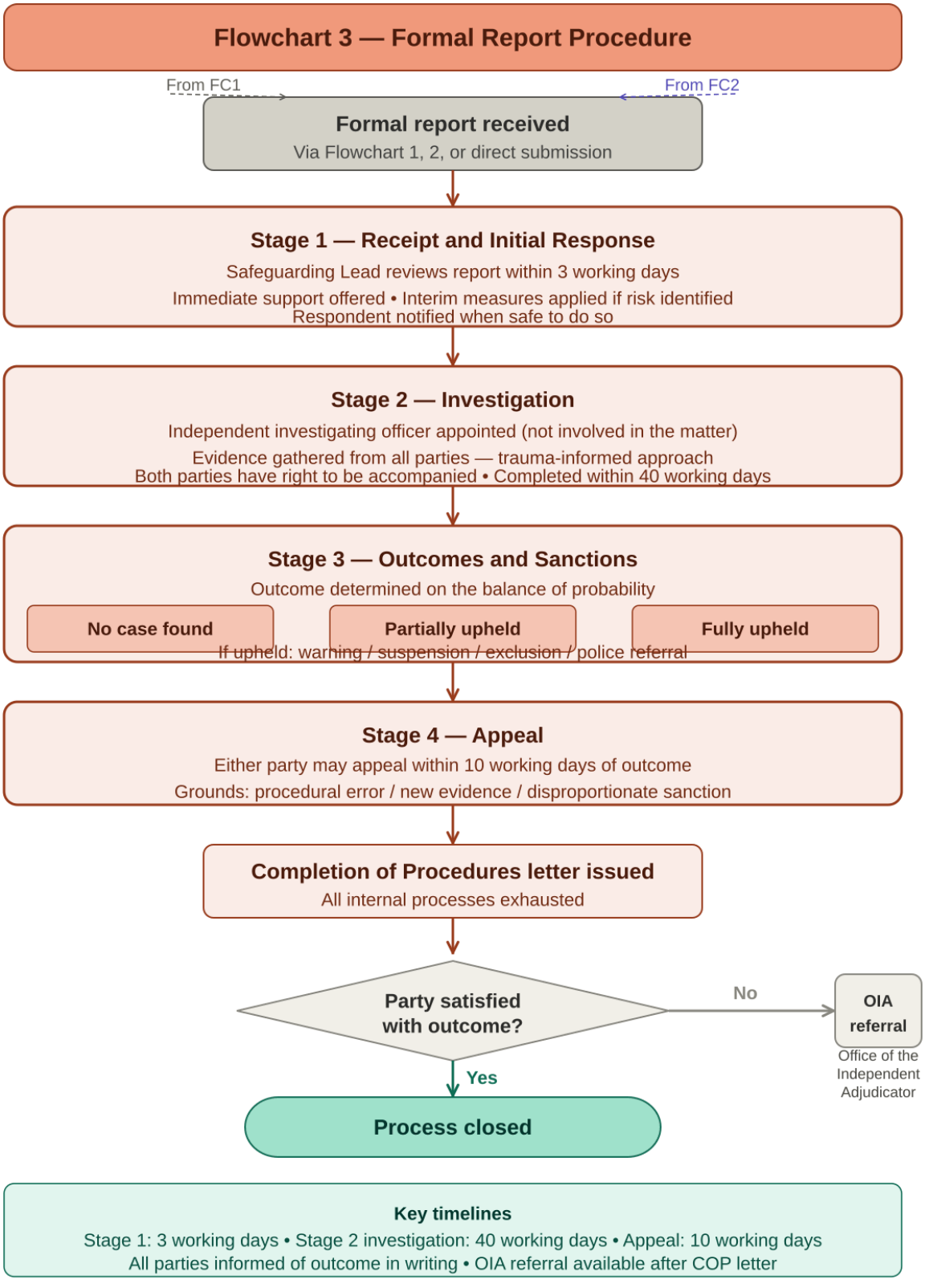


Key principles for sexual misconduct disclosures

- The person disclosing controls what and how much they share
- Confidentiality maintained subject to investigation requirements
- No retaliation for reports made in good faith
- Support is available regardless of whether a formal report is made

External support available at any stage

Rape Crisis England & Wales | Galop | Survivors UK | The Samaritans
See Appendix 3 for full details


Flowchart 3 — Formal Report Procedure
From FC1
From FC2
Formal report received
Via Flowchart 1, 2, or direct submission
Stage 1 — Receipt and Initial Response
Safeguarding Lead reviews report within 3 working days
Immediate support offered • Interim measures applied if risk identified
Respondent notified when safe to do so
Stage 2 — Investigation
Independent investigating officer appointed (not involved in the matter)
Evidence gathered from all parties — trauma-informed approach
Both parties have right to be accompanied • Completed within 40 working days
Stage 3 — Outcomes and Sanctions
Outcome determined on the balance of probability
No case found
Partially upheld
Fully upheld
If upheld: warning / suspension / exclusion / police referral
Stage 4 — Appeal
Either party may appeal within 10 working days of outcome
Grounds: procedural error / new evidence / disproportionate sanction
Completion of Procedures letter issued
All internal processes exhausted
Party satisfied with outcome?
No
OIA referral
Office of the Independent Adjudicator
Yes
Process closed
Key timelines
Stage 1: 3 working days • Stage 2 investigation: 40 working days • Appeal: 10 working days
All parties informed of outcome in writing • OIA referral available after COP letter