

## Policy Title: **Managing Violence in the Workplace**

Descriptors : 1) managing 2) violence 3) workplace 4) manner  
5) behaviour 6) incidents

Category : **Human Resources**

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### 1. **Intent**

Violence directed towards staff in the workplace will not be tolerated at Edith Cowan University.

Any violent incident, whether threatened or actual, at an Edith Cowan University workplace (as defined) will be investigated as appropriate and formally addressed in a timely manner. Edith Cowan University will make every effort to support and protect persons who experience a violent act in the workplace.

This policy seeks to offer guidance on the manner in which Edith Cowan University and its staff will effectively respond to, manage and address alleged incidents of violence in the workplace.

### 2. **Organisational Scope**

This policy applies to all Edith Cowan University staff.

### 3. **Definitions**

**'Violence'** Actions ranging from intimidation and low-level threatening behaviour to physical assault and verbal abuse

**'Workplace'** Any Edith Cowan University campus, facility or official location that may include temporary work spaces where Edith Cowan University is the recognised employer and anywhere where an Edith Cowan University employee is on official duty. For staff working off-shore or on assignment in another employer's workplace, the employer managing the particular workplace would be responsible for adherence to this policy.

### 4. **Policy Content**

- 4.1 Violence is a workplace hazard and as the employer, Edith Cowan University and all its employees must take reasonable, practicable steps to

protect employees and other people in the workplace from violent incidents which may cause injury or harm.

- 4.2** Edith Cowan University will deal with any alleged violence in the workplace incident that involves an Edith Cowan University staff member on official duty and which occurs at any of its workplaces.
- 4.3** All parties involved in an alleged violent incident in the workplace will have their rights respected; all actions will be dealt with in a confidential manner and in accordance with the Principles of Natural Justice.
- 4.4** Preventive assessments of potential violent scenarios is encouraged and should be conducted by the supervisor and if any facet is deemed to be high risk in respect of this policy, adequate training should be provided covering all aspects of avoidance through to reporting.
- 4.5** The following process steps outline the manner by which alleged incidents of violence in the workplace are to be managed.
- 4.6 Steps to follow:**  
Generally and wherever possible, an employee's first response to a potentially violent incident should be to remove themselves from the situation.

**4.6.1 Step 1: Employee involved in a workplace incident.**

An employee is subjected to a threatening or violent incident. The employee should consider:

- a. the severity of the incident;
- b. the extent of harm/injury;
- c. the immediacy of a required response;
- d. Proposed action (e.g. Seek police involvement) and obtain the details of the other party(ies) involved including witnesses

**4.6.2 Step 2: Employee advises their supervisor and completes a formal report.**

Once the matter has been reported, the employee should immediately advise their supervisor and seek assistance from other university officials (e.g. Security, Medical suite, Corporate Communications, WA Police). Where the supervisor is the alleged perpetrator of the incident, the employee should report to the next in line manager.

At his/her earliest convenience the employee will complete and sign a formal report detailing the incident and parties involved. The report should include:

- a. nature and factual detail of the incident and context (time, date, location etc);
- b. immediate action taken/notifications;
- c. assessment of harm/injury;
- d. all information from step 1.
- e. the report should be copied to the Occupational Safety and Health Manager.

**4.6.3 Step 3: Supervisor's initial responsibility**

Depending on the severity, timing or circumstances of the incident, the supervisor may be required to take immediate remedial action to respond to the employee or the threat/incident. In this instance the

supervisor will address or involve other university officials to secure the immediate situation.

The supervisor should direct or avail the employee to available services including Medical suite, Employee Assistance Program etc.

On receipt of the formal report from step 2, the supervisor will undertake a preliminary investigation into the alleged incident as soon as is practicable. The investigation will entail but not be limited to:

- a. identify and confirm all parties involved, including the employees perception of the incident;
- b. Notify the parties of the formal report, proposed investigation and timeframe
- c. Notify and involve appropriate Edith Cowan University officials (e.g. Security, Corporate Communications).

#### **4.6.4 Step 4: Undertake a formal investigation and report**

As soon as practicable after notification of the incident, the supervisor, in consultation with other university officials, undertakes a full, formal investigation to establish the context of the alleged incident, affirms all relevant facts, recommends specific action and addresses any systemic issues. This action should be completed within 2 weeks of receipt of the formal report from step 2.

Note: The immediate supervisor may seek to refer the matter to his/her supervisor for it to be allocated to another officer for investigation.

The investigation should entail:

- a. interview with the victim;
- b. interview the perpetrator if possible;
- c. interview witness(es);
- d. obtain expert advice/instruction, where necessary (eg. medical/health specialists, Security, OS&H Representative);
- e. collate and analyse evidence;
- f. determine severity of incident and impact;
- g. recommend the university response, including any safety measures which should be implemented.

The supervisor completes the investigation report with a recommendation on what action is to be taken and forwards the report to the line executive for approval.

#### **4.6.5 Step 5: Line Executive approves the university's response.**

The Line Executive will review the investigation report and consider the recommended action plan submitted by the supervisor.

- a. If the Line Executive is satisfied with the report he/she will approve the action plan and the supervisor (or other designated official) will take action.
- b. If the Line Executive believes that there are outstanding issues, he/she will ensure these are addressed and approve subsequent action.

#### **4.6.6 Step 6: Parties notified of the outcome**

The supervisor will formally advise all relevant parties of the outcome of the investigation and take whatever approved action is necessary.

**4.6.7 Step 7: Supervisor addresses any systemic issues**

If the investigation identifies any systematic issues/problems that may give rise to potential violence in the workplace, the supervisor is responsible for implementing the changes to address those issues within a period that is reasonable, having regard to the level of risk to the employees.

**4.6.8 Step 8: Record Keeping**

A final report of the incident, investigation and outcome will be submitted to the Security Manager for central recording. A quarterly report should be provided to the Occupational Safety and Health Manager and to the Deputy Vice Chancellor if appropriate.

**5. References**

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Related Documents		

**6. Contact Information**

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