

# Building respect

I'VE HAD AN

**ALLEGATION**

OF INAPPROPRIATE  
BEHAVIOUR MADE  
AGAINST ME

Advice and support for those who have been  
accused of inappropriate behaviour.

# You've had an **allegation** of inappropriate behaviour or bullying made against you

## **You've been told you have behaved inappropriately:**

It can be difficult to hear someone thinks you behaved inappropriately or bullied someone. You may be angry, confused or embarrassed. You may be worried about what people think or fearful of disciplinary action.

## **These things are often not clear cut.**

You may not recognise the behaviours they are describing or feel misunderstood. Perhaps on reflection, you did behave inappropriately but you didn't mean for it to be taken that way.

Maybe you didn't notice at the time but on reflection, you can see how you came across. It may be a one-off or you were stressed. In this case, you may want to apologise.

**You may feel your actions were justified.** Perhaps you thought they were going to make an error or you were trying to help them do their job.

**You may recognise a need to change.** Studies show incivility between colleagues makes mistakes and errors more likely .

## **You will be supported to resolve things.**

Everyone involved will be treated fairly and with compassion. Our focus is on resolving issues through reflection, feedback and discussion, only using a formal process when appropriate.

## **The role of your manager is:**

- To actively build a positive team culture
- To create an environment where people feel safe to talk to each other about issues
- If people raise concerns to respond with discretion and in an impartial, fair and professional way
- To think about the person before the process
- To provide clarity so everyone involved

We have a series of guides on the University website to assist. **Start with the 'Our approach, our options' guide.** Refer to the contact list if you need help at any stage.

## **1. Creating a positive culture**

Your team is encouraged to have a discussion about your team culture and what our values and behaviours mean to you. Talk to your manager about this.

## **2. Reflection**

**The person may have told you themselves.** This can take real courage so hear them out. Or another colleague may have said something using BUILD.

This is about informally resolving the issue. They want to let you know, because they want to hear your side of the story and resolve things together.

**Stay calm,** step into their shoes for a moment. Use the flowchart and behaviours guide to reflect on your behaviour and how they experienced it. On reflection, might there be room for you to do things differently? If so, you could apologise, let them know you'll change.

## **3. Direct feedback**

**You may still feel your actions were appropriate** and the allegation is unjustified. In this case talk to whoever gave you feedback and explain you have a different view. Listen carefully to their response and be respectful of their view. You could use BUILD as a basis for this conversation.

## **4. Informal resolution**

**If you can't find a resolution together, talk to someone you trust,** your manager, the Manager of Facilitation and Mediation, HR, or a Union representative. Ask for help with a facilitated discussion.

## **5. Formal process**

If a **formal process** has been initiated against you, your options and rights are outlined in the Ethical Behaviour Policy available on the University website.

## Your notes to help you consider the options

Detail feedback from others about your alleged inappropriate behavior:

Describe your perspective and details of what you said / did:

Take a moment to step into their shoes. What might their perspective be?

Reflect on your behaviour. Could you have done things differently?

Your options and next steps, including support:

## Further support and guidance

If you feel you need more guidance on what to do next, you can visit the University website where you can download the following tools and resources:

### For you

- Information about our approaches, policies and procedures
- Guidance on what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- Who to speak to for support
- Step-by-step guides walking you through all of our options

### For your team

- Guides and templates to help you discuss and improve team culture
- Roles and responsibilities
- Guide for managers

This is one in a series of guides to support anyone who is a target of inappropriate behaviour, has witnessed or had an allegation of such behaviour made against them, and for managers dealing with inappropriate behaviour in their teams.



### Contact List

For more assistance or if you have any questions, you can get in touch with the people listed below who can advise you on informal and formal procedures, and support you throughout the process:

- [HR team](#)  
human.resources@otago.ac.nz  
Tel 03 479 8269
- [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#)
- [Ethical Behaviour Network](#)
- [Manager of Facilitation and Mediation](#)  
mediation@otago.ac.nz  
Tel 03 479 5679
- [Occupational Health](#)
- Or contact your Union rep