

## Routines in cases of victimisation and bullying

Victimisation [Swe: *kränkande särbehandling*] falls under the Work Environment Act (unlike discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and reprisals, which must be investigated in accordance with the Discrimination Act, see a separate document). According to the Swedish Work Environment Authority's provisions on systematic work environment management (AFS 2001:1) and organisational and social work environment (AFS 2015:4), the employer is responsible for measures to prevent and deal with victimisation and bullying. These measures involve preventing future risks for occupational injury or ill health and are documented as part of the systematic management of the work environment. There is no specific obligation to investigate in cases of victimisation.

The foundation of Södertörn University's work to combat victimisation and bullying is the equality of all human beings in dignity and rights. Södertörn University rejects all forms of victimisation, discrimination, harassment and reprisals and will not accept that these occur at the university. A good work environment is everyone's responsibility. We are each other's work environment every day, so we should always treat each other with respect. We also defend and take an active position for the equality of dignity and rights for everyone, and work against victimisation, discrimination and harassment. Good collegiality and good management create the right conditions for a good work environment.

### Victimisation and bullying

In this context, victimisation is behaviour that is perceived as offensive, but which has no apparent association with the grounds regulated in the Discrimination Act. Examples of victimisation:

- Deliberately withholding work-related information or supplying incorrect work-related information.
- Deliberately sabotaging or impeding the performance of work.
- Ostracising, disregarding and neglecting a co-worker
- Deliberate insults, hypercritical or negative response or attitudes (ridicule, unfriendliness, etc.).
- Being individually named and shamed
- Being unjustly accused

These types of occurrences are emotionally testing, disagreeable and unpleasant. In the worst cases, they may result in serious mental ill health. Long-term, systematic victimisation can result in bullying. Bullying is defined as recurrent negative actions over a period of time that target a group or individual. Bullying also entails an imbalance of power between the person doing the bullying and the person being bullied, and that these actions lead to the affected individual being excluded from the social context. Victimisation can also occur via email, text message, social media, etc.

### Preventing and identifying risks

One starting point for preventing situations in which there is a risk of victimisation, is that employees and managers are familiar with the central government's common basic values and with Södertörn University's Common Code of Conduct. Employers are also responsible for reviewing organisational conditions, such as how activities are organised, how people cooperate and communicate and how work is led.

Examples of risks in organisational conditions:

- a lack of clarity vis-à-vis the allocation of work, performance expectations and/or working methods

- heavy workload
- conflicts
- reorganisation, rationalisation and restructuring, which may lead to feelings of insecurity and/or competitiveness between employees

Early warning signs and indications of victimisation may include:

- difficulties cooperating with others
- personal conflicts
- seeking scapegoats
- a work climate characterised by tension
- jargon or jokes that not everyone is comfortable with
- high level of sick leave
- high staff turnover
- reduced efficiency and productivity

### **Responsibility and approach**

The line manager must take action when they are made aware of victimisation. An employee who feels that they are being victimised must talk to their line manager. If this manager is the cause of the problem, a superior manager should be contacted. The employer can also contact the HR unit, occupational health service or the health and safety representative and union ombudsman for advice and support.

### **Managerial responsibilities:**

1. Take employees' information about victimisation seriously.
2. Find out factual information about what has happened and document the incident(s).
3. State that victimisation is not acceptable.
4. Plan and conduct measures to resolve the current situation; in serious cases, disciplinary action may be examined by the Staff Disciplinary Board.
5. When necessary, ensure that the people involved receive support at an early stage, i.e. counselling from occupational health services.
6. Follow up the situation and ensure that there is a good work environment.
7. The HR unit can be contacted for support and advice.

### **Employee responsibilities:**

1. React if you witness a situation in which a person/group is victimised or bullied. You should protest or make your manager aware of what you saw.
2. Be aware of your own actions and choice of words.
3. Ensure that you are familiar with the central government's basic values and with Södertörn University's Common Code of Conduct.

### **Contact**

If you have questions, please contact the HR unit. Information is available at [www.sh.se](http://www.sh.se) and on Södertörn University's intranet. For more information about victimisation and bullying, please visit the Swedish Work Environment Authority's website, [www.av.se](http://www.av.se)