



## Respect in Action Contact Programme

### Expectations of a Contact

#### Purpose of Contact Network

The Respect in Action programme provides support to staff, so they can enjoy a safe place to work free from bullying and harassment. It provides targets of bullying, respondents, and observers with a choice of appropriately informed and skilled people who may assist the person coming to them to make good decisions about appropriate action to take.

A Contact network does not abrogate the authority or responsibility of a manager to address bullying, discrimination, or harassment (B&H). Instead, it provides another option for (usually) people experiencing B&H to discuss matters confidentially with an informed person who is not in their management structure.

#### Role of a Contact

Their voluntary role is to equip visitors to make appropriate decisions and enable them to act on their decisions. A Respect in Action Contact provides a safe, confidential setting in which staff can tell their story, gather information about acceptable behaviour in the NZ workplace, test their situation against these definitions, and start to consider options available to them, including referral to other support possibilities, e.g., Head of Employee Advisory and Resolution Service (EARS), Union, HR, internal or external investigations. The appointment is for a two-year renewable term.

Their role is NOT:

- Acting as a counsellor
- Advocating for the person, accompanying them to meetings in a support role, or acting on behalf of the concerned person.

[If advocacy is required, the Contact will refer them on appropriately.]

#### Training for Respect in Action Contacts

- The Contact must complete three days of initial training, including practical skills and demonstration and written materials. It has elements of assessment within it. A refresher day training will be held every two years (one day).

Attendance will also be required at a bi-monthly network meeting.

#### The Contact's commitment to the position

- Knowledgeable and up to date about grounds for harassment and definitions of bullying, and AUT policy and procedures for responding to unwelcome behaviour
- Visible as a Contact and willing to publicise the Respect in Action Programme
- Able to protect and maintain confidentiality

- Committed to developing specific communication skills needed to work effectively with complaints
- Prepared to actively educate staff
- Available with time and energy to engage with the programme
- Able to address their conflict issues appropriately

## Reporting requirements

**It is essential to let the Head of EARS know after seeing a visitor, even if the approach is seemingly a casual enquiry so that the EARS office:**

- Knows about the types of situations Contacts are dealing with
- Keeps track of the amount of bullying and harassment that is reported
- Plans education appropriately to address areas of concern

**And you can**

- Ask, if you feel unsure of the appropriate next step
- Debrief about what went well /not so well and consult about next steps. Sometimes a follow-up check is appropriate without encouraging dependency.

## Process for Recruiting a Contact

Getting the right people is important. The network needs to include a range of people, reflecting the diversity of areas of work, different ethnicities, genders, ages, sexuality, disability etc. It also needs to be maintained at a reasonable number of people to ensure access for as wide a range of staff as possible.

There is a robust process for people to be considered for the network, so interested staff members will complete an Expression of Interest form. This will be returned to the Head of EARS.

The Expression of Interest form will include questions about:

- Your reasons for becoming a contact, to ensure that there is no risk of a preeminent personal agenda.
- Relevant training, skills or experience, so that there can be a recognition and recording of prior learning.
- Names of referees, including two staff, name of Manager and Head of School, Faculty Dean, relevant HR Business Partner or Adviser
- Information about any prior involvement in a complaint process at AUT

This will provide the opportunity for direct manager endorsement, both for suitability for the role, and so that the workload can be incorporated into the substantive position of the CP.

There will be a clear assessment process before training (e.g. through reference checks) and after training.

Completing the training does not in itself guarantee acceptance as a contact person; the training is also an assessment process.

AUT needs to know how often CP are being used, the sorts of issues raised with them, and the areas of the university from which they arose. Such reporting would not include the names of the complainant or respondent but would provide the university data to inform future training for staff, managers and CP; for Group Director P&C and VC to create a concrete vision of a respectful, fair, B&H-free learning and working environment, and to plan appropriate programmes and interventions.

### Strengths of a contact network

- Allows people experiencing harmful behaviour, respondents and observers a wider choice of people to discuss B&H issues with beyond the management structure, or the Head of EARS
- Encourages the use of lower-level strategies to address B&H issues in the first instance (where appropriate)
- Provides managers with a resource to offer for staff to use if they want to develop a skill base regarding addressing B&H
- Shows the commitment of AUT to addressing and preventing issues of B&H by providing a tangible and accessible resource for staff and helps instil confidence that the university is taking matters seriously
- Demonstrates a proactive stance from the university by developing a network of people to be champions of the policies in this area, providing good role modelling in their behaviour and being a 'face' of prevention for the university
- Allows AUT to know at a more in-depth level the kinds of issues that are concerning staff across the university
- Provides another entry point to the university's informal and formal structures, especially where the complainant's manager is the perpetrator of the offending behaviour

If you are prepared to be a Respect in Action Contact and understand these expectations of being a contact, click [here](#) to register or by scanning the QR code.

The Respect in Action Contact Training for 2024 is:

- **Monday 26 August**
- **Tuesday 27 August**
- **Wednesday 28 August**



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