



## **Analysis of student clinical placement experience survey**

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### **Summary**

In September 2010, as part of campaign to tackle bullying in the workplace, the Society and College of Radiographers surveyed students in their second, third and (where applicable) fourth years of studying radiography about their experience during clinical placements. Over 300 students responded to an anonymous online questionnaire primarily designed to capture data on the level of bullying on clinical placements. This document presents the results of this survey and the themes of follow-up correspondence with students.

### **Executive Summary**

The majority of radiography students experience rewarding academic and clinical placements with supportive teaching teams and clinical educators. Sadly, however, some students experience bullying and harassment. The Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR) believes that bullying and harassment are completely unacceptable in any form.

In September 2010, as part of campaign to tackle bullying in the workplace, the Society and College of Radiographers surveyed students in their second, third and (where applicable) fourth years of studying radiography about their experience during clinical placements. Over 300 students responded to an anonymous online questionnaire primarily designed to capture data on the level of bullying on clinical placements. This document presents the results of this survey and the themes of follow-up correspondence with students. The following bullet points highlight the main findings:

- One third of respondents said they feel they have been bullied during their clinical placements.
- Nearly four-fifths of respondents experience at least one of the following symptoms during their clinical placements: self-doubt and loss of confidence; inability to relax or switch off from study; sleeplessness; depression; and loss of appetite. Self-doubt and loss of confidence are the most frequently reported symptoms, but all the symptoms listed are experienced by a significantly high number of respondents.
- Around one-fifth of respondents have been absent from the department on at least one occasion due to their experience during clinical placements.
- Around half of respondents who feel that they have been bullied reported it to a member of staff on their clinical placement and/or at their university. When respondents reported the bullying they had mixed results. A number of respondents said that no action was taken as a result of them reporting the bullying or that they were not taken seriously. Some said that

the report led to an improvement in the situation, whilst a few said that it had made things worse.

- Around half of respondents who feel that they have been bullied took no action. Victims who did not report the bullying gave a variety of reasons: they were afraid of making things worse; the bullying was towards all students, not just them; they discussed it with other students; or they just decided to avoid the bully.
- The vast majority of respondents say that if they witness bullying they will offer to support the victim if they choose to speak up or report the incident in confidence to a responsible person.
- The SCoR received a number of emails as a result of the online questionnaire. The following themes summarise the main issues raised in this correspondence: racial discrimination; culture of exclusion "*students should be seen and not heard*"; physical sickness due to experience; reports of bullying not handled correctly; and mature students feeling like they are being treated as children.

## 1. Introduction

In September 2010, the Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR) surveyed students about their experience during clinical placements in hospitals as part of their degrees. An email containing a link to an online questionnaire was sent to all 2428 students members in their 2nd, 3rd or 4th years studying pre- registration radiography with known email addresses. As an incentive to complete the survey, respondents were offered the chance to enter a prize draw to win one of the two prizes of £75 worth of vouchers. 302 students (12.4%) responded to the survey, answering questions primarily designed to capture data on the level of bullying on clinical placements. The questions also covered the characteristics, causes and symptoms of bullying. As this is a self-selecting group of respondents, caution should be exercised if extrapolating these results to the entire population of student radiographers.

The questionnaire was designed carefully to guide the respondent through a set of questions to inform the students as well as capture data. The questions were based on the contents of the SCoR publication *Dealing with bullying and harassment - a guide for student radiographers*<sup>1</sup>. Respondents were told that if they were affected by any of the questions and wanted to discuss the issues, they should contact the SCoR in confidence. Some students contacted the SCoR as a result and the themes from this follow-up correspondence are included.

<sup>1</sup> Society and College of Radiographers (2010) [Dealing with bullying and harassment - a guide for student radiographers](#) (requires SCoR membership number and website password to access)

## 2. What is bullying?

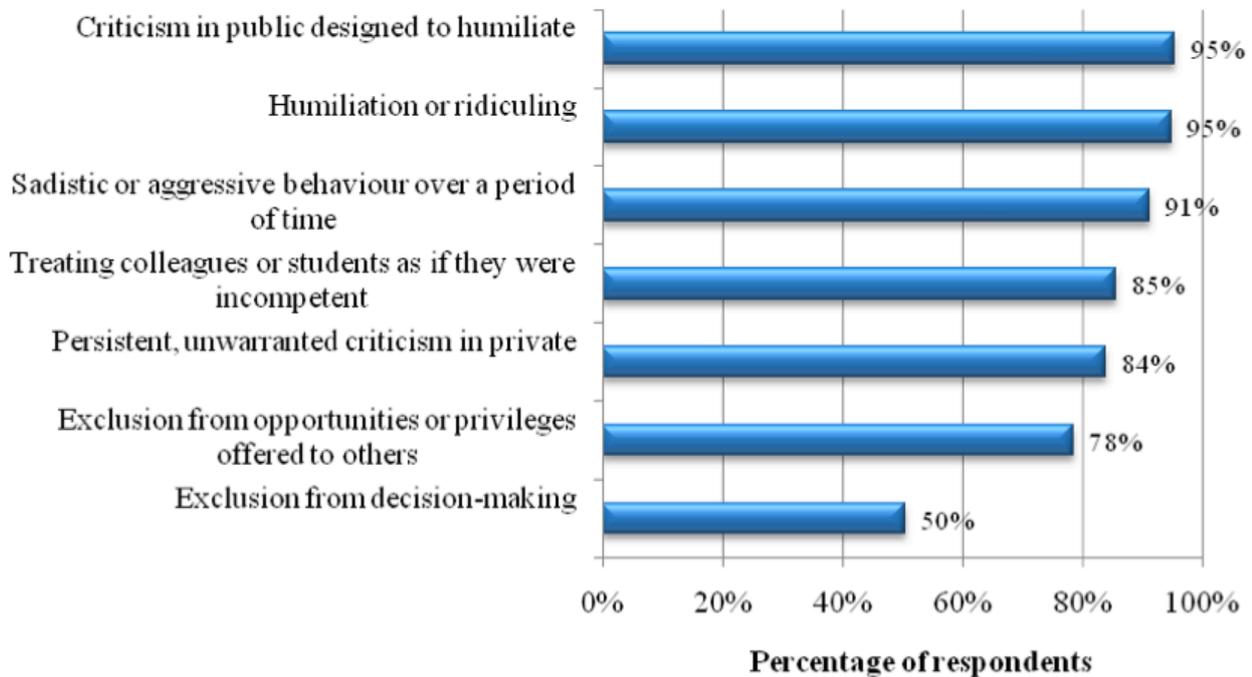
### 2.1 Characteristics of bullying

Respondents were first asked if they could identify the characteristics of bullying. They were given a list of characteristics (all of which are recognised as potential components of bullying) and asked which of them they thought of as bullying. Once they had answered the question and landed on the next page they were told that, in fact, all of the characteristics could actually be classed as bullying.

Most respondents correctly identify the majority of characteristics as bullying with the exception of "Exclusion from decision-making" which only half of the respondents correctly identify.

*Click the graph to enlarge.*

**Which of the following statements could be classed as bullying?  
(Select all that apply.)**



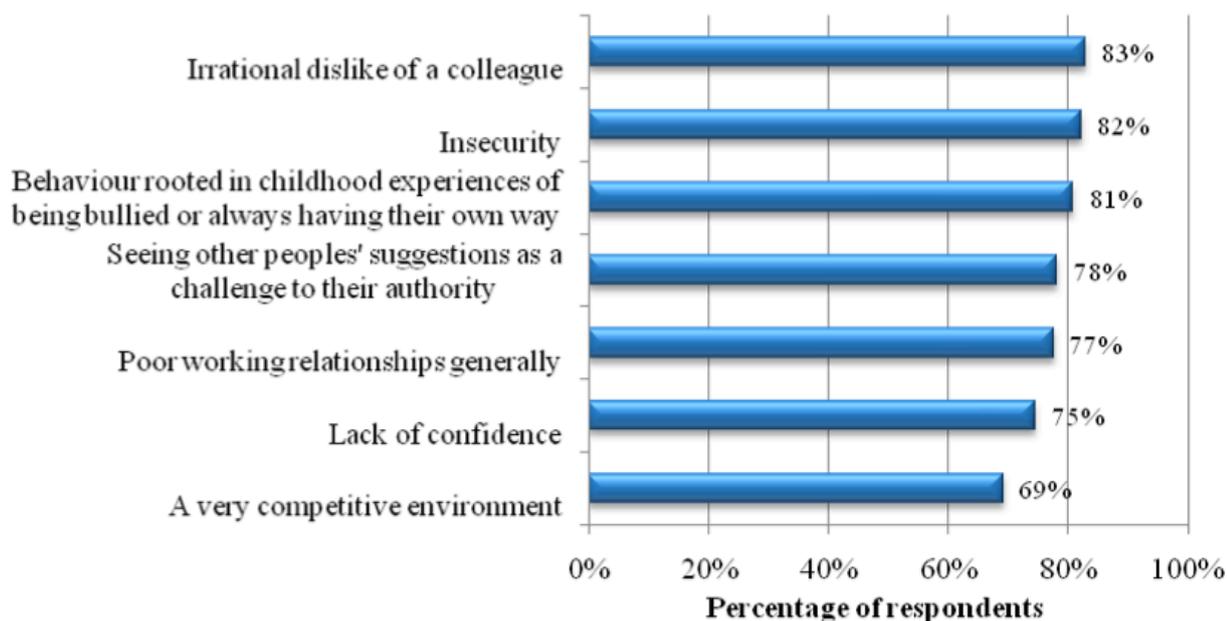
## 2.2 Causes of bullying

In a similar manner, respondents were asked if that could identify the reasons why people become bullies. They were given a list of the causes of bullying and asked which of them they thought could be causes of bullying. Again, once they had answered the question and landed on the next page they were told that, in fact, all of the items on the list could be causes of bullying.

Most respondents correctly identify each item on the list as a cause of bullying.

*Click the graph to enlarge.*

**Which of the following statements could be reasons why people become bullies? (Select all that apply.)**



### **3. Students' experiences**

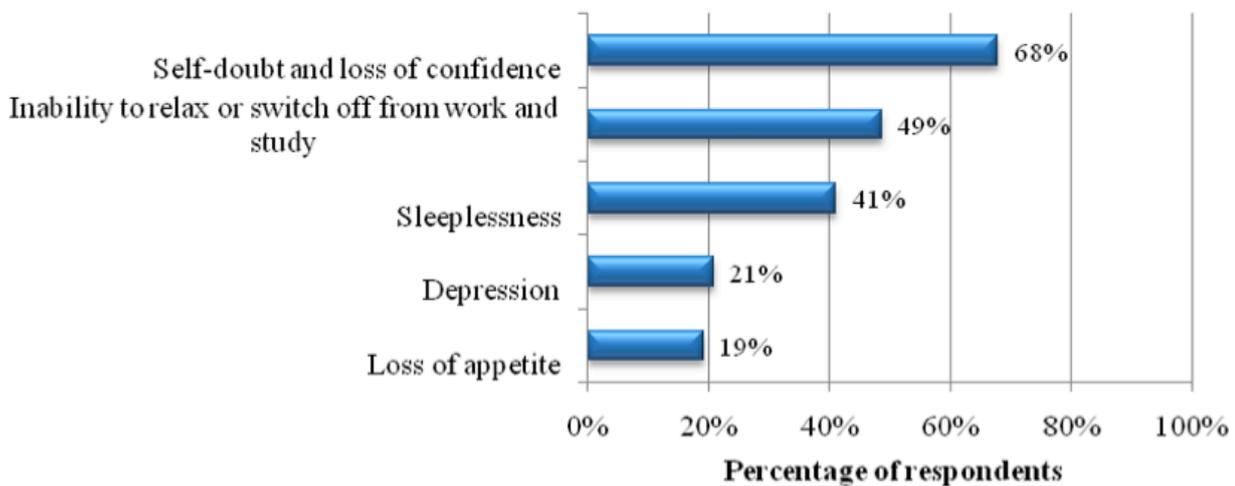
Following the initial set of questions designed to educate, respondents were then asked about their experiences during clinical placements.

#### **3.1 Symptoms of being bullied**

Without being told that the items listed can be symptoms of being bullied, respondents were asked to select symptoms that they experienced during clinical placements. 78% of respondents experience at least one of the symptoms during their clinical placements which is a cause for concern. Self-doubt and loss of confidence are the most frequently selected symptoms, but all the symptoms listed are experienced by a significantly high number of respondents. The fact that these symptoms are not necessarily signs of bullying does not make the results any less concerning.

*Click the graph to enlarge.*

**During your clinical placements have you ever experienced any of the following symptoms? (Select all that apply.)**

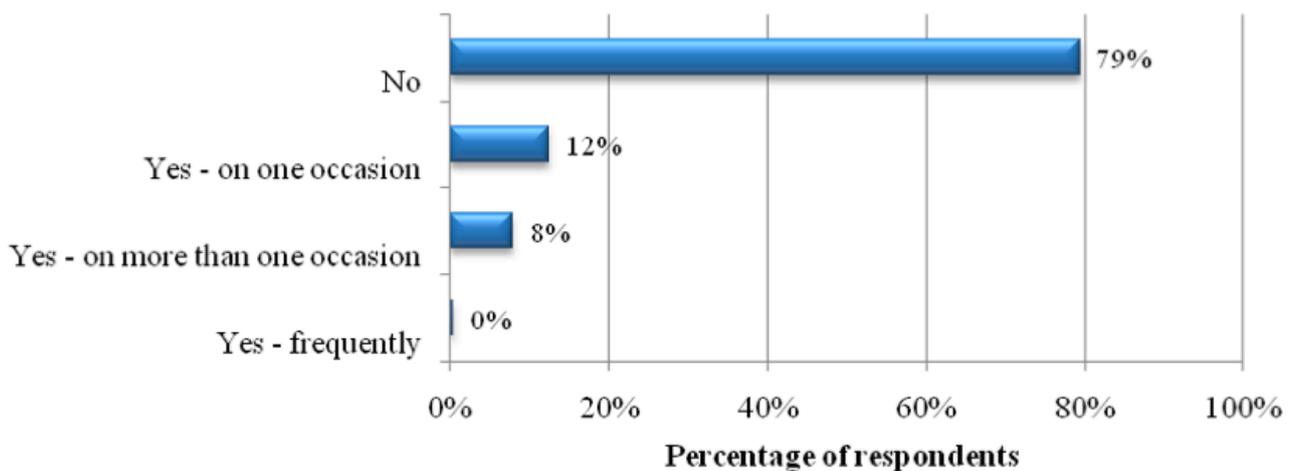


### 3.2 Absence

Respondents were asked whether their experience during clinical placements led them to be absent from the department. 21% of respondents have been absent on at least one occasion due to their experience during clinical placements.

*Click the graph to enlarge.*

**Has your experience during clinical placements led you to be absent from the department?**

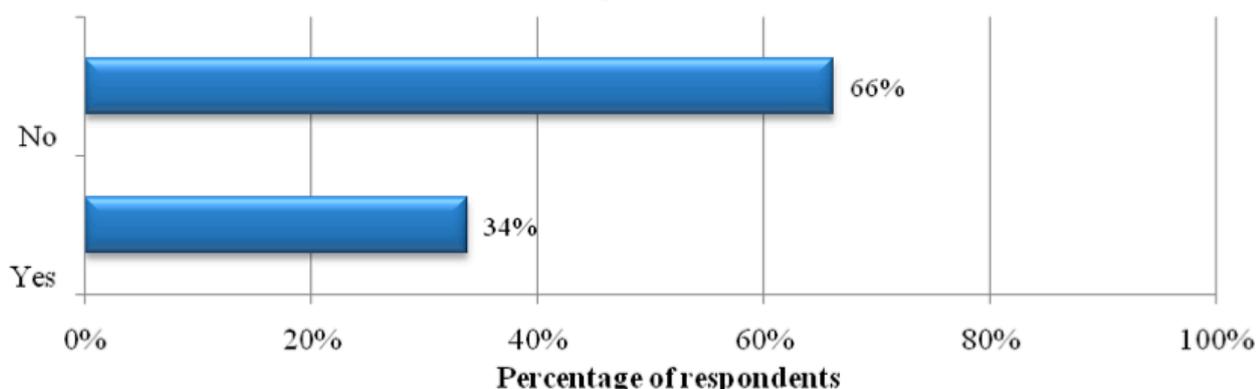


### 3.3 Bullying

One third of respondents said they feel they have been bullied during their clinical placements.

*Click the graph to enlarge.*

**Do you feel that you have been subjected to bullying during your clinical placement?**



**3.4 Action taken by those being bullied**

Respondents who said that they feel that they have been bullied during their clinical placement were then asked an open-ended question about the action they took. 92 respondents answered this question. Nearly half of respondents took no action, and nearly half spoke to a member of staff on their clinical placement and/or at their university. A few respondents talked to the bully directly. Some incidents were witnessed and reported by third parties.

When respondents reported the bullying to a member of staff they had mixed results. A number of respondents said that no action was taken as a result of them reporting the bullying or that they were not taken seriously. Some said that the report led to an improvement in the situation, whilst a few said that it had made things worse.

Victims who did not report the bullying gave a variety of reasons: they were afraid of making things worse; the bullying was towards all students, not just them; they discussed it with other students; or they decided to avoid the bully.

Theme	Number of respondents	Example comment
Victim took no action	44	"I have not taken any action when I felt I was bullied by staff members. I felt that by doing so, would make my life as a student harder in the department, and I didn't want to cause a fuss."
Victim spoke to member of staff on placement and/or at university	43	"I reported my concerns to the superintendent radiographer."
No action taken as a result of report	13	"No action was taken against any of them and the whole incident (despite not being the first formal complaint about that member of staff) was brushed under the carpet."
Victim afraid of making things worse	9	"I felt that it would prejudice my development in the department if I took it any further."
Action led to improvement	7	"A few month later I told the clinical lecturer - who then did something (I don't know what)

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		which resulted in all the radiographers being more student friendly.”
Victim tearful	6	“Went to the staff toilets and cried for 30 minutes.”
Victim spoke to bully	6	“I approached the individual and said my piece, which greatly improved the relationship.”
Bullying towards all students	5	“Talked to other students - we were all experiencing similar problems.”
Victim spoke to fellow student	5	“Spoke to some fellow students and friends.”
Action made things worse	3	“Approached the [senior member of staff] who then went and told the person, who then confronted me.”
Other person reported it	3	“The incident was witnessed by another senior radiographer, who dealt with the matter directly.”
Victim not taken seriously	3	“I feel she brushed my remarks aside and put it down to my over sensitivity.”
Victim avoided bully	3	“I just knuckled down and got on with work and avoided the staff who bullied me.”

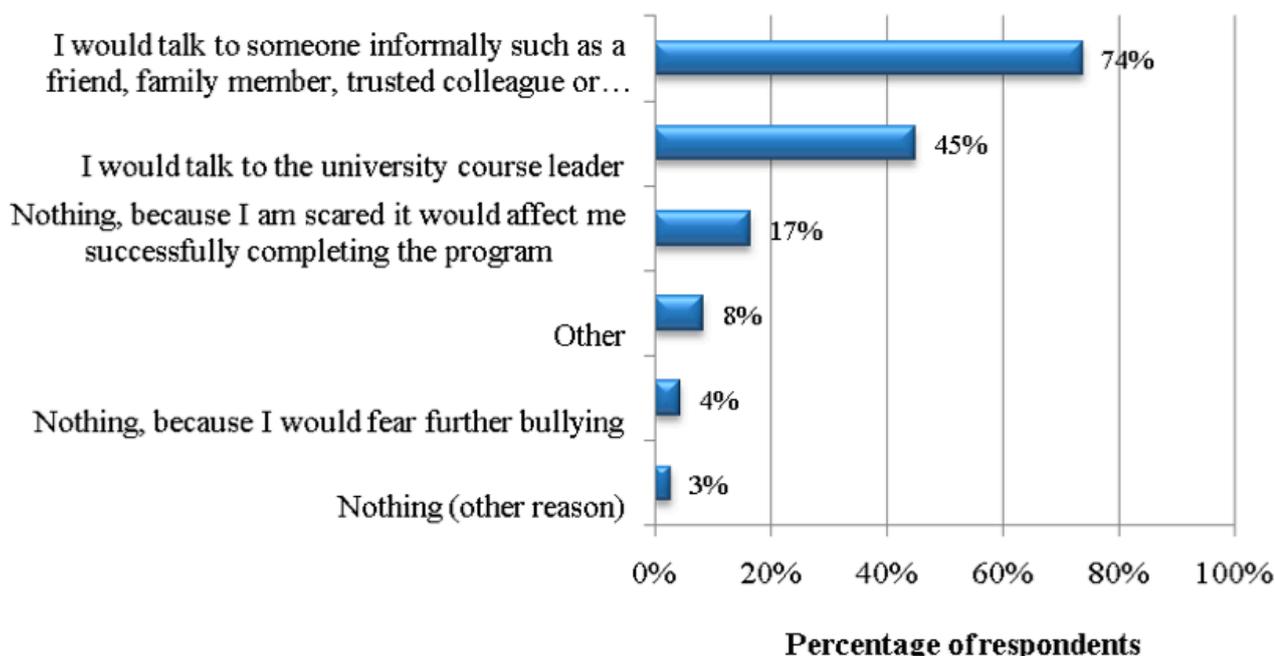
### 3.5 Potential action taken by those who had not been bullied

Those respondents who had stated that they did not feel they had been bullied during their clinical placement were asked what action they would take if they were bullied. 180 respondents answered this question. They were given a list of possible responses and the option to enter a free text response if they wished. Respondents could select more than one response from the list if they wished, so the percentages add up to more than 100%.

Most respondents indicate that they would talk to someone about the bullying if it occurred. Some of the respondents giving a free-text response say they would talk to the bully directly.

*Click the graph to enlarge.*

**What action would you take if you felt you were being bullied?**



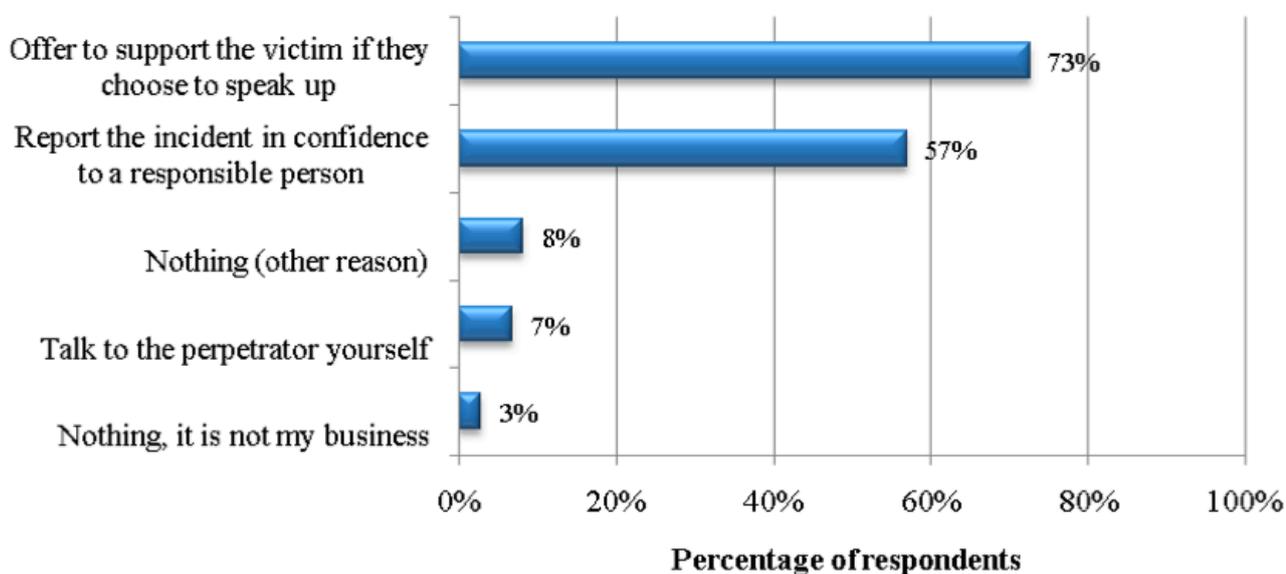
**3.6 Witnessing bullying**

Finally all respondents were asked what they would do if they witnessed somebody being bullied. They were given a list of possible responses and could select more than one response from the list if they wished, so the percentages add up to more than 100%.

The vast majority of respondents would offer to support the victim if they choose to speak up or report the incident in confidence to a responsible person if they witness bullying.

*Click the graph to enlarge.*

**What would you do if you witnessed someone being bullied?**



### 4. Follow-up correspondence

At the end of the online questionnaire, respondents were told that if they were affected by any of the questions and wanted to discuss the issues, they should contact the SCoR in confidence. The SCoR received a number of emails as a result which explored some of the issues raised by the online questionnaire in more depth. The following themes summarise the main issues raised in this correspondence:

- Racial discrimination;
- Culture of exclusion e.g. students ignored on placement and not involved in the team: “students should be seen and not heard”;
- Physical sickness due to experiences during placement;
- Students have reported bullying but it has not been dealt with in the correct manner as the clinicians appear better supported with the student being in a less powerful position;
- Mature students feel like they are being treated as children.

### Appendix A - Survey questionnaire

[Click here to download the Survey questionnaire PDF](#)

**Source URL:**

<https://www.sor.org/learning/document-library/analysis-student-clinical-placement-experience-survey>