



# How We Deal with Incidents of Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

**Last amended: July 2025**

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## Introduction

**This document brings together information and resources to support students and staff in understanding harassment and sexual misconduct. It outlines policies, procedures and the range of support available to anyone who may be affected.**

Higher education can be a transformational experience. It can open new opportunities to learn about yourself and others, as well as engage in enriching and challenging academic study. The University of Nottingham (UoN) is committed to creating an environment, including online, where you can experience being a student without fear of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation, or sexual misconduct (unacceptable behaviour).

This document provides a single comprehensive source of clear and accessible information as required by the university's regulator, the Office for Students. It includes the university's policies and procedures on unacceptable behaviour, such as bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation and sexual misconduct, and details of the university's policy on intimate personal relationships between staff members and students.

These pages aim to help you understand the steps the university is taking to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct, and where you can turn to for help if you experience or witness unacceptable behaviour. We want everyone in our community to feel empowered to speak up and to know they will be taken seriously.

You'll also find links to other relevant documents, pages, and support and guidance resources.

This information applies to all applicants, students and those studying for a UoN award with another provider, whether in the UK or overseas, online or in person.

This document provides information about sexual misconduct including definitions of sexual abuse which some may find upsetting. If you are affected by any information here, **you can access wellbeing support via the links below:**

[University Wellbeing Team](#)

[Residential Experience Team \(ResX\)](#)

[Chaplaincy and Faith Support](#)

[A Dignity Adviser](#)

[Students' Union Advice](#)



## Definitions

This section contains definitions of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation and sexual misconduct as set out in our [Dignity at Nottingham Policy](#), and mirrored in other relevant policies and procedures.

These definitions are important as they form the basis for how we assess whether harassment or sexual misconduct have taken place.

When you join the university and throughout your time with us, you'll be provided with training and guidance to help you understand what these definitions mean in real-life situations. These situations can occur in many different settings – in person or online, and on and off campus. Whatever the context, our commitment remains the same: to take all concerns seriously and to respond with care, fairness, and respect.

**Harassment** is unlawful and can include:

- Unwanted conduct that is related to the protected characteristics of: age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation, and that violates the person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or hostile environment for that person
- Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment)
- Less favourable treatment for rejecting/submitting to sexual harassment
- Less favourable treatment or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment
- A course of conduct against one or more individuals, not necessarily related to a protected characteristic, which amounts to harassment. This could include alarming or causing distress to individuals and conduct which the person undertaking it knows or ought to know amounts to harassment. They should know this if a reasonable person in possession of the same information would think the course of conduct amounts to harassment.

Harassment of an individual can take a variety of different forms ranging from repeatedly ignoring an individual or subjecting them to unwarranted attention, to intimidation, humiliation, ridicule or offence. Harassment may not be deliberate; someone may harass another person unintentionally.

**Sexual misconduct** includes any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature to which a person has not consented, or the person engaging in the behaviour does not have a reasonable belief as to that other person's consent. Sexual misconduct can happen within any kind of relationship or between people who do not know each other. Sexual harassment is a form of sexual misconduct, which is also considered a form of sexual abuse/violence.

Sexual misconduct could be any of the following:

- Engaging or attempting to engage in sexual intercourse or a sexual act where [consent](#) is not or cannot be given
- Sharing another person's private sexual materials without their consent
- Kissing/inappropriately touching without consent
- Inappropriately showing sexual organs to another person
- Making unwanted remarks, sounds or gestures of a sexual nature.



**Domestic abuse:** It can be hard to recognise that you are experiencing domestic abuse and it can take different forms. You can find more information on our Let's be clear on domestic abuse guide which you can find [here](#).

## Protecting Students from Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

This section sets out what we are doing to protect students from harassment and sexual misconduct. This includes setting expectations with all our students and staff, our reporting tool Report and Support, campaigns and training and support available from staff.

We want to provide a positive, inclusive, and supportive working and learning environment, and we expect staff and students to treat each other with dignity and respect. Any form of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation and sexual misconduct are unacceptable.

Unacceptable behaviours can have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of those directly affected by such behaviour or who are witness to it.

We want to ensure you feel empowered to raise a concern or complaint about unacceptable behaviour, and know that any concerns will be taken seriously, dealt with appropriately, fairly and in a timely manner and that you will not face any negative consequences for raising a concern or complaint in good faith.

All students must uphold the Student Code of Conduct (Non-Academic) which states that: *University of Nottingham is committed to fostering an environment that values and respects all members of the university community. We expect everyone to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the values of inclusivity, fairness and respect.*

### Expectations of Behaviour

Everyone will receive [information about expectations of behaviour](#) before you arrive at the university, through your student contract and the Get Ready for UoN module, which has specific information about harassment and sexual misconduct. This module is sent to new students via email before they are due to arrive on campus.

### Report and Support

Our reporting platform [Report and Support](#) is the best way to alert us to unacceptable behaviour. This platform is heavily promoted throughout your time at the university and contains information on unacceptable behaviour and the support available if you experience or witness an incident. [An annual report](#) is published every year on the platform with anonymised information on what issues are being reported, factors identified within any reports and the actions we've taken following the reports we've received.

### Campaigns and Training

You will also receive information about unacceptable behaviour, including harassment and sexual misconduct, from your accommodation and school, as well as through central university campaigns, such as [Let's be Clear](#) on Consent.

Our [Stronger Together](#) campaign makes it clear that we expect everyone to be respectful to others both on and off campus



We have also developed online training courses on [consent](#), misogyny and hate crime, and harassment.

### **Support from staff**

Our dedicated Report and Support team respond to incidents reported via the platform and includes staff specially trained to respond to disclosures of sexual violence and domestic violence. We also have a 24/7 security team who can be contacted by anyone seeking support.

Details about staff member's roles and responsibilities can be found on the relevant linked webpages and linked documents and policies.



## Disclosure and Reporting

This section includes details of how you can report unacceptable behaviour, whether that's on or off campus. It also includes guidance and information on our procedures, our commitment to confidentiality and the support available.

If you've experienced or witnessed unacceptable behaviour—including sexual misconduct or harassment—we want you to feel able to report it to the university. We understand that speaking up can be difficult, especially in challenging or emotional situations. That's why there are different options for you to share what's happened in a way that is most suitable for you. You don't even need to report it yourself, someone else can do it on your behalf.

### Report and Support

**The best way for you – or someone else – to report an incident of harassment, sexual misconduct, or another form of inappropriate behaviour, is through [Report and Support](#). You can submit a report anonymously or provide your contact details.**

When you choose to make a disclosure through Report and Support, you are not making an official report or complaint to the university. Instead, the report enables you to reach out safely, access support and find out more about your options and next steps.

**If you report with contact details:** When we receive your report, we'll contact you and offer a meeting. This can be in person, on the phone or on Teams, whichever you would prefer. We will offer support as well as put in place any safeguarding arrangements that might be needed. We can also explain your reporting options to help you to decide on the next steps.

We want to ensure people reporting through the system stay in control of the reporting process as far as possible. However, if you provide details identifying people involved, and the nature of your report raises urgent concerns about the risk to you or others, we may decide that action is required even if you are not requesting action to be taken at this point. Wherever possible, we will discuss this with you first and keep you informed about what is happening.

**If you report anonymously:** We will not be able to contact you directly and offer you any advice, support, or updates on any investigation. However, we may still investigate the report, depending on the seriousness of the matters described. Anonymous disclosures, like named ones, can also enable us to better understand the issues within our community. It's therefore important to include as much detail as possible in your report.

More information on disclosure and reporting can be found here:

[Student Wellbeing Confidentiality Statement](#)

[Report and Support Privacy Notice](#)

[FAQs Report and Support](#)

### Non-Academic Student Misconduct

If you have made a report about serious misconduct of another student, the team will talk to you about the option of an investigation under the university's [Student Code of Conduct \(Non-Academic\)](#).



To help with understanding the conduct process, we've created the following guidance:

- [guidance for students who choose to make a report of unacceptable behaviour by another student](#)
- [guidance for those students who are asked to respond to reports about their behaviour.](#)

## Confidentiality

Coming forward with a concern can feel deeply personal, and we will handle all matters with care and respect. We will maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality for everyone involved, while also ensuring any investigation is fair, thorough and effective.

If a formal investigation takes place, any statement and relevant evidence will be shared with the reported student as part of a fair process, including the name of the person who provided the statement. This may feel daunting, but we will support you at every step.

## Staff Misconduct

If you have made a report about unacceptable behaviour by a staff member, you will be informed about the option to use the [Procedure for Student Dignity Complaints about Staff by students about staff](#).

## Third Party Misconduct

If you are reporting concerns about someone who is not a student or member of staff, then, as well as providing you with support, we will discuss other reporting options with you, which might include the police or other external agencies.

## Police Reporting

The university has a data sharing agreement with Nottinghamshire Police. If you choose to report an incident to the police, the university will request information from the police to inform appropriate next steps. For example, if an allegation of student misconduct is reported to the police, the university will assess whether any precautionary measures are needed and whether the disciplinary process should be paused until the criminal process is complete.

## Further Information

The [Report and Support webpages](#) provide comprehensive information about people you can contact regarding the issues affecting you, including specialist support services inside and outside of the university.

Within the university, you can also consider speaking to:

[University Wellbeing Team](#)

[Campus Security](#)

[A Sexual Violence Liaison Officer \(SVLO\)](#) (accessed through Report and Support)

[Residential Experience Team \(ResX\)](#)



## **Using Report and Support**

We know that some students may not feel confident that they can use Report and Support or other reporting tools. We closely monitor and consistently review our work so that we can build trust and transparency with all members of our community.

To help reduce barriers to reporting, there is the option to report anonymously, flowcharts showing what happens when you submit a report, and use of inclusive imagery.

We also provide support to complete the form, and host drop-in sessions so you can talk to the Report and Support team before making a report. There is more information about the team and how we work on the [Report and Support webpages](#). If you choose to have an in-person meeting, we will send you information about where we work so you know what to expect ahead of the meeting.

It is important to us that we provide visible and authentic mechanisms to support anyone if they have experienced or witnessed harassment or sexual misconduct. We proactively seek feedback from people using the system and are also consulting with students to better understand barriers to reporting and how we can overcome them.





## Investigation Processes (staff and students)

Navigating formal procedures – especially in difficult circumstances – can be overwhelming. This section includes information about the steps we would take to investigate any incidents reported to us.

When we become aware of an allegation against a staff member or student that may constitute unacceptable behaviour, whether harassment, sexual misconduct or something else, there may be a formal investigation by the university. Our approach will be decided on a case-by-case basis and will take into account factors such as whether the report has been made anonymously or whether the person making the report wishes the behaviour to be investigated.

There are several procedures under which allegations could be investigated:

[Student Code of Conduct \(non-academic\)](#)

[Fitness to practise procedures](#)

[Procedure for Student Dignity Complaints about Staff](#)

[Student Complaints Code of Practice](#)

[Student Code of Conduct Procedures](#)

The procedure used will depend on the nature of the allegations and who they have been made against.

The documents that detail the procedures above provide information such as:

- when and why the university might begin an investigation or decision-making process involving a student or staff member
- how we would respond to allegations that may also constitute a criminal offence (where this applies)
- what the investigation process involves
- how we make decisions and who is involved
- expected timescales for investigation and decision-making, and what might influence these timescales
- the possible outcomes or actions that may result
- How you can appeal a decision, what the process looks like
- the steps we take to ensure disciplinary processes are fair, transparent and free from any reasonable perception of bias.

More Information can be found [here](#)



## Staff – Student Relationships

This section sets out our approach to personal relationships between staff and students, which is set out in our [Personal Relationships Policy](#).

Everyone deserves to learn and work in an environment where interactions are respectful, professional, and free from any real or perceived conflicts of interest. At the heart of this is professional relationships founded on trust, confidence and equitable treatment.

To protect the integrity of these professional relationships, the university does not allow intimate personal relationships between staff and students where the staff member has direct responsibility for that student (as defined in section 3 of the policy).

Even in situations where there is no direct responsibility, the university strongly discourages staff from engaging in an intimate personal relationship with any student, to avoid potential conflicts of interest or abuses of power.

### Why do we have this policy?

- To ensure positive, respectful interactions between staff and students
- To protect both students and staff from conflicts of interest
- To prevent any abuse of power or unfair treatment
- To create a safe space where concerns can be raised without fear
- To maintain the university's reputation as a safe and welcoming place.

### What are the main principles?

- Staff must not enter an intimate personal relationship with students where they have a direct responsibility (as defined in section 3 of the policy)
- The university strongly discourages staff from engaging in an intimate personal relationship with any student, even where there is no direct responsibility
- When students are employed as staff at the university alongside their studies and have direct responsibilities (as defined in section 3) for one or more students, they will be regarded as staff in relation to those students
- Where a staff member is already in a relationship with a student who they now have direct responsibility for, they must report it following section 4.3.1.3 of the policy. Students are also encouraged to disclose.

### What if I feel uncomfortable or have concerns?

- If you feel uncomfortable about a staff member's behaviour or have concerns about a relationship, you can speak to your Head of School/Department, [HR](#) or utilise [Report and Support](#). The Report and Support team is part of our student wellbeing service and will ensure students' wellbeing is supported.
- If you were or are in an intimate personal relationship that is not permitted under this policy, you can still report concerns about harassment, sexual misconduct or other unacceptable behaviour. You would not get in trouble for reporting it.



## Free Speech

Freedom of speech and the free exchange of ideas are central to the university's mission of advancing truth, knowledge and understanding.

This mission requires free and open enquiry within the law, including the airing of ideas or perspectives which may be unpopular or cause offence. This is especially important given that many ideas which were previously regarded as deeply controversial, or offensive are now widely accepted. A commitment to freedom of speech must therefore apply to challenging or unpopular ideas as well as ideas about which there is broad consensus.

Academic Freedom in relation to academic staff at a registered higher education provider means the freedom to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves at risk of losing their jobs or privileges or the likelihood of securing promotion or different jobs at the provider being reduced.

## Distressing Content

Our curriculum may contain content that you might find distressing. We provide content notes at module or programme level with a verbal or written alert before potentially sensitive material. These content notes aim to signal content that could be distressing, especially to individuals with relevant personal experiences, and to give you opportunity to prepare yourself in an informed way to engage with specific material.

You can read more about free speech and academic freedom in the UoN [Statement on Free Speech and Academic Freedom](#) and on our Free Speech webpages.



## Support

We offer support to all our students, through internal services such as [Support and Wellbeing](#), specialist [Sexual Violence Liaison Officers](#), the [Students' Union Advice](#) team and [Faith and Chaplaincy](#) services, or by providing information about many specialist services external to the university.

Wellbeing support is integrated, which means that if you see one team, but then need more specialist help from another, the referral will be made for you to enable you to access the help you need as easily as possible.

You can read more about the support that is available to you on these pages:

[Student Wellbeing pages](#)

[Report and Support Disclosure and Reporting Section](#)

[Let's be clear on consent](#)

[Let's be clear on domestic abuse](#)



## Information Management/Sharing

You can find information about why and how we collect and use personal data in the context of the Report and Support tool and your rights under data protection laws in the [Privacy Notice](#).

### Reporting Students

If you make a report through Report and Support, you will receive information about how your information will be used. This will be repeated if/or when you first have contact with the Investigations and Resolutions team.

### Witnesses

During the investigation process, witnesses may be identified. Before a witness statement is taken, the witness will be informed that they will be identified and about how their information will be used/shared. The witness will need to consent to this before they give their statement.

### Further Guidance

You can find information about sharing of information in the Student [Code of Conduct \(non-academic\), section 11](#).

The university observes [guidance provided by Universities UK](#) regarding the sharing of personal data in harassment cases.



## **Training and Guidance**

We are committed to the ongoing review, revision, and enhancement of training and development related to harassment and sexual misconduct for both students and staff.

This includes a blend of online and in-person delivery, and covers a range of important topics such as consent, being an active bystander, safeguarding, Prevent, Islamophobia, antisemitism, anti-racism and sexual harassment.

Our aim is to ensure that all members of our community are equipped with the knowledge and tools to foster a safe, respectful and inclusive environment. All new students start to receive this training as part of a pre-arrival Get Ready for UoN module sent in August before their course commences. For staff, training in these topics is given as part of onboarding training and updated regularly as part of a training cycle.



## Related Policies and Procedures

This section provides quick access to relevant university policies and procedures. For a more comprehensive overview, the [University of Nottingham Policy Finder](#) is a useful resource to find policy and procedure information in one place.

[Student Code of Conduct \(non-academic\)](#)

[Staff grievance procedure](#)

[Staff disciplinary procedure](#)

[Fitness to practise procedures](#)

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

[Dignity at Nottingham Policy](#)

[Procedure for Student Dignity Complaints about Staff](#)

[Personal Relationships Policy](#)

[Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#)

[Prevent](#)



## Evaluating Our Progress

Evaluating our progress, learning from outcomes, and continually improving our processes and resources are key to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for staff, students and those visiting our campuses.

This section sets out ways we evaluate our progress.

### Report and Support

We publish annual reports using anonymised data gathered through the platform. These outline reports of hate crime, harassment and assault received by the university. The annual report also contains information about responses to reports and wider safeguarding developments within the university. We also survey students who complete the Report and Support forms, whether they continue to engage with us or not.

By publishing this information, we aim to increase transparency around the reporting process. We hope that this will increase our community's confidence in reporting to us if they have experienced or witnessed any of these behaviours.

### Student Casework

We have introduced a Student Discipline Oversight Group that receives reports relating to student non-academic misconduct cases. The role of the Student Discipline Oversight Group is to provide oversight and scrutiny to the student disciplinary process, ensuring compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and considering the quality, impact and development of the Student Code of Conduct (Non-Academic).

Responsibilities of the SDOG:

1. To provide oversight and scrutiny to all student disciplinary matters, including staff to student sexual misconduct.
2. To ensure compliance with the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) good practice framework.
3. Ensure compliance with the following areas of the Office for Students (OfS) expectations in relation to harassment and sexual misconduct (*to be confirmed when the final guidance is published*):
  - a. Ensuring that those receiving information about, investigating or taking decisions on incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct are appropriately trained.
  - b. Ensuring investigations undertaken and decisions made in respect of incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct are credible, fair and otherwise reflect established principles of natural justice.
  - c. Ensuring that staff and students who are directly affected by any decisions made in respect of incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct are informed about the decisions and the reasons for them.





4. To consider guidance from Universities UK, Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and others in the development of good and best practice in this area.
5. To receive qualitative and quantitative data (including feedback from students) on the management of student discipline and lead developments in relation to timescales, outcomes, equality and diversity, student experience and quality of process.
6. To identify trends in reports received through Report and Support, and those managed through the disciplinary process, to find areas to improve prevention, raise awareness and develop appropriate educational approaches.
7. To consider and support training and communication requirements for staff and students engaged within the disciplinary process (including investigators, Student Misconduct Panel Members).
8. To lead the development and implementation of restorative practices at the University of Nottingham.
9. To ensure ongoing alignment with associated UoN policies (e.g. Dignity at Nottingham)

### **Staff Casework**

We regularly review staff conduct to ensure our community remains respectful, safe and supportive for everyone. This includes looking at individual cases, any disciplinary actions and reports made through our Dignity procedures.

Reports on staff conduct/ behaviour are compiled and analysed to identify patterns in the types of issues raised, the process followed, and the outcomes and recommendations of cases.

This evaluation process helps us to monitor the effectiveness of our staff-related procedures and codes, ensuring they remain fair, consistent and aligned with organisational policies. By reviewing trends, we are able to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the necessary support and guidance are provided to staff when required.

### **Steering Group**

We have a Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Steering Group, co-chaired by the university and Students' Union, which provides expertise and advice in the management of harassment, sexual misconduct and related issues.

Responsibilities of the Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Steering Group:

- To ensure alignment across the university's policy and procedures on the identification and management of harassment, sexual misconduct and related areas.



- To consider and recommend the steps the university could take to make a significant and credible difference in protecting students from harassment, sexual misconduct and related areas, including preventing and reducing incidents.
- To identify appropriate training and awareness-raising activities for staff and students, in relation to harassment, sexual misconduct and related areas.
- To oversee consent training for students, providing support and direction to the Consent Training Working Group.
- To receive qualitative / quantitative data and reports on harassment, sexual misconduct and related areas to support the understanding of issues at the university, making recommendations for the development of support and services for students.
- To consider themes identified by the data or feedback from staff or students and undertake deep dive exercises to develop institutional understanding of the issues experienced.
- To identify learning from lived experience and the management of harassment, sexual misconduct and related areas, and make recommendations as to how this can be embedded into future developments, practice and training.
- To report to relevant student experience and other committees, such as the Code of Conduct Working Group, and other relevant groups as required.
- To consider where expertise is required from across the sector/other sectors to support the university's approach to managing harassment, sexual misconduct and related areas.
- To consider how the Office for Students (OfS) statement of expectations impacts on the university's policies, procedures and codes, providing advice and support to the development of these where required.
- To advise on the development and review of this 'single document' expected by the OfS to set out the university's policy and procedures relating to then harassment and sexual misconduct.

## Other Activities

The university and Students' Union regularly collaborate and consult with relevant networks, groups and societies to understand students' experiences and perspectives of harassment, sexual misconduct and related issues. Students and Students' Union Officers have also been consulted and included in the development of this document and its associated webpages.

## Review

This document and its associated webpages will be reviewed yearly by the Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Steering Group. This group includes Students' Union Student Representatives.