

Student guide to tackling harassment, hate and sexual misconduct

Office for
Students

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Every student should feel safe and protected during their time at university or college.

This includes protection from harassment and sexual misconduct.

There are practical actions we expect universities and colleges to take to prevent and address harassment and sexual misconduct. We call this our statement of expectations.

This guide will help you understand:

- what to expect from your university or college
- what to do if those expectations aren't being met
- where you can get help if you've experienced harassment or sexual misconduct.



What do we expect from universities and colleges?

Our statement of expectations is a consistent set of standards that universities and colleges should follow to develop and implement effective ways to tackle harassment and sexual misconduct.

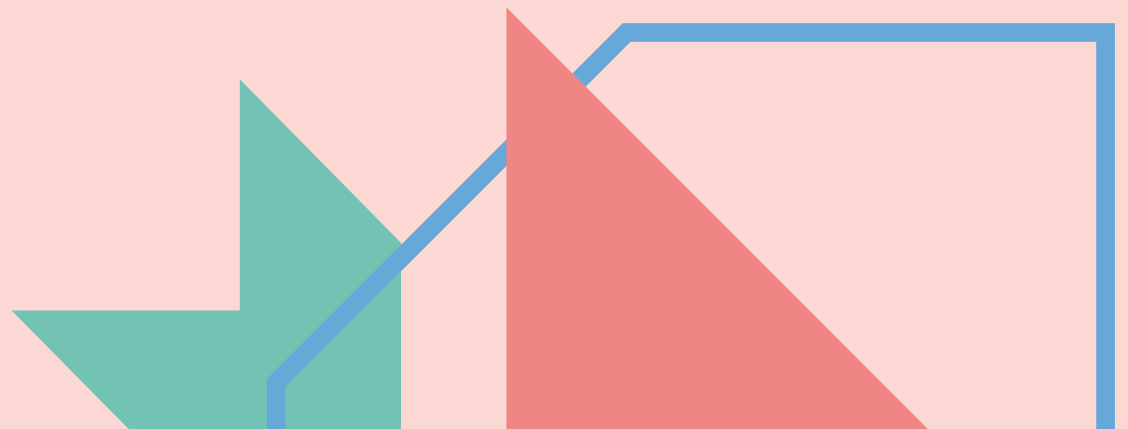
It was developed by looking at research, evidence and practice from across the higher education sector as well as through conversations with students, universities and colleges, sector representatives and specialist organisations.

Statement of expectations for universities and colleges

1. Every part of the organisation should clearly communicate how they will prevent and respond to all forms of harassment and sexual misconduct and take responsibility for making sure these expectations are met.
2. Those in charge of running universities and colleges (boards, senate, governors etc.) should be given regular information on what work is taking place, and take responsibility for making sure that work is done effectively.

3. Universities and colleges should work with their students to develop and evaluate systems, policies and processes for addressing harassment and sexual misconduct.
4. Training should be provided to students and staff to raise awareness of, and prevent, harassment and sexual misconduct.
5. It should be clear to students how they can report and disclose incidents.
6. Universities and colleges should have a fair, clear and accessible approach to responding to reports and disclosures.
7. Students who are involved in an investigation should have access to appropriate support.

[Read our statement of expectations in full.](#)



How does the OfS support universities and colleges?

In addition to providing a clear statement of expectations, we are supporting universities and colleges in their work on addressing and preventing harassment and sexual misconduct by:

- highlighting examples of best practice
- funding projects to explore new ways of supporting students
- sharing research and resources.

Read more about our work on [harassment and sexual misconduct](#).



What can you do if expectations are not being met?

Speak to your university, college or students' union

We have developed the statement of expectations to help you understand what support and processes should be in place at your university or college.

We want to empower students and students' unions to challenge their university and college if standards are not being met.

If you don't feel your university or college is meeting these standards, you should first speak to staff at your university or college or your students' union. You could ask if they know about the statement of expectations and for more information about how they are tackling harassment and sexual misconduct.

We have also created a [communications toolkit](#) to support the statement of expectations that you can share with your university and college or use on social media.

Notify us of an issue

If universities and colleges are not meeting our expectations in responding to and preventing harassment and sexual misconduct, we want to know why.

If you want to let us know about an issue you can [submit a notification to us](#).

It's important to remember that we do not have a direct role in dealing with individual complaints or with disputes between students and their university or college.

We want to hear from students, student representatives and students' unions about issues in their university or college that are affecting students' abilities to participate in, and have a fulfilling experience of, their studies.

Make a complaint

If you have a complaint about your university or college, you should first go through your university or college's own complaints process.

If this doesn't resolve the issue, you can raise the matter with The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

Read more about [how to raise a complaint](#).

What if I think I've experienced harassment and/or sexual misconduct?

If you think you have experienced harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you can choose whether to report it.

You may choose to tell someone you trust at your university or college – such as a personal tutor – or you could approach your students' union.

Some universities and colleges may have anonymous online reporting tools.

Your university, college or students' union will be able to advise you on the support services available to you, such as student wellbeing services or academic support.



Organisations that can help

There are a number of national organisations and charities that may be able to support you:

Police

Practical information about reporting incidents and the police force in your area.

Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice has more information about what you can do if you've experienced, or know someone who has experienced, a hate incident or crime.

Rape Crisis England and Wales

Rape Crisis can help you find a Rape Crisis Centre, get online emotional support, or find information and self-help tools.

NSPCC Abuse in Education helpline

Provides victims of abuse with the appropriate support, advice and onward action, including on contacting professionals or the police if they wish.

Stonewall

Stonewall can help you find LGBTQ+ support services and community groups that are local to you.

TellMama

TellMama offers a secure service that allows people from across England to report any form of anti-Muslim abuse.

Disability Rights UK

Disability Rights UK has a disabled students' helpline, providing advice to disabled students studying in England. They also campaign to improve disabled people's rights and to tackle hostility, bullying and hate crime.

Community Security Trust

The Community Security Trust is a charity that protects British Jews from antisemitism.

