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10 June 2021

Dear accountable officer

Statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education

You will be aware that on 19 April we published a statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education.¹ We are determined to do all we can to help ensure that students feel safe and supported during their time in higher education – that meaningful support is provided to students when they need it, and that all incidents are dealt with effectively and sensitively.

As part of this, we are now writing to each accountable officer, restating our invitation for you to review and update your systems, policies and procedures in line with the statement of expectations. We would ask that this is done in advance of the next academic year (2021-22).

The statement of expectations provides a consistent set of standards that all universities and colleges can follow to:

- minimise potential barriers to reporting and disclosing instances of harassment and sexual misconduct
- ensure that investigatory procedures are fair and independent
- ensure all students involved receive appropriate support
- clearly set out behavioural expectations for all students.

Thanks to the work led by sector and student representative bodies, and through projects funded by the OfS, there are significant resources available to support implementation of the statement,

¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/prevent-and-address-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/statement-of-expectations/

some of which we reference on our website.² We will continue to update these as new materials, effective practice and research become available.

We will review the impact of our publication of the statement of expectations over the coming year and examine how universities and colleges have responded.³ This will be done in a risk-based and proportionate way, focused on areas of concern. Please let us know if you will not be able to align your systems, policies and processes with the statement in advance of the next academic year, and the relevant actions you are taking.

We are not, at this stage, formally connecting this statement of expectations to specific conditions of registration, but we will consider options for this in light of evidence from the changes made by universities and colleges, and the experiences of students, during the coming year.

You will also be aware that the statement of expectations was published in the context of online testimonials of sexual harassment and violence in schools and universities. This led to the commissioning of the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges. Ofsted's report is being published today.

If you have any queries in relation to this letter, please contact Estelle Kane at Estelle.Kane@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Yours sincerely



Nicola Dandridge
Chief Executive

² See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/prevent-and-address-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/resources-for-higher-education-providers/

³ For more information, see www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/how-we-expect-universities-and-colleges-to-tackle-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/