

POLICY PROPOSAL

TITLE: ZERO TOLERANCE TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment should not be tolerated by the University or Students' Union, and those who commit acts of sexual harassment should be stopped (i.e. their behaviour challenged) and disciplined as appropriate for their actions. The bathimpact Lad Culture survey in 2015 highlighted how 1 in 3 female students on campus had been victims of sexual harassment. (1) Because of such incidences, it is worth noting that the SU has stated that they are willing to support the Gender Equality Group in their work to tackle harassment that is faced by students in sports clubs.

This is by no means just a Bath-specific issue either. Data suggests the seriousness of the problem faced by female students nationally:

- 7% of female students experienced a serious sexual assault (2010 NUS Hidden Marks Report) (2)
- 77% students have experienced sexual harassment (2014 University of Cambridge survey) (3)
- 12% of female students have been subjected to stalking (Hidden Marks Report)

We call on the Students' Union to implement a zero-tolerance approach to sexual, physical, emotional violence, abuse, or harassment, as well as improving support available for victims of such actions, in order to improve welfare and student safety on campus. This policy statement sets out our commitment to this aim, and to working with relevant groups and stakeholders to ensure its implementation, including periodic review.

REASON FOR CHANGE

Considering that

1. There is a diverse student population at the University of Bath, this diversity can be defined in various ways: gender, sexual orientation, race, beliefs, and levels of abilities. From 2012/13 and 2015/16 statistics relating to the demography of Bath students, it was recorded that:

- a. 46% self-defined as female (4)
- b. There are 130 nationalities
- c. 11% of undergraduates have declared a disability (5)

2. This diversity may influence the way people view sexual harassment

3. Sexual harassment disproportionately affects women, but can happen to anyone of any gender

4. Sexual consent refers to the agreement to participate in sexual activity

5. There is no one legal definition of sexual harassment because of a range of different laws which cover different aspects of sexual harassment. However, use of the definition by the NUS provides a useful means of interpreting sexual harassment and states that sexual harassment is any physical and / or verbal behaviour that is characterised as unwanted, persistent, and of sexual nature. These behaviours include:

- a. Unwelcome sexual invitations, innuendoes, and offensive gestures
- b. Groping, pinching, or smacking of your body
- c. Wolf-whistling, catcalling, or offensive sexual noises

- d. Having your clothes lifted without consent
- e. Someone exposing themselves / sexual organs to you without consent

6. Sexual harassment can have a serious negative impact on victims' health (mental and physical), experience of learning, confidence, and relationships

7. The University's senior management failed to issue a statement in support of students and staff following a recent sexual harassment case by a former member of a staff on campus (6)

Bath Students' Union recognises that

1. A zero-tolerance policy against sexual harassment aims to help the union create an environment where all students can enjoy time in their union without being harassed

2. No student at this institution should be forced to just 'put up' with sexual harassment and that action must be taken to ensure all students are able to enjoy the union without experiencing sexual harassment

3. Victim blaming is still prevalent in campus-culture, both amongst staff, students, and services alike, and must be challenged

4. All students have the right to live, study, work, and relax in an environment where they feel safe and are free from any form of sexual, physical, emotional violence, abuse, or harassment

5. All students have the right to live, study, work, and relax in an environment where their body and personal boundaries are respected

6. Victims deserve support to ensure their studies and daily lives are not considered secondary issues to the act(s) of violence committed against them

7. A zero-tolerance policy may be used as a springboard for raising awareness of sexual harassment, violence, and of other kinds of harassment or bullying

8. The process of driving social and cultural change around sexual harassment must be student-led and in collaboration with and supported by University staff

9. The levels of reported harassment severely under-represents the true number of incidents due to normalisation of harassment, embarrassment of the individual, and fear of repercussions

10. Consent is a necessary part of any sexual interaction, and consent education should be a normal part of every student's experience at University

11. Current union approach to 'zero-tolerance' does not adequately reflect how serious and widespread campus sexual harassment is

12. The failure of the union and/or university to respond appropriately and adequately to sexual harassment can be more damaging to institutional reputation than the occurrence of sexual harassment. Reputation is built on welfare

THE PROPOSAL

Bath Students' Union will

1. Support the adoption of a 'zero-tolerance to sexual harassment' Policy that applies to the harassment of any, and all, genders. To be put to the Board of Trustees at the next available opportunity

2. Extend this policy across all SU activities, including our commercial services and bar areas
3. Improve support services for victims of sexual harassment by mandating the Officer Team to lobby the University to offer better support and resources
4. Request that the University introduce compulsory consent workshops, as well as bystander awareness training from September 2017 during induction (Freshers' Week) to improve awareness of the issues outlined above
5. Use the NUS definition of sexual harassment in the zero-tolerance policy to maintain consistency and allow for future assessment of the policy
6. Set a clear and accessible guideline on how to report cases of sexual harassment and harassment of any sort, which is communicated amongst relevant support services on campus (i.e.: student services, personal tutors)
7. Introduce a zero-tolerance approach to complaints regarding any breach of this policy, up-to and including expulsion from the union
8. Resource the promotion of this policy, at least once every academic year, in order to educate Bath SU members
9. Mandate the Community Officer to work with campus liberation groups, such as the Gender Equality Group, concerning sexual harassment, via social media, organisation and attendance (where possible) of student-led discussions, events, and campaigns
10. Mandate the Community Officer to lead a campaign in response to the issues outlined in this policy
11. Mandate the Officer Team to work with University staff to develop training and support for students in positions of responsibility on how to enforce the zero-tolerance policy and how to effectively support victims
12. Mandate the Officer Team to work collaboratively with the campus trade union Equality Officers and Reps to review university policies and practices relating to sexual harassment of students and staff and jointly campaign and submit requests for improvements
13. Where it is safe to do so, the SU will publish annual statistics of how many cases of sexual harassment have occurred and will ask the University to do the same
14. Introduce a comprehensive recording system for cases and reports of sexual harassment, abuse, or violence, which is accessible to students, staff, and the public alike, in order to maintain understanding of the situation on campus
15. Lobby the University to introduce specialist counselling services in sexual and domestic violence

(1) <http://bathimpact.co.uk/2015/02/08/one-in-three-girls-sexually-harassed-at-university-of-bath-lad-culture-survey-suggests/>

(2) https://www.nus.org.uk/Global/NUS_hidden_marks_report_2nd_edition_web.pdf

(3) <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/7123>

(4) <http://www.bath.ac.uk/about/organisation/facts-figures/>

(5) <http://www.bath.ac.uk/student-records/statistics/sreo-equality-and-diversity-statistics-2012-2013.pdf>

(6) <http://www.bathchronicle.co.uk/eustachio-mitrano-from-bath-admits-secretly-filming-women-s-bottoms-at-the-university-of-bath/story-30068456-detail/story.html>