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RAS Astronomy Forum
23 Nov 2018

**Welfare of Students and Staff:
Tackling Sexual Misconduct**

The 1752 Group



Established in 2016, The 1752 Group is a UK-based research, lobbying and consulting organisation that addresses **staff-to-student sexual misconduct** in higher education.

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UK context



Higher education

Sexual harassment 'at epidemic levels' in UK universities

Exclusive: Almost 300 claims against staff have been made in the last year, victims and lawyers say those are just tip of iceberg

5,077

David Batty, Sally Weale and Caroline Bannock

Sunday 5 March 2017 18.00 GMT



Oxford University reported the highest number of staff-on-student

Higher education

Sexual harassment at university: 'I felt terrified to say anything'

Rebecca Nice tells of how she was sexually harassed by an undergraduate at Winchester

This article is 6 months old

1,219

David Batty and Sally Weale

Friday 7 October 2016 13.35

Sexual harassment

UK universities accused of complacency over sexual misconduct

Exclusive: More than one-third of universities provide no staff training on misconduct, including harassment and rape

Universities failing to tackle sex harassment by staff, says report

Only one sexual misconduct case out of 16 led to a staff member losing their job

Guardian coverage:

- August 2016
- October 2016
- March 2017
- November 2017
- February 2018
- September 2018

University of Cambridge

University of Cambridge admits significant sexual misconduct problem

Institution receives 173 complaints of improper behaviour in nine months



▲ The University of Cambridge said the large number of complaints received through its anonymous sexual misconduct reporting system was 'a metric of success'. Photograph: Geoff Robinson Photography/REX

The University of Cambridge has admitted it has "a significant problem" with sexual misconduct after it received 173 complaints in nine months after launching a new anonymous reporting system.

Sexual harassment of students by university staff hidden by non-disclosure agreements

Harassment of students is widespread but remains invisible, partly because of confidentiality clauses, say campaigners

- [Have you been affected by sexual harassment at university?](#)
- [Opinion: complaining means risking your career](#)





What is sexual misconduct?

“

Sexual misconduct involves **forms of power** enacted by academic, professional, contracted, and temporary staff in their relations with students (this can also occur between staff members).

Sexual harassment is one of many behaviours encompassed by sexual misconduct, which can include **grooming, bullying, assault, sexual invitations, comments, non-verbal communication, creation of atmospheres of discomfort, promised resources in exchange for sexual access.**

”

What is sexual harassment?



“ ——— The Equalities Act 2010 ——— ”

Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

- Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or unwanted conduct relating to gender reassignment, sex or sexual orientation.



Misconduct vs harassment

Misconduct

- **Many behaviours** including grooming, bullying, assault etc.
- **"Unwanted" is not a core criterion** in evaluation
- Relationships can change over time to become abusive

Harassment

- **Included under the umbrella of 'misconduct'**
- Relies on the recipient to state that **behaviours are "unwanted"**
- Requires students or staff member to make a judgement on appropriate behaviours

Prevalence



In the US:

- 9% of over 150,000 respondents reported having **ever** experienced harassment from a member of faculty
- This figure rose to 22% of female graduate students and 17% of male graduate students¹

In Australia:

- Out of the 51% of students who reported experiencing sexual harassment **during 2016 only**, 7% of these (3.5% of all respondents) named the perpetrator as “a tutor or lecturer from [their] university”
- Among postgraduate students, 10% (5% of all respondents) reported staff members as the perpetrator²

Power in the Academy



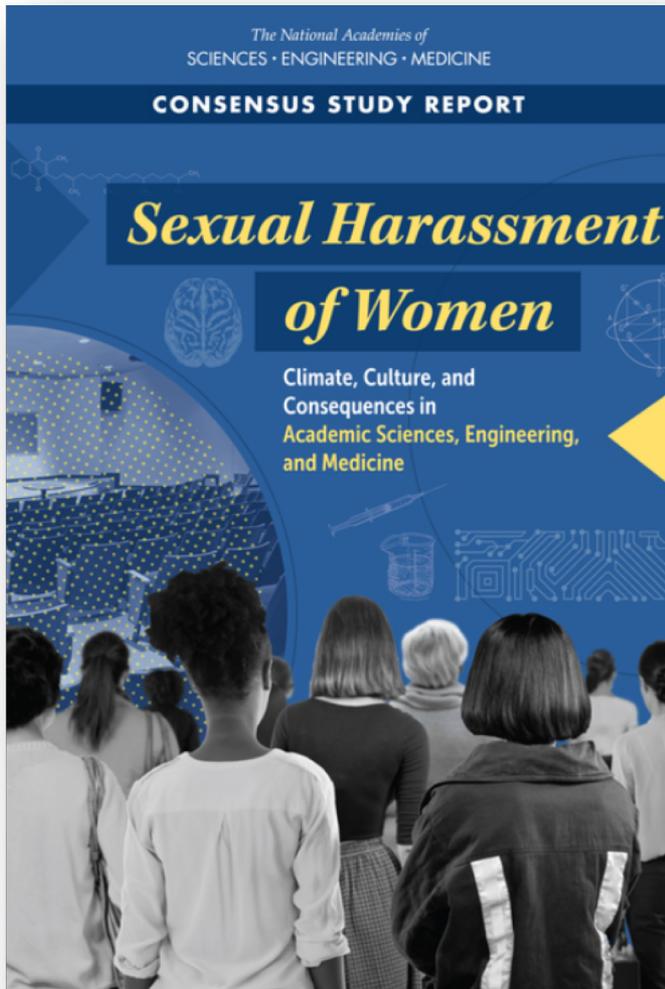
Power in the
academy: staff
sexual misconduct in
UK higher education

nus
national union of students

NUS/The 1752 Group Survey 2018:

- **Sexual misconduct is common** - 40% had experienced at least one incident of sexualised behaviour from staff
- **Sexual misconduct is under-reported** - only 10% of respondents who experienced staff sexual misconduct reported this to their institution
- **Sexualised relationships impact students** - 80% of respondents were uncomfortable with staff-student sexual/romantic relationships

National Academy of Sciences Report



“

The most potent predictor of sexual harassment is organizational climate—the degree to which those in the organization perceive that sexual harassment is or is not tolerated

”

Silencing Students 2018



SILENCING STUDENTS: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO STAFF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN UK HIGHER EDUCATION

ANNA BULL,
UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH/THE 1752 GROUP
RACHEL RYE, INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER
SEPTEMBER 2018

Part One:

- **16 interviews** were conducted with students or ex-students who had tried to report sexual misconduct from academic staff
- Cases covered **15 different perpetrators** at **14 different institutions**

Part Two:

- Analysis of a **cross-section of 25 institutions' policies** in this area

Silencing Students: Alice



“

It's the worst single thing that has ever happened to me and I think of it in terms of before and after that happened, and my life will never be the same. It sounds crazy because it's like, "Well look, he didn't kill you, he didn't rape you, he didn't deliberately- he didn't hold you down. Why is it such an important thing?" I don't know and one of the things that bugs me is that I can't even articulate why it affected me that much, but it did, I know it did, and my life cleaves into before and after. [...]

Five years later, and I still think about it every day, every day.

”

Impacts: on the individual



- Loss of **access to teaching**
- Difficulty in getting **references**
- Spending **time** working on complaints rather than publishing/academic work
- Not **feeling safe** on campus
- **Changing dissertation topic**, department, research area or sub-discipline
- **Dropping out** of a degree, PhD, or academic career
- Effects on **ability to do their work** through being triggered
- Effects on **grades** and degree results
- Loss of **confidence**, affecting ability to write, publish, or complete their courses
- Loss of **networks**, or ability to network (including reputational damage following retaliation)
- Loss of **access to spaces** that were not safe because of the presence of the staff member (e.g. work spaces such as labs or networking spaces, such as conferences, seminars, or other institutions)



Impacts: more widely

Sexual misconduct and the handling of reports impacts the research group, department and institution

- Evidence of impacts on **other staff and students** beyond the individuals experiencing the misconduct
- Bystanders reported “**frustration, cynicism and loss of faith** in institution”
- Economic costs:
 - **Student attrition** and completion rates
 - Loss of **productivity** of researchers
 - **Staff time** working on investigations
 - **Compensation** payouts to students
- Reputational damage



Impacts: timing

We must recognise that the problem involves the institution itself: the institution can betray and do harm to students across the duration of sexual misconduct:

- Before** Environments and culture that enable or permit sexual misconduct to occur.
- During** The violating behaviours of staff that can occur over moments, months and years, without being reported or stopped by others or by the institution.
- After** The response of the institution to reports and complaints, and how it shows care and priority for student well-being. How does the institution act when a report is made?

Understanding barriers to change



From work with staff working in universities, we know that sexual harassment and violence in higher education contexts is:

- **Invisibilised:** limited and incorrect conceptualisations of what constitutes SH/SV and escalation of 'extreme' cases only
- **Normalised:** gender stereotypes and expectations underpin normalisation of various forms of violence ('boys will be boys')
- **Trivialised:** poor understanding of prevalence and impact on survivors
- **Dismissed:** covering up ('open secret' culture) and entrenched victim-blaming



What needs to change?

Changes at institutional level

- Implement **clear sexual misconduct policy**, including a policy on staff-student relationships with active recording and monitoring
- Implement **separate reporting and complaints procedures** for sexual misconduct/sexual violence/hate crimes/gender based violence
- Deliver **training on bystander intervention** and taking disclosures – staff need to know what the procedure is
- Conduct **independent investigations**
- Implement enforceable professional **code of conduct** for all university staff
- Implement new, **transparent disciplinary procedures**
- Conduct regular **climate surveys** to measure results



What needs to change?

Changes at a group level

Before - prevention and culture

- **Training** regarding power imbalances for all staff and students
- Clearly communicated **expected standards of behavior** (to both staff and students) e.g. codes of conduct internally and for conferences/collaborations
- **Events and groups** promoting e.g. respect, equality and diversity issues, welfare, Women in Physics groups
- **Embedded pastoral care** for students and staff separate from supervisors (e.g. PhD/ECR **Tutors**, **mentoring** and buddy systems, “**Listening groups**”)



What needs to change?

Changes at a group level

During – intervention

- All staff trained and aware of where to **signpost** students
- All staff and students aware and **trained** in the spectrum of sexual misconduct behaviours
- **Bystander intervention**
- Early intervention by management
- **Surveys** for monitoring



What needs to change?

Changes at a group level

After – reporting and supporting

- Clearly **communicated reporting routes** with visible points of contact for concerns
- **Minimise repetition** for the reporting party
- Clearly **communicated consequences** for misconduct (especially to reporting party)
- Active emotional support and pastoral care
- Awareness of the possibility of **retaliation**

What needs to change?



Equality and diversity needs to be embedded in every decision, policy and practice

Changes that are happening



- The universities of Sussex and Durham have **new staff sexual misconduct policies**
- Roehampton **relationships policy** prohibits romantic/sexual relationships between students and staff with any responsibility for them
- **“Where do you draw the line?” training** developed collaboratively by UCL and Universities of Cambridge, Manchester and Oxford
- Several universities now have a sexual misconduct **strategy taskforce** in place
- Several universities working with local rape crisis to deliver **disclosure training**

What we are currently doing



- **Developing training** in partnership with Rape Crisis South London (to be launched early 2019)
- Produced **disciplinary process guidelines**, in partnership with leading law firm McAllister Olivarius
 - These are currently open for consultation; please send feedback to contact@1752group.com by Dec 3rd
- **Sitting on Universities UK's advisory group** on staff sexual misconduct



RASASC
Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre
RAPE CRISIS SOUTH LONDON

nus women

International conference 2019



- June 30 to July 2, 2019 at University of Madison, Wisconsin, USA
- For activists, academics, students, survivors, and anyone else trying to make change in their institution
 - Funded by the US National Science Foundation
 - Funding available for some attendees
 - Call for proposals open until 6th Jan 2019:
<https://facultysexualmisconduct.com/call-for-proposals/>
- **We especially want to hear from applicants from outside the US and UK, and those from marginalized positions**



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