



northumbria  
students' union

## Sexual Harrasssment Policy

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Northumbria Students' Union has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

We take all complaints of this nature extremely seriously.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

To enable a working environment and culture in which sexual harassment is unacceptable. All people working in or supporting the Union are covered in this policy, including visitors, student volunteers, society members and contractors such as door staff.

This policy should be read alongside the University of Northumbria Unacceptable Behaviour's policy. This addresses harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual violence in more detail. This policy is intended to work alongside and within the expectations of the University of which the Union is part. This information can be accessed at <https://northumbria.service-now.com/ub>.

While the Union recognises that women are most likely to experience sexual harassment, this policy covers all forms of sexual harassment related to anyone's gender and sexuality and should be read as such.

## **REPORTING: NSU STAFF**

Should you experience or witness any behaviour that you feel amounts to sexual harassment either towards yourself, a student or customer or another member of staff we strongly encourage you to report it to your line manager as soon as you can.

You can also report directly to the Union's HR in person in the management corridor on the first floor or to [su.hr@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:su.hr@northumbria.ac.uk).

Harassment does not need to have taken place in the Union to be reported. Any harassment seen or experienced in the process of undertaking work for the Union can and should be reported.

If you receive a report of harassment from a student (see below) please report it to your line manager immediately.

## **REPORTING - STUDENTS**

The same zero tolerance approach applies to students who wish to report incidences.

In this case the appropriate reporting route is

- a) To a staff member within the Union.
- b) Direct to our complaints process by emailing [su.complaints@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:su.complaints@northumbria.ac.uk).

Any behaviour by, or affecting, students can be reported to the University through the Unacceptable Behaviours platform, given above. This can report harassment wherever it occurs; the Union, on campus, in accommodation, in Newcastle or wherever the students were. Reports can be made in person or anonymously through the portal.

Students can report both through the Students' Union and through the portal.

If you believe yourself, or another student, is at immediate risk from the perpetrators notify a member of staff immediately and contact University security directly on 0191 227 3200. Students can also report concerns of safety through the NU Connect App (Finder link) and through the SafeZone app.

### **REPORTING – ALL OTHER PARTIES.**

Please report directly to a member of staff or email to [su.complaints@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:su.complaints@northumbria.ac.uk).

If the harassment was by a student of Northumbria you can also report the matter to the University through the reporting platform referenced above.

## **WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?**

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination. It takes place when someone is subjected to unwelcome and unwanted sexual behaviour or other conduct related to their gender.

Harassment is defined by law in the Equality Act 2010 as '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'. In the case of sexual harassment, the relevant protected characteristic is 'sex'.

Behaviour that constitutes sexual harassment includes:

- Unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, this may be either physical or verbal,

- Inappropriate or suggestive remarks or verbal sexual advances or inappropriate showing sexual organs to another person,
- Indecent comments, jokes or innuendos relating to a person's looks or private life,
- Unwanted physical contact such as hugging, kissing or inappropriate touching,
- Requests for sexual favours, particularly where it might involve misuse of institutional or role power
- Conduct of a sexual nature which creates (or could create) an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for others
- Inappropriate and unwanted display or circulation of pornography or indecent images
- Recording and sharing intimate images or recordings of another person without their consent.

Often, this kind of behaviour may be brushed off by the harasser as 'banter' or harmless flirting, particularly in social settings.

It is important to remember that the impact the behaviour had is the most important factor, it is not so relevant whether the individual intended to cause offence, but rather that offence was caused by the conduct.

## **WITNESSING AND HANDLING REPORTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Northumbria Students' Union considers it our responsibility to intervene when sexual harassment happens in our premises or in connection with services for which we are responsible.

If you witness or are alerted to sexual harassment taking place please alert the nearest member of staff.

## **RECEIVING REPORTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

If you are a staff member who receives a report of sexual harassment;

- Take it seriously and treat it as credible.
- Seek to take the conversation somewhere private and quiet but do not put yourself at risk.
- Seek to establish the facts of the matter. Who is involved, when and where.
- Seek to establish the outcome sought.
- Make it clear you may need to report this to your line manager.
- Report the matter to your line manager as soon as possible.

Under no circumstances promise complete confidentiality or to tell no other member of staff. In most cases it is likely a manager and senior staff member will need to be involved and in many cases our Duty of Care to the person and students of Northumbria means we will be required to inform the University where we believe students are at risk.

If you feel uncomfortable or distressed by the disclosure seek to bring your line manager in as soon as possible.

If the person making the complaint is in distress, seek the help of a 1<sup>st</sup> aider on duty in the building and the Duty Manager. If not in the building, consider contacting University Security and/or the police.

#### **INTERVENTIONS TO CHALLENGE SEXUAL HARASSMENT INCLUDE:**

- Watching/keeping an eye on the situation
- Speaking with target/victim of sexual harassment
- Speaking with perpetrator of sexual harassment
- Asking the perpetrator to leave the establishment
- Alerting door staff
- Alerting University security.
- Calling the Police.
- Reporting the matter to the University.
- Restricting a student's access to the building or Union services including society membership and volunteer positions.

#### **PRINCIPLES FOR REPORTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

We understand that reporting sexual harassment can be intimidating, so we aim to make the process as clear and straightforward as possible.

If you choose to report the incident by speaking to a member of staff, it will only be treated as a formal complaint if you make it clear that this is the route you would like to take. We are happy to offer informal advice about the possible action and outcomes open to you and will not force you to take any action you do not feel comfortable with.

Where we believe a criminal offence has taken place, we will advise you to report the incident to the police.

If we have serious concerns about your safety or the safety of others, the Union has a duty to inform the University (for matters relating to students) and contact the police (for all other individuals), but we will do our best to let you know before

doing so. We may also take action if we receive complaints that suggest a pattern of behaviour. If your complaint is subject to an ongoing police or University enquiry, we will not investigate until their investigation has run its course.

If, after speaking to us, you decide to make a formal complaint; the process will be as follows:

- a) Complaints between staff are handled through our grievance procedure. This may lead to disciplinary action against the staff members involved.
- b) Complaints about staff or students from non-staff are handled through our complaints procedure and member disciplinary process.

In both cases principles are the same;

1. Your complaint will be taken seriously, and every effort made to collect evidence to ensure appropriate action is taken.
2. Union staff will ensure the safety of the parties concerned as appropriate, including immediate intervention.
3. A written statement from you, the complainant, will be taken.
4. Once we have your statement, and the statements of any witnesses you are able to provide, the respondent will be informed of the details of the complaint made against them. As part of this process, each party will be encouraged to provide any relevant evidence and names of witnesses that support their statement. This process will always seek to establish the matters of fact from both sides.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Allegations raised regarding sexual harassment will be taken seriously and treated confidentially. Northumbria Students' Union gives an assurance that there will be no victimisation against any worker making a complaint under this policy or against staff who assist a colleague in making a complaint.