

STATEMENT OF INTENT: HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Aim

1. The University of Suffolk is clear in its intentions and duties that staff, students and visitors should have the right to study and work in an environment that is free from harassment¹ and sexual misconduct². This includes both the physical and online environments that encompass University and partners institutions.
2. For transparency and full compliance with OfS E6 conditions of registration, this statement seeks to provide staff, students and visitors with a single comprehensive source of information on how the University seeks to make a credible difference to protect students and tackle incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct. This information is published and accessible on the [University website](#) allowing for users to clearly identify the history of all related documents and policies and any changes made to their content.
3. The University of Suffolk complies with these duties in a manner which is consistent with the freedom of speech principles, Equality Act 2010 or any other legal requirement.

Relationships

4. The University of Suffolk takes seriously any allegations pertaining to the 'abuse of power' whereby a staff member exploits a position of power or trust in relation to a student to apply pressure in a way which:
 - may result in a student doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done; and

¹ Harassment is defined in section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 and section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (in its entirety, and as interpreted by section 7 of the Act) as relates to any behaviour or conduct that is considered unwanted (and unacceptable) to the recipient (and by any reasonable person) which:

- has the purpose, or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, threatening or offensive environment for that person which interferes with their learning, working or social environment;
- is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating their dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

² Sexual misconduct is defined as any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. This includes, but is not limited to:

- sexual harassment
- sexual assault; and
- rape.

Where conduct does not fall clearly within the examples in the paragraph above, that conduct may still amount to sexual misconduct under this definition where it is unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. The definition therefore includes the most serious behaviour of sexual assault and rape, but this is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

- any action or inaction that could reasonably result in something that falls within the scope of an intimate personal relationship.

5. Staff are expected to declare any personal relationship as outlined within the [Personal Relationships at Work Policy](#) or in line with a partner equivalent policy or code of conduct.

6. By way of summary the following statements set out University of Suffolk's position concerning relationships between staff and students:

- Close relationships of a personal/romantic/sexual nature between staff and students are strongly discouraged.
- Close relationships of a romantic/sexual nature between staff and students under the age of 18 years, or students who are adults at risk, are normally forbidden and will usually lead to disciplinary action being taken against the member of staff, possibly leading to dismissal. In this context, an adult at risk would refer to a person who
- is usually 18 years or older, who have care or support needs and are unable to protect themselves. This may include individuals where mental capacity is impaired.
- Academic staff engaged in a close personal relationship or having a personal connection with a student whom they teach and assess, must notify their line manager immediately so that arrangements for demonstrably impartial assessment can be made. Any member of staff failing to follow this requirement is likely to become the subject of disciplinary proceedings.
- Any member of staff in a professional services role engaged in a close personal relationship or with a personal connection with a student must alert their manager of this situation. The line manager will work with that member of staff to ensure no inappropriate professional contact with or influence on the student's activities occurs or could reasonably be perceived.
- Close relationships between students and professionals working in a placement setting that are responsible for the teaching and assessment of their practice. Any close relationship within the placement setting should be disclosed to their relevant line manager (in the case of staff/ professionals) and to their PAC/ Course Lead (in the case of students).

Disclosing and reporting incidents

7. Students, staff and other individuals are able to report behaviour that may amount to harassment and/or sexual misconduct to University Safeguarding Officers at their respective campus.

8. Contact details are published on the University website, [Safeguarding](#).

9. The University distinguishes between a disclosure, where a student tells the University that something has happened to them or someone else, and a report, where a student makes a formal report to a University policy and procedure.

10. Disclosures may relate to any event, including those that do not involve another University student or staff member. A disclosure may lead to a report, however, disclosing students may purely be seeking support or information. It should also be noted that, since disclosures can be about historical events or those involving people from outside the University environment, disciplinary action is not always applicable.

11. All information received or obtained in connection with incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct will be handled sensitively and used fairly, with the reporting party informed of their options to progress with any of the following:

- To make a formal complaint to the University
- To report the incident to the Police
- To seek support

12. When a formal complaint is made via the University Complaints procedure, the University of Suffolk ensures that any investigations undertaken, and decisions made in respect of incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct are credible, fair and otherwise reflect established principles of natural justice.

13. Conduct may be harassment or bullying and/or sexual misconduct whether or not the person behaving in that way intends to offend. Different people find different things acceptable. Everyone has the right to decide what reasonable behaviour is acceptable to them and to have their feelings respected by others. The perception of the person who is at the receiving end of the conduct should be considered objectively alongside the other circumstances of the case; and whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have had that effect.

14. Complaints against other students may be investigated under the Student Discipline Procedure and complaints made against staff may be investigated under the Staff Discipline Procedure.

15. The University of Suffolk prohibits the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) or other forms of written contracts to prevent a student from disclosing information about harassment or sexual misconduct. Students, staff and visitors are encouraged to report incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct as set out in the policies below.

16. Including but not limited to an investigatory and decision-making process, appropriately trained staff are equipped with the required knowledge and skills to support any student, who:

- wish to make allegations or complaints about harassment and/or sexual misconduct;
- have alleged and/or experienced incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct; and
- are the actual or alleged perpetrators of incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct.

Support

17. Pastoral support will be identified and allocated to reporting, responding or witness students. Support may include providing information on institutional policies, the allocation of a single point of contact, identification of adjustments or supportive arrangements.

18. Arrangements may include, but are not limited to, risk assessment and safety planning to establish mitigating or precautionary measures such as non-contact arrangements between students; directing students to mental health or welfare support; providing guidance on options for leave of absence; considering student accommodation arrangements, where student accommodation is available; meeting students to discuss behaviour concerns.

19. Other support may include the provision, referral or signposting to other services, such as specialist agency support, therapeutic or wellbeing support.

20. The Safeguarding Officer receiving the disclosure or report should establish, with the student's consent, their support needs and facilitate the arrangement of support.

Raising awareness and training

21. All students will receive key information as part of their induction. Training includes but is not limited to ensuring that students understand:

- a) The content of the single comprehensive source of information published by the University
- b) Behaviour that may constitute harassment and/or sexual misconduct

- c) Information describing in more detail the content of this statement to promote understanding
- d) Information on activities which aim to make a credible difference to addressing harassment and sexual misconduct.

22. In addition, the University of Suffolk is committed to providing staff with up-to-date briefing or training to enhance their understanding, knowledge and skills of:

- a) The single comprehensive source of information
- b) Behaviour that may constitute harassment and/or sexual misconduct to support students and staff who may:
 - Wish to make allegations or complaints about harassment and/or sexual misconduct;
 - Have alleged and/or experienced incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct;
 - Be the actual or alleged perpetrators of incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct;

23. Staff who are required to undertake investigations or make decisions in relation to incidents of harassment and/or sexual misconduct are appropriately trained.

24. Policies that align with the statement of intent are as follows:

Students	Staff	Students, staff and visitors
Dignity at Study Policy	Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy	Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
Student Discipline Policy	Personal Relationships at Work Policy	Domestic Abuse Policy
Students Complaints Procedure	Disciplinary Policy	Freedom of Speech COP and Policy

Functionally equivalent partner institution policies and procedures with different titles meet the same expectations.

Data Collection

25. The University seeks to operate with fairness and transparency and will collect non-identifiable annual data on its cases including data sets for specific types of reports, analysis and

evaluation. This data will support the University to identify actions and forward planning to make a significant and credible difference to tackling harassment and sexual misconduct.

Governance and Monitoring

26. The University of Suffolk Board has ultimate responsibility in ensuring that the University discharges its duties in relation to harassment and sexual misconduct. The University Senate and Safeguarding Committee maintain oversight of compliance and assist in monitoring progress against action plans and the compliance framework.

27. The information in this statement is regularly reviewed for alignment with the requirements set by the Office for Students and seeks to:

- Not contradict, undermine or conflict with expectations on the minimum content requirements
- Be compliant with the provision which makes it expressly clear that the minimum content requirements must take precedence over any other information and provisions relating to harassment and/or sexual misconduct (and/or any subject matter of a similar nature to matters covered by those defined terms).