



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE

Student Unacceptable Behaviours policy			PL.70-v001
Brief Description & Purpose:	<i>The Student Unacceptable Behaviours Policy outlines the University's commitment to preventing and addressing bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct of students. The policy provides definitions of unacceptable behaviours, and outlines how to report incidents, support available to students, and how incidents are investigated.</i>		
Applicable to (list cohorts):	Staff: All staff	Students: All students	Third Parties: Third parties (including agents, <u>sub-agents and partners</u> ) acting on behalf of the University and all University-controlled activities ( <i>all levels, all modes of delivery</i> ) undertaken in the UK and overseas, involving students and partner organisations
Effective From:	12/06/2025	Last Review Date:	12/06/2025
Approval Authority:	Academic Board	Approved:	12/06/2025
Executive Owner:	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)	Business Owner:	Director of Student Life and Wellbeing
Next Review Date:	01/06/2028	Publication External Y/N	Y

## Overview

Northumbria University seeks to provide an environment where students can flourish academically and personally. We aspire to a community that is safe, welcoming, respectful and free from bullying, discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The University is committed to preventing incidents of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment) wherever possible. We also commit to providing preventative training in relation to unacceptable behaviours. We also commit to providing timely support for those who have been affected by such behaviours, and to provide fair and transparent investigatory and resolution processes to stop bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct, to remedy any harm, and to prevent its recurrence.

Our [Student Charter](#) and [Values and Behaviours](#) set out agreed standards of behaviour and expectations. Bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment) are unacceptable behaviours and will not be tolerated. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Unwelcome remarks, gestures, or physical contact
- Deliberately ignoring or excluding others
- Offensive jokes or comments (explicit or by innuendo)
- Display or circulation of offensive words, pictures, or other materials
- Verbal abuse or threats
- Physical abuse or violence of any nature
- Sexual misconduct
- Hate crime
- Coercive Control

This policy includes but is not limited to, behaviours relating to the protected characteristics within the [Equality Act 2010](#).

The scope of this policy applies to unacceptable behaviours committed or alleged against students by other students, staff or third parties.

If you experience or witness unacceptable behaviour involving any person connected to your studies at Northumbria, you are strongly encouraged to seek support and report it. For the avoidance of doubt, any person includes students, University staff and third parties such as partners, agency workers, visitors and consultants.

The University is committed to ensuring that all concerns raised are taken seriously and dealt with thoroughly and sensitively. If at any point another University policy is considered more appropriate, concerns may be re-routed through discussion with those involved.

The University maintains its duty in upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law, as per its Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech Policy. However, this duty will always be balanced with upholding a fair and inclusive environment for students, staff and the wider community.

## **Definitions**

### **Bullying**

Bullying occurs when someone is subject to offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, that is intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure them. There is often an imbalance, abuse or misuse of power, or perceived power, and it is normally repeated behaviour rather than a one-off isolated incident.

### **Discrimination**

Discrimination occurs when someone is treated unfavourably because of their actual or perceived membership of a certain group or social category including but not limited to characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

### **Domestic and partner violence**

Domestic and partner violence/abuse covers incidents or a pattern of incidents that happen between those who are, or have been, partners or family members. The incidents can take a number of forms, including: physical, verbal, emotional, financial and coercive control. It can occur online and offline. Anyone can be a victim, while the majority of victims are women and girls.

### **Harassment (including stalking)**

Harassment occurs when someone is subject to unwanted or unwelcome behaviour, which has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Stalking is a form of harassment and occurs when a person becomes fixated with another. It can occur online and offline.

### **Hate incident**

Hate incidents are behaviours motivated by hate, fear, prejudice or intolerance and are often based on real or perceived characteristics of the victim(s) in relation to their age; disability; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership. Racial harassment occurs when someone is subject to unwanted behaviour in relation to their real or perceived race, which has the purpose or effect of violating dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

### **Misogyny**

Misogyny is the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls, and the belief that men are inherently superior. Its meaning is similar to 'sexism', and can refer to behaviour and attitudes. Misogyny is generally directed by men against women and occurs online and offline.

### **Sexual misconduct**

Sexual misconduct occurs when someone is subject to unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature from another person. It includes sexualised and predatory behaviours by students, and by university staff towards students. It can occur online and offline. In the University setting, it may also involve the misuse of institutional or role power in an unequal professional relationship.

### **Sexual violence and abuse**

Sexual violence and abuse is any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, which occurs in person or by letter, telephone, text, email, social media or any other means. The violence or abuse is often characterised by the absence of consent. Sexual violence and abuse includes but is not limited to:

- Conduct of a sexual nature which creates (or could create) an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for others
- Making unwanted remarks of a sexual nature
- Rape or sexual assault
- Revenge Porn
- Inappropriately showing genitals to another person

### **Victimisation**

Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated in a way that is detrimental because:

- They made, or intend to make, a complaint about being discriminated or harassed
- They acted or intend to act as a witness in support of another person relating to a complaint

### **Violence**

A violent crime occurs when someone uses or threatens to use force against a person. A violent incident occurs when a person or group of people are attacked, or threatened with attack, using physical force.

Anyone can be attacked – and anyone can be an attacker. An attacker could be a friend, a colleague, a partner, a family member, or a complete stranger.

The use of physical violence is a crime.

### **Consent**

Consent is agreeing by choice and having the freedom and capacity to make that choice. The person seeking consent should always take steps to ensure that consent is freely given, that it is informed and recognises that it can be withdrawn at any time. Consent should be freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic and specific.

Sexual violence or abuse is often characterised by the absence of consent which may be demonstrated by:

- Use of force or threats against the victim/survivor
- The victim/survivor was incapable of giving valid consent due to drink, drugs, sleep, age or mental disability
- The victim/survivor was deceived as to the identity of the person with whom they had intercourse

### **Disclosure**

Disclosure, in the scope of this policy, involves a student choosing to tell anyone who is part of the University about their experience of unacceptable behaviour. If you make a disclosure, you will be offered support from relevant University teams.

## Support

If you have experienced or witnessed sexual misconduct, harassment or any unacceptable behaviour, the University is here to support you. A range of specialist, one-to-one support services are available to help you navigate your options and access the right help for your wellbeing, studies, and safety. You can explore these services through your Student Portal. If you're unsure where to begin, you can speak in confidence to a member of staff at any Ask4Help point or submit an enquiry — you will be treated with dignity and respect, and referred to the most appropriate support, including teams trained in trauma-informed responses. You are in control of what happens next, and accessing support does not mean you have to make a formal report.

Our support services for disclosures of sexual misconduct, violence and harassment are guided by trauma-informed principles. This means we recognise the varied and complex effects that trauma can have, and we ensure our support services are delivered in ways that promote trust, choice, safety and empowerment. Students who disclose sexual misconduct or harassment are supported by trained staff who listen without judgement, respect individual experiences, and work in partnership to agree next steps. We aim to minimise re-traumatisation and ensure students feel believed, supported, and in control of how they engage with further support or reporting processes.

If you report unacceptable behaviour through the University's Unacceptable Behaviours Portal and provide your contact details, you will be contacted by a specialist member of staff to discuss the support available to you.

You could also consider talking to a friend, course tutor, [Northumbria Students' Union](#), family member or another person you know and trust

## Resolve It

If you experience unacceptable behaviour, you should get support quickly to help you to deal with the immediate situation. Next, you need to think through your options in order that the concern can be resolved as early as possible. You can consider talking with:

- A person you know and trust, this might be a friend, fellow student, colleague, or family member
- A tutor or another member of your programme team
- The Students' Union
- A member of our Student Life and Wellbeing Team
- University 24/7 Security Team

Sometimes, it may be possible to resolve the matter informally. For example, if the other person is not aware that their behaviour has caused offence or concern, or their actions or words have taken on a meaning they did not intend, an informal discussion may help to resolve the situation quickly. Our Student Life and Wellbeing Team can advise on the range of support available to help resolve concerns informally.

## Report It

If it is not possible, or it is not appropriate, to resolve the situation informally you can report concerns using the [online reporting tool](#). Alternatively, you can talk with your programme team, the Students' Union, our Security Service or [Student Life and Wellbeing](#) who can also report on your behalf. You can also use our [SafeZone app](#) or your [Student Portal](#).

The Reporting Party is the person(s) who witnessed or is the subject of the alleged incident of unacceptable behaviour.

The Reported Party is the person(s) whose behaviour it is alleged amounted to an incident of unacceptable behaviour.

All reports are carefully and thoughtfully addressed by relevant staff members through a process that is transparent and clearly communicated to the individuals involved. We will respect the right of the individual disclosing an experience to choose how to take forward a disclosure.

You will be asked to provide information about what happened, the impact and, whether it has affected anyone else, and if there are any witnesses. Once you have submitted the report, a University Specialist Support Adviser will contact you to discuss the information provided and next steps.

Reports of unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with confidentially to the maximum extent possible and we will respect a student's right to choose how they want to take the situation forward. In most cases, reports of unacceptable behaviour will remain confidential. However, if we believe there is a significant risk of harm to a student or others, we may need to share information with other professionals to ensure safety. We will always aim to discuss this with you first, and seek your agreement, unless there is an immediate or significant risk where it is necessary to act quickly for your or others' protection. This is done in line with the law, under what is called "vital interests".

You can submit a report anonymously if you wish. If you choose to report anonymously, this means that you are unable to identify yourself or the individual(s) you are making the report about. We will not be able to offer you direct support or initiate an investigation following an anonymous report.

We use anonymous reports to help us understand the issues impacting our University community, to monitor patterns and trends and to shape our prevention of and response to unacceptable behaviour.

If you prefer to speak with someone confidentially about your concerns you should make a [report with contact details](#).

## Formal Resolution Processes

The University may take disciplinary action against a student if there is a complaint from anyone (from either within or outside the University community) that they may have displayed behaviour which the University judges amounts to misconduct as defined in this student [Handbook of Regulations](#) (Taught) and (Research).

Students on professional programmes should note that 'Misconduct' of any form may have

implications for their fitness to practise (see Section 9 of the 'Handbook of Student Regulations' (Taught)).

Where the case is more complex and concerns have arisen about the risk that the individual or other members of the University Community may be exposed to, a case conference will be convened (Appendix C of the Handbook of Student Regulations) and any report will be considered in line with the Precautionary Action on the Basis of Duty of Care Procedures (Section 17 of the Handbook of Student Regulations).

If the allegation is against a student, the matter will be considered in line with the Student Disciplinary Procedure (Section 3 of the Handbook of Student Regulations). If the allegation is against a member of staff, the report will be considered in line with our internal procedures, the Student Complaints Procedure (Section 10 of the Handbook of Student Regulations (Taught) and (Section 3 of the Handbook of Student Regulations (Research), the staff code of conduct, and where required, in accordance with relevant staff disciplinary procedures.

### **If the incident constitutes a criminal offence**

Some incidents, for example sexual assault or violence, might constitute a criminal offence. Where appropriate, the University investigation may be paused pending the outcome of the Police investigation and the University may also exceptionally inform the Police for the purposes of protecting the victim and / or for the prevention of further serious offence.

### **Malicious or vexatious allegations and false statements**

Malicious or vexatious allegations and false statements will not be tolerated by the University and shall be considered misconduct by the complainant, and disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with Section 3 of the '[Handbook of Student Regulations](#)' (Student Disciplinary Procedure) and / or Section 9 of the 'Handbook of Student Regulations (Taught)' (Student Fitness to Practice Procedures).

### **University use of data and reporting**

The University's [Unacceptable Behaviour Reporting Privacy Notice](#) outlines how we use data and reporting.

Anonymised data relating to reports of unacceptable behaviour will be collated and reported via the appropriate University Committee and required External bodies on a regular basis.

### **Review of Policy**

This policy will be reviewed at regular intervals, and its effectiveness will be monitored and any changes which are identified as needed will be implemented.

### **Previous versions**

Student Unacceptable Behaviours Policy 2021

Student Unacceptable Behaviours Policy 2023

### **Related information**

[University information about harassment and sexual misconduct](#)  
[Handbook of Student Regulations \(Taught Programmes\)](#)  
[Handbook of Student Regulations \(Research Programmes\)](#)  
[Safeguarding Policy](#)  
[Staff Code of Conduct](#)

Version No.	Reviewer	Date	Changes
1.0	Director of Student Life and Wellbeing	12/06/2025	Updated Policy to adhere to OfS guidance.