

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP  
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Dear Caroline Nokes

## **OfS consultation on addressing harassment and sexual misconduct**

When I gave oral evidence to the Committee's inquiry into attitudes towards women and girls in educational settings, in October, I promised to update members on the Office for Students (OfS) proposals to introduce new regulation to protect students from harassment and sexual misconduct.

I am now writing to let you know that we have today published a consultation on a proposed new condition of registration. The new condition, if implemented, would:

- Require all universities and colleges registered with the OfS to identify and take significant and credible steps to address harassment and sexual misconduct that affects students. An institution would be required to publish, in an easily available single document, the steps it intends to take to reduce incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct and to deal appropriately with incidents that do occur.
- Require institutions to explain the training students and staff will receive, how students can report concerns, and what support students should expect while a complaint is being investigated. In particular, we have proposed that universities and colleges should ensure students have access to personal support, including counselling where appropriate, in connection with incidents of harassment or sexual misconduct.
- Prohibit non-disclosure agreements that prevent students from talking about incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Place regulatory requirements on universities and colleges in relation to certain types of personal relationships between students and relevant staff.

- Ensure freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law are protected by requiring universities and colleges to continue to meet their legal and regulatory obligations in relation to both freedom of speech and harassment.

I have attached a copy of the consultation document, which can also be viewed along with any consultation updates on [our website](#).

### **Sexual misconduct prevalence survey**

I also discussed with the committee the difficulties created by the absence of good data about incidents of sexual misconduct affecting students and explained our plans to develop a national prevalence survey of sexual misconduct. We are currently working on a pilot survey that will grow our understanding of patterns of sexual misconduct in higher education, and allow us to explore for the first time how these experiences affect students' studies. You can find more information about the developing pilot survey on [our webpages](#).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Lapworth', written in a cursive style.

**Susan Lapworth**  
**Chief Executive**