

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Universities: Summary of Evidence – Dr Geetanjali Gangoli, CGVR, University of Bristol

Background

Universities are significant sites for gender based violence, of which sexual harassment and sexual violence (SHSV) (Kippel, 2006, NUS 2011, Feltes et al 2012, Phipps & Smith 2012, CUSU 2014, DeGue 2014, DeGue et al 2014, Fenton et al 2015) plays an important role. Universities are also key sites for prevention (DeGue et al 2014). The extent of sexual harassment, sexual coercion, stalking and rape in student populations is a serious problem (Fenton et al 2015) with considerable consequences for mental health / academic performance (Stenning et al 2012). In the UK growing concern about male peer group behaviour in universities, described as 'lad culture', (Phipps & Young 2012, 2015a, 2015b) has led to a government request for an inquiry (BIS 2015). Studies show correlation between male peer support for sexual violence and prevalence of sexual violence (Schwartz et al 2001). The gender gap in the numbers of professors is also significant. For example in the UK, only around one in five professors is a woman (Times Higher Education, 2013). Such power differentials between men and women in academia reflect societal unequal gender relations and indicate that universities are likely to be a fertile site for sexual harassment and coercion of women staff and students. Broader research on gender based violence suggests that domestic violence and sexual abuse within relationships form a continuum with sexual harassment in the workplace (including universities), and need to be addressed holistically.

Types of gender based violence, particularly sexual violence and harassment include

Sexual harassment or violence perpetrated on academic staff by members of the public: Use of social media to target high profile women academics who have appeared on television or on other media. For example, Professor Mary Beard, a classicist from the University of Cambridge who appeared on *Question Time* in January 2013 was subject to sustained and vitriolic sexual taunts and harassment on social media via a website called 'Don't Start me Off' after this appearance. (see The Guardian, 26th January 2013).

Sexual harassment of students by academic staff: The sexual harassment of students by academic staff is dominant in the literature from the 1980s, particularly in the United States (Adams, Kottke and Padgitt, 1983; Dziech, B., & Weiner, 1984; Fitzgerald et al, 1988). Power dynamics between academic staff and students, and wider unequal gender relations may lead to sexual coercion by academics (Fitzgerald et al, 1998). Post-graduate students may be particularly vulnerable to sexual advances from supervisors (Lee, 1998). Only one study on SV and university staff could be located, which queried students about staffs' use of SV towards them, with 41.1% of female and male students reporting they experienced staff sexual misconduct (NUS, 2018).

GBV/sexual harassment of students Though no study has investigated DVA specifically at UK universities, there are indicators that it occurs amongst students. For instance, Young et al. (2017) examined the experiences of Further Education students aged 16 to 19, finding that nearly half of women (46.1%) and men (49.9%) experienced controlling behaviours. When considering that university students tend to be older (UCAS, 2017), a more direct indicator may be findings by the ONS that young adults aged 18 to 24 tend to be at the higher risk for DVA (ONS, 2017). Several studies of varying quality have assessed students' experiences of SV. Findings from these studies suggested that: for female students, 68.6% experienced sexual harassment (Stenning et al., 2012), 31% experienced sexual assault (Goldhill and Bingham, 2015), and 5% rape (NUS, 2010; Phipps and Smith, 2012); and for male students, 12.5% experienced sexual assault (Goldhill and Bingham, 2015).

Impact of SV

We know from wider studies that GBV has a huge impact on women and girls. A multi-site study of impacts experienced by students at English campus universities found that 100% of those who had experienced SV reported a negative psychological, emotional or physical health based impact and out of these, 27% contemplated suicide or self-harm, 15% developed an eating disorder, 15% abused alcohol or drugs and 12% reported becoming more prone to, and frequent absence from university due to, illness (Stenning et al., 2012). Additionally, 50% of those who reported being sexually assaulted indicated having experienced a negative impact on their academic performance and 11% indicated that the progress of their studies was delayed (Stenning et al., 2012). There are no direct indicators of staffs' experiences and impacts of SV but inferences can be drawn from wider studies. Studies conducted with general samples in the UK suggest the prevalence for women may range from 20% experiencing assault or rape in their lifetime (ONS, 2018) to 52% experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace since the age of 16 (TUC, 2016).

Role of universities

Universities function within national/international legal frameworks. Chapter III, Istanbul Convention makes clear that prevention is a core strategic goal for all parties (Council of Europe, 2011). However, there are no specific legislative duties on UK universities in terms of data collection or prevention and response akin to those under US law such as Title IX 1972, the Clery Act 1990/1998; VAWA Act 1994/2013; Campus SaVE Act 2013). Guidance has been issued by UUK for investigating 'student misconduct which may also constitute a criminal offence' but which fails to recognize the complex reality of SV cases and is not mandatory (Fenton, 2016). Some work has been undertaken by EVAW which explores potential obligations on Universities under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998 (Dustin & Whitfield, 2015). At the current time the Equality and Human Rights Commission is recommending an enforceable mandatory duty and statutory code of practice on employers to combat sexual harassment (SV) in the workplace. The University of Bristol has taken specific initiatives (see attached documents) to tackle these issues, including: enhanced training and support for staff who receive complaints of sexual harassment; bystander intervention training for key staff and e-induction for new students. The University has also created a new Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy, and is part of the Joint Forum Against Sexual Violence and Harassment, which takes a city-wide approach, working with the universities of Bristol and the West of England, their students' unions and local agencies.

International institutional responses: The US federal government takes a tough line on sexual violence on campus compared to European responses. In 2014 the US produced a list of universities that had charges made against them of mishandling sexual violence cases. In India, sexual harassment in universities is treated as part of sexual harassment in the workplace, and under the Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (Prevention, Protection and Redressal Act, 2013), universities are mandated to create a sexual harassment prevention committee that handle sexual harassment cases, and are also meant to have a preventative role.

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ANNEX

This document outlines the key activities and initiatives to address sexual harassment at the University of Bristol as of June 2018.

The individuals that have contributed to this update include: Mark Ames, Miriam Goossen, Pru Lawrence-Archer, Rachel Everington, Richard Edwards, Rosalyn Ayres and Sue Clyne.

Training and Support

1. We work closely with The Bridge (Bristol's Sexual Assault Referral Centre) and Somerset & Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS) to provide guidance to staff who receive a report of sexual harassment. Staff are supported around how to respond and provided with guidance on referrals to specialist support. The Bridge have also provided training to members of the wellbeing team last year and there is a plan to roll out this training for the expanded wellbeing team.
2. An important area of HEFCE Catalyst Funded work was piloting the use of Bystander Intervention Training earlier this year. Since the pilot, it was decided that all new Residential Life Advisers, Senior Residents (SRs), Chief Residents (CRs), and wellbeing advisors will receive in house bystander training.
3. All SRs and CRs will attend a workshop around sex, consent and relationships during their training in the first week of September '18.
4. All new students will complete an e-induction prior to moving into their residences. The e-induction covers all aspects of their life in residences, including appropriate behaviour and sexual consent. The uptake is typically in excess of 98% and the e-induction is followed by a workshop in the first few weeks of term.

Policies and Advisors

5. We have also recently developed a new Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy which has been approved by UMT. It will be implemented to tie in with the imminent roll out of the new Report & Support tool for staff and students, see paragraph 8. The Policy applies to staff and students and was developed through a working group comprising people from the Student's Union, HR, Equality & Diversity, trades unions, legal services and Student Services. Consultation was also undertaken with two Deans and Staff Counselling services. The policy was based on recommendations from the Equality & Human Rights Commission.
6. There are two Acceptable Behaviour Policies, one for students and one for staff. We have Acceptable Behaviour Advisors for staff and these Advisors deal with a wide range of issues, including sexual harassment.
7. The Acceptable Behaviour policy for students is currently under review and we are working closely with the Chair of the SU Women's network who is also the elected Equality, Liberation and Access officer for next year.

Report and Support Website

8. We are in the final stages of implementing a Report and Support website that will enable students and staff to submit online reports and seek advice for incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including sexual harassment. All staff and students can report something either

anonymously or with contact details, this should make it easier for individuals who might not typically have come forward in the past. Reports can be made by those who have observed or experienced unacceptable behaviour, they can also be made by individuals who have concerns about the wellbeing of a student at the University. Report and Support will be managed by the Student Wellbeing Service who can offer guidance around the options and support available to individuals.

Communications and digital channels

9. To raise awareness of the new Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy and the Report and Support Website, there will be promotion through our internal communications channels in the new academic year. This includes:
 - All staff and student emails, items in the student newsletter and staff bulletin
 - Video content likely featuring staff/students (tbc)
 - MyBristol portal announcements
 - Printed material to be distributed throughout University buildings including residences
 - Social media
 - Supporting material for personal tutors and other student facing staff

Joint Forum Against Sexual Violence and Harassment

10. The joint forum against sexual violence takes a city-wide approach, working with the universities of Bristol and the West of England, their students' unions and local agencies. It provides a forum for sharing best practice and accessing local expertise to resolve common challenges. The PVC Education co-chairs the joint forum with the Deputy VC and Provost of UWE, the forum.