

Zero tolerance to sexual, physical, emotional abuse, violence or harassment

Policy 2016-2017

This is the RAU and RAU Student Union joint policy statement

The Vice-Chancellor and the Student Union Board of Directors have both made it clear that they want to see our institution implement a zero-tolerance approach to sexual, physical, emotional violence, abuse or harassment. This policy statement sets out our joint commitment as an institution to this aim, and we will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure its implementation, including periodic review

RAU and RAUSU believe

- All students and staff have the right to live, study, work and relax in an environment where they feel safe and are free from any form of sexual, physical, emotional violence, abuse or harassment.
- All students and staff have the right to live, study, work and relax in an environment where their body and personal boundaries are respected.
- No student or staff member should be forced to just 'put up' with sexual, physical, emotional violence, abuse or harassment, and action must be taken where necessary to ensure all students and staff are able to enjoy the campus / student life without experiencing these.
- Sexual harassment should not be tolerated by the RAU or RAU Students Union, and those who commit acts of sexual harassment should be stopped (i.e. their behaviour challenged) and disciplined as appropriate for their actions.
- That in order to be effective, a whole- institution approach to preventing sexual, physical, emotional violence, abuse or harassment is necessary. The process of driving social and cultural change must be student-led and in collaboration with and supported by University staff

RAU and RAUSU resolve

- To adopt a zero tolerance approach to sexual, physical, emotional violence, abuse or harassment on University premises and / or perpetrated by / against students or staff members. 'Zero tolerance' for the purposes of this policy means that incidents of such behaviour should not be left unchallenged.
- To promote a social and cultural environment in which sexual, physical, emotional violence, abuse or harassment is less likely to occur.
- To challenge the causes of violence against women such as gender stereotyping and the sexualisation and objectification of women.
- That the institutional response to sexual harassment is no different to its response to racial or homophobic harassment for example. Derogatory comments are no less offensive when they are ostensibly expressed as 'humour', 'banter' or 'joking'.
- To promote better understanding of the concept of sexual consent, and in particular the awareness that if an individual is incapacitated by alcohol or drugs they are not able to give consent freely, and being in a relationship with someone, or consenting to previous sexual activity, does not imply consent to sex
- To promote better understanding that some behaviours, such as unwanted groping or kissing or other forms of sexual assault, constitute criminal offences which, if reported to the police, may result in arrest and conviction

- To promote better understanding of the early warning signs of abuse and awareness of specialist support services.
- To take appropriate action, be it formal or informal (as deemed appropriate to the circumstances), against students or staff who perpetrate abuse. Possible student disciplinary action is outlined in the University's Student Conduct Code and Disciplinary Code.
- To actively encourage students and staff who experience or witness abuse to report it.
- To publicly promote the campus, as a zero tolerance to sexual harassment space, along with a similar promotion for 'virtual spaces' such as social media channels e.g. Facebook, Twitter.
- To develop robust and effective measures to improve the safety of the campus environment and the wellbeing of our students, including issues such as CCTV and security staffing, training and procedures
- To ensure that every staff member or student suffering abuse, harassment or sexual violence and every staff member or student supporting others who are suffering abuse, harassment or sexual violence, is able to find information and have access to support including specialist support.

It is acknowledged that sexual violence, abuse and harassment are not only an issue for women but may impact on individuals of any gender or sexual orientation. However we recognize that the vast majority of victims of sexual violence, abuse and harassment are women, and the vast majority of perpetrators are men. The focus of our policy and actions will take account of this reality.

The RAU Equality Scheme promotes our commitment to providing an environment where all people are respected and treated fairly regardless of irrelevant characteristics or distinctions such as: gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, disability, socio-economic group / background, religious belief / faith, political belief or affiliation, marital status, family responsibilities and sexual orientation.

Legislative context

Individuals may be criminally or civilly liable for their own actions. The RAU and the RAU Student Union recognise their duties and obligations in law to students and staff as individuals and the community as a whole, such as under the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998.

RAU

The RAU has launched the Intervention Initiative, funded by Public Health England, and developed by UWE to support universities in England to implement an evidence-based bystander intervention programme to address sexual coercion and domestic violence in university settings by encouraging students to take steps to prevent sexual violence and coercion.

The University has a number of policies already linked to this area, under which reports can be made and action taken, in particular the Student Conduct Policy, Bullying and Harassment policy and Student Safeguarding Policy.

Awareness of this policy statement

- This statement shall be available to view on the RAU and RAUSU websites and should be actively promoted through RAU Student Communication and RAUSU channels, particularly in bars and student residencies across all campuses
- RAU and RAUSU staff should all be made aware of this statement through staff communication channels as well as becoming part of staff induction. Specific training should be provided for staff in relevant areas such as student residencies, security, and bar Staff.

i **Sexual Violence** is any kind of unwanted sexual touching including groping, and other forms of sexual assault, sexual penetration, as well as rape. **Sexual harassment** is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. It can include catcalling, groping, following, wolf-whistling, derogatory comments, sexual comments about a person's body of clothing, asking questions about someone's sexual life, making somebody feel uncomfortable through displaying or sharing sexual material. This includes putting pornographic pictures on walls in a shared environment or sending sexually explicit emails or texts (for more information see for example <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/whatish.pdf>) It includes stalking in person or online.

Contact us

For any queries concerning this policy please contact Student Support Services or the Student Union