



Student Council Meeting 05/06/2017

Motion Name: Stop Masking The Problem: University of Bristol to Take Action against Sexual Misconduct

Background:

1. Sexual misconduct is defined here as: "forms of power enacted by academic and professional staff in their relations with students. This can also occur in relations with other staff members" (1752 group)
2. Sexual misconduct includes behaviours that are abuses of power such as sexual harassment, sexual violence, grooming, assault, sexual invitations, comments, creation of discomfoting environments, promised resources for sexual access.
3. Women, trans and non-binary students are disproportionately affected by sexual misconduct within higher education, with this compounded by being LBTQIA+ student and/or a BME student/and or having a disability.
4. For example, BME individuals are less likely to report due to lack of support services for both racism and sexual assault (1752 group).
5. Universities UK have recently released guidance on how institutions should tackle sexual violence and harassment.
6. However, the guidance and report did not adequately consider harassment and abuse perpetrated by staff, and indeed, that staff themselves face, is a serious failing.
7. Student-staff misconduct is a prevalent issue in HE institutions. Sussex University allowed a senior lecturer to continue working despite allegations of abuse and police investigation.
8. The Guardian published the results of a series of freedom of information (Fol) requests sent to 120 universities which showed that students had made at least 169 allegations of sexual misconduct against academic and non-academic staff from 2011-12 to 2016-17. At least another 127 allegations about staff were made by colleagues.

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9. Case studies have shown the prevalence of staff-student misconduct among postgraduate (PhD) students.
10. The investigation revealed that the true scale of the problem is likely to be far greater, as many alleged victims claimed they were dissuaded from making official complaints and either withdrew their allegations or settled for an informal resolution.
11. Testimonies revealed that survivors have had to withdraw from their studies, forgo careers and perpetrators often staying within institutions or using non-disclosure agreements (NDA) to move institutions without any investigatory or disciplinary penalty.
12. The abuse and harassment endemic in higher education cannot be understood without seeing it in the context of marketisation and cuts. This makes it harder for survivors to speak out, fearing for their future careers.
13. With mass under-reporting, even students and staff who do report have stated their complaints were dealt with poorly.
14. Epigram recently conducted a survey highlighting the problem of abuse and harassment students face by staff.
15. Several of these respondents told Epigram explicitly about the alleged incidents, including objectifying and sexual comments 'about female students breasts' and calling one student 'beautiful' in a personal message.

Purpose:

1. The University of Bristol was mentioned in the Guardian as being one of the institutions that do not have a Staff-Student Sexual Misconduct Policy thereby no effective policy of disciplining staff sexual misconduct to students.
2. Institutions have a duty of care for their students; this includes eradicating sexual violence.
3. The University of Bristol should ensure students are able to be report it all forms of harassment and abuse and for this to be dealt with
4. There is no formal data on the experiences of Bristol students as the University of Bristol does not have appropriate or effective procedures to collect evidence.

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Action:

1. For Bristol SU to stand in solidarity with students and staff who have faced harassment and abuse.
2. For Bristol SU to challenge institutional cultures which enable and mask abuse.
3. For Bristol SU to work with NUS UK and 1752 group on conducting research into staff student sexual misconduct, focusing equally on postgraduate students PhD students.
4. For Bristol SU to lobby for the University to co-develop and create a Student-Staff Sexual Misconduct Policy
5. For Bristol SU to support students facing and wanting to campaign against sexual violence perpetrated by staff, and to offer our support to activity on campus and awareness campaigns on student-staff sexual misconduct.
6. For Bristol SU to demand that UoB record and make public their data on sexual violence, including that faced by staff (academic and professional services)

Proposed by: Hannah Dualeh

Seconded by: Laura Ho, Sofia Doyle, Amy Finch

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/aug/26/sexual-harassment-of-students-by-university-staff-hidden-by-nondisclosure-agreements>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/07/scale-of-sexual-abuse-in-uk-universities-likened-to-savile-and-catholic-scandals> 3

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/london-university-goldsmiths-professor-quits-sexual-harassment-female-students-staff-a7072131.html> 4

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/sussex-university-lecturer-student-girlfriend-criminal-conviction-beat-up-assault-lee-salter-a7183391.html>

<http://epigram.org.uk/news/2017/05/epigram-survey-highlights-need-clearer-staff-student-sexual-harassment-policy>

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