

Student Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy

August 2025

Student Experience Directorate

Document Control

Version	Date	Update by	Details
1.0	01.08.25	Olly Walker	New policy for 2025/26 academic year

Document Reviewers


Name	Role	RACI
Elena Rodriguez-Falcon	Executive Director - Academic and UK & Ireland Operations	Accountable
Ali Baines	Dean Education and Student Experience	Owner and Responsible
Vaughan Leyshon	Executive Dean	Responsible
Melinda Tan	Executive Dean	Responsible
Olly Walker	Associate Director Student Wellbeing	Author
Jen Warry	Student Wellbeing Network Lead	Consulted
Peter Skillen	Director of UK Recruitment Integrity and Student Readiness	Consulted
Pamela Weeks	Director of Brand Marketing & Corporate Governance	Consulted
Ben Potter	Academic Registrar/Director of Quality	Consulted
Emma Walkden	Deputy Registrar	Consulted
Elaine O'Connor	Legal Counsel	Consulted

Associated Documents

Policy
Safeguarding Policies (England, Scotland, Wales) Student Behaviour Charter Student Disciplinary Policy Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (UKEU) External Speakers Policy Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech Information Sharing Principles Data Retention Policy

Legislation and Government Guidance
Education Act (no. 2) 1986 Guide to the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 Equality Act 2010 Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 Protection from Harassment Act 1997 https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/student-protection-and-support/harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/condition-e6-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct/

Approved

Executive Director	Signature and date
Elena Rodriguez-Falcon Executive Director Academic and UK & Ireland Operations	 16/07/2025

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1. Introduction and Purpose

This policy was created in response to the Office for Students' E6 registration condition on harassment, sexual misconduct and intimate personal relationships between students and staff, effective from 1 August 2025.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Student Disciplinary Policy* which details how incidents are investigated where allegations have been made against students, and the *Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (UKEU)* which details how incidents are investigated where allegations have been made against staff.

The *Student Disciplinary Policy* outlines the process for investigating allegations fairly, including clear timelines, stages, potential penalties, and provisions for appeal.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

2. Scope

This policy is applicable to all Study Group Centres in the UK; online while studying through the Digital Learning Hub; where appropriate in student accommodations (private or university) and in the wider community. It also applies to students who are registered with a Centre but studying remotely for reasons beyond their control.

For the purposes of the policy, any reference to 'Centre' includes International Study Centres and the Digital Learning Programme.

This policy also applies to all permanent, sessional, agency and supply staff who are responsible for managing non-academic student behaviour.

3. Definitions

Harassment including sexual harassment includes unwanted behaviour or conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment because of or connected to one or more of the following protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation (S26 Equality Act 2010 and S1 the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (in its entirety, and as interpreted by section 7 of the Act)).

In deciding whether behaviour constitutes harassment we'll take into account perception of the reporting party, other circumstances and if it is reasonable for the behaviour to be taken as harassment.

Sexual misconduct means any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and includes but is not limited to sexual harassment, sexual assault or rape as defined in the

Sexual Offences Act 2003. The conduct needs to have the purpose or effect of the general definition above.

In addition to the above, if a person is treated less favourably because they reject or submit to sexual misconduct, this also constitutes harassment.

All Study Group students must be protected from harassment and sexual misconduct from other students, staff, and visitors, and as such there is zero tolerance of any form of harassment, inappropriate sexualised behaviour or sexual misconduct. This includes those instances that are face-to face or online. Staff members should refer to the *Global Code of Conduct* for further information.

Students should refer to the *Student Safeguarding Policy*, the *Student Behaviour Charter* and the *Student Disciplinary Policy* for further information.

Being subjected to harassment, violence and/or abuse may breach a child's rights as set out in the *Human Rights Act*, so for any incident of harassment or sexual misconduct that involves a student who is under 18 years old, consideration will be given to reporting the incident to Children's Services and/or the police as per the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024*.

In the event a student is over 18 years old the decision to call the police will depend on the student's wishes, the severity of the incident and/or the risk to others.

4. Policy Aims

Study Group is committed to a strict zero-tolerance policy regarding any form of harassment and sexual misconduct. This policy empowers Centres to foster a positive and supportive student community, safeguarding students against its harms through various mechanisms. Harassment and sexual misconduct can affect anyone, but some students may face increased vulnerabilities due to factors like gender, age, sexual orientation, race, or ability. We are dedicated to providing accessible reporting channels, and offering appropriate support while minimising risks to student safety. As such, the policy and the mandatory training for all students is designed to ensure:

- Students can recognise the different forms of harassment and sexual misconduct, both in-person and online.
- Students have a clear understanding of consent and the law while studying with us.
- Students are able to be positive bystanders.
- Students are aware of how to report concerns both in-centre and externally.
- Students can identify available support resources both in-centre and externally.
- Students and staff are aware of the protocols for investigating possible incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Vulnerable students are supported appropriately.

- Students and staff are committed to our supportive culture that encourages the reporting of concerns. This policy ensures that all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, while also being provided with access to appropriate support.
- All Centre staff are familiar with the procedures for escalating potential incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Students and staff are informed of Study Group's position on intimate personal relationships between students and staff.

5. Information Handling

Confidentiality is a fundamental principle in fostering a culture where our students feel safe to raise concerns about harassment and sexual misconduct. We are committed to taking all reasonable measures to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those who come forward. However, there may be situations - such as when a student's safety is at risk - where it is necessary to share information with relevant agencies or internally. The Centre may be obligated to breach confidentiality and share information either internally or with external agencies if a student is under 18 years of age and has experienced or is at risk of significant harm. This also applies if information is provided regarding a child or young person under 18 who is facing, or is at risk of, significant harm, or if the individual is a vulnerable adult meeting these criteria. Refer to the *Information Sharing Principles*.

6. Use of Data

Centres are responsible for maintaining records related to incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct on CPOMS, Study Group's student information system for recording student safeguarding and wellbeing incidents at all UK and Ireland Centres and on the digital pathway. Additionally, Centres are responsible for documentation of staff and student training via staff training logs and the Safeguarding Compliance Checklist. Centres must complete safeguarding risk assessments, and quarterly and annual safeguarding reviews.

The Central Student Wellbeing Team is responsible for maintaining comprehensive records of staff safeguarding training and conducting regular audits of safeguarding documentation submitted by Centres. The Central Student Wellbeing Team also produces overarching reports that provide a network-wide overview of incidents related to harassment and sexual misconduct, as well as broader safeguarding trends.

All reports and statistical data are anonymised to protect personal privacy and ensure no personally identifiable information is shared. These reports are shared with Study Group's Student Experience Committee, Senate and Council as required.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Study Group adopts a collaborative approach to behaviour and incident management therefore both staff and students are responsible for maintaining positive behaviours during the academic year.

7.1. All Students

Students are responsible for ensuring:

- They understand the expected positive behaviours outlined in the *Student Behaviour Charter*, and the mandatory training module, *Protecting Students from Harassment and Sexual Misconduct*, delivered at the start of their course.
- They report the poor behaviour of their peers to staff and are equipped to be positive bystanders.
- They always act appropriately in the classroom, in the Centre, in their accommodations, online in the virtual learning environment and, where appropriate, in the wider community.
- They engage with the disciplinary processes as detailed in the *Student Disciplinary Policy* as appropriate.

7.2. All Staff

All staff members are responsible for ensuring that:

- Students are aware of their responsibility to behave in a positive manner.
- Student behaviour is managed fairly and in line with this policy.
- They uphold the principles and standards outlined in the *Global Code of Conduct* at all times.
- They engage in staff training as outlined in this policy.
- Issues related to safeguarding and child protection concerns are escalated to the Centre Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately as per the *Safeguarding Policy*.
- Concerns about members of staff must be escalated immediately to the Centre Director as per the *Safeguarding Policy*.
- Centre wellbeing staff are engaged to support students who may be vulnerable.

7.3. Centre Director

The Centre Director is responsible for ensuring that:

- Students are made aware of their responsibility for positive behaviour during induction and thereafter.
- Staff are aware of their responsibility to escalate possible incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct to the Centre's Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Risk assessments are completed when incidents could put other students, staff or the public at risk.
- Training for staff and students is completed and recorded as outlined in this policy.
- Records are taken and stored in line with the *Data Retention Policy*.
- Investigations are undertaken in line with the *Student Disciplinary Policy*.
- Significant incidents are escalated as per the *Safeguarding Escalation Policy*.

8. Reporting Concerns

All students must be made aware of the importance of raising concerns relating to themselves or others and not to act as a bystander. They must also be made aware of the means available to them to raise these concerns in an environment where they feel safe and supported without fear of judgment, while reducing anxiety and discomfort.

Information about the Centre's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads and welfare teams, and their contact details, must be displayed prominently in communal areas around Centres with a description of the roles. This information must also be prominently displayed on both the student and staff support sites on the Centre's virtual learning environment.

There must be multiple ways for students to report concerns. These include the following (please note this list is not exhaustive):

- The Centre's dedicated email address for student safeguarding and wellbeing concerns.
- Anonymous reporting forms, which students can use to share bullying, discrimination, harassment, hate crime and sexual misconduct incidents without revealing their identity.
- The Centre's Designated Safeguarding Lead is contactable during working hours.
- The Centre's Student Wellbeing Team is contactable during working hours.
- Our Student Assistance Programme is available for out-of-hours concerns.
- Students are aware how to contact external support such as the Police for urgent out-of-hours concerns.

Reports are accepted on behalf of students who have alleged and/or experienced harassment or sexual misconduct, or on behalf of witnesses, from third parties, for example third party reporting centres.

Students who share concerns will be informed how information they share may be used, for example during a disciplinary process.

9. Investigations

The *Student Disciplinary Policy* details how incidents are investigated where allegations have been made against students. It also details the Outcomes and Appeals Process and its associated documentation.

The *Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (UKEU)* details how incidents are investigated where allegations of harassment and sexual misconduct have been made against staff. There is additional information in the *Global Code of Conduct*.

These documents outline the process for investigating allegations fairly, including clear timelines, stages, potential penalties, and provisions for appeal.

Where a student shares a concern that falls within the scope of this policy and involves an allegation against a student, consideration will be given to whether informal resolution is feasible. If informal resolution is not possible, or if the matter is deemed sufficiently serious, a formal investigation may be initiated under Stage 1 of the *Student Disciplinary Policy*. If the allegation concerns a staff member, it may be referred to the *Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (UKEU)*.

10. Support for Students

Centres must have support systems in place for students who have made allegations and complaints related to harassment and sexual misconduct. The format can vary, such as in-house or through a third-party. This support could involve (please note this list is not exhaustive):

- The student is assigned a dedicated staff member for ongoing guidance and assistance during working hours.
- The student is placed on a personalised support plan, developed in collaboration with the Centre's Student Wellbeing Team (usually, the dedicated staff member).
- The student is provided with support throughout the process of reporting to the police or other external authorities.
- The student is signposted to external specialist support, such as counselling.
- The student is supported academically, such as applying for extenuating circumstances, or to ensure the continued academic engagement where they wish to continue studying.
- The student is supported in relation to decisions about attendance, continuation, suspension or cessation of study.
- The student is referred to our Student Assistance Programme.

Students facing allegations will be provided with a named staff member who they can contact for support.

Support is also provided to students who have witnessed such behaviours.

Support is available to students who have alleged and/or experienced harassment or sexual misconduct, whether or not they decide to make a formal report about an incident.

We take into account the diverse support needs of students, including mental health diagnoses, experiences of trauma or abuse, sexuality, gender identity, or any other factors that may increase their vulnerability. All support should be provided with these considerations in mind to ensure it is appropriate and inclusive.

The decision to contact parents and/or agents will be made on a case-by-case basis dependent on the disclosure, the safeguarding risk to the student and the student's wishes.

In certain situations, the Centre may need to act without the student's consent, particularly if there are concerns about a significant risk of harm to the student or others. In such cases, the student will be informed and supported, unless doing so is unreasonable, impossible, or impractical under the circumstances.

Refer to the *Information Sharing Principles*.

11. Training

11.1. Training for Students

All students are required to undertake training on identifying behaviour that constitutes harassment and sexual misconduct. The training takes place during Welcome Week sessions or during the extended induction period. The training's key learning outcomes are as follows:

- To recognise the different forms of harassment and sexual misconduct, both in-person and online.
- To gain a clear understanding of consent and the law whilst studying with us.
- To learn how to be a positive bystander.
- To understand how to report concerns effectively.
- To identify available support resources.

The training has been created by Study Group's Central Student Wellbeing Team in collaboration with Designated Safeguarding Leads, Senior Wellbeing Staff and Lead Student Representatives across the Study Group network. The training is reviewed annually.

The training considers the needs of our students given they are an almost exclusively international cohort and that it is appropriate for our specific student population.

The training must be presented by the Centre Safeguarding Lead or designate within the Centre's Student Wellbeing Team. Additional sessions take place as soon as possible during the first term to capture late arriving students or students that did not attend the initial training sessions.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead must ensure the student training slides are accessible to students via the student support site or equivalent on the Centre's virtual learning environment.

Our Centres recognise the importance of the student voice, which is why student representatives must undergo specialised training, which has been created by the Central Student Wellbeing Team in collaboration with Lead Student Representatives across the Study Group network. This training ensures our student representatives are equipped to uphold the Centre's commitment to a culture of safety for all and understand how to escalate students' concerns where their peers may report incidents of sexual misconduct and harassment to them.

Student training is mandatory, but the Centre exercise judgement in student exemptions. For example, a student who has experienced harassment and sexual misconduct can be exempt from the training but should be informed of the resources available to them at any time on their Centre's virtual learning environment. All students exempt from training should be recorded on CPOMS.

11.2. Training for Staff

All staff employed at the Centre are required to complete training led by the Centre's Designated Safeguarding Lead or designate. The training must be refreshed at least annually.

The training resources are developed by Study Group's Central Student Wellbeing Team in collaboration with Designated Safeguarding Leads and Senior Welfare Staff across the Study Group network and are reviewed annually. This training ensures that all staff at Study Group Centres are equipped:

- To maintain an up-to-date understanding of the 'single comprehensive source of information' on harassment and sexual misconduct available on studygroup.com.
- To understand what behaviour constitutes harassment and sexual misconduct.
- To support students who wish to make an allegation of harassment and/or sexual misconduct.
- To support students who have alleged and/or experienced harassment and/or sexual misconduct.
- To support students who are the actual or alleged perpetrators of harassment and/or sexual misconduct.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead or designate may localise the training to ensure it adheres to any specific challenges or factors pertaining to the centre and local risks or hazards.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead must ensure the staff training is accessible via the staff support site or equivalent on the centre's virtual learning environment.

Staff training is mandatory, although we recognise that some staff may wish to be exempt from the training. For example, somebody who has experienced harassment and sexual misconduct can be exempt from the training. The staff member should speak to their line manager or safeguarding lead in the first instance. If such a request is made, it should be noted on the staff training log that the staff member is exempt.

The training must be recorded on Centres' staff training logs.

11.3. Training for Staff who are Involved in Investigations of Sexual Misconduct and Harassment

Staff who receive students' concerns, undertake investigations and make decisions around disciplinary cases require further mandatory training in these areas. This training is provided annually by Study Group's Central Student Wellbeing Team in collaboration with approved external providers. All centres must nominate two staff members who will be responsible for

conducting investigations. It is a minimum requirement for nominated staff to receive this training and for it to be refreshed at least annually. The Central Student Wellbeing Team are available to assist Centres where required.

The training must be recorded on Centres' staff training logs.

12. The Continued Protection of our Students

Centres must provide a safe and inclusive environment for both students and staff, whether on campus or in our online spaces. We are committed to respecting and upholding the dignity of all individuals, in line with our values of equality and diversity, and in accordance with protected characteristics.

We are committed to implementing meaningful and impactful measures that protect students from harassment and sexual misconduct. Our actions include:

- Analysing and sharing data on harassment and sexual misconduct trends, while reviewing our training programmes for staff and students to address emerging risks and trends across our network.
- Gathering feedback through surveys from both students and staff to assess the effectiveness of our training and using this data to refine and enhance our approach.
- Collaborating with our university partners to review training resources and policies on harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Attending external events to maintain current knowledge.
- Running regular campaigns to raise awareness about harassment and sexual misconduct, using a variety of platforms including social media, student newsletters, and more. Our campaigns promote inclusivity and offer information on recognising red flags, understanding consent, our reporting procedures, and the support available to students both within the Centre and externally.

13. Non-disclosure Agreements

From 1 September 2024 the Office for Students prohibited the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in relation to student allegations of harassment and sexual misconduct. Study Group will not use NDAs in relation to complaints of sexual harassment, abuse, misconduct, or other forms of bullying and harassment.

14. Personal Relationships between Staff and Students

We are dedicated to safeguarding students from any actual or potential conflicts of interest or abuse of power arising from intimate personal relationships with staff. To uphold this commitment, Study Group has enacted a strict ban on personal relationships between staff and current students.

15. Partnership Arrangements

If an allegation is made against a student, whether by another student at the Centre, someone from the partner university, or an external party, the responding student will be subject to Study Group's *Student Disciplinary Policy*.

In cases involving students from both the Study Group Centre and the partner university, we will work with the university's safeguarding lead or designate and student wellbeing teams to ensure a coordinated, fair, and supportive response for all parties involved.

Our Study Group Centre's Designated Safeguarding Leads are encouraged to engage with their partner universities regarding student training and awareness campaigns to ensure consistent messaging and alignment.

16. Capacity and Resources

All our Centres are consistently staffed with Designated Safeguarding Leads, Centre management, and dedicated student wellbeing teams to ensure we have the capacity and resources to safeguard students from the harms of harassment and sexual misconduct.

The Central Student Wellbeing Team monitors and reviews incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct across all Centres. This ensures we maintain the capacity to conduct investigations of harassment and sexual misconduct whilst continuing to protect students from harm.

Where additional support is required - such as during periods of increased investigations or emerging concerns - the Central Student Wellbeing Team is available to assist, which may include on-site visits to Centres where necessary.

17. Freedom of Speech

Study Group has a zero-tolerance approach to unlawful discrimination, bullying and harassment. At the same time, we recognise the fundamental importance of freedom of speech for staff, students, and visitors. Study Group is committed to fostering a culture of tolerance which is essential to the academic debate of a wide range of ideas, including those that may be controversial, whilst supporting the safeguarding and welfare of students.

All centres must uphold the principles of lawful free speech and academic freedom. Our policies are designed to ensure they do not unduly restrict lawful expression, even when addressing student misconduct. We apply the requirements of the OfS Condition E6 only in ways that do not conflict with lawful speech protections.

Mandatory training ensures staff are aware that:

- Unlawful harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- Unlawful discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably or disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic.

Appropriate actions that uphold free speech while addressing serious misconduct include:

- Prompt removal of hate-promoting graffiti or images.
- Investigating threats of violence, with appropriate support for affected students or staff.

Refer to the *External Speakers Policy* and *Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech*.

Appendix 1: Student Behaviour Charter

Study Group students:

- Engage positively in lessons and contribute to their own learning;
- Listen to the opinions of others with respect and tolerance;
- Treat all those that they come across with respect;
- Appreciate the differences that people have to offer;
- Seek to understand and develop respect for local customs and culture;
- Dress in a way that is respectful and suitable for a diverse learning environment;
- Share their own opinions but understand that they may be different from those of others;
- Are vigilant of their student peers and tell staff if they are concerned;
- Act safely at all times and do not put other students at risk (especially those that are under 18 years old);
- Engage positively with the support that is offered to them;
- Use the internet safely and appropriately;
- Do not attend the Centre whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including legal highs);
- Do not engage in violent or aggressive behaviour at any time;
- Do not willfully disrupt classes or events;
- Do not bring the Centre or university into any form of disrepute at any time;
- Do not damage the Study Group property or the belongings of others;
- Understand and abide by the law of the country and their Immigration permissions;
- Comply with all reasonable requests made by Centre staff.



Title	Student Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy
Version	1.0
Date	1 August 2025
Author	Olly Walker, Associate Director Student Wellbeing
Owner	Ali Baines, Dean Education and Student Experience

Student Experience Directorate