

Student Council Motion Proposal

Sexual Violence, NDAs and Student Sex Workers Policy Motion:

(Content Warning: This policy includes references to sexual violence, assault and harassment)

Policy Number:	2020-21_006	Policy Date	29/04/2021
Policy Proposer:	Meg Price (President)		
Policy Seconder:	Tish Manning (Vice President Activities)		

Summary:

This policy proposes that the SU President should continue to lobby the University to do the three following actions to make sure students who experience sexual harassment, assault and/or violence feel comfortable and able to report it:

- Conduct **research** into the current situation, including gathering students views on the accessibility of reporting mechanisms, here at Worcester.
- Implement Report and Support for students to be able to **report** incidences online anonymously.
- Publicly commit to **not using non-disclosure agreements** in cases of sexual misconduct at the University.
- Recognise the prevalence and diverse range of motivators for students engaging in sex work; as well as the **support required to ensure they feel safe**. When the university becomes aware of a student engaging in sex work they should take a holistic approach to supporting them – regardless of their course.
- The **SU Help and Advice service to update it's webpages** with information linked to relevant to support for students who have experienced sexual assault, harassment or violence. As well as adding information to support the wellbeing and safety of student sex workers.
- Any developments of university policy regarding sexual harassment should include student representatives at the development and approval stage.

There is still a long way to go with eradicating sexual assault on campus; including tackling the notion that being a survivor is something that shouldn't be talked about. The University should also work closely with SU campaigns, Networks, Course Reps and Sports Clubs and Societies to ensure that there is a culture of progressive conversation on this topic. The actions outlined above will help us gain a clearer understanding of the extent of the issue at Worcester and help us support those effected in the most effective way.

Student Council Notes the Following Facts:

- **Almost two thirds (62%) of students and graduates have experienced sexual violence at UK universities.** 70% of female students and recent graduates have experienced sexual assault, as well as 26% of male students, 61% of non-binary students, and 73% of disabled students. (<https://www.nus.org.uk/articles/sexual-violence-ndas-and-relationship-abuse>)
- Currently, students at Worcester have limited avenues to report sexual violence compared to other universities. **Nationally, only 1 in 10 reported their experiences to the university or police; only 6% of respondents reported their experience of sexual violence to the university.**
- Report and Support is commonly used in universities across the country - <https://www.reportandsupport.manchester.ac.uk>. **The website provides the opportunity to report an incident online, anonymously and access help and support from an advisor.** There is also additional information about how to support someone who may have experienced sexual violence, harassment or a hate crime.
- The **Office for Students have recently asked Universities to review their policies** on sexual harassment 'by this summer' - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/review-sexual-misconduct-and-harassment-policies-by-this-summer-ofs-urges-universities/>
- Consensual sexual student-staff relationships are currently allowed at the University – although if these must be declared by the staff member through their line manager. There is currently no recognition of the role power dynamics between staff and students; including the impact on the students ability to refuse advances from staff.

Student Council Holds the Viewpoint That:

We want to **encourage the university to recognise changes needed to support those who experience sexual violence.** There is ample evidence to suggest that what is already being done is not enough - <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-2018/january-2018/tackling-sexual-violence-universities>. Students who feel unable to report their experience are more likely to experience poor mental health, perform poorly academically and are more likely to drop out of university all together. **What the university is currently doing to support students who experience sexual violence is simply not enough.**

Student sex workers should be openly and actively supported to ensure they have the resources to feel safe. The Students' Union should provide information on their website, similar to YUSU - <https://yusu.org/advice-support/support-a-z/supporting-student-sex-workers#>.

Student Council Resolves to Take the Following Action(s):

This policy proposes that the SU President should continue to lobby the University to do the three following actions to make sure students who experience sexual harassment, assault and/or violence feel comfortable and able to report it:

- Conduct **research** into the current situation, including gathering students views on the accessibility of reporting mechanisms, here at Worcester.
- Implement Report and Support for students to be able to **report** incidences online anonymously.
- The Students' Union should lobby the University to change their policy to a zero-tolerance policy on student-staff relationships.
- Lobby the University to review the way they use and apply non-disclosure agreements.
- Recognise the prevalence and diverse range of motivators for students engaging in sex work; as well as the **support required to ensure they feel safe**. When the university becomes aware of a student engaging in sex work they should take a holistic approach to supporting them – regardless of their course.
- The **SU Help and Advice service to update it's webpages** with information linked to relevant to support for students who have experienced sexual assault, harassment or violence. As well as adding information to support the wellbeing and safety of student sex workers.
- Any developments of university policy regarding sexual harassment should include student representatives at the development and approval stage.

There is still a long way to go with eradicating sexual assault on campus; including tackling the notion that being a survivor is something that shouldn't be talked about. The University should also work closely with SU campaigns, Networks, Course Reps and Sports Clubs and Societies to ensure that there is a culture of progressive conversation on this topic. The actions outlined above will help us gain a clearer understanding of the extent of the issue at Worcester and help us support those effected in the most effective way.

Resources:

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/changing-the-culture.pdf>

Other SU policies:

<https://yusu.org/advice-support/support-a-z/supporting-student-sex-workers#>

<https://studentsunionucl.org/policy/up1717/supporting-students-in-sex-work>

<https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/referenda/motion/31/45/>