

York St John University and York St John University Students' Union joint policy statement on sexual misconduct

The York St John University Vice-Chancellor and the President of York St John University Students' Union have both underlined the importance for our institution of an 'All About Respect' ethos, which includes a responsibility to respond appropriately to any incidents of sexual misconduct and domestic violence. This policy statement sets out our joint commitment to this aim, and how we will work with relevant stakeholders to ensure its implementation, including periodic review.

Sexual misconduct covers sexual violence, which includes sexual assault and rape, and sexual harassment, which is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. Domestic violence is the misuse of emotional, physical, financial or sexual control of one person over another. More detailed definitions are at the end of this statement.

York St John University and York St John University Students' Union **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 misconduct or domestic violence, and where personal boundaries are respected.
- Our community expects that all interpersonal relationships and interactions will be grounded upon mutual respect, open communication, and clear consent. Community members are expected to take an active role in upholding our collective commitment and in promoting the inherent dignity of all individuals.
- Sexual misconduct and domestic violence should not be tolerated by the University or Students' Union, and those who commit acts of sexual misconduct should expect to have their behaviour challenged and where appropriate be disciplined for their actions.
- That in order to be effective, a whole-institution approach to preventing sexual misconduct is necessary. The process of driving social and cultural change is everyone's responsibility and initiatives to tackle inappropriate behaviour should be collaboration between the Student Union and the University.
- Sexual misconduct and domestic violence jeopardise the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of members of our University and the safety of our community. It diminishes dignity and impedes access to educational, social and employment opportunities and can cause lasting physical and psychological harm.

York St John University and York St John University Students' Union therefore **resolve;**

- To adopt a campus wide approach to sexual misconduct that always challenges inappropriate behaviour and language. We will do this through the 'All About Respect' campaign, empower students and staff through training programmes, implement accessible reporting mechanisms and provide appropriate support.
- To promote a social and cultural environment in which sexual misconduct and domestic violence is less likely to occur.
- To challenge the causes of violence such as gender stereotyping and the sexualisation and objectification of women.
- To promote 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 that the fact of being in a relationship with someone, or consenting to previous sexual activity, does not imply consent to sex.

- To promote 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 understanding of the early warning signs of domestic violence and awareness of specialist support services.
- To actively encourage students and staff who experience or witness sexual misconduct or domestic violence to report it.
- To systematically collect relevant data by which to measure the scale of the problem and report this to the senior leadership team annually.
- To ensure that every staff member or student suffering sexual misconduct or domestic violence, and every staff member or student supporting others who are experiencing sexual and domestic violence, is able to find information and have access to appropriate support.
- The University or the Student Union will always take appropriate action in response to inappropriate behaviour by applying the relevant disciplinary processes to [students](#) or to staff. The University recognises that it is not placed to undertake a criminal investigation. It will, however, cooperate fully with any associated Police investigation and subsequent legal proceedings.

Definitions

- Sexual Violence is any kind of unwanted sexual act or activity including rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation as well as sexual abuse.
- Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. It can include pressure for sexual favours, groping or unwanted deliberate touching, wolf-whistling, catcalling, sexual teasing, jokes or comments about a person's body or the way they dress, spreading rumours about someone's sex life, making somebody feel uncomfortable through displaying or sharing material of a sexual nature. This includes putting pornographic pictures on walls in a shared environment or sending sexually explicit emails or texts. It includes stalking in person or online.
- Domestic violence is when an adult uses threatening, violent or abusive behaviour to control another person they are in a relationship with. The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: *any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: Psychological; Physical; Sexual; Financial; Emotional*

It is acknowledged that sexual misconduct and domestic violence impact on individuals of any gender or sexual orientation. However we recognize that the vast majority of victims of sexual misconduct and domestic violence are women and the vast majority of perpetrators are men. The focus of our policy and actions will take account of this reality.



Professor Karen Stanton
Vice Chancellor



George Coombs
Students' Union President