



HARPER ADAMS STUDENTS' UNION

Inclusive and Respectful Culture Statement

Harper Adams Students' Union is committed to fostering an inclusive culture where all students feel safe to express themselves and participate. The students we have studying at Harper Adams come from a variety of races, religions and backgrounds with differing beliefs and traditions which we celebrate throughout the year through a range of cultural events and social media campaigns.

Naturally, as with any diverse community, there will be differing views and attitudes. We welcome healthy discussion and informed debate and the role of the Students' Union is to represent the different voices within the student body. However, there may be instances where we must intervene to ensure that Harper Adams remains a safe and inclusive place for our students. We are dedicated to supporting all of our students and therefore we will not tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination. The Union will enforce a strict zero tolerance policy on such behaviours to protect our students, staff and visitors. 'Zero tolerance' in this instance refers to the commitment that any reported behaviour contravening this policy will be investigated. This policy includes mechanisms for reporting unacceptable behaviour, clear pathways for handling reports (with the reporting individual's wishes and comfort being a key consideration) and of course, including referral to the University's disciplinary procedures where appropriate, support for individuals who have experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination.

The Union is in the process of developing a new reporting system via the SU website and will be working collaboratively with Student Services to ensure this reflects the needs of our students. The reporting system will be a method of documenting instances of unacceptable behaviour that may have otherwise gone unreported or have been dismissed as not worth reporting. We will actively encourage students to report their concerns, no matter how big or small, *for example* it may be used to report the occurrence of sexual harassment, racist jokes, verbal abuse or any forms of discrimination against a protected characteristic. This will give us the data to ensure that negative behaviours are addressed, campaigns are appropriately targeted and that support for students is responsive to student needs.

Following approval by our Trustee Board in October 2020, the Union introduced a new role to the SU Executive Committee. The Equality and Diversity Representative will focus specifically on issues and concerns relating to race, gender, sexuality or disability and will work to identify and act on barriers faced by those with protected characteristics. Their work will include collaboration with the University International

Officer and Chaplain as well as feeding into the University's Equality and Diversity Committee. This role will further help to embed values of equality and diversity in the student experience and students are welcomed to apply for the role during elections.

Whilst work on a reporting system continues, students are welcome to discuss any concerns with the Students' Union or Student Services teams where support can be offered. You can also chat with the teams if you have witnessed inappropriate behaviour or are concerned about someone you know. We also welcome students' thoughts on how we can continue to nurture a respectful and diverse student community.

Definitions and Examples

Unacceptable behaviour can be presented in many forms, and we take reported concerns seriously. It is important to understand what may constitute harassment or discrimination. This helps to ensure that you are behaving appropriately and respectfully towards others, but also being knowledgeable about the forms of harassment and discrimination may help you to understand if you have personally experienced, or witnessed, such behaviour. Thereafter, you can take action, report the matter and seek support or advice – no matter how minor you may initially think the incident is, it is always better to seek guidance.

Bullying

Bullying is a form of harassment where the perpetrator intends to hurt someone either physically or emotionally. This behaviour is repeated, aims to intimidate or offend, and can take many forms such as physical violence, name calling, making threats or cyberbullying.

Discrimination

To discriminate means to treat an individual or group unfavourably or unfairly due to a protected characteristic that they have or are perceived to have.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression includes the right to hold lawful opinions, ideas or beliefs and to share these without interference by public authority. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression where this does not break criminal or civil law. Instances where freedom of expression may be lawfully restricted include: speech causing fear or provoking violence; acts intended or likely to incite hatred on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation; speech amounting to a terrorism related offence or causing a person harassment, alarm or distress.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted behaviour that may be offensive, violate the recipient's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Protected Characteristics

Protected characteristics are those characteristics of a person that are protected by law. This includes: age, disability, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that may create a hostile or offensive environment and make you feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated. This may include sexual advances, sexual comments or jokes, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical sexual conduct.

Sexual Assault

Sexual Assault is when a person coerces or physically forces someone to engage against their will or when a person sexually touches someone without their consent.

Further details on these topics, along with advice and support information, can be found in the University's Policy: [Sexual Violence, Violent Behaviour, Racism, Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)