

Supporting Students at Oxford: preventing and responding to harassment and sexual misconduct

2025/26 Academic Year

The University of Oxford is committed to fostering a safe environment in which all students can thrive. Harassment and sexual misconduct in any form are not tolerated here.

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This page is the University's Single Comprehensive Source of Information, published in line with the Office for Students Condition of Registration E6. It sets out the University's approach to preventing and responding to harassment and sexual misconduct involving students, and brings together policies, procedures, guidance and key information relevant to both students and staff.

This comprehensive guide on harassment and sexual misconduct has been developed in accordance with the University's [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#), which includes updated regulations and procedures related to student conduct.

For any related queries, please contact studentwelfare@admin.ox.ac.uk.

Overview

Scope of the guidance and who it applies to

The page provides information about how the University works to prevent incidents through training and awareness, including guidance on behaviours that constitute harassment and sexual misconduct. It explains reporting routes for incidents involving a student or a member of University staff and sets out the procedures that follow a report. The page also outlines available support services, the University's policy concerning staff-student relationships, and how the University balances its responsibilities to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom while fostering a safe and respectful environment for all.

This guidance applies to all students studying at Oxford. However, it should be noted that certain University services may not be available to students enrolled on non-award-bearing courses*. Where relevant, this distinction is highlighted in specific sections of the guidance. Students on non-award-bearing courses are advised to contact the Proctors' Office (casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk) or their course director/administrator.

* Award-bearing courses include undergraduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas, masters' and doctoral degrees, whereas non-award-bearing courses (which may also be referred to as 'Open Access Courses') do not lead directly to a qualification from Oxford.

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The University and Colleges

The University of Oxford is a collegiate University. While this guidance outlines University policies and procedures, many students are also members of one of Oxford's colleges or permanent private halls. These are independent entities and will have their own policies, procedures and sources of support. Where applicable, students are strongly encouraged to consult their college for further guidance and to familiarise themselves with college-specific approaches to harassment and sexual misconduct.

Depending on the situation, either college-specific or University policies and procedures may apply. For guidance on how it is determined whether the University or college will take responsibility for handling a report, students should refer to the section below; 'Reporting: When the University may take action'.

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The University is committed to preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct. These core policies:

- Set out the behaviours that may constitute harassment and sexual misconduct;
- Outline the standards of behaviour expected of all members of the University community, including students and staff; and

- Provide clear processes for raising concerns and accessing support.

University Policies

Key University policies supporting this commitment

1. [Statute XI: Code of Discipline](#)
Sets out the behavioural expectations of students. It provides the foundation for the rules and disciplinary processes that apply when concerns about student conduct are raised by a current or former student, by University staff, or by a member of the public.
Primarily applies to students
2. [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#)
Comprehensively outlines how the University applies its disciplinary rules (set out in Statute XI) to student behaviour. It includes information about the formal process for handling reports of student misconduct, such as harassment and sexual misconduct, as well as the support available, the precautionary measures that may be put in place, and the possible outcomes and penalties.
Applies to students
Used by students and staff
3. [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against Students](#)
Outlines how students and staff can report harassment they have experienced involving a student (through the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#)), with details on resolution options and how the University ensures fair handling of complaints.
Applies to students
Used by students and staff

Key policies and procedures about staff conduct

1. [Harassment Policy](#)
Sets out the University's approach to harassment and the clear position that harassment (including sexual misconduct) has no place at Oxford.
Primarily applies to staff
2. [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#)
Provides a structured process for students and staff who wish to raise concerns about harassment (including sexual misconduct) by a member of University staff. Includes information on how reports are handled and what support is available.
Applies to staff

Used by students and staff

Other relevant policies for all University members

1. [Policy on Relationships Between Students and Staff](#)
Provides guidance on intimate and close personal relationships between students and staff. The policy prohibits staff from entering into an intimate relationship with any student for whom they have a professional responsibility. It also strongly discourages other close personal relationships and requires such relationships to be declared, so they can be appropriately managed to protect student welfare.
2. [Equality policy](#)
Sets out the University's commitment to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning, and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected.
3. [Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech](#)
Sets out the University's commitment to freedom of expression within the law, while recognising the University's responsibility to protect students and staff from harassment.

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Freedom of speech and academic freedom

University policies uphold both freedom of speech and academic freedom, which are central to its mission. The University also has a responsibility, through its policies and practices, to foster an environment where students feel safe, supported, and able to participate fully in university life. It is important to distinguish between academic content that may be challenging or offensive, where its use serves legitimate academic purpose and is protected under academic freedom, and conduct that is unlawful and contrary to University policies, such as harassment and discrimination, which is not.

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Colleges will have their own policies and procedures. Where applicable, students are strongly encouraged to consult their college for further guidance and to familiarise themselves with college-specific approaches to harassment and sexual misconduct.

Student Support

The University recognises that experiencing or witnessing harassment or sexual misconduct can have a significant impact, whether a student has been directly affected, witnessed something happen, or has been named in a report. Support is available to students regardless of whether the incident(s) occurred within the collegiate University or elsewhere.

Many services offer the option to speak with identity-specific advisors or counsellors, including individuals with lived experience or specialist understanding of race, gender, sexuality, disability, or other aspects of identity.

Support for students on award bearing courses*

*Award-bearing courses include undergraduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas, masters' and doctoral degrees, whereas non-award-bearing courses (which may also be referred to as 'Open Access Courses') do not lead directly to a qualification from Oxford.

Support for students who have experienced harassment or sexual misconduct

There are a range of services available for students who have experienced any form of harassment or sexual misconduct. Students do not have to go through a situation alone, and accessing support does not mean a formal report has to be made.

Support available includes the following confidential options:

- [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#) – confidential specialist support for students who have experienced sexual harassment or violence, domestic abuse, relationship abuse, coercive control and stalking. Independent of colleges and departments.
- [Independent Sexual Violence Advisor \(ISVA\)](#) – The ISVA service is independent of a student's college and the University. The ISVA can support as an advocate if the student is reporting sexual violence to their college, the Proctors' Office or the police. They provide information about the criminal justice process and can support throughout this journey. Non-therapeutic emotional support is also offered. Support is ongoing and can range from weekly to monthly appointments, including beyond a students' time at Oxford.

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- [Harassment Advisor Network](#) – Harassment advisors are available across the collegiate University to offer confidential support and guidance to anyone affected by harassment.
- [Oxford SU Advice](#) – Independent advice and support on navigating collegiate University processes including how to access support, report incidents of harassment and sexual misconduct and access academic adjustments.
- [College welfare teams](#) – each college has its own support framework, which may include welfare officers, peer supporters, nurses and chaplains (who support students of all faiths and none). These teams can offer support to students affected by harassment or sexual misconduct, providing a safe space to talk and help to access further specialist help if needed.
- [University Counselling Service](#) – professional, confidential counselling and wellbeing support.
- Discussion with the Proctors' Office (casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk) before any participation in a formal process.
- [Specialist external organisations](#) – There are a number of organisations locally and nationally providing specialist support to individuals affected by sexual harassment or violence, domestic and relationship abuse and stalking.

Full details of each area of support and contact information can be found on the pages linked to above.

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Support for students who have witnessed harassment or sexual misconduct

It is natural for students to feel unsure about what to do after witnessing or becoming aware of an incident of harassment or sexual misconduct. Support is available for students to help process the experience and understand how to respond safely and appropriately.

Support available includes the following confidential options:

- [The Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#) for advice on how to support someone impacted by sexual misconduct.
- [Harassment Advisor Network](#) – Harassment Advisors are available across the collegiate University to offer confidential support and guidance to anyone affected by harassment.

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- [Oxford SU Advice](#) for independent advice on how to navigate collegiate University processes, including participating as a witness in a formal report, accessing support services, and managing academic adjustments.
- [College welfare teams](#) – each college has its own support system, which may include welfare officers, peer supporters, nurses or chaplains (for all faiths and none). These teams can offer support to students affected by harassment or sexual misconduct, providing a safe space to talk and helping students access further help if needed.
- [University Counselling Service](#) – professional, confidential counselling and wellbeing support.
- Information and training on [bystander intervention](#) and how to support others safely.

No formal steps are needed to speak with someone.

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Support for students who have had an allegation of harassment or sexual misconduct made about them

Being named in a report or involved in an investigation can be distressing and confusing. Dedicated, impartial, and confidential support is available for students who have been reported for, or are otherwise alleged to have carried out, harassment or sexual misconduct.

Support available includes the following confidential options:

- [Reported Student Service](#) – a confidential specialist support service for students who are subject to an allegation of harassment or sexual misconduct.
- [Harassment Advisor Network](#) – Harassment Advisors are available across the collegiate University to offer confidential support and guidance to anyone affected by harassment.
- [Oxford SU Advice](#) - for independent advice on how to navigate collegiate University processes, including attending informal meetings and formal interviews, providing guidance on statements and evidence and helping to navigate accessing support services and academic adjustments.
- [College welfare teams](#) - each college has its own support system, which may include welfare officers, peer supporters, nurses or chaplains (for all faiths and none). These teams can offer confidential support to students who have been reported for, or are otherwise alleged to have carried out, harassment or sexual misconduct, helping with access to further support if needed.

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- [University Counselling Service](#) – professional, confidential counselling and wellbeing support.
- Discussion with the Proctors' Office (casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk) before any participation in a formal process so students know what to expect.

Seeking support does not affect the outcome of an investigation, and it is available to students regardless of how far the process progresses.

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Academic Support

If a student's experience is affecting their ability to engage with their studies or assessment, there is a range of academic support routes available. These can ensure that a student's circumstances are considered.

Resources include:

- [Student Handbook](#) – outlines a student's academic rights, responsibilities, and guidance on available processes.
- [Mitigating Circumstances Notices \(MCEs\)](#) – can be submitted if personal circumstances affect a student's ability to sit exams or complete coursework or their performance in an exam.
- [Exam adjustments or academic dispensations](#) – such as deadline extensions, alternative assessments, or deferral options.
- [Suspension of status](#) - Suspension of status within the University 'stops the clock' for all elements of a student's course, including residence, fees and terms for which a particular status may be held.

This is not an exhaustive list, and further information is available on the [Problems completing your assessment webpage](#). The most appropriate support will depend on a student's individual circumstances. College Offices and Welfare Leads; or Departmental Academic Offices can help guide students in the first instance through options and next steps.

Students can access independent advice from the [Oxford SU Advice](#), including support with navigating these conversations.

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Support Services for students on non-award-bearing courses*

* Award-bearing courses include undergraduate and postgraduate certificates and diplomas, masters' and doctoral degrees, whereas non-award-bearing courses

(which may also be referred to as 'Open Access Courses') do not lead directly to a qualification from Oxford.

Non-award-bearing students, in some circumstances, may have recourse to access Harassment Advisors, the Proctors' Office, and the Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service, who can refer to external support services as appropriate.

Students should also consider contacting their department for signposting to any additional sources of support relevant to their course or individual circumstances.

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Reporting

Students who have experienced harassment or sexual misconduct can decide how, when, and if they want to share what happened. A formal report is not required to receive support e.g. via the routes outlined in the section above. Many students begin by speaking with a support service or a trusted member of staff, asking questions, and exploring their options.

Disclosures and formal reports: What is the difference?

Disclosure:

A disclosure occurs when a student shares information about an incident of potential harassment or sexual misconduct. This might have been an incident involving another student or a staff member, and the disclosure may be made to a member of University and/or college staff, or to the University by other means (other than a report). The intention is typically to seek emotional or practical support, advice, and information about formal reporting options.

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Formal report or complaint:

A written request for the University to investigate an incident through its procedures is referred to as a formal 'report' under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#) or a 'complaint' under the [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#):

- A formal report can be against another student and is considered under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#).
- A formal complaint can be against a member of University staff and considered under the [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#).

For clarity, throughout this section and those that follow, all reference to 'formal reports' and 'formal complaints' will be described as a 'formal report' of harassment and sexual misconduct.

Colleges will have their own reporting procedures. Where applicable, students are strongly encouraged to consult their college for further guidance and to familiarise themselves with college-specific procedures for reporting harassment and sexual misconduct.

Support is available to students before, during, and after making a report.

Support when deciding whether to report

Confidential support is available if a student is unsure what to do or is seeking help thinking through their options:

- [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#)
- [Oxford SU Advice](#)
- [Harassment Advisory Network](#)
- [University Counselling Service](#)
- [College welfare teams](#)

If a student talks to a staff member who isn't part of a support service, they can help connect them to the right support service for their needs.

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What happens after a disclosure?

For disclosures involving another student:

Where possible and appropriate to the circumstances it may be possible for the matter to be resolved locally, for example by departmental staff. A staff member will keep a record of the disclosure, and seek advice from the Proctors' Office, if needed.

- The Proctors' Office can liaise between the students where there has been a relationship breakdown to agree a 'No Contact Agreement' (NCA), on the basis of no admission of fault by anyone.
- A Proctor or the head or deputy head of the Proctors' Office separately has the power to impose a 'No Contact Instruction' as a precautionary measure (including if agreement cannot be reached about a 'No Contact Agreement' or if a 'No Contact Agreement' is breached).

Disclosures involving allegations against a member of University staff:

What happens after a student's disclosure involving a member of staff will depend on the specific circumstances and the nature of the concern. Each disclosure is considered individually, and the next steps will be guided by what is appropriate and proportionate in that context.

In some situations, if it is appropriate, it may be possible to resolve the issue through an informal approach such as mediation or facilitated conversations.

For more details about what the process might involve, and the other possible steps that may follow a disclosure, students should refer to the [Procedure for Reports of Harassment Against University Staff](#).

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Limits to confidentiality when a disclosure is made

Disclosures will generally be kept confidential, and students' preferences will usually be respected. The University works to ensure that as much as possible, students are in control of what happens next. However, there are certain situations in which the University may need to share information, or to act including (but not limited to):

- Where the University assesses that the welfare of any person requires that a disclosure cannot be kept in confidence, such as where there are welfare concerns that indicate a risk of serious harm in accordance with the University's Confidentiality Guidance.
- Where the disclosure concerns a medical student or a PGCE student and there are Fitness to Practise/Fitness to Teach implications arising from the disclosure.

- Where the University has [safeguarding responsibilities](#) that require further action.
- For the purpose of taking legal or other specialist advice or to notify insurers.

If the University does need to act, students will be kept informed throughout where reasonably possible and offered support every step of the way, via the support services listed in the *Section: Student Support*.

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Disclosures and reports against students involving criminal conduct

Some disclosures and reports may involve behaviour that could also be a criminal offence, such as assault, stalking, or threats of violence. These cases are taken seriously, and students can choose whether to report the matter to the police, the University, or both.

Unless the University decides that someone's welfare requires sharing the information, or there are other exceptional circumstances, the University will respect students' wishes about whether the matter should be reported to the police.

If the police are involved

If a student reports an incident to the police and there is an active criminal investigation, the University will usually pause its own disciplinary process. The [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#) details the circumstances under which the University may investigate at the same time as the police and what precautionary measures might be put in place in the meantime.

Deciding which process to use

Because the Proctors will not normally investigate while the police are doing so, if a student's report involves criminal conduct, the student may need to decide whether:

- They want the matter to be handled by the police and the Courts, or
- They prefer to ask the University to consider investigating under its own procedures

Students are encouraged to refer to the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#) to understand the University's investigatory process and how it differs from that of the criminal justice system. The University will support the student in any decision they take, and will provide practical and substantive support through:

- [Student Welfare and Support Services](#)
- [Oxford SU Advice](#)
- Appropriate specialist caseworkers in the Proctors' Office.

For more information, view the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#).

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Disclosures or reports against University staff involving criminal conduct

If a disclosure or a report about a member of staff involves behaviour that could amount to a criminal offence (e.g. assault or threats), it may not be dealt with under the standard harassment procedure.

In these cases, the Head of Department, in consultation with:

- the Head of Employee Relations, and
- the Director of Student Welfare and Support Services (if students are involved),

will decide which University procedure is most appropriate.

For more information, view the [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#).

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Making a formal report

If a student decides to make a formal report about harassment or sexual misconduct, the process will depend on whether the report concerns another student or a member of University staff. Support is available to guide students through either route. They do not need to go through the process alone.

Colleges will have their own reporting procedures. Where applicable, students are strongly encouraged to consult their college for further guidance and to familiarise

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themselves with college-specific procedures for reporting harassment and sexual misconduct.

Reports about a student

Formal reports about students are to be submitted to the Proctors' Office and considered under the University's [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#).

Students can report in one of the following ways:

- **By email** - by submitting the [student report form](#) to casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk
- **In person** – by contacting the Proctors' Office (casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk) to arrange a meeting or ask questions

A specific form is used for reports against students. Support completing the form is available from the:

- [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#)
- [Oxford SU Advice](#)
- the Proctors' Office.

Step-by-step written guidance is also available in the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#).

Students can contact the Proctors' Office (casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk) for confidential information and guidance, even if they are not ready to make a report.

When the University may take action (student reports)

The University may only take formal action under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#) where the behaviour occurred in a University context - such as in University or college premises, or during academic, social, sporting, or cultural activities of the University.

The University has discretion as to whether or not to investigate, having regard to a range of factors. In particular, the University will not usually take formal action in relation to matters which occurred more than six months previously. Further relevant factors will include whether the matter has previously been determined by another organisation (e.g. a college, or a tribunal) or under another University procedure or where another organisation is better placed to respond (e.g. a college).

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Reports are usually managed by colleges if the matter is internal to college life, e.g. if the report involves two members of the same college. However, the University will take the lead where the reporting and reported parties are members of different colleges.

For full details about the factors which the Proctors' Office takes into account when deciding whether or not to investigate, view the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#).

Reports about University staff

Formal reports about University staff are to be submitted to the relevant Head of Department and are considered under the University's [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#).

Any references to the 'head of department' should be taken to mean the head of department, faculty board chair, head of division or their equivalent, or the person to whom any of these has formally delegated responsibility.

Students can:

- **Email a written report** to the Head of Department (contact details are available on the relevant departmental website)
- **Request a meeting** with the Head of Department before submitting a report, to discuss concerns and ask questions

The [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#) includes guidance on what a written report should contain. If students are unsure how to begin or would like to speak to someone first, they can contact the Head of Employee Relations at harassmentcomplaints@admin.ox.ac.uk for confidential advice. This does not commit a student to submitting a report.

For information about reports of harassment or sexual misconduct against a member of college staff, students should refer to their college procedures.

Confidential support is available for students who are uncertain about how to proceed or who need assistance in understanding their reporting options:

- [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#)
- [Oxford SU Advice](#)
- [Harassment Advisory Network](#)
- [University Counselling Service](#)

- [College welfare teams](#)

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Additional reporting options and informal measures

In some situations, students may prefer to explore informal or alternative ways of addressing concerns, particularly if they are not ready to submit a formal report. These options are designed to support student wellbeing and help establish safe and respectful boundaries.

Colleges will have their own reporting procedures. Where applicable, students are strongly encouraged to consult their college for further guidance and to familiarise themselves with college-specific procedures for reporting harassment and sexual misconduct.

Informal resolution

Informal resolution may be appropriate in certain cases and can be facilitated with support from a Head of Department, Director of Graduate Studies, Human Resource teams or Senior Tutor. This might involve a structured conversation, clarification of expectations, or practical steps to help resolve a concern without formal proceedings.

Third-party reporting

Reports involving students

In certain cases, as set out in more detail in the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#), a report about a student may be submitted on another student's behalf by a trusted third party where the student consents (for example, reports made by a specialist sexual violence support service).

The Proctors' Office caseworker will:

- Need to see evidence that the student consents to both the third party making the report on their behalf and the contents of the report.
- Need to be satisfied that the student understands their role as a reporter under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#).

Reports involving staff

The University will be limited in the action it can take if the student who is raising the complaint is not willing to take part in the process. If a student has reservations about raising a complaint, they should discuss their concerns with

their Head of Department who will discuss the options available for taking a matter forward, depending on the circumstances.

Students are welcome to have the support of a trusted person, such as another student, a member of staff, or a support service, when making the report.

Anonymous reporting

Anonymous reports will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there are compelling reasons to do so. While limited investigation may be possible in certain cases, it is generally very difficult to proceed without identifying the reporting individual, due to the fundamental requirement that the individual reported against is given the opportunity to respond to the report.

Students should also be aware that, even where a report is submitted anonymously or where identifying information is withheld from the subject of the report, it may still be possible for the individual concerned to infer the identity of the reporting party based on the circumstances described.

Useful Documents and Guidance

Before making a report, students are expected to read the relevant procedures and guidance as outlined above. These documents explain how to submit a report, what to include, and what to expect from the process:

- [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#)
- [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#)

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Confidentiality

When a student shares information with the University about harassment or sexual misconduct, it will be treated with care. We know these matters can be difficult to talk about, and such information will be handled securely, in line with University policies and safeguarding responsibilities.

While the process is ongoing, students will be asked to keep the matter confidential. Some elements of the matter (which will usually include details of the University process and outcomes) will remain confidential after the process has concluded, but there will be no limitations placed on a student wishing to speak about their experiences of the underlying events in their own words.

Confidentiality policy

How student information is handled

Information is managed in accordance with the University's [Data Protection Policy](#), [Harassment Policy](#), [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#), and other relevant procedures. Information is only shared when necessary and with as few people as possible, typically to:

- Carry out a fair investigation
- Carry out procedures related to a report, including instances where the matter progresses under the University processes such as disciplinary or appeals procedures
- Put safety or wellbeing measures in place
- Comply with contractual obligations
- Comply with legal or safeguarding duties
- Support academic arrangements or student welfare.

Depending on the nature of the report, those with whom information is shared may include (but is not limited to) staff in the Proctors' Office (for reports about students), Student Welfare and Support Services (including the Disability Advisory Service), Education Policy Support, Legal Services, People Department, college and departmental contacts, individuals involved in the procedure (such as the subject of the report, witnesses, or an internal or external investigator), decision makers in the context of University processes, or third parties such as external authorities, external funders, regulatory bodies or courts in limited cases.

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Who is informed at the outset of the process when a formal report about a student is made?

When a formal report is made, information is shared in a number of ways at the outset of the process, including the examples below:

- The student named in the report will usually be informed of the complaint and the identity of the reporter and will subsequently receive the evidence relied on if the matter is referred for disciplinary action.
- The college of the student named in the report will be notified, and will receive a summary of the allegations, and will receive updates at key points in the procedure.

- The department may also be informed and kept updated where appropriate, for example, in relation to Fitness to Practise considerations (e.g. Medicine or PGCE programmes), or to support other students or implement practical measures such as a No Contact Instruction.

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Who is informed at the outset of the process when a formal report about a member of University staff is made?

When a formal report is made, information is shared in a number of ways at the outset of the process, including the examples below:

- The subject of the report will usually be informed of the complaint and the identity of the reporter and will usually receive the evidence relied on as part of the University responding to the matter and/or any further University processes.
- Any senior officers who may be taking or supporting decisions on the report, for example a copy of the written complaint will be forwarded to the Head of Employee Relations and, with the student's permission, the Director of Student Welfare and Support Services.
- Where appropriate, a senior member of the relevant college if the reported University staff holds a joint position with a college.

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Who can students talk to?

Considering the need for confidentiality, the University will specify that students who have made a formal report or students who are named in a formal report should only discuss the matter with certain people, who are likely to include:

- Any person providing professional support.
- The student's immediate family and/or a close friend in confidence.
- Individuals who they intend to name as witnesses. Such conversations should take place solely for the purpose of discussing the potential witness's involvement. Students should be careful that such discussions do not appear to amount to collusion (or fabricating an untrue account). Students should refer to the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#) for more details on the information that can be provided to witnesses where the formal report concerns a student.

Anyone students speak to should understand that the process is confidential, that information should not be shared further, and should be shown a copy of

the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#) for a formal report involving a student, or the Procedure for [Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#) for a formal report involving University staff.

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Informing the police in cases involving criminal conduct

If a report involves potential criminal behaviour, the University will not usually contact the police without a student's consent. However, information may be shared without consent including if:

- There is a serious and immediate risk to the student's safety or the safety of others.
- The University has a legal obligation to do so.
- A request is made as part of an active police investigation.

In such cases, only the information necessary to meet the purpose for sharing will be shared, and the University will aim to keep the student informed where reasonably possible.

For more information on how these situations are handled, view *Criminal Conduct* in the *Reporting* section of this page.

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If students are unsure about confidentiality

If students have questions about confidentiality or how their information will be used, they can ask:

- The Proctors' Office (for reports about students) casework@proctors.ox.ac.uk.
- Their Head of Department or the People Department (for reports about staff).

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Investigations and decisions

When a formal report of harassment or sexual misconduct is made, the University may launch an investigation. What happens next depends on whether the report involves a student or a member of staff and is managed under the appropriate University procedure:

- [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#) - for reports involving students.
- [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#) – for reports involving staff.

These procedures outline the investigation process, clarify decision-making responsibilities, and explain how all parties involved will be supported and kept informed.

Colleges will have their own procedures for investigating and making decisions about harassment and sexual misconduct. Where applicable, students are strongly encouraged to consult their college for further guidance and to familiarise themselves with college-specific procedures.

Procedures

Information about the Student Disciplinary Procedure (Non-Academic Cases)

Full details about how the University responds to reports of harassment and sexual misconduct made against a student are set out in the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Misconduct\)](#), which should be referred to for comprehensive and definitive guidance.

To support students' understanding, the following key aspects are outlined below with reference to the relevant sections of the full procedure:

The decision to investigate

On receipt of a report, a Proctors' Office Caseworker will decide whether or not to investigate. In order to make this decision, the Caseworker may make preliminary enquiries.

If the decision is to not investigate, and the reporting student is dissatisfied with this decision, they have the option to make a complaint under the [University's Student Complaints Procedure](#).

If the decision is to investigate, the Caseworker will usually send the subject of the report a letter which identifies the parts of the [Code of Discipline](#) they are alleged to have breached; and explains what, factually, they are alleged to have done (i.e., what alleged conduct will be investigated).

It will normally be appropriate for the subject of the report to be informed of the identity of the reporter in this letter.

Full details on the decision to investigate, including the conditions under which the Proctors' Office will or will not investigate can be found in Section 5 of the [Procedure](#).

Investigatory process

A structured and impartial process is followed when investigating reports. Investigations are conducted by trained caseworkers from the Proctors' Office or external investigators, both of whom are referred to in the Procedure as 'the Investigator'.

Interviews

The Investigator may take any step to investigate and to assemble relevant evidence. This may include interviewing the reporter and the subject of the report at an early stage, as well as interviewing any witnesses.

Full details of who may accompany an interviewee as a supporter can be found in Section 5 of the [Procedure](#).

Upon the completion of the investigation, the Investigator will present a Proctor with a written account of the investigation in an Investigation Report.

Full details about the investigatory process, including details of the interview procedure, the ways in which accounts of the reporter and the subject are shared, and an overview of the expected contents of the Investigation Report, can be found in Sections 5 of the [Procedure](#).

Decision-making process-referral for disciplinary action

Referral decisions are based on the findings of the investigation and are made by the Proctors. The Proctor will review the Investigation Report and decide whether there are reasonable grounds for believing the [Code of Discipline](#) has been breached, and whether it is fair, just and reasonable to proceed with disciplinary action by referring the matter for a disciplinary hearing.

Full details, including all factors considered in the Proctors decision can be found in Section 5 of the [Procedure](#).

Possible outcomes

The decision is communicated to the reporter and the subject of the report in a

Referral Decision Letter.

If the decision is to take no further action, the Referral Decision Letter to the reporting student will explain if the University is going to take any other steps as a result of the report (e.g. reviewing its procedures). A reporter who is dissatisfied with the way the Procedure has been followed has the option of making a complaint.

If the report is to be referred on to a disciplinary hearing the Referral Decision Letter to the subject of the report will:

- Refer the matter to the Student Disciplinary Panel.
- For less serious matters, give the subject of the report the alternative option of having the matter considered by a Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing.
- In some cases, offer the subject of the report the opportunity to admit the facts and breaches in the Referral Letter and accept a proposed penalty (an 'Agreed Determination').

Full details on the potential outcomes of the decision-making process, including overviews of the content of both the Referral Decision Letter and its accompanying rationale, can be found in Sections 5 and 6, and Appendix A of the [Procedure](#).

What to expect: Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing

- A student is permitted to appoint a supporter to attend the hearing with them for moral support. The hearing will start with a member of staff from the Proctors' Office asking the student whether they accept the alleged breach(es) of the [Code of Discipline](#) set out in the Referral Decision Letter.
- The hearing will have an 'inquisitorial format', which means that the Proctor will lead the hearing, consider evidence and the subject's representations on the referral before making a decision rather than a 'case' being presented by the Investigator.

Full details can be found in Section 6 of the [Procedure](#).

The Proctor will inform the subject of the report whether they have been found to have breached the [Code of Discipline](#) and the subject will be given the opportunity to present evidence and representations in mitigation.

The Outcome Letter

The Proctor will communicate the decision in an Outcome Letter.

A full overview of the content of the Outcome Letters can be found in Section 6 of the [Procedure](#).

A reporter who is dissatisfied with the way the Procedure has been followed has the option of making a complaint as described in the *Section: Decision to investigate*.

For full details on the Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing, including the possibility of the hearing being conducted in writing, can be found in Section 6 of the [Procedure](#).

What to expect: The Student Disciplinary Panel (SDP)

The Student Disciplinary Panel will be a panel comprising three members, who will choose a chair for the hearing in question. One of the members of the Student Disciplinary Panel may be an external barrister or solicitor.

When the referral to the Student Disciplinary Panel is made, the day-to day handling of the matter will be transferred to the Secretary to the Student Disciplinary Panel (sdp@admin.ox.ac.uk).

What to expect: The Student Disciplinary Panel Hearing

The subject of a report is permitted to appoint a supporter to attend the hearing with them for moral support. The reporter usually attends part of the hearing as a witness and is also permitted to appoint a supporter.

The Student Disciplinary Panel hearing is an 'inquisitorial' process. This means that the panel appointed will lead the hearing and decide the case on the basis of the referral and any other additional evidence presented at the hearing.

The Panel will then first consider the evidence relating to whether there has been a breach of the [Code of Discipline](#) and will make a finding on the breach.

- If the Panel finds that there has been a breach, they will then consider the question a of penalty, taking into account any mitigating and aggravating factors.

Examples (but not an exhaustive list) of the penalties which the SDP can impose, separately or in any combination, are listed in Section 6 of the [Procedure](#).

Full details about the SDP and the hearing process, including how panel members are appointed, who may act as a supporter for the subject of a report, the permitted and prohibited aspects of the supporter's role, the exceptional

circumstances under which legal representation is allowed, and when the Panel may seek legal guidance, can be found in Section 6 of the [Procedure](#).

The Outcome Letter

The SDP Secretary will send the reporter, the subject of the report, and the Proctor the SDP's reasoned decision including their finding as to whether the subject breached the [Code of Discipline](#) and details of any penalty in an 'Outcome Letter'.

A full overview of the content of the Outcome Letters is set out in Section 6 of the [Procedure](#).

A reporter who is dissatisfied with the way the Procedure has been followed has the option of making a complaint as described in the *Section: Decision to investigate*.

Appeals

A formal process is in place for appealing certain decisions, with specified grounds and procedures outlined in the policy.

An appeal against a decision of a Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing or the Student Disciplinary Panel must be made within two weeks of the date of the written decision.

An appeal must be made in writing to the Secretary to the Student Appeals Panel (sap@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Section 7 of the [Procedure](#) sets out the grounds on which an appeal against a Proctors' Disciplinary Procedure or a SDP may be made.

On receiving the appeal, the Student Appeals Panel will review the submission. The Panel may ask written questions of the subject of the report, the Investigator, or any witness during the review. Any information will then be shared with the subject who will be given an opportunity to comment on it.

Student Appeals Panel - Potential outcomes

The Student Appeals Panel's decision may confirm or reject the Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing or Student Disciplinary Panel's decision (including on any breach and/or penalty) or decide any other outcome which would have been within their power to decide. The Panel's decision will be one from a list of three *detailed in Section 7 of the [Procedure](#)*.

The Student Disciplinary Panel will communicate their reasoned decision in the Appeal Outcome Letter to the subject of the report, the Proctor and the Student Disciplinary Panel Secretary.

A full overview of the content of the letter can be found in Section 7 of the [Procedure](#).

Full details on the appeals process, including details on any re-hearing, can be found in Section 7 of the [Procedure](#).

Additional arrangements for harassment and sexual misconduct

In cases involving harassment and sexual misconduct additional considerations and arrangements may be necessary and will be considered under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#). The principles that will be applied in such cases; and guidance applicable to cases of sexual misconduct where there is an alleged lack of consent can be found in Section 5 of the Procedure.

Timescales and influencing factors

The University's aim is to conclude its consideration of any report under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Cases\)](#) within 90 days of the receipt of the report. If the procedure is paused under the criminal conduct provisions (*section 5 of the [Procedure](#)*) or to allow another procedure to follow first (for example Fitness to Study), that period of time will not count towards the 90 days.

Generally, an investigation and Proctors' Disciplinary Hearing/Student Disciplinary Panel hearing should conclude within 70 calendar days, and any appeal to the Student Appeals Panel should be concluded within a further 20 calendar days. However, this timescale may not be met in certain cases, such as those which are complex due to the unavailability of participants, or for other reasons.

Full details, including the timescales for each stage of the investigatory, decision-making, and appeals process, can be found in Sections 5, 6 and 7 of the [Procedure](#).

Important note

This summary is provided to aid understanding. [The Student Disciplinary Procedure \(Non-Academic Misconduct\)](#) remains the definitive and complete source of information for reports of harassment and sexual misconduct made against a student.

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Information about the Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff

Full details about how the University responds to reports of harassment and sexual misconduct made against a member of University staff are set out in the [Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff](#), which should be referred to for comprehensive and definitive guidance.

To support students' understanding, the following key aspects are outlined below with reference to the relevant sections of the full [Procedure](#):

The decision to investigate

On receipt of a report the Head of Department will in consultation with the Head of Employee Relations and the Director of Student Welfare and Support Services, take steps as necessary or appropriate to understand the nature of the report and the outcome sought. The Head of Department will then decide how to proceed and inform all parties in writing. The Head of Department may make such enquiries, or commission an investigation, as necessary, to determine the complaint.

The Head of Department may also determine that immediate interim action is necessary, pending the outcome of a formal process.

Investigatory process

The purpose of an investigation is to establish the relevant factual evidence in connection with the allegations(s) made by the reporter. This will usually involve an appointed investigator meeting separately with the reporter, the subject of the report and any witnesses, and the preparation of a written report which will be forwarded to the Head of Department.

Decision-making process

The Head of Department will consider the scope and findings of the investigation and whether any further investigation is required before making a decision.

Possible outcomes

Depending on the nature of the complaint and evidence found, including findings of any investigation report, the Head of Department, in consultation with the Head of Employee Relations and the Director of Student Welfare and Support Services will take one of a number of possible actions, as listed in the [Procedure](#).

The Head of Department will inform both the reporter and the subject of the report of their decision in writing.

Full details of the contents of the letters to the reporter and the subject of the report can be found in the [Procedure](#).

In summary:

The letter to the reporter will state whether the report has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. The letter will include any recommendations the Head of Department is making in relation to the complaint and information about any right to appeal the Head of Department's decision. If the complaint has been upheld or partially upheld the reporter will be informed of their option of taking their complaint to the Proctors'. *Further details can be found in the [Procedure](#).*

Full details of the content of the letter to the University staff who is the subject of the report can be found in the [Procedure](#).

The Head of Department will also inform any other parties who have been asked to participate in an investigation that the investigation has been concluded.

Appeals

If the report is not upheld or only partially upheld, a reporter can appeal in writing to the University's Registrar on specified grounds, normally within two weeks of being informed of the outcome of the report. Appeals are conducted by way of a review of the papers; there is no reinvestigation or rehearing of the evidence.

The consequence of a reporter's appeal being upheld is that they may seek redress as explained in the [Procedure](#).

Timescales and influencing factors

Every effort is made to achieve a prompt resolution to reports, the aim being normally to conclude the investigation within six weeks. Both the reporter and the subject of the report will be expected to co-operate with the University in achieving that result.

In the case of an appeal the Registrar will usually consider the student's appeal and issue a decision within four weeks.

Important note

This summary is provided to aid understanding. The Procedure for Complaints of Harassment Against University Staff remains the definitive and complete source of information for reports of harassment and sexual misconduct made against University staff.

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Harassment and sexual misconduct training for students

Oxford offers a range of training opportunities for students as part of the University's wider commitment to preventing harassment and sexual misconduct across the student community. These sessions are designed to help students build awareness of consent and harassment.

Required Training

All students are required to complete the [Consent for Students](#) online training programme. This training is designed to help students understand what consent and healthy relationships means in real-life situations and why they matter.

- The online training programme is required, though it is recognised there are a number of reasons why students may choose to opt out if they wish. While only required to complete the training once, students are encouraged to retake the course annually to refresh their understanding and stay engaged with the content.
- The final section of the training includes information specific to Oxford, linking the topic of consent with the University's approach to all forms of harassment, its relevant policies, how to seek support, and how to report concerns.
- Students receive a confirmation email through the University's online training system CoSy once the training has been completed, which also includes links to further information and resources.

For more details and access* to the programme, visit the [Consent for Students webpage](#).

**The training is accessible to all on course students and staff via SSO (SSO stands for Single Sign-On account; which uses the individual's Oxford username, password, and multi-factor authentication).*

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Supplementary training and inductions

In addition to the required online [Consent for Students](#) training, the University and colleges offer further training and awareness programmes to support Oxford's culture of respect and inclusion. These may be offered as part of a students' course or college induction, as well as throughout the year, including:

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Inductions**
Introduce key principles of inclusive behaviour and respectful engagement in the Oxford community, delivered by the University's Equality and Diversity Unit in partnership with colleges.
- [Bystander Intervention Training](#)
Delivered via departments, this programme builds practical skills to help students and staff recognise harassment and highlights the role everyone plays in fostering a respectful and inclusive culture.
- [Healthy Relationships and Consent Workshop Programme](#)
Offers small group sessions where students can explore consent-related scenarios in more depth and ask questions in a supportive setting.
- [Oxford's University-wide approach](#)
The University provides resources that can be incorporated into college and department inductions to reiterate messaging about Oxford's approach to preventing harassment and sexual misconduct.

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Implementation and monitoring

To support the effective delivery of training:

- Colleges and departments play a role in reinforcing the importance of their students completing the [Consent for Students](#) online training as part of inductions or start of new academic year communications.
- Feedback is collected and reviewed throughout the academic year.
- The University monitors student engagement and gathers impact data to review and improve the programme over time.

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Harassment and sexual misconduct training for staff

The University is committed to ensuring that staff have the knowledge and confidence to support students, uphold a respectful environment, and respond appropriately to concerns and disclosures of harassment and sexual misconduct.

Core training for all staff

All University staff are required to complete the [Harassment in Higher Education online training module](#). This training covers behaviours related to both harassment and sexual misconduct, and supports the creation of a respectful, inclusive workplace.

The training is supported by Oxford-specific information, including links to relevant policies, reporting procedures, and support services for both staff and students.

Once completed, staff receive a confirmation email through CoSy, the University's online training system, with signposting to further guidance and resources.

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Additional and supplementary training

In addition to the main training, the University promotes a range of optional staff training to strengthen understanding and support our positive institutional culture. This includes:

- Responding to Student Disclosures of Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (webinar) - *link to follow*
- [Sexual Violence in Context](#)
- [Bystander Intervention Training](#)

These sessions are designed to expand on core knowledge, equipping staff with the awareness and skills to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct, as well as to confidently support and direct students to appropriate resources when needed.

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Responding to student disclosures

The University issues guidance to help staff respond confidently and appropriately to [disclosures of harassment or sexual misconduct](#). This covers how to offer support and signpost services and outlines what happens when a disclosure involves another student or a member of staff.

This guidance helps to ensure that staff respond with care and consistency and in line with University procedures.

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Staff involved in investigations and decision making

Staff who investigate or make decisions about reports involving harassment or sexual misconduct either receive training appropriate to their role or are supported by colleagues who have the relevant skills and knowledge to carry out these responsibilities.

- **Reports involving students:**

Investigations are carried out by trained staff in the University's Proctors' Office or external investigators. Members of the Student Disciplinary Panel may also receive case-specific training, including for harassment and sexual misconduct.

- **Reports involving staff:**

Investigators and decision-makers receive ongoing support from HR Business Partners, and relevant team leads (who can access support as appropriate) who have the appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure processes are consistent and fair.

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Policy concerning relationships between students and staff

Full details about the University's position on relationships between students and staff are set out in the [University Policy Concerning Relationships Between Students and Staff](#), which should be referred to for comprehensive and definitive guidance.

Colleges will have their own policies concerning relationships between students and staff. Where applicable, students are strongly encouraged to consult their college for further guidance and to familiarise themselves with college-specific policies.

To support students' understanding, the following key aspects are outlined below with reference to the relevant sections of the full policy.

Policy

The University's approach to relationships between students and staff

Positive professional relationships between members of staff and students are central to students' educational development and welfare. However, intimate or close personal relationships between students and staff who have responsibility for them can cause significant problems because of conflicts of interest, imbalance of power and authority, perceived favouritism, and undermining of trust and confidence in the academic process.

To protect the welfare of students, and in the best interests of staff, the University:

- Prohibits staff from entering into an intimate relationship with a student for whom they have any responsibility; and
- Strongly discourages any other close personal relationship between a staff member and student for whom they have any responsibility that transgresses the boundaries of professional conduct and requires such relationships to be declared.

Staff who fail to comply with the policy, or with any arrangements put in place under it, may be disciplined. This provision also applies to students, including DPhil students, who are employed in staff roles involving positions of responsibility; such individuals are expected to adhere to the policy as other members of staff are required to do.

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Assuming responsibility in existing relationships

Members of staff (which includes graduate students who are employed by the University in a teaching, pastoral, or supervisory capacity) must not take on or assume responsibility for a student:

- With whom they are in an existing intimate relationship or with whom they previously had such a relationship; or
- With whom they are in an existing close personal relationship or with whom they previously had such a relationship without first declaring this to their Head of Department or Chair of Faculty, to enable them to assess the risk of conflicts of interest and put appropriate protective measures in place. Usually, the protective measures will have the effect of avoiding conflicts of interest by ensuring the staff member ceases to have, or does not acquire any, responsibilities. *Principles for taking protective measures are detailed*

in Annex 5 of the [Policy](#) with reference to the [University's Conflict of Interest Policy and accompanying guidance](#).

Even in cases which are not covered by this policy, i.e. where a staff member does not have and is not likely to have responsibility for a student, staff are strongly encouraged to be cautious before embarking on an intimate or close personal relationship with any student.

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Definitions

Intimate relationship

The policy defines an 'intimate relationship' as one that includes sexual or romantic relationships, marriage or life partnerships, regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, including a brief relationship and one-off occurrences, and whether they are conducted in person and/or online and/or via electronic or any other form of communication.

Close personal relationship

The policy defines a 'close personal relationship' as one that excludes intimate relationships but means a relationship where the nature, content, emotional involvement and/or frequency of interactions and/or communications between a staff member and student transgress the boundaries of professional conduct or may be reasonably perceived to do so.

Guidance on recognising 'close personal relationships' that need to be declared can be found at Annex 3 of the [Policy](#).

Staff

The policy defines 'staff' to include every individual working within the University under a formal contract of employment or as a casual paid worker or any individual to whom the University offers any privileges or facilities normally available to its employees (such as visiting academics). Where graduate students work for the University in a teaching, pastoral, or supervisory capacity this policy applies to them in that capacity to the same extent as if they were employees of the University.

Responsibility for a student

'Responsibility for a student' is defined widely in the policy, to include any teaching, professional, pastoral or administrative responsibility or authority over a

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student, whether temporary or permanent, whether formally conferred on or voluntarily assumed by the staff member and whether the responsibility arises in a University or college context. It includes, but is not limited to, lecturing, teaching classes or seminars, overseeing projects or fieldwork, supervising, and setting/and or marking of examinations or other assessment of any type. It also includes acting as a mentor or college advisor, and making decisions on internships or work placements.

Guidance on this issue can be found at annex 2 of the [Policy](#).

Advice to students

If an intimate or close personal relationship has developed contrary to this policy, the student is encouraged to disclose it to their Head of Department or Chair of Faculty Board and to a senior member of their college welfare team. Students should be aware that they would not be penalised by the University for participating in an intimate or close personal relationship with a staff member.

Non-Consensual behaviour

If a student finds themselves in receipt of inappropriate behaviour that occurs within a relationship with a member of staff, or they are involved in a relationship with a member of staff that they do not consider to be wholly consensual, regardless of whether that relationship is in breach of the policy, they should make a report to the Head of Department or the Chair of the Faculty Board.

Students who raise concerns or make a report of harassment or sexual misconduct will be supported and will be protected from any form of retaliation by the staff member as a result of making the report. Students are strongly encouraged to seek support from the [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#) or their college welfare team.

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For any queries related to the information on this page, please contact studentwelfare@admin.ox.ac.uk.

Related documents

- [Understanding Harassment and Sexual Misconduct for SCSl](#) (PDF)
- [Responding to Student Disclosures of Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Guidance for Staff](#) (PDF)

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