Sexual Misconduct Policy

2026 -2029

Edge Hill University

Sexual Misconduct Policy

CONTENTS

1. Policy statement 3
2. Glossary of terms 3
3. Overarching principles 5
4. Scope 6
5. Duty of care 7
6. Sexual misconduct 7
7. Consent 9
8. Equity, inclusion and intersectionality 10
9. Support 10
10. Disclosure procedure 11
11. Anonymity 13
12. Third Party or Witness Disclosures 13
13. Safeguarding 14
14. Formally reporting to the University 14
15. Risk Assessment 15
16. Investigation 16
17. Actions Under the University's Procedure 16
18. Criminal Investigations 17
19. Reports to the Police 18
20. Confidentiality 18
21. Malicious or Vexatious Reports 19
22. Monitoring and Record Keeping 19
23. External Support 19
24. Relevant Policies and Procedures 20
25. Relevant Resources 20

Endmatter 20

1. Policy statement

1.1. Edge Hill University is committed to creating a safe campus environment, in which the rights and dignity of all members of the University community are valued and respected.

1.2. This policy aligns with the Office for Students (OfS) regulatory requirements relating to harassment and sexual misconduct, including Condition E6, and reflects the University's commitment to preventing and addressing such behaviour across the University community.

1.3. The University will maintain a Single Comprehensive Source of Information – Your Guide to Respect, Safety and Support - relating to harassment and sexual misconduct which complies with the OfS E6 requirements.

1.4. The University acknowledges that sexual misconduct can be experienced by any individual, regardless of their identity.

1.5. The University is committed to promoting a culture in which any incidents of sexual misconduct will not be tolerated and will be thoroughly addressed to ensure the preservation of a safe work and study environment.

1.6. Sexual misconduct jeopardises the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of members of the University and the safety of the community. It diminishes dignity and impedes access to educational, social, and employment opportunities. It can cause lasting physical and psychological harm.

1.7. This policy document aims to provide clear information for the community on what constitutes Sexual Misconduct, to provide examples to enable greater understanding and to ensure our community members understand how to seek help and support.

2. Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Disclosure	Disclosure means that an individual tells a member of the University community that they have experienced sexual misconduct (this is different from Making a Formal Report).
Disclosing Party	The disclosing party is the person(s) who has made a disclosure regarding an experience of sexual misconduct.
Formal	Formally reporting an incident to the University regarding an

Term	Definition
Reporting	individual's experience of sexual misconduct is an instruction for the University to take appropriate action. The formal report will allow the University to investigate the alleged misconduct as set out in this policy.
HR Adviser	Independent point of contact for any staff member who has experienced or been affected by sexual misconduct. They offer confidential, emotional support.
Incident	An 'incident' of harassment and/or sexual misconduct includes a wide range of circumstances. For example, it includes, but is not limited to, allegations, complaints, suspected behaviour, and formal findings of harassment and/or sexual misconduct. This means that it also includes instances where a formal report is not made, or where there is insufficient evidence to progress to disciplinary proceedings.
Mental Health & Wellbeing	Independent point of contact for any student who has experienced or has been affected by sexual misconduct. They offer confidential, emotional support.
Partner Organisations	Edge Hill University forms collaborative partnerships with a range of UK and international organisations to deliver modules or programmes leading to University credit or qualifications, and to provide structured learning opportunities such as placements, exchanges, and articulation routes for entry with advanced standing.
Reporting Party	The reporting party is the person(s) who has made a formal report regarding an experience of sexual misconduct.
Responding Party	The responding party is the person(s) named in a formal report who is alleged to have committed an act of sexual misconduct.
Sexual Misconduct	Sexual misconduct means any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and includes but is not limited to: Sexual harassment as defined by section 26(2) of the Equality Act 2010. Assault as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Rape as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The term 'Sexual Misconduct' will be used throughout this policy to cover all unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. See section 6 for further details.

Term	Definition
[Sexual] Harassment	Harassment has the meaning given in section 26 of the Equality Act 2010 and section 1 of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (in its entirety, and as interpreted by section 7 of the Act). See section 6.3 for a full definition.
University Community	The University community includes staff, students, the Students' Union and other third parties interacting with the University such as contractors.

3. Overarching principles

3.1. The University holds a set of principles to reflect the University's commitment to establishing a culture of support and respect and all members of the community have a responsibility for upholding them. The principles are:

- To ensure a safe campus environment that is free from sexual misconduct, in which the rights and dignity of all members of the University community are valued and respected.
- Promoting a culture in which any incident of sexual misconduct will not be tolerated, will be actively challenged, and will be addressed to ensure that a positive, safe environment for all members of the community is sustained.
- To recognise the significant impact of all experiences of sexual misconduct and violence and to acknowledge the potential detriment to studies and employment regardless of when the experience occurred.
- All interpersonal relationships and interactions are founded upon mutual respect, open communication, and clear consent. Community members are expected to take an active role in upholding a collective commitment and in promoting all individuals' inherent dignity.
- A clear commitment to educate the University community and encourage active bystander intervention.

3.2. The University will take proactive steps to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct through awareness campaigns, training, and educational initiatives for staff and students.

3.3. The University will also work in partnership with the Students' Union to promote awareness, prevention initiatives and student support relating to sexual misconduct.

3.4. The University will take a trauma-informed approach throughout its work to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct, seeking to promote safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment, and to avoid re-traumatisation.

3.5. All formal reports made under the policy will be considered and assessed on the balance of probabilities in line with existing Procedures and Regulations.

3.6. All members of the community will be informed of the policy and will receive awareness raising and training as appropriate to their roles.

3.7. The University will seek to ensure that its approach to disclosures, reporting and investigations is accessible and inclusive, including through consideration of reasonable adjustments where required.

3.8. All staff and students involved in the investigation or decision making in relation to this policy are expected to act with impartiality and discretion.

3.9. The University will not tolerate victimisation, retaliation or detrimental treatment of any individual who makes a disclosure, submits a formal report, acts as a witness, provides support to another individual, or participates in an investigation. This includes the making of a malicious or vexatious counter-complaint as a form of retaliation.

3.10. Positive relationships will be developed with local support service partners and key groups to support all the work in this area, from prevention to enquiry and post-incident care.

3.11. Appropriate learning will be taken from experiences, enabling the University to both shape and respond to national policy and practice, and make improvements to internal services.

3.12. Regular assurance will be provided through the University's governance arrangements and to the wider University community that specific incidents and broader cultural issues are appropriately captured and addressed

3.13. The University will implement this policy in a manner which is consistent with the OfS E6 Freedom of Speech principles.

4. Scope

4.1. This policy applies to all members of the University community, including those based at our Ormskirk and St James campuses, as well as partner organisations. Anyone can be affected by sexual misconduct including staff members, students and third parties linked to the University.

4.2. Disclosures and formal reports made under this policy are not limited to university premises or the immediate geography of the University.

4.3. Sexual misconduct is defined in section 2 and includes a broad spectrum of behaviour. Examples of the types of behaviour that will constitute a violation of this policy are set out in section 6.

4.4. Some incidents of sexual misconduct may also constitute a criminal offence under English law. Such incidents may be addressed through criminal proceedings, internal disciplinary proceedings, or, in some cases, both criminal and internal proceedings. Which of these proceedings are followed (if any) will take account of the wishes of the reporting party alongside the University's assessment of risk and safeguarding obligations.

4.5. This policy does not cover incidents of non-sexual harassment as this is covered by the Bullying, Harassment and Hate Crime Policy.

5. Duty of care

5.1. The University has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

5.2. The University takes its duty of care very seriously. In the instance that a member of the community experiences sexual misconduct, the University will facilitate access to appropriate specialist support whilst respecting their feelings and decisions.

5.3. The University is responsible for creating an environment where individuals affected by sexual misconduct feel comfortable to disclose with confidence and seek help.

5.4. The University takes steps to protect students from any actual or potential conflict of interest and/or abuse of power. The University has a separate policy on Relationships Involving Colleagues, Students and Close Personal or Business Associates. All members of the University Community are expected to comply with this policy.

6. Sexual misconduct

6.1. Sexual misconduct is defined as any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and includes but is not limited to:

- Sexual harassment as defined by section 26(2) of the Equality Act 2010.
- Assault as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

- Rape as defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

6.2. Where conduct does not fall squarely within the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and the definitions of rape and assault within the Sexual Offences Act 2003, that conduct may still amount to sexual misconduct where it is unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. This may include other offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, Section 58, or other legislation.

6.3. Sexual misconduct covers various inappropriate, unwanted behaviour, and it is impossible to detail all types of sexual misconduct. However, some examples of sexual misconduct are included below. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list:

- Rape is defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

- Sexual assault can involve a range of different behaviours where the victim has not given consent. This includes but is not limited to unwanted sexual advances or physical contact ranging from invasion of personal space to inappropriate touching and physical assault. This may include kissing, touching, attempted rape, pressuring someone into a sexual act through coercion, manipulation, or intimidation, and pressing up against someone for sexual pleasure.

- Indecent exposure or flashing occurs when somebody exposes themselves to another person without their consent.

- Sexual harassment involves someone carrying out behaviours, intentionally or unintentionally, to make the victim feel upset, frightened, or humiliated. These behaviours could include but are not limited to inappropriate sexualised jokes, gestures, verbal or physical innuendo, sending unwanted emails or texts with sexual content, up-skirting, pestering, spying, stalking, unwanted sexual advances, sharing offensive, explicit or inappropriate images or literature.

- Non-consensual image sharing is also known as ‘revenge porn’ when individual shares explicit images or videos of the victim without their consent, often to manipulate and coerce the victim in some way.

- Sexual coercion is unwanted sexual activity that happens when you are pressured, tricked, threatened, or forced in a nonphysical way.

- Harassment on social media is unwanted and repeated online behaviour of a sexual nature – such as sending explicit messages, sharing sexual content, or making inappropriate comments – that causes distress,

discomfort or harm to the recipient.

- Cyberstalking is the repeated use of online technologies to monitor, contact or harass someone in ways that are sexually threatening, intrusive or intimidating, often causing fear, distress or violations of personal boundaries.

- AI deepfakes are artificially generated or altered images, videos or audio that use AI to place a person's likeness into sexually explicit or compromising situations without their consent, often causing harm or reputational damage.

7. Consent

7.1. Consent is defined as where a person has the freedom and capacity to make the choice whether to consent to the sexual activity. This can be considered in two stages:

- Whether a complainant had the capacity (i.e. the age and understanding) to make a choice about whether or not to take part in the sexual activity at the time in question;

- Whether they were in a position to make that choice freely and were not constrained in any way.

7.2. Consent must always come first. It is the cornerstone of respectful and healthy intimate relationships. Members of the community should communicate openly, honestly, and clearly about their actions, wishes, and intentions when it comes to sexual behaviour and do so before engaging in intimate conduct.

7.3. Consent is about a clear and unambiguous agreement, expressed in mutually understandable words or actions, to engage in a particular activity.

7.4. Consent by either party can be withdrawn at any point.

7.5. Consent must be voluntarily given and may not be valid if a person is subjected to actions or behaviours that elicit emotional or psychological pressure, intimidation, or fear.

7.6. A person is not able to consent to a sexual act freely and voluntarily when they are:

- Asleep or unconscious.
- Significantly intoxicated or affected by drugs.

- Intimidated, coerced, or threatened, including when they are afraid of harm to themselves or someone else.
- Unclear about the identity of the person performing the act.
- Tricked into doing something they do not want to do.
- Detained or held against their will.
- Under 16 years of age.
- Under 18 years of age and the person performing the act is a staff member of the University.
- Pressured or feel pressured to engage in the sexual act by another person in a position of power or authority over them.

8. Equity, inclusion and intersectionality

8.1. The University recognises that sexual misconduct can be experienced by any individual, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, age, disability, faith, race, ethnicity, nationality, or economic status.

8.2. Experiences of sexual misconduct may intersect with other forms of discrimination and harassment, and therefore minority groups may be disproportionately affected.

8.3. The University is committed to providing support to any member of the community regardless of how they identify, and to reducing any additional barriers to disclosing and reporting that may affect these groups.

9. Support

9.1. The University webpages provide advice and information to individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct. This includes emergency help, medical assistance, time limits to be aware of, talking to someone, and deciding what to do next.

9.2. Specialist support is available to students through the Mental Health & Wellbeing Team, who provide primary support for a wide range of needs. In addition, some students studying at a partner organisation may also be able to access support through their Collaborative Partner, with services delivered locally by the respective institution where appropriate.

9.3. Confidential support is available to staff via the HR Adviser.

9.4. Team members in both Mental Health & Wellbeing and HR receive regular training from external experts on supporting individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct.

9.5. A referral to internal Counselling services can be made for students, or the team can provide support to engage with external specialist agencies who may have more appropriate services depending on an individual's needs and requirements.

9.6. An individual may prefer to speak to someone outside of the University, such as a specialist support service for survivors of sexual assault.

9.7. Sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) are located across the country and available for everyone, regardless of gender, age, the type of incident, or when it happened.

9.8. SARCs offer a range of services, including crisis care, medical and forensic examinations, emergency contraception and testing for STIs. They can also arrange access to an independent sexual assault advisor (ISVA), as well as referrals to mental health support and sexual violence support services.

9.9. There is a list of specialist external agencies that can be found on the Critical incident support pages of the Edge Hill website. These will be kept up to date online rather than listed here.

9.10. A Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) assessment can be provided for staff and students following an incident if appropriate. Following this a referral for further trauma support can be made to a third-party organisation.

9.11. Staff within HR, and Mental Health & Wellbeing Team, can help in making an informed decision about the next steps should an individual choose to formally report the incident to the Police or the University.

9.12. Practical and emotional support can be provided to make the initial formal report or throughout the process of making a formal report if required.

9.13. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required to enable individuals to engage effectively with disclosure, reporting and investigation processes.

10. Disclosure procedure

10.1. A disclosure is made when someone tells a member of University staff, such as the Mental Health & Wellbeing team, or the HR Advisory Team that they have experienced sexual misconduct. A disclosure can be made in person, in writing, online or via other means such as phone or email.

10.2. Where a disclosure is made in person there will be the opportunity to use a confidential space.

10.3. The University has developed an online reporting tool Let Us Know, which makes it quick and simple to make a disclosure. The website also provides information about what will happen when a formal report is received.

10.4. The University wants all members of the community to feel able to disclose incidents of sexual misconduct. However, if a Disclosing Party does not feel able to give their details, they can disclose an incident anonymously via Let Us Know.

10.5. Where a member of staff has received a disclosure in person or via other means, they may submit a disclosure on behalf of the person who has disclosed, with their permission, via the University's online reporting tool.

10.6. The person who has chosen to disclose does not need to provide the full details of their experience if they do not wish to. They will not be pressured to make a formal report.

10.7. If the incident is historical, the person who has experienced it can still disclose it to the University and receive support. They can access Wellbeing Support Services or the HR Advisory Team for support.

10.8. A disclosure does not create a formal report and is not an instruction for the University to act. The person who has disclosed will have the opportunity to be heard and to consider their options before proceeding with any further steps. No action will be taken immediately by the University unless there is a concern about immediate safety or if the University has a duty under Safeguarding legislation (see section 13).

10.9. Where a student chooses to disclose contact details via the University's online reporting tool, their disclosure will be received by the Mental Health & Wellbeing Team, and disclosures made by members of staff will be received by the HR Advisory Team.

10.10. Where a disclosure is made via a different route, the Disclosing Party can still access all the same support that is available via Mental Health & Wellbeing Team and the HR Advisory Team.

10.11. The University recognises that the Disclosing Party may require time and reflection before deciding on how to proceed. The Disclosing Party will be given the option and support to do one or more of the following:

- Report to the police.
- Make a formal report to the University.
- Make no report of the incident.
- Receive advice on the support that is available.

- Consider if they want to preserve evidence in the instance that they choose to make a formal report to the police in the future.
- Receive independent advice and support from the Students' Union Advice Centre (students only)

10.12. Staff members dealing with a student disclosure can refer to the Supporting Staff to Support Students Toolkit which has detailed information about 'what you should do' and also, 'what not to do'.

10.13. The University is committed to protecting individuals from retaliation when they disclose or report sexual misconduct or participate in an investigation. Any such retaliation will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

10.14. The Disclosing Party should be aware that a record will be kept of their disclosure, whether they choose to make a formal report or not.

10.15. Records will be kept for a fixed time period before being destroyed in line with the University's Records Retention Schedule.

11. Anonymity

11.1. If the Disclosing Party is concerned about being identified, they can make their disclosure anonymously. The University treats anonymous disclosures just as seriously as those made openly. However, if the disclosure is made anonymously, there may be a limit to the University's ability to investigate the concerns effectively.

11.2. Where a person chooses to disclose anonymously the anonymised data will help the University to understand patterns in behaviour and inform future policy.

11.3. The University encourages anyone raising such a concern to do so by completing the Let Us Know form. The University would prefer that any disclosure is made anonymously rather than not at all.

12. Third Party or Witness Disclosures

12.1. Where the person disclosing is a third party who has not experienced sexual misconduct (such as a person who has witnessed misconduct taking place or been informed of misconduct) the University will respect the right of the individual who experienced the incident to choose how to take forward a disclosure.

12.2. There may be certain circumstances where the University is required to take

appropriate action to prevent potential harm to individuals or the University based on a risk assessment, which may include acting on information despite or without knowledge of the wishes of the individual(s) who experienced the incident. However, these are expected to be rare, and the actions of the University will usually be led by the person experiencing the misconduct.

13. Safeguarding

13.1. The University reserves the right and may be under an obligation, to share information without consent in circumstances where a child or adult at risk is involved or believed to be at risk.

13.2. On these occasions the University Safeguarding Policy and Procedure will be followed. Where possible consent will be sought, and the Disclosing Party will be kept informed throughout the process if it is felt that action needs to be taken.

14. Formally reporting to the University

14.1. Formally reporting is the sharing of information, by a Reporting Party, regarding an incident of sexual misconduct to potentially initiate an investigation. This Formal Report may be made to any member of staff at the University or where relevant, a partner organisation.

14.2. The investigation process for staff is set out in the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and for students in the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure.

14.3. This process may vary where a Formal Report is submitted at a partner organisation. Initial discussions between key staff at the University and the partner organisation will determine the appropriate procedure to follow depending on the specific circumstances of the case.

14.4. A formal Report is different to a disclosure in that it informs the University that something has happened, and that the person who has made the formal report wishes the University to act.

14.5. Further information about how to formally report an incident to the University is available at Critical incident support pages of the University website.

14.6. Following a formal report that will be investigated under the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure, students may be given the option to provide their report in person, so they would only need to provide details of their report once. Alternatively, formal reports can be submitted in writing. All reports should contain enough information so that the University can take the report

forward and the Investigating Officer may get in touch with the Reporting Party to establish further information.

14.7. Every effort will be made to support the Reporting Party and ensure that their formal report is addressed sensitively and respectfully. The University will respond to formal reports promptly within working hours.

14.8. If the Responding Party is a student, the formal report form will be dealt with by staff in the Student Casework Team and investigated using the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure. If the Responding Party is a staff member, the formal report form will be dealt with by staff in the Human Resources Team and investigated using the Staff Disciplinary Policy & Procedure.

14.9. Students studying professional programmes in which Fitness to Practice is used should note that the Fitness to Practice procedure interacts closely with the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure and may be invoked when an allegation of sexual misconduct is made.

14.10. The University does not determine criminal guilt or civil liability. University processes determine whether University policies, regulations and expected standards of behaviour have been breached.

14.11. Throughout the reporting and investigation procedure, the University's priority will be the interests of all parties involved regarding safety, fairness, dignity, privacy, and due process. Appropriate wellbeing and procedural support will therefore be available to reporting parties, responding parties and witnesses throughout University processes.

14.12. The Reporting Party has the right to withdraw their formal report and to stop the investigation at any time.

15. Risk Assessment

15.1. In all cases of formally reported sexual misconduct, including referral by a third party, the University will discharge its duty of care by establishing the extent of any formally reported and identified alleged breaches of its conduct policies and, after that, by entering a process of formal risk assessment to reduce the risk of future harm.

15.2. The risk assessment will consider the potential risks to all members of the University community but in particular, to the Reporting Party, the Responding Party, and any witnesses.

15.3. The University will take affirmative action to mitigate risks in cases of alleged sexual misconduct. The University may implement precautionary measures

including, but not limited to, no-contact requirements, accommodation changes, timetable adjustments or restrictions on access to certain facilities.

15.4. Risk assessments will be reviewed regularly and whenever there is a material change in circumstances.

16. Investigation

16.1. Following receipt of a formal report, the investigation of sexual misconduct will be conducted according to the Staff Disciplinary Procedure or the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure. These procedures are the same for any type of misconduct, including non-sexual harassment or misconduct.

16.2. All members of the University are required to cooperate fully with an investigative process; failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

16.3. All procedural steps of an investigation, including parties involved in the investigation process, are outlined in the Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and the Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure.

16.4. All parties including witnesses will be offered support including advice and guidance on policy and procedure. They will also be signposted to other external support that is available such as from a trade union for staff or the Students' Union for students.

16.5. Staff members who are conducting investigations or taking part in decision making on sexual misconduct cases (e.g. as part of a panel) will take part in appropriate training and development.

16.6. All investigations conducted within the University will be trauma informed and conducted carefully so as not to risk a detrimental impact on potential future criminal justice proceedings.

16.7. There are 6 principles of trauma-informed practice: safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural consideration; and these will be key to our investigations.

16.8. A trauma informed investigation seeks to avoid re-traumatisation which is the re-experiencing of thoughts, feelings or sensations experienced at the time of a traumatic event or circumstance.

17. Actions Under the University's Procedure

17.1. Following an investigation, should the University find the allegation of Sexual Misconduct to be proven, and in turn a breach of this policy, sanctions may

be placed upon the Responding Party. For students, this may be up to and including expulsion from the University. For members of staff, sanctions may be applied up to and including dismissal from employment with the University.

17.2. The Responding Party will be informed of the outcome and any sanction(s) in writing and, where appropriate, in person. The letter will set out the rationale for the decision. The Responding Party will be informed that they may appeal on specified grounds.

17.3. Data protection legislation does not completely prevent the University from sharing information about a Responding Party's disciplinary process with the Reporting Party. There are benefits to the Reporting Party, and to the community, in being open about how formal reports of student or staff misconduct have been considered.

17.4. Where possible, the University will provide meaningful outcome information to the Reporting Party, including whether the complaint was upheld and whether sanctions were applied.

17.5. The University will also consider everyone's right to privacy carefully.

17.6. In deciding what information can be shared with a Reporting Party or other relevant individuals, the University will undertake a Data Sharing Impact and Risk Assessment.

17.7. The University will provide clear information on whether and how a Reporting Party can challenge the outcome of their formal report about the behaviour of another student or member of staff.

17.8. The University will ensure that no terms or agreements are used that have the purpose or effect of preventing or restricting students from speaking to others about allegations of harassment or sexual misconduct.

17.9. The University will also take all reasonable steps to prevent any other person from entering contracts that prevent or restrict any person from disclosing information about an allegation of sexual misconduct that in any way affects one or more students.

18. Criminal Investigations

18.1. The University cannot undertake a criminal investigation. It will, however, cooperate fully with any associated Police investigation and subsequent legal proceedings.

18.2. Where a criminal investigation is underway and the Responding Party is a member of the University community, the University may also establish separate disciplinary proceedings where the behaviours and circumstances are a breach of expected University conduct.

18.3. The University will not undertake any investigations or actions which may confound any police investigation. Therefore, in the event of a Police investigation, University proceedings will normally be placed on hold.

18.4. However, a risk assessment process will be carried out prior to or alongside the Police investigation in cases where the University feels this is a reasonable and proportionate way of discharging its duty of care to all concerned. This may result in the University imposing conditions on individuals to ensure that a full and proper investigation can be carried out and/or to safeguard the Reporting and Responding party or others.

19. Reports to the Police

19.1. The University will not normally report an incident of sexual misconduct to the police without the Reporting Party's permission. However, the University may be required to notify the Police of behaviour or areas of concern, especially where there is believed to be an ongoing risk to others.

19.2. If the University does make the decision to report an incident to the police against the Reporting Party's wishes, the Reporting Party will be notified and fully informed of the reasons why.

19.3. If a criminal investigation is undertaken, the University will facilitate the Police enquiry wherever possible.

20. Confidentiality

20.1. The University recognises the importance of privacy in cases where sexual misconduct is alleged. Confidentiality for all parties involved will be maintained as far as possible unless otherwise agreed.

20.2. However, there may be circumstances (e.g. Safeguarding as mentioned in section 13, or the danger of physical assault) that means that the University will be required to disclose certain information to additional University personnel or third parties on a 'need to know' basis. This is consistent with meeting the University's Safeguarding and Duty of Care obligations.

20.3. Where a student is studying at a partner organisation, discussions will involve a limited number of relevant staff to ensure appropriate and timely decisions

are made regarding next steps.

20.4. Information within formal reports of sexual misconduct will be used for internal data reporting to ensure that patterns are identified (e.g. to check for multiple incidents relating to students and staff in the same department and to ensure that any necessary measures are taken as a result). As far as practicable, the University will seek to protect confidentiality.

20.5. The members of staff who will have access to this information and will be responsible for extracting this information for reporting are the Director of HR & The Director of Student Journey.

21. Malicious or Vexatious Reports

21.1. The University treats all formal reports of sexual misconduct very seriously. A report that is not upheld does not in itself mean that it was malicious, vexatious or made in bad faith.

21.2. However, the possibility of malicious or spurious reports is recognised, and any Reporting Party identified as such will be dealt with under the relevant University disciplinary procedure/regulations.

22. Monitoring and Record Keeping

22.1. The University maintains a central record of disclosures and incidents of sexual misconduct to monitor trends, identify patterns, understand any disproportionate impact on particular groups, and inform prevention initiatives. Student Journey and Human Resources maintain these records which will be anonymised in any reporting process.

22.2. The University will share anonymised prevalence and trend data with the Students' Union to support joint prevention work.

22.3. An annual report providing assurance on the implementation of this policy, including relevant anonymised prevalence and trend data, will be considered by Faculty Management Groups, Senior Leadership Group and the Board of Governors.

22.4. All records are maintained in accordance with the University's Records Retention Schedule.

23. External Support

23.1. For expert advice on these issues, a list of agencies that can be found on the

Critical Incident Support pages of the Edge Hill website. These will be kept up to date online rather than listed here.

24. Relevant Policies and Procedures

- Bullying, Harassment and Hate Crime Policy
- Non-Academic Misconduct Procedure
- Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Relationships Involving Colleagues, Students and Close Personal Business Associates
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedures
- Freedom of Speech Policy and Code of Practice

25. Relevant Resources

- Your Guide to Respect, Safety and Support
- Let Us Know – Sexual misconduct pages
- Critical Incident Support pages – Sexual Misconduct
- Supporting Staff to Support Students toolkit – Sexual Misconduct Disclosures

Endmatter

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