

UUK taskforce on violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students

Progress report number 2

Introduction

The taskforce met for the second time on 16 March 2016. The taskforce has been established by Universities UK (UUK) to make recommendations on further action the higher education sector can take to prevent and respond to incidents of violence and sexual harassment against women, hate crimes and other forms of harassment. Further details including a full membership list can be found on the [UUK website](#).

The meeting focused on two substantive items:

- (i) discussion of the *Final Report of the Task Force on Student Disciplinary Procedures* (known as the Zellick guidelines published in 1994)
- (ii) consideration of an updated evidence paper summarising the evidence received by the taskforce, emerging themes and possible areas of focus for recommendations

Outcomes from these discussions are summarised below.

Zellick guidelines

Much of the evidence gathered by the taskforce highlighted concerns about the limitations of the guidelines developed by Professor Graham Zellick, which provide advice to universities on handling circumstances where a student's alleged misconduct would also constitute a criminal offence.

Although not statutory, the prevailing view was that the guidance remains partially relevant and reinforces the importance of having appropriate policies and procedures in place. However, it was also noted that the guidance requires updating due to significant changes to the legal, social and technological context within which institutions now operate. In view of this, the taskforce agreed that the Zellick guidelines should be reviewed. A [press release](#) announcing this decision was issued immediately after the meeting. UUK is currently developing a plan to undertake this review.

Evidence paper and emerging themes

The taskforce discussed a lengthy evidence paper summarising all of the evidence, both published and other, which the taskforce secretariat has reviewed since October

2015. This included evidence received from many stakeholders, academics and other organisations with expertise relevant to the taskforce's remit.

Key themes

A number of themes were evident as set out below. These will form the focus of possible taskforce recommendations:

- adopting a consistent and coordinated cross-institutional approach to prevent and respond to incidents
- obtaining commitment from senior leaders and middle management
- implementing a zero-tolerance culture which sets clear behavioural expectations
- ensuring that expected behaviours are backed up by disciplinary procedures and that students are aware of these
- supporting students to be agents of change via evidence-based bystander initiatives
- identifying relevant support services and ensuring students are aware of these – this was a key area where sharing of good practice would be welcomed
- implementing formal reporting and monitoring systems in a systematic way
- developing effective models of recording incidents, data collection and processes for regular review
- identifying and implementing effective training for staff
- building effective external relationships eg with the local police force/ designated higher education liaison officer, specialist support and community groups
- developing a facility /forum to facilitate the sharing of good practice across the sector
- drawing on good practice both within the UK and internationally

The taskforce also discussed whether there are any gaps in the evidence considered to date and identified areas where additional research is needed including cyber-bullying.

Next steps

- Event on 19 April 2016

On 19 April 2016 Universities UK will be hosting a one-day seminar *Tackling violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students* with the aim to provide an update on the work of the taskforce, share examples of best practice and gather further evidence and insights from the sector on how best to address these issues.

This one-day seminar is an opportunity for delegates to explore topics such as the prevention of incidents of sexual violence, harassment and hate crime through cultural and behavioural change and adopting a zero tolerance approach, 'backlash' to certain interventions, dealing with incidents off-campus, working with the student body, ensuring that reporting procedures are appropriate and effective, and working effectively with external agencies including the police and local community. This event will further inform the work of the taskforce. Further details are available [here](#).

- Third meeting of the taskforce

The next meeting of the taskforce will be on 10 June 2016. The meeting will consider potential recommendations and a first draft of the taskforce's final report. A further progress report will be published shortly afterwards.

Further information

For further information on the taskforce or to submit any comments or evidence of relevance, please contact harassmenttaskforce@universitiesuk.ac.uk