



# Summary of Changing the Culture 7 years on: a progress report

**Universities strive to be inclusive, safe and respectful places for their students, staff and visitors. There is no place for harassment or intimidation within our institutions.**

*Changing the Culture* was launched by Universities UK in 2016 as the strategic framework for institutions' anti-harassment work in the student community across Scotland and the rest of the UK. This is the second report on progress. The data reflect a considerable amount of work undertaken over the last five years, since the last update in 2019. The major areas of progress can be summarised as:

## Working closely with stakeholders

- 95% of institutions have ensured close involvement of their student and staff bodies in their anti-harassment strategies.
- 79% work with third-sector organisations as part of their strategic approaches and 63% collaborate with the police.

## Survivor-focused

- 63% of institutions work with survivors and those with lived experience to inform their strategic approach to anti-harassment, up from only a third who indicated they did so in 2019.

## Trauma-informed

- 79% of institutions have adopted trauma-informed processes for student misconduct, with 74% having done so since 2019.
- 79% of HEIs now have policies that allow for preventative suspension where this is necessary and appropriate.

## Primary prevention

- 100% of institutions set behavioural expectations of their students in official policies, 95% do so additionally in student codes of conduct, and 74% also make use of student-focused campaigns to do so.
- 63% of institutions now communicate behavioural expectations to students in their pre-arrival information, up from 46% in 2019.

## Increased ease of reporting

- 89% of institutions have a dedicated reporting tool in place in 2024 (in addition to other mechanisms for reporting, such as in-person) compared to less than one-third in 2019.

## Training opportunities for students and staff

- 100% of institutions offer training programmes to staff in support of this agenda. That has risen from 69% of institutions in 2019. Of the 100% delivering staff training, 74% make the opportunities available at least on an annual basis.
- 94% of institutions have delivered student bystander and/or consent training since 2019, with more than two-thirds doing so annually.

## Leadership

- 68.5% of institutions have located strategic responsibility for progress on this agenda with their executive team (Principal, Vice Principal, Provost or Chief Operating officer) up from 41.7% in 2019.
- 89% of university governing bodies now have regular oversight of the anti-harassment agenda in their institutions compared to 54% in 2019.

## There have been a number of sector-wide collaborations to drive this agenda forward since 2016. Further examples are listed in the full report:

- **2019.** All of Scotland's universities adopt a commitment on the use of confidentiality clauses, agreeing that it would be "wholly unacceptable" to use confidentiality clauses (aka NDAs) to prevent victims/survivors from speaking out. EmilyTest campaigned for a ban on NDAs and the pledge was led by Universities Scotland.
- **2020.** Scotland's universities stand united against racism, in a statement made by Principals in partnership with Advance HE, in response to 2019 Universities Challenged report from EHRC.

- **2022.** Universities UK publishes Tackling Staff to Student Sexual Misconduct which strongly discourages close personal relationships between staff and students.
- **2023.** Scotland's universities commit to a consistent way of collecting and processing student data on unspent, relevant criminal convictions in the interests of student safety. This responds to calls from campaigners including EmilyTest and Ellie Wilson. Guidance for universities is being developed by Universities Scotland and is expected by late November 2024.

The data and initiatives show universities have driven forward a significant programme of work over the last five years. However, there is no complacency from our institutions. The work continues.

## A comment on resourcing

No institution is in receipt of public funds specifically to support primary or secondary prevention work in support of the safety and wellbeing of their students. This means that wider public funding pressures in the higher education sector also add pressures on this agenda. 72% of all institutions, regardless of size, identified funding as a problem in regard to making further progress.

As with all areas of their activity, institutions seek to work in ways that are efficient and effective. Universities are highly active collaborators on this agenda; both with each other and with colleges and other partners although clearly when it comes to student safety and wellbeing, efficiency is not the driver.

## A comment on the contribution of survivors

There are many examples of positive change in the higher education sector occurring in this space thanks to the courage and campaigning of victims/survivors and their families. Institutions act on their responsibility to listen to their students, staff and particularly from survivors to learn from their lived experience. We applaud the bravery of those who choose to do so, and to recognise their achievements, but also note that further progress should not rest so heavily on their shoulders.

## Notes

- All 19 higher education institutions responded to this survey, with the data collected in spring 2024.
- The full progress report and examples of best practice and collaboration between institutions and stakeholders was published in autumn 2024 and can be found at: [www.universities-scotland.ac.uk](http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk)