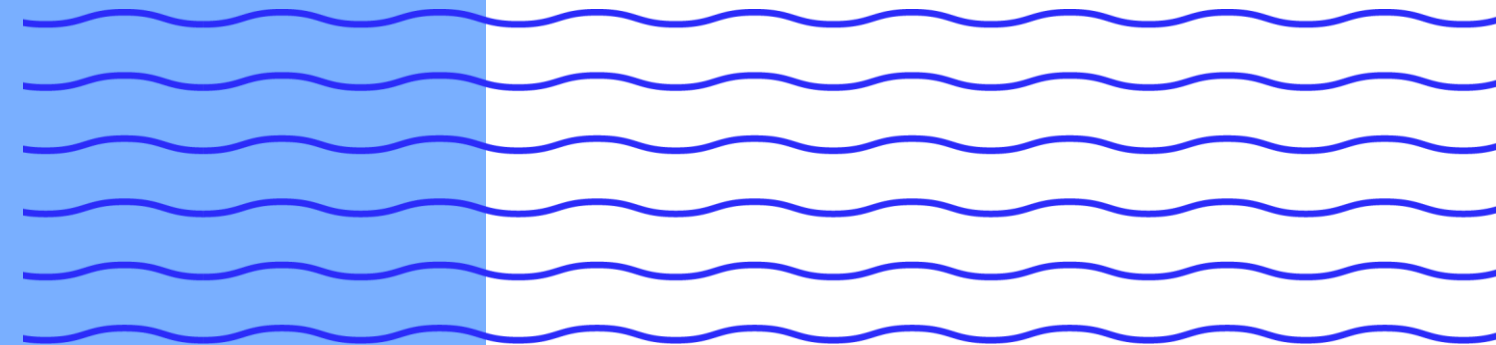


This week

Mond	Democratic models and democracy reviews
Tue	Righting the wrongs for Disabled students
Wed	Student on student conduct, complaints, discipline
Thu	Parliament and government advocacy
Fri	Won't somebody think about the Postgraduates?



WONKHE
SUs

Cutting through the haze

Initiations, student conduct, complaints and SUs

JIM DICKINSON | WONKHE SUS
@JIM_DICKINSON



WONKHE
SUs

Swirling forces

- Retreat of the state and size of the sector
- #MeToo and ancient/closed/elite groups
- Press interest in students and universities
- University jurisdiction and the regulation of relationships and lives v provision
- Student safety and safeguarding as a major issue
- Student mental health
- What is the university? Law v expectation & data protection
- Campus culture wars
- Student demands for authoritarianism

University of Gloucestershire student died after rugby initiation game went tragically wrong, coroner hears ahead of inquest next year


Family, friends and counsel representing the university student attended a pre-inquest review

SHARE       1 COMMENT


By John Hawkins
15:05, 23 OCT 2019

NEWS

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More women say Birmingham University refused to investigate rape complaints

Growing outcry as students say university refused to look into complaints of sexual violence



▲ Birmingham University campus. One recent graduate said staff told her there were no specific procedures to deal with rape complaints, so no action could be taken. Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo

Birmingham University faces a growing outcry over its response to student victims of sexual violence after more women said it had refused to investigate their rape complaints.

College sports and coronavirus: Schools reporting positive tests among athletes

| USA TODAY
Published 7:19 AM EDT Aug 11, 2020

The coronavirus has drastically affected the sports cancellations and postponements from major pro l as the world attempts to slow the spread of COVID- players and other athletes across the country have campus for workouts, many are testing positive for

Are Covid- Parties Rea Alabama?

 **Bruce Y. Lee** Senior Healthcare
I am a writer, journal expert, avocado-eater



Beer Pong Party Cups in Red with ping pong balls GETTY

Nowadays, there is new meaning to the phrase, “bro, this party is sick.”

BUMP START Freshers face sex ban in bid to stop coronavirus spreading in universities

[Alex Matthews](#)
4 Aug 2020, 9:30 | Updated: 4 Aug 2020, 16:27

   11 Comments

NEW students are facing a sex ban as universities slap them with rules and fines to stop coronavirus spreading in the halls.

Wild parties and sleeping around are off the agenda for freshers this year with social interactions confined to one household.



id raise anxiety levels.

Colleges files will slow pread, en't convinced

his fall. That much is clear.

for student conduct in the midst of a ll go about enforcing them, especially place off-campus – or overnight.

for example, has banned parties, both on e health and safety of our community at



Fine lines

- Between what can be regulated and what cannot
- Between “organised” and “organic”
- Between SU and “a group of friends”
- Between a club/society and “a group of friends”
- Between student and private citizen
- Between the right to hedonism and the right to safety



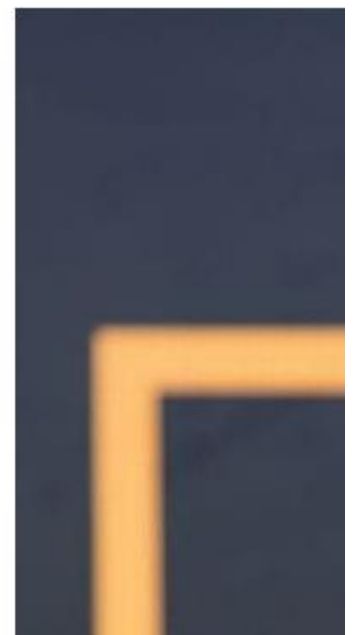
Initiations

News Gloucester News

University initiation of inquest

Family, friends and c

SHARE   



WONKHE
SUs

Ed Farmer inquest: Student died from 'toxic effects' of alcohol

25 October 2018

     Share



Ed Farmer was found unresponsive and taken to hospital, but died

A university student died from the "toxic effects" of drinking excessive alcohol on an "initiation-style" bar crawl, a coroner has ruled.

Universities struggling to stop s initiation ceremonies and uals, figures reveal

Challenges on alcohol-heavy events have become more severe

Student | @Eleanor_Busby |
16 comments



Initiation events have taken place at UK institutions (Pixabay)

Universities struggling to stop dangerous student initiation
ceremonies – which experts warn have become more
deadly – after the death of a first-year student.

Sam Potter case

- Second year film production student at Uni Glos who died on 9th May 2019.
- Alcohol level of more than four and a half times the legal limit for a driver in his blood.
- Rugby Club's "end of season" initiation -drinking "concoctions" of alcohol mixed by third and fourth years in a shed – with a tarpaulin laid on the floor to catch spillages and vomit.
- At 6pm several students went home but Sam, described as being "extremely intoxicated", stayed and fell asleep on the floor, leaning against a sofa.
- Fellow students found him unresponsive in the early hours of the next morning and attempted CPR until paramedics arrived – but he could not be revived.



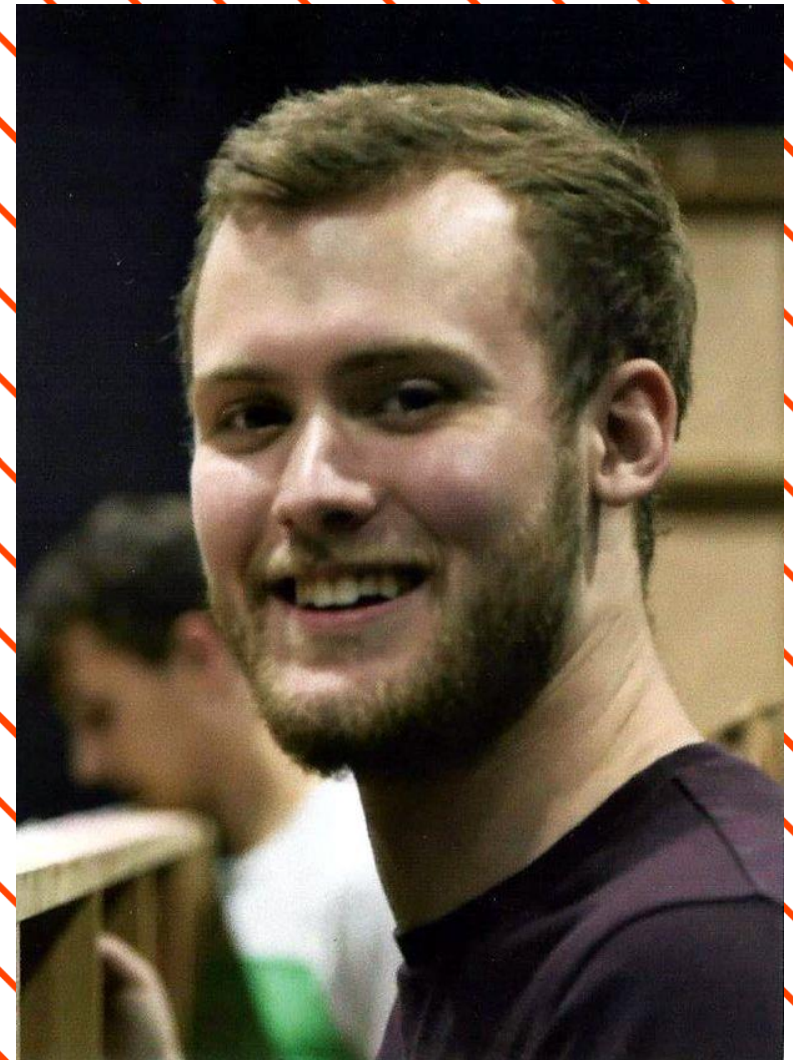
Potter case

Detective Sergeant David McCoy said there was evidence that lager, Guinness and rum had been drunk alongside various food sauces at the gathering:

- “Everybody who was there, was there of their own free will and voluntarily and engaged in those games voluntarily and were able to stop if they wished to do so”

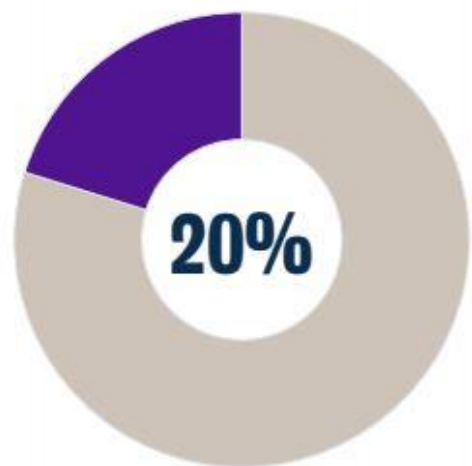
University’s student registrar Stewart Dove :

- “There is no doubt there was a culture within Sam’s group which meant you probably felt you had to attend and had to join in. I don’t think we can try to dodge that issue. That is very clear.”



Culture wars and campus killjoys

The Libertarian



This minority group of students are less certain about whether they and others are free to express their views at their university. They feel confident – but not certain – that they are free to protest, yet are not convinced that their university is taking seriously the need to protect students from hatred so that everyone can enjoy an equal right to express themselves freely.

They are also unsure of whether university officials should have the right to ban people with extreme views from speaking on campus. While they largely feel free from discrimination, harm or hatred, they do not believe that it is a university's place to shield people from intolerant or offensive ideas. They feel that safe-space policies or safetyism in universities pose a threat to freedom of expression and oppose the suppression of demonstrations or rallies representing unpopular political views.

The combined % of the three clusters does not add to 100% due to rounding errors.

Key demographics

Gender

Male – 62%
Female – 38%

Voting intention if general election held tomorrow

Labour – 29%
Conservative – 18%
Liberal Democrat – 16%
Green Party – 11%
Brexit Party – 8%
Don't know – 6%
Would not vote – 5%
Would rather not say – 4%
Other – 2%
SNP/Plaid Cymru – 1%

Voting intention if referendum on EU membership tomorrow

Remain – 65%
Leave – 29%
Don't know – 4%
Would not vote – 2%

University: lads, blokes and jocks not welcome

Universities now treat male students as deviants in need of re-education.



JOANNA WILLIAMS
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

7th October 2014



Share Topics **POLITICS**

Initiations as a thing

- Sometimes longstanding policy “problems” (wicked problems) turn into urgent ones (critical problems)
- See: #MeToo and aspects

Ed Farmer inquest: Student died after 'initiation-style' event

22 October 2018

f b t e Share



Ed Farmer was found unresponsive and blue and taken to hospital

A university student died after taking part in an "initiation-style" bar crawl, an inquest has heard.

Newcastle University student Ed Farmer, 20, died in hospital in December 2016.

A round of 100 triple vodkas had been ordered at one of the pubs on the bar crawl, the hearing at Newcastle Coroner's Court was told.

Mr Farmer, of Leicester, was taken to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in the early hours after being found unconscious.



Life

UK University Initiations Are Getting More and More Extreme

Two students have died in recent years because of initiation rituals.

How sector guidance works

- Now! Album – pasteurised view of “the sector” with a focus on autonomy and institutional diversity
- Broad brush – we do this already
- Detail – harder, yes but
- Often used in a crisis to compare what led to said crisis against the guidelines
- Useful as “ongoing discussion” tool?



Life

UK University Initiations Are Getting More and More Extreme

Two students have died in recent years
because of initiation rituals.

Approaches to community problems

- Egalitarian: Establish understanding and awareness. Policy as **education**.
- Individualist: Establish incentives to behave “better”. Policy as **rewards**.
- Hierarchical: Establish power (often to punish). Policy as **deterrent**.
- All three have significant limitations



Approaches to community problems

- Hierarchical: Establish power (often to punish). Policy as **deterrent**.
- There is a reach for authority – “blame”, “action”, “leadership”
- No-one thinks they’ll get “caught”. Few do get caught
- Weak system of penalties.
- “Clip on the ear” / “Boys will be boys”
- Definitions on a spectrum
- Forced <> Required <> Expected <> Happened
- There is, as it turns out, tolerance

Approaches to community problems

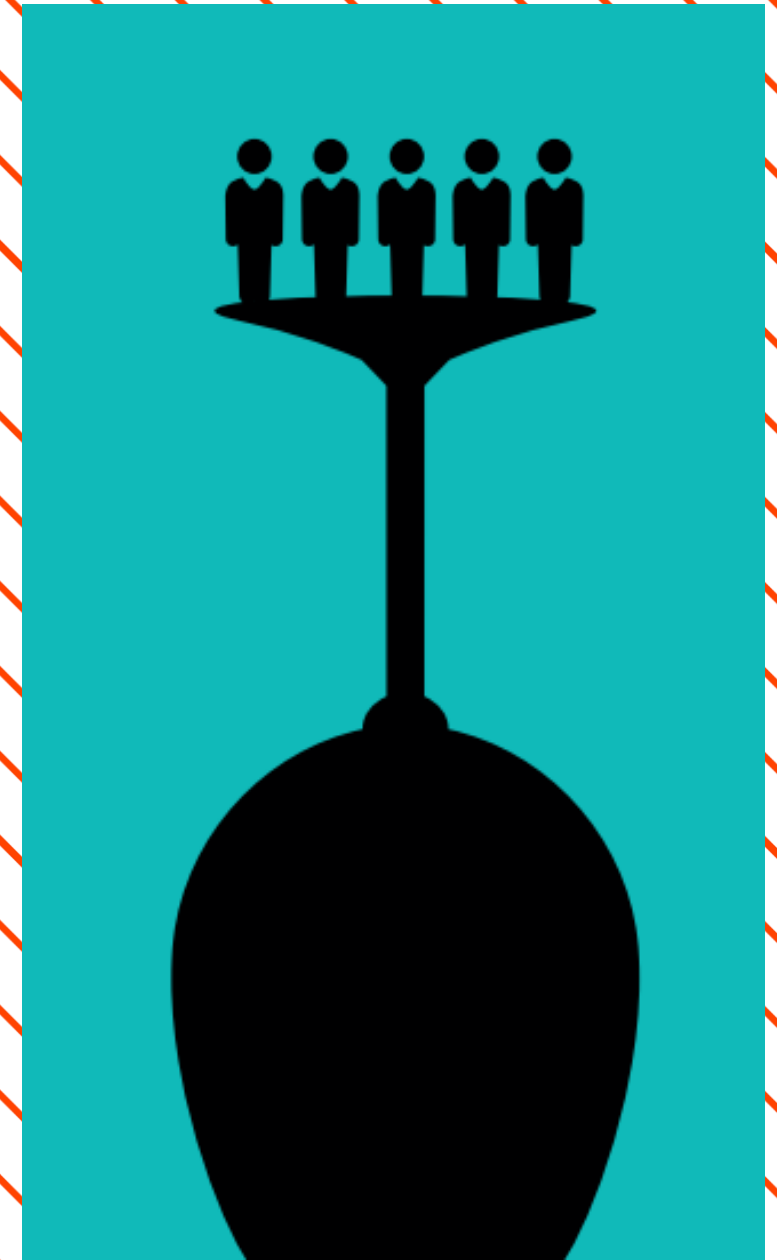
- Egalitarian: Establish understanding and awareness. Policy as **education**.
- Limitations esp where tradition, hierarchy and close relationships exist
- Cognitive dissonance – that meant that not this
- Survivors disregard harms arguments
- Emotional experience overrides data/evidence

Approaches to community problems

- Individualist: Establish incentives to behave “better”. Policy as **rewards**.
- Primary incentives?
- Secondary incentives relate to tradition, hierarchy and rites of passage
- Very few meaningful incentives schemes have been developed that can override

1. Defining the problem

- Definition issue – UUK uses example
- Defining behaviours matters legally and in terms of reporting
- From “forcing” to “expected” to “climate creation” – a continuum
- Also: climate studies... (See TSR)



2. Whose problem

“Even if AU or SU, a university retains a responsibility for student conduct and there should be greater symmetry across definitions, processes and sanctions”

- Seriousness v Context of behaviour
- Investigation and Panel competence/capacity



3. Jurisdiction

- From pitch to pre's
- Legal responsibility and flow back to board(s)
- How clear is the jurisdiction issue and what is the culture/regulation of risk assessment around “off pitch” activity
- We need to talk about tour (and definitions of risk)



4. Ancient and Elite

- Institution type
 - Diversity of participants
 - Role of “traditions”
 - Balance of induction v creation
 - Role of alumni
 - How “closed” the social/professional group is
-
- Points to: Medics, Elite Sports Clubs, PCR (Frats and Sororities in US)
 - Tension in targeting



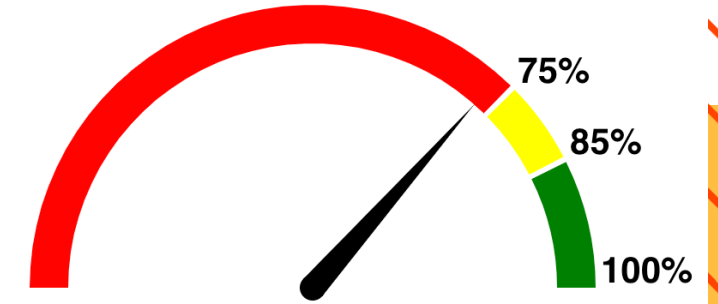
5. I'm telling on you

- Continuum between opportunity to report and requirement
- “Making it easier” doesn’t necessarily “make it easier” or desirable
- Role of reproduction in student activities
- Who might you require to report
- Relates to attitudes of periphery actors (often volunteers)
- Harassment/Bullying?



6. Induction

- Student diversity
- “Readiness” challenged by diversity
- Navigation of diversity repeatedly identified as challenge
- Joins a host of other issues loaded into “induction”
- Is it time to rethink the “onboarding” into university communities?



7. Plus

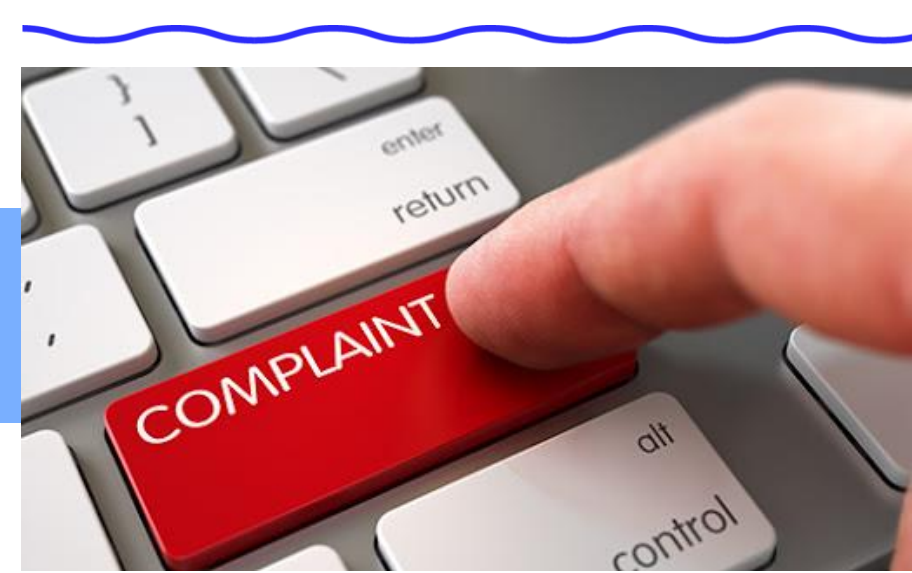
- A shift to psychological harm and RA
- Issues between universities
- Concepts of consent broader than the law
- Duty of care and safeguarding
- Reimagining positive social (sporting) activity

Ten point plan...

1. Adopt a clear definition of what constitutes an initiation which focuses on prohibited behaviours
2. Foster cross-working and a whole university approach. This means including work to prevent initiations as part of strategies to tackle harassment and promote good wellbeing and mental health
3. Evaluate new initiatives and share knowledge and good practice, continuously assessing progress being made
4. Update or develop policies and practices to explicitly refer to initiation events and the problems that arise from them
5. Ensure proportionate disciplinary processes and sanctions are in place, noting that a “zero tolerance approach” is unhelpful as it implies initiations do not happen
6. Provide clear reporting systems and advertise support available to students
7. Raise awareness of initiations and their risks among students and staff
8. Organise appropriate staff training, identifying the levels of training needed for different staff. First responders will need the most training, for example.
9. Work with the local council, licensees and partners to ensure the campus environment promotes responsible behaviours towards drinking
10. Work with alumni to encourage an increased sense of responsibility for the safety of student groups and societies of which they were a part

Complaints

- Talking principally about complaints about other students and their “conduct”
- Anecdotally, complaints of this nature rising
- Is this because everyone is too quick to see an “authority” figure to investigate and punish rather than sort things out themselves?
- Or is it about increasing confidence among victims of harassment, discrimination and abuse and promotion of “zero tolerance” and standards?



Why this matters now

- Protest, culture wars and student conduct
- EDI issues, “values in practice”, line between free speech and codes of behaviour
- Evidence of significant increase in reporting
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill:
 - A students’ union to which section A5 applies must take the steps that are reasonably practicable for it to take (including where appropriate the initiation of disciplinary measures) in order to secure compliance with its code of practice
- SUs said they were struggling with some of these issues when we ran TTDF
- Legal issues and expensive solicitors

Why Now?



- “While these students are usually dealt with respectfully, and demonstrations have sometimes been given space, in some instances [the university] has been quite heavy handed in removing students or moving them on from the location in which they’re protesting.”
- “Some clear guidance would be very welcome.”
- “In the past the university pushed complaints it received to the union - for example, if a case of harassment happens within the context of a society activity or event and the solution the complainant would like is for the accused to be removed from said society, the university would not investigate it and would expect us to do so.”
- “Over the past year, the university has concluded that that action is less than satisfactory and has begun to take on cases between students regardless of their context. We’d like to see that tidied up in policy.”



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Taking the debate forward:

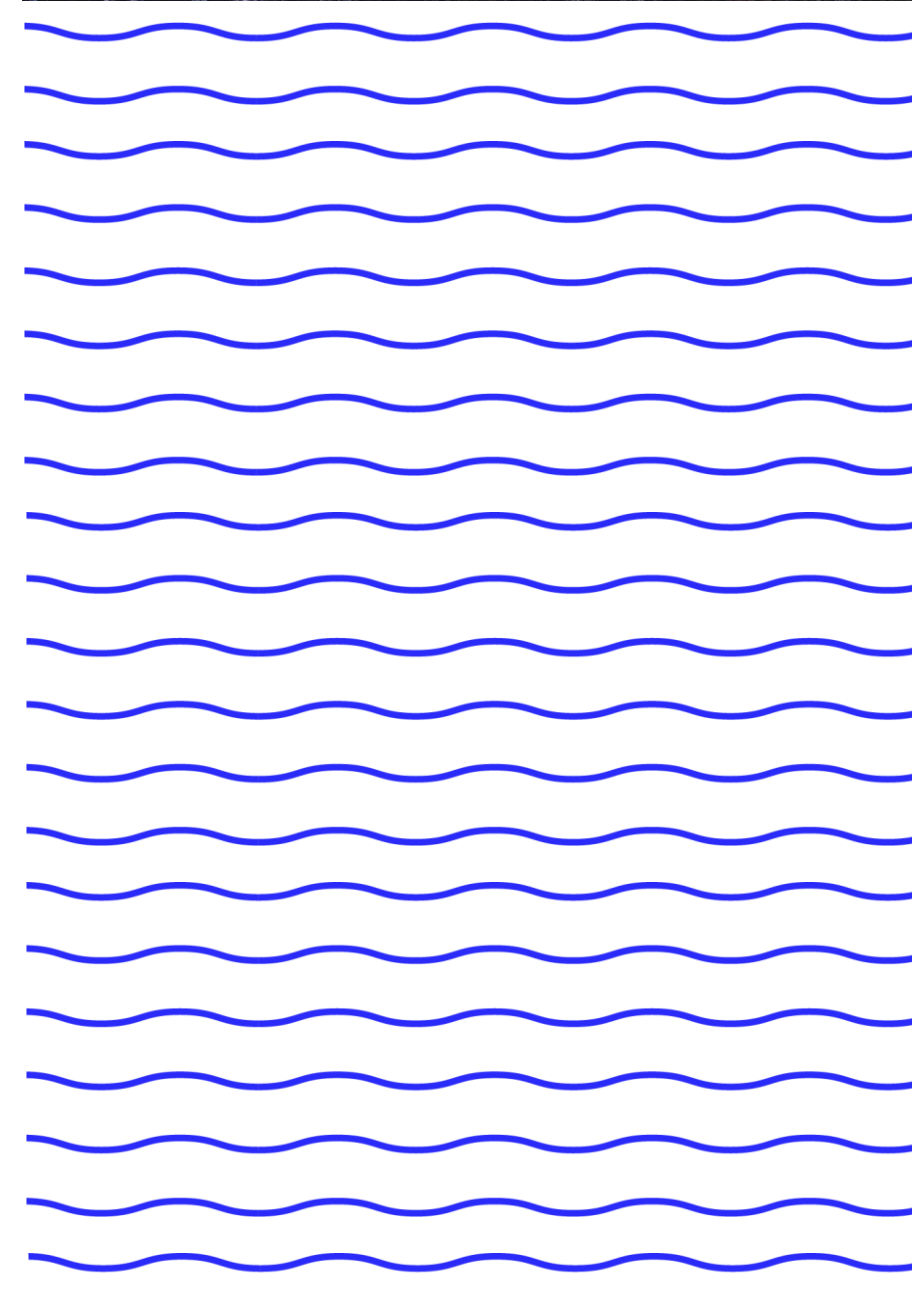
A new code to secure and champion freedom of speech and political diversity on campus



February 2021

Landscape

- Education Act 1994 requires there should be a complaints procedure available to all students or groups of students who are dissatisfied in their dealings with the union
- Also:
 - Code of conduct? (separate for sabs?)
 - (Student) employment codes
 - Board conduct codes
 - Election rules
 - Conduct rules that apply to clubs and societies
 - Meetings rules
- Duty of care/safeguarding duties
- University rules for students, staff (PCRs?)
- NGBs and equivalent. Halls of residence.



Ten big issues

- Not exhaustive
- Often exhausting!
- Arsing out of discussions and casework
- Often people “think” their arrangements are fine until a case comes up
- Cases can dominate time and attention and take away from other issues and priorities



1. Which process

- Are students invited to choose a process or policy?
- How do the processes and policies overlaps, or talk to each other?
- Is it possible for a student to have been “guilty” in one process but be exonerated in another?
- Jurisdiction issues....



Which?

2. Jurisdiction issues

- One option is to identify the “context” of the conduct and use that procedure
- For example – an incident at an SU event or in an SU affiliated group
- But would penalty scope fit the misconduct?
- And how does that fit with wider campaigning on harassment and sexual misconduct?



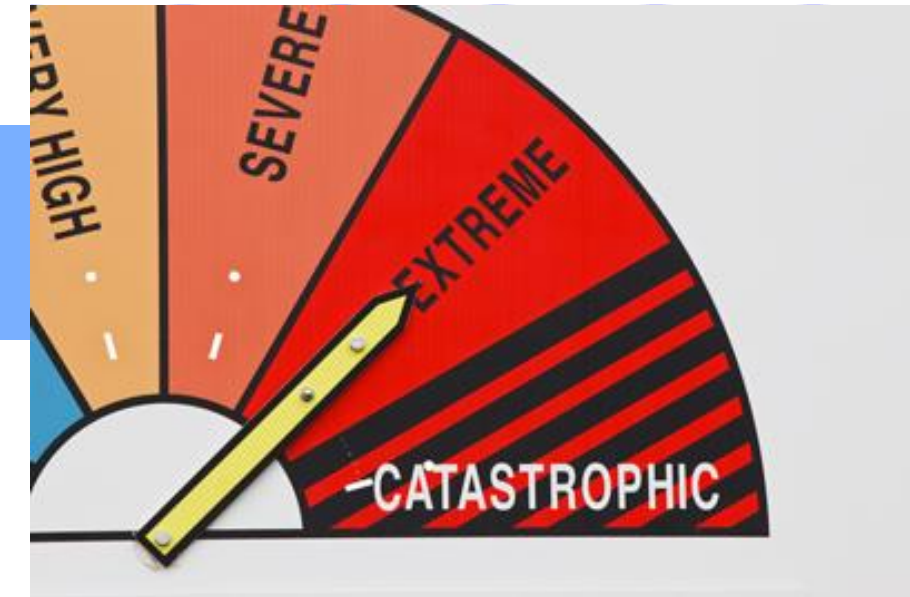
3. Allegations and sharing

- There are some data sharing complexities
- Who across the university “receives” allegations?
- Who tells who? Is the SU required to share allegations with the university? Vice versa?
- A failure to “join the dots” would be condemned externally.
- Is the current way to cope via phonecalls and whispers?



4. Severity triggers

- One way to handle split responsibilities is via severity triggers
- ie if an incident met a definitional threshold (for example harassment as per EA2010) it is bounced to the university
- As the SU has its own duty of care, is that satisfactory or wise?



5. Definitional harmony

- Are the definitions of what is and is not acceptable clear and harmonised across the institution
- Are they consistent in practice, both inside the union and the university?



6. Standards of investigation

- Who investigates?
- Have they been trained?
- Do they have the capacity and competence to respond appropriately?
- How do we know if they are performing to the appropriate standard?



7. Standards of hearings

- Are panels trained?
- What kinds of burdens of proof do they require?
- Panel make up?
- Rules inside panels – consistent? Fair? Natural justice?
- Penalty and punishment approach?



8. Delegation

- SUs frequent delegate low level conduct issue identification and penalty in licensed premises
- This also tends to happen in halls of residence and across university depts of Sport
- Are there eyes on these issues? Stats? Monitoring? Checking that cases are being escalated? Dot joining?



9. Elected officers

- What role(s) do elected officers play in any of these processes or incidents?
- Do we expect too much?
- What are the fairness perceptions where students are involved?
- (Side issue: University complaints procedures heavily relying on sabs?)



10. And there's more

- Referral(s) to the Police
- Support for victims and complainants
- Support for those accused
- Setting aside confidentiality requests
- “I wanted to make you aware”
- Small and specialist
- Groups v individuals
- “We handled it” in clubs and socs
- Do we require our people to report in?
- Groups of friends?
- Risk assessing events and gatherings
- Public v Private
- Board supervision



**MORE
IS
MORE**

Cutting through the haze

What's going on in the initiations space and why does it matter?

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