

PLYMOUTH MARJON UNIVERSITY

STUDENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND MISCONDUCT POLICY

This policy outlines Plymouth Marjon university's commitment to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment, free from all forms of sexual harassment and misconduct. It promotes a culture of dignity, mutual respect, and clear consent, encourages individuals to report concerns and challenge unacceptable behaviour, and ensures that all incidents are addressed with fairness, sensitivity, and seriousness. The policy also provides clear pathways for reporting and accessing support, reinforcing the shared responsibility of our entire University community.

1. Purpose

1.1 Plymouth Marjon University is committed to fostering a learning and working environment in which all members of its community feel safe, respected, and valued. The University is dedicated to preventing and responding to incidents of sexual harassment and misconduct, recognising the serious harm such behaviour can cause to individuals and the community.

1.2 This policy outlines the University's expectations, support mechanisms, and procedures for responding to incidents of sexual harassment and misconduct. It reinforces our zero-tolerance approach and promotes a culture of dignity, equality, and mutual consent.

1.3 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote an inclusive community that supports respectful behaviour and healthy relationships.
- Empower students to report inappropriate behaviour, knowing they will be taken seriously and treated with care.
- Provide clear definitions, procedures, and reporting mechanisms for handling incidents.
- Ensure all parties receive appropriate support and are treated fairly, regardless of when or where an incident occurred.

1.4 The University acknowledges that any form of sexual harassment or misconduct is a violation of human dignity and has a duty of care to respond with seriousness and compassion. All members of the University are expected to uphold these principles.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all students engaged in study at Plymouth Marjon University, regardless of mode or location of study including those studying at partner institutions or on placements.

2.2 The policy covers incidents involving students, staff, visitors, contractors, or any third parties associated with the University. This includes interactions occurring:

- On campus premises including partner sites.
- During off-campus University-related activities, such as placements, fieldwork, and study trips.
- Online or through social media platforms.

2.3 The policy also applies where a student is considered to be representing the University, whether formally or informally.

2.4 The University recognises its shared responsibility with partner institutions to ensure students are protected from harm. Where students at a partner organisation make a disclosure to Marjon, appropriate coordination will take place to ensure support and investigation.

2.5 This policy does not limit the rights of individuals to pursue criminal or civil action where appropriate. The University may continue its internal investigation in parallel with, or subsequent to, external proceedings if deemed reasonable.

3. Policy Statements

3.1 Plymouth Marjon University does not tolerate any form of sexual harassment, misconduct, or violence. We are committed to fostering a respectful and inclusive culture in which all members can thrive.

3.2 The University will:

- Treat all disclosures seriously, with sensitivity, fairness, and impartiality.
- Empower students to speak out, access support, and understand their reporting options.
- Provide appropriate support to both those affected and those accused, recognising the impact on all individuals involved.
- Educate our community to prevent harm and promote positive relationships.
- Promote a culture of zero tolerance for sexual misconduct across all areas of university life.

3.3 We recognise that harm may be caused unintentionally; however, lack of intent does not negate responsibility. All forms of sexual misconduct will be addressed under this policy and its associated procedures.

3.4 Disclosures and reports will be handled confidentially and compassionately. Information will only be shared where necessary for safeguarding or procedural reasons.

3.5 The University will provide an accessible single source of information through its website, clearly signposting:

- How to report an incident.
- Internal and external support services.
- Policies and procedures.
- Guidance on consent and healthy relationships.

3.6 Students may report incidents through:

- Anonymous or informal disclosure via the University's online reporting tool.
- Formal complaint for investigation under the Student Misconduct Procedure.
- Police report where a criminal offence may have occurred.

3.7 The University will assess each case and implement appropriate precautionary measures to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the individuals involved. This may include academic adjustments, no-contact agreements, or temporary suspension.

3.8 Students disclosing an incident will never be pressured to take a particular course of action. The University's support services, and the Marjon Student Union will assist individuals in exploring their options.

3.9 Reports involving staff or contractors will be handled by the People Department, following the Staff Disciplinary Policy. The civil standard of proof (balance of probabilities) will apply.

3.10 The University reserves the right to investigate or act in serious cases even if a formal complaint has not been made, particularly where safeguarding concerns are present.

4. Definitions

4.1 The University adopts the Office for Students' definition of sexual misconduct as any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that:

- Violates a person's dignity.
- Makes them feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended.

4.2 Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual harassment (unwanted comments, gestures, or advances).
- Sexual assault or rape.
- Spiking (giving someone drugs or alcohol without consent).
- Sharing or taking sexual images without consent.
- Coercion, manipulation, or controlling behaviour.
- Stalking or persistent unwanted contact.
- Voyeurism or indecent exposure.
- Retaliation against someone for reporting misconduct (see Student Misconduct Procedure)

5. Disclosures, Reporting and Support

5.1 Students should access support or disclose through:

- Marjon's online reporting form: for informal or anonymous disclosures.
- Student Wellbeing and Support Services: for pastoral support and guidance.
- Formal complaints process: if action is sought under the misconduct procedure.
- Police services: with or without university involvement.

5.2 Staff receiving disclosures must:

- Respond sensitively and without judgement.
- Respect confidentiality within safeguarding limits.
- Provide information about available support.

5.3 Support is available for both those making disclosures and those accused. This includes:

- Counselling and mental health services.
- Academic and accommodation adjustments.
- Advice from the Student Union.
- Signposting to appropriate external agencies and services.

5.4 The University will ensure that staff involved in responding to reports or conducting investigations receive appropriate training.

6. Confidentiality and Safeguarding

6.1 Confidentiality will be respected unless there is a clear safeguarding risk or legal obligation to share information. In such cases, the student will be informed and provided with support.

6.2 Disclosures will be recorded in line with the University's data protection obligations and stored securely. Only those directly involved in handling the case will have access to relevant information.

6.3 In serious circumstances, including a risk of harm to self or others, the University may inform relevant authorities, such as the Police or Social Services.

7. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Student Regulations Framework – Student Misconduct Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy (Children and Adults at Risk)
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Support to Study Policy
- Fit to Practice Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Data Protection Statement for Students

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Student Wellbeing and Support Services team and approved by the Academic Board.

8.2 Anonymised data on disclosures, reports, and outcomes will be collected to inform future service improvements and policy developments.

8.3 Feedback from students and staff involved in cases will be used to inform training and awareness initiatives.

Approved by: ULG

Effective from: 01 August 2025

Review Date: 01 August 2027

Policy Owner: Student Wellbeing and Support Services

Contact: SWS@marjon.ac.uk