



Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Learning Environment

Guide for Students

2025 - 26





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Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Learning Environment - Guide for Students

Introduction

DN Colleges Group (DNCG) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all students. This guide outlines the key aspects of our Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy, to help equip our students with essential information to recognise, prevent, and respond to incidents of harassment. Understanding your rights, responsibilities, and available support services is important in fostering a positive learning space.

All staff and students are encouraged to report any concerns regarding inappropriate behaviour, including suspected sexual harassment, through the appropriate channels. Where it is safe and appropriate to do so, individuals may also intervene or seek support on behalf of others.

How to Report a Sexual Harassment concern can be found on page 5 of this guide.

If anyone has any questions, queries or concerns about this guide please contact the Associate Director of EDI at karen.dainty@don.ac.uk or Tel: 07763567212.

Purpose

The Preventing Sexual Harassment Guide for Students is based on the DNCG Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy.

DNCG is committed to creating an inclusive environment where every student is respected, valued, and supported. Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy ensures compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2024; Sexual Offences Act 2003; Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and the Employment Rights Act 1996. The full policy can be found on the intranet.

The Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy ought to be read in conjunction with the DNCG Preventing Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation Policy, DNCG Student Code of Conduct Policy and the DNCG Student Disciplinary Procedure.

The Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy aims to create a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all students. It outlines how sexual harassment will be prevented, addressed, and resolved fairly and respectfully.

We are committed to creating an environment where every student is valued and protected recognising this as essential to ensuring the success of every individual.

Definitions: What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment includes any unwanted, unacceptable and inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

This can be verbal, physical, or online and may include (but not limited to):

- Unwelcome or persistent sexual comments or gestures that a reasonable person would view as violating someone's dignity or creating a hostile or offensive environment.
- Flirting, gesturing or making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance.
- Asking questions about someone's sex life and discussing a staff and/or students sex life in front of another person.
- Spreading sexual rumours about staff and/or students.
- Leaving sexual or romantic unwanted gifts.
- Telling sexually offensive jokes, making sexual comments or jokes about someone's sexual orientation or gender reassignment.
- Displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content.
- Revenge Pornography where intimate or sexual images or videos are shared without the consent of the individual being depicted.
- Touching someone against their will, for example, hugging them.
- Stalking of a Sexual Nature and repeated unwanted attention, contact, or monitoring that is sexually motivated, causing fear or distress.
- Sexual Exploitation by taking advantage of another individual for sexual purposes, including coercion, manipulation, or threats for sexual gain.
- Indecent Exposure that is the deliberate exposure of one's genitals both in public or in view of others to cause alarm or offense.
- Sexual assault or rape.

Sexual interaction that is invited, mutual or consensual is not sexual harassment because it is not unwanted.

However, students need to be aware that the boundaries of what is welcome may change over time and are encouraged to communicate clearly. This policy does not prohibit respectful, lawful interpersonal relationships or academic discussions involving sensitive or controversial topics.

The College will assess reports of harassment by considering both the effect and the intent of the behaviour, along with its context and whether a reasonable person would find it offensive or harmful. All parties involved will be treated fairly, with respect for privacy, the right to respond, and the presumption of innocence during any investigation.

Power Imbalances

The College recognises that power imbalances can exist within a higher education environment, particularly between staff and students, and this is not acceptable. Staff are expected to maintain professional boundaries at all times. While lawful, consensual personal relationships are not prohibited, they must be disclosed in line with the College's Personal Relationships at Work Policy, especially where a power imbalance may exist.

Expected Standards of Behaviour for Students

All students must:

- Treat peers, staff, and visitors with respect and dignity.
- Conduct themselves respectfully and professionally, and to avoid behaviour that a reasonable person would consider to be unwanted, inappropriate, or of a sexual nature.
- Avoid any actions or words that could be seen as sexual harassment.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries with staff, other students, and visitors.

Sexual harassment by a student towards an employee and/or another student will be handled under the College policies and procedures relating to learning, behaviour and safeguarding, which may result in warnings, suspension, or expulsion from the college.

If there is an allegation of harassment that is the subject of police investigation or has led to criminal charges, precautionary action may be taken against the alleged perpetrator through a risk assessment and reviewed in line with the Student Disciplinary Procedure.

Preventing Sexual Harassment

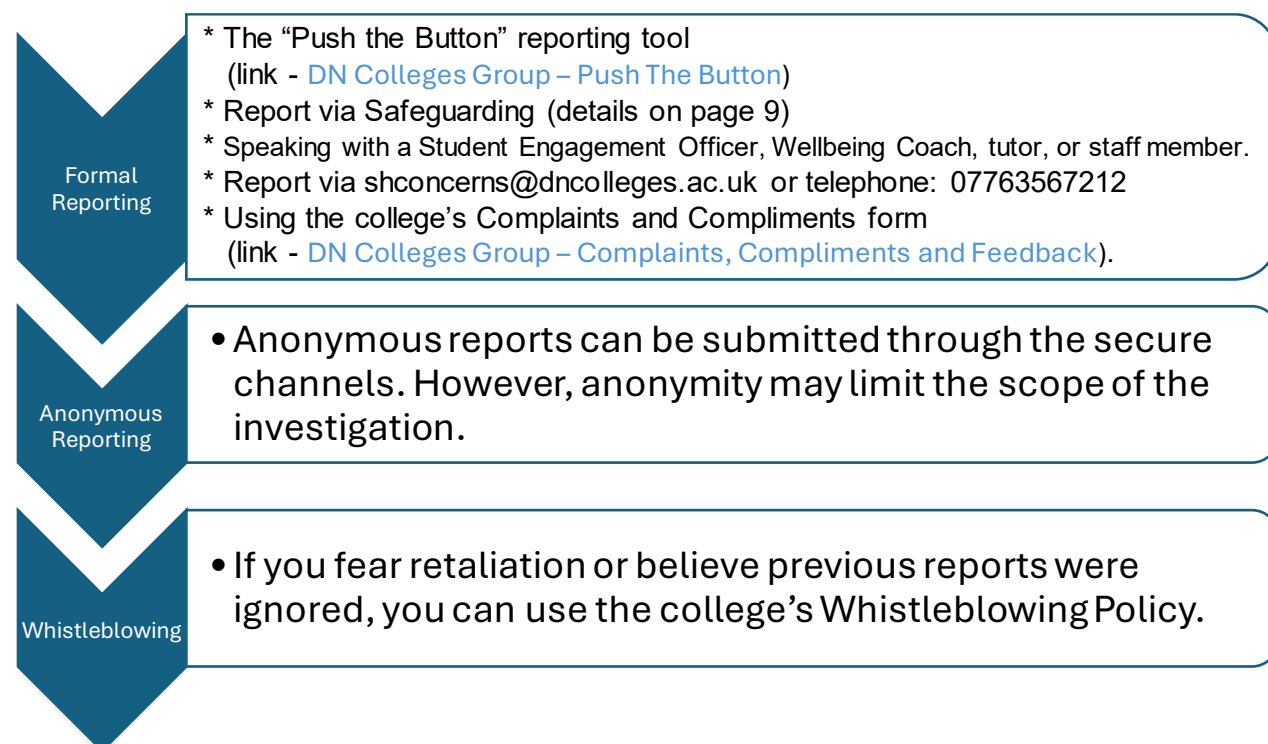
To create a safe learning environment, the college will:

- Make it clear that sexual harassment will not be tolerated.
- Provide training and resources to help students identify and prevent inappropriate behaviour.
- Encourage students to report incidents or concerns about sexual harassment.

Risk factors, such as inappropriate use of social media, power imbalances, or unsafe environments during events, will be addressed by implementing clear guidelines and preventative measures.

How to Report Sexual Harassment

If you feel you are a victim of harassment and/or have witnessed an incident that concerns you, you can report it using the following mechanisms:



Investigating and Addressing Reports

It is the College’s policy to ensure that all students have access to a procedure to help deal with any reported incidents of sexual harassment and/or misconduct. The reporting procedure is outlined below and it is designed to protect individuals from retaliation. Investigations are conducted fairly and impartially, with respect for the rights of all parties involved.

- It is encouraged that all instances of sexual harassment and/or misconduct be reported.
- In certain circumstances individuals might seek informal advice or support first and this is respected.
- All reports will be recorded, taken seriously, handled confidentially and investigated where required.
- Where appropriate, all parties involved will be informed about the complaint and they will be formally asked for a response.
- Investigations will be undertaken that are fair, impartial, and aim to protect all involved.
- All parties involved and any witnesses will be part of the investigation process to ascertain all of the pertinent facts.

- The outcome of the investigation and any actions will be documented and communicated in an appropriate manner.
- Actions may include separating the complainant and accused during investigations, advise to block emails, signpost counselling help etc.
- Advising to contact the police (in cases where the harassment is long-term and/or consists of actual violence or threats of violence).
- Instigation of the disciplinary procedure.

Support for Students

Students who report **sexual** harassment or **have been accused of perpetrating sexual harassment** will be offered support, including:

- Access to the college's **Counselling Service**.
- Help from the **Wellbeing Centre** and **Student Support teams**.
- Academic adjustments, such as schedule changes, to minimize contact with the accused.
- If a Higher Education student has experienced sexual harassment or misconduct, this may be considered under the Mitigating Circumstances process where the impact of the experience affects their ability to meet assessment deadlines.

Pastoral Support

Whilst pastoral care is a vital aspect of fostering student wellbeing, staff will establish clear professional boundaries to prevent the development of emotionally intimate relationships that could compromise their objectivity or lead to real or perceived exploitation. We have a duty of care to ensure that staff interactions remain respectful, supportive, and free from personal emotional entanglements.

Protection Against Retaliation

The college strictly prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports harassment or participates in an investigation. Retaliation may include bullying, exclusion from activities, or unfair treatment. If retaliation occurs, it will lead to disciplinary action.

False or Malicious Claims

The college supports honest reporting of sexual harassment but will address any deliberately false or malicious claims. Disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, may follow such behavior.

Education and Awareness

The college is dedicated to educating students about sexual harassment through:

- Workshops and training sessions.

- Resources to help students recognize and safely intervene in inappropriate situations.
- Clear communication about acceptable behavior at college events and on social media.

Commitment to Confidentiality

The college respects the privacy of all parties involved in investigations. Information will only be shared with those directly involved in the investigation or providing support.

Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs)

The College is committed to fostering a safe and supportive environment where all students feel empowered to report incidents of sexual harassment without fear of retaliation or enforced silence. Individuals who report sexual harassment or participate in investigations will not be restricted by NDAs from sharing their experiences.

Accountability and Review

This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective and aligned with best practices. Students are encouraged to provide feedback or raise concerns about the policy at any time. Together, we can ensure a safe and respectful learning environment for everyone.

Complaints Procedure

FE and Apprentice students enrolled at DNCG are expected to adhere to the established Compliments and Complaints procedure ([DN Colleges Group – Complaints, Compliments and Feedback](#)) if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a claim relation to Sexual Harassment or Misconduct. Similarly, HE students should use the HE Complaints procedure ([HE-Complaints-Policy.pdf](#))

This procedure provides a clear and structured process for students to formally express their concerns and seek further review of the decision. By following this protocol, students ensure their grievances are addressed fairly, transparently, and in accordance with DNCG policies. We are committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment, and the Complaints Procedure is designed to uphold these standards whilst ensuring all voices are heard.

Higher Education Students

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the HE Student Complaint procedure, they have the option to escalate their complaint through the validating university partner's procedure before submitting their claim to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

If you're unhappy with the College's final decision on a complaint (including academic appeals, student complaints, or issues related to learning, behaviour, and safeguarding), and the decision of the validating university partner, you may be able to take your case to the OIA. Check the OIA website (<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>) for details on eligibility and deadlines.

Commitment to Freedom of Speech

While maintaining our commitments under the Equality Act and to a safe and respectful environment, the College also upholds the principles of lawful freedom of speech and academic freedom, as protected by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. This policy shall be applied in a manner that does not unduly restrict lawful expression or open debate, including the right to express controversial or unpopular views, provided this is done respectfully and within the law.

Authorisation

The Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Policy Holder: Rachel Maguire: Chief Operating Officer – People and Information Services

Policies will be reviewed every 3 years unless there is a specific requirement to undertake a review more frequently. If for any reason a review does not take place in the planned period, the policy will remain current until a review takes place.

The Equality Impact has been considered on this policy and procedure.

Safeguarding Team Contact Details

The Safeguarding team can be contacted via Teams, phone, or face-to-face.

Natalie Marshall Designated Safeguarding Lead 01302 553741 Across Sites

Emma Annakin Student Services Administrator 01302 553741 07763550577 Doncaster College SG.04

Jules Draycott Team Leader – Safeguarding & Wellbeing 01302 558104 07708472403 Across Sites

Lindsay Ellis Safeguarding Caseworker 01302 558373 Doncaster College SG.04

Megan Bailey Safeguarding Caseworker 01302 558373 01724 295395 07772618460 Across Sites

Vicki Simpson Safeguarding Caseworker 01724 295395 07518904719 North Lindsey College A25A



External Organisations

- [Women's Aid Live Chat External link \(Opens in a new tab or window\)](#) (and other support for domestic abuse victim-survivors).
- [Rape Crisis England and Wales External link \(Opens in a new tab or window\)](#): 0808 802 9999.
- [NSPCC Abuse in Education Helpline External link \(Opens in a new tab or window\)](#): 0800 136 663 or help@nspcc.org.uk.
- [National Domestic Abuse Helpline External link \(Opens in a new tab or window\)](#): 0808 2000 247.
- [Men's Advice Line External link \(Opens in a new tab or window\)](#) (the helpline for male victim-survivors of domestic abuse): 0808 8010327.