



The All-Party Parliamentary
University Group

8 December 2015



The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

Agenda

The subject of the meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group is the stamping out of sexual harassment and ‘lad culture’ in the university sector.

- 8.30am** **Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP**, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group, welcome and introductions.
- 8.35am** **Laura Bates**, Founder, Everyday Sexism Project
- c8.45am** **Susuana Amoah**, Women’s Officer, National Union of Students
- c8.55am** **David Richardson**, Vice-Chancellor, University of East Anglia
- c9.05am** **Nicola Dandridge**, Chief Executive, Universities UK
- 9.15am** Questions, comments, and discussion with university leaders, MPs and Peers.
- 10.00am** Speaker meeting concludes.



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Speaker biographies



Laura Bates

Laura Bates founded the Everyday Sexism Project, which has been described as "one of the biggest social media success stories on the internet" in 2012. She is also a contributor to the New York-based, Women under Siege Project. Her first book *Everyday Sexism* was published by Simon & Schuster Ltd in 2014. She writes frequently for *The Guardian*.



Susuana Amoah

Susuana Amoah is the National Women's Officer at the National Union of Students (NUS). Susuana graduated in 2013 from Royal Holloway University With a BA Media Arts Degree before becoming the sabbatical women's officer at the University of London Students' Union. During her time as Women's officer in London she founded the I Heart Consent Campaign, which is now a National Campaign that brings peer-led consent education to universities and colleges all over the country.

At the NUS, Susuana chairs the National Lad Culture Strategy Team and is currently working with the nine students' unions in a pilot scheme to support the development of their local Lad Culture Strategies and identify best practice in tackling Lad Culture on campus. Susuana is also working on campaign for better national guidelines for reporting sexual assault, violence and harassment and student survivor support.



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David Richardson

David Richardson is the 9th Vice-Chancellor of the University of East Anglia and took office in 2014, after 23 years at UEA. David was educated at the University of Keele (BSc, Biochemistry) and the University of Birmingham (PhD, 1988) and undertook post-doctoral research at the University of Oxford 1988-91. He joined the University of East Anglia as a lecturer in 1991, became Professor of Bacterial Biochemistry in 2001, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) before being appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor in 2012 and Vice-Chancellor in 2014.

David was awarded the Society for General Microbiology Fleming Medal in 1999 and is a recipient of the Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award. His research group is active in the area of bacterial bioenergetics, and his work has shed important light on the mechanism of greenhouse gas production by bacteria and the molecular basis and function of bacterial nanowires.

David is active in a range of national and regional HE bodies including the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital (NNUH), New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, Norwich Research Park LLP and the Norfolk and Norwich Festival Trust.



Nicola Dandridge

Nicola Dandridge has been Chief Executive of Universities UK since September 2009. Universities UK is the representative organisation for the UK's Universities. Founded in 1918, UUK has 132 members and offices in London, Cardiff and Edinburgh. Its mission is to be the definitive voice for all universities in the UK, promoting the strength and success of UK universities nationally and internationally.

Nicola was previously Chief Executive of the Equality Challenge Unit, the higher education agency which promotes equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Prior to this, Nicola was a lawyer qualified in both England and Scotland working in private practice.



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Briefing: Stamping out sexual harassment and 'lad culture' in the university sector

Prepared for members of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group

This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either House or its committees. All-Party Groups are informal groups of Members of both Houses with a common interest in particular issues.

This briefing document has been produced by Universities UK which provides the Secretariat for the University APPG.



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Sexual harassment and 'lad culture'

In recent years, various reports have examined the nature and prevalence of harassment on universities campuses. This section summarises the evidence, focusing specifically on sexual harassment and lad culture.

Political context

Tackling sexual harassment and violence (including domestic violence) against women remains a priority for the UK government. In November 2010, the Home Office published its cross-government strategy *Call to end violence against women and girls*¹. The strategy focuses on four key areas; the prevention of violence, the provision of support, working in partnership, and education to reduce risk. Shortly after, the Home Office published an accompanying action plan², which has been updated every year since.

As part of this cross-government work, Public Health England commissioned the University of the West of England (UWE) to develop a bystander intervention programme – the Intervention Initiative. This was based on the findings from national crime statistics, which showed that female students were potentially at high risk of being a victim of a sexual offence because sexual offenders targeted women aged 16-19 and students more than any other age or occupation group. In addition, women aged 16-24 were also at a higher risk of domestic violence than any other group³.

Although the higher education sector was not cited specifically in the government's call to action, universities have been encouraged by government to consider establishing a bystander programme. Alongside this, universities have come under

¹ Home Office, Call to end violence against women and girls, 25 November 2010. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/call-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls>

² Home Office, A call to end violence against women and girls: action plan 2014, 8 March 2014. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287758/VAWG_Action_Plan.pdf

³ See ONS (Office for National Statistics) 2013; Focus on: Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2013/14 – Appendix Tables (online). Available at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/focus-on-violent-crime-and-sexual-offences--2013-14/index.html>



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increasing scrutiny by other organisations in relation to sexual harassment and the prevalence of lad culture on campus.

Wider interest in sexual harassment on campus

In the last two years, there have been campaigns by the NUS, the media and the End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW) to highlight the impact of lad culture. The EVAW's report *New technology, Same Old Problems*⁴ highlighted ways in which social media is used to abuse women and girls. In early 2015, the EVAW sent a legal briefing to all vice-chancellors to support the sector in understanding their legal obligations, *Spotted: Obligations to Protect Women Students' Safety & Equality*⁵.

The media has also taken a particular interest in lad culture and sexual harassment - including a campaign by the Telegraph urging universities to do more. Examples of the ongoing media interest can be found below:

- *NUS finds 'startling' lack of sexual harassment policies on campuses* (Guardian)⁶
- *Universities are failing to tackle sexist and homophobic lad culture, says NUS* (The Independent)⁷
- *Lad culture thrives at our neoliberal universities* (The Guardian)⁸
- *Sexual assault victims: don't rely on your college website for help* (The Guardian)⁹

In 2014, the annual report¹⁰ produced by the Chief Executive of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) (England and Wales) identified sexual harassment and lad culture as an emerging issue of concern and urged

⁴ Available at http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/Report_New_Technology_Same_Old_Problems.pdf

⁵ Available at http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/Spotted_-_Obligations_to_Protect_Women_Students_Safety_Equality.pdf

⁶ Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jul/27/nus-finds-startling-lack-of-sexual-harassment-policies-on-campuses>

⁷ Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/universities-are-failing-to-tackle-sexist-and-homophobic-lad-culture-says-nus-10416973.html>

⁸ Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/oct/15/lad-culture-thrives-in-our-neoliberal-universities>

⁹ Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/17/sexual-assault-victims-dont-rely-college-website-help>



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universities to take a more proactive approach to dismantling laddish culture¹¹. On 26 November, the Chief Executive gave a key note speech at the Westminster Briefing conference on tackling sexual harassment and lad culture¹².

National Union of Students campaign to address lad culture and sexual harassment

The National Union of Students (NUS) has been particularly active in highlighting their concerns with the prevalence of 'lad culture' on university campuses and the need to take action to 'dismantle this'. The NUS define lad culture as 'a group or pack mentality residing in activities such as sport and heavy alcohol consumption and 'banter' which was sexist, misogynist, or homophobic'.

The NUS' call for action arose following the commission of two pieces of research and the findings from a Lad Culture and Sexism Survey. A summary of the findings are set out below.

- *Hidden Marks: a study of women students' experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault (2010)*
 - 1 in 7 experienced a serious or sexual physical or sexual assault during their time as a student
 - 68% of respondents reported that they had been subject to verbal or physical sexual harassment on campus and in some of these experiences were on a daily basis i.e. normalised behaviour
 - 1 in 10 victims of serious sexual assault reported that they were given alcohol or drugs against their will before the attack

In August 2012, the NUS commissioned, Dr Alison Phipps, Director of Gender Studies & Reader in Sociology at Sussex University to conduct a piece of research on campus culture and explore the experience and views of female students. This included a

¹⁰ <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/99897/oia-annual-report-2014.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/tackle-laddish-conduct-more-vigorously-oia-head-says>

¹² The speech is available at <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/106493/keynote-speech-tackling-sexism-and-lad-culture-26112015.pdf>



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literature review of the evidence of lad culture set in the context of gender issues and higher education policy. This resulted in the report, *That's what she said: women students' experiences of 'lad culture' in higher education*¹³.

The findings revealed that:

- lad culture was often heavily associated with the social side of university life
- many participants had altered or limited their nightlife activity as a result of lad culture behaviour
- the impact on the educational experience at university appeared to have been less affected, although there was some feedback on the existence of negative attitudes towards feminism and gender-related topics within courses
- participants identified strong connections between lad culture and the values, attitudes and behaviours that occurred on their campuses, suggesting that where lad culture was thought to be prevalent, it could have a far-reaching impact on campus
- the behaviours associated with lad culture were not seen as the particular 'preserve of the privileged' as some of the existing research had suggested
- lad culture behaviour was not restricted to men

The research also highlighted that while there were clearly other influences which shaped a student's experience of university, none did so to the exclusion of lad culture, which led the researchers to suggest that there was little in place to deal with the *behaviour* and *attitudes* identified as creating this culture on campus.

In 2014, NUS held a summit on lad culture. This led to the development of a national strategy team to tackle the problem, which has included a national audit of institutional and students' union approaches to tackling lad culture. The audit analysed the policies, training, education and support services that institutions and students' unions had put in place to tackle lad culture. The policies NUS considered relevant were dignity at work, equality and diversity, alcohol and substance abuse, violence and harassment, bullying and safe spaces.

¹³ NUS, *That's what she said: women students' experiences of 'lad culture' in higher education* (2012), p.5.



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The audit revealed that:

- many students' unions and institutions lacked policy directly addressing lad culture
- some equality and diversity and bullying and harassment policies were ill defined, and often not relevant to lad culture, and at times unclear on what was meant by sexual harassment and assault
- 51% of institutions had a formal policy on sexual harassment
- one in ten had a policy that covered the display of sexist and discriminatory material
- many institutional complaints procedures put the onus on the victim to try and resolve matters 'informally first'
- only one in ten students' unions (11%) provided training
- 32% of students' unions provided sexual consent workshops
- 6% of institutions had included consent as part of their curriculum

The NUS is continuing to move forward with their Lad Culture Strategy and have recently partnered with nine students' unions to act as part of their Lad Culture Pilot Scheme.

In 2015, the NUS carried out a poll¹⁴ on new students' awareness of sexual harassment reporting procedures at university. The survey was conducted with 2,670 respondents from a nationally significant sample frame. The survey found that:

- 17% of respondents stated they had been victims of some form of sexual harassment during their first week of term
- 29% had witnessed sexual harassment directed at somebody else
- the most significant forms of harassment were unwanted sexual comments about people's bodies. 59% of these incidents were reported to have happened at social events or night clubs and a further 33 per cent in halls of residence
- over half of the respondents were not made aware of any university codes of conduct

¹⁴ See <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/nus-research-reveals-one-in-four-students-suffer-unwelcome-sexual-advances/>



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- over half stated that they were not aware of the procedure to report these incidents

On the basis of these findings, the report made a number of recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness of responses by students' unions and institutions; it identified gaps in both students' union and institutional policies in relating to specifically addressing lad culture. It also concluded that complaints and disciplinary procedures were largely inappropriate and unsuitable for incidents of sexual harassment. In some cases, victims of bullying and harassment were encouraged in the first instance to try to resolve the matter 'informally' by speaking to the perpetrator. There was a lack of information on when it would be inappropriate to take an informal approach to resolution. The Lad Culture Audit report recommended that institutions further developed their complaints and disciplinary policies.

International research

The Obama administration has devoted significant resources to tackling sexual harassment on campus. The 'It's On Us' campaign is seeking to end sexual assault on campus. As part of this campaign, the Obama administration has taken steps to help bring an end to campus sexual assault by:

- sending guidance to every school district, college and university that receives federal funding setting out their legal obligations to prevent and respond to sexual assault
- establishing a White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault to work with colleges and universities on developing best practices on how to respond and prevent sexual assault
- reviewing existing law to ensure victims of sexual assault are adequately protected

The US has also conducted a range of research to assess the scale of the issues on campus. The Association of American Universities (AAU) conducted a Campus Climate Survey on sexual assault and sexual misconduct in September 2015. This was the first survey undertaken in the US to provide an empirical assessment of



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campus sexual assault and misconduct across the higher education system. It was also the first to use uniform methodology across universities, and produce statistically reliable estimates for each.



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Further Information

White House Taskforce to Protect Students from Sexual Assault

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/22/memorandum-establishing-white-house-task-force-protect-students-sexual-a>

Home Office – Call to end violence against women and girls

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/call-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls>

HM Government – A Call to end violence against women and girls: Action Plan 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287758/VAWG_Action_Plan.pdf

Office for National Statistics – Crime Statistics, Focus on violent crime and sexual offences 2013/14

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/focus-on-violent-crime-and-sexual-offences--2013-14/index.html>

NUS report – *That's what she said*: Women students experiences of 'lad culture' in higher education

<http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Campaigns/That%27s%20what%20she%20said%20final%20report%20Final%20web.pdf>

NUS report – Education beyond the straight and narrow: LGBT students' experience in higher education

<http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/lgbt-research.pdf>

NUS resource – How to respond to complaints of sexual violence: The Zellick report

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/how-to-respond-to-complaints-of-sexual-violence-the-zellick-report>

NUS resource – Lad Culture Strategy Hub

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/ladculture>

End violence against women report – New technology: same old problems

http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/Report_New_Technology_Same_Old_Problems.pdf

End violence against women report – Spotted: Obligations to protect women students' safety and equality

http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/Spotted_-_Obligations_to_Protect_Women_Students_Safety_Equality.pdf



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Office of the Independent Adjudicator – Annual Report 2014

<http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/99897/oia-annual-report-2014.pdf>

NUS research - <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/nus-research-reveals-one-in-four-students-suffer-unwelcome-sexual-advances/>

News articles

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/tackle-laddish-conduct-more-vigorously-oia-head-says>

<http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/oct/15/lad-culture-thrives-in-our-neoliberal-universities>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/17/sexual-assault-victims-dont-rely-college-website-help>

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jul/27/nus-finds-startling-lack-of-sexual-harassment-policies-on-campuses>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/universities-are-failing-to-tackle-sexist-and-homophobic-lad-culture-says-nus-10416973.html>



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Future meetings

27 January 2016

International comparisons of funding of the higher education sector

6pm-7.30pm, Committee Room 2, followed by dinner

Speakers to include Professor Sir David Greenaway, Vice-Chancellor of University of Nottingham, John O'Leary, Author, The Times Good University Guide and Vivienne Stern, Director, UK HE International Unit

15 March 2016

Flexible pathways: what universities are doing to support 'earn while you learn' options.

Why are part-time student numbers plummeting – and what should be done to halt the decline?

6pm-7.30pm, Committee Room 2a, followed by dinner

Speakers to include Mr Peter Horrocks, Vice-Chancellor, The Open University

For more information about the group please email appug@universitiesuk.ac.uk or visit www.universityappg.co.uk