

Preventing and responding to gender based violence

Guidance for SOAS students and staff

Launch date: 25 November 2015, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

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Content Warning

**This document makes
unambiguous reference to
incidents of sexual violence and
abuse**

i). Introduction

At SOAS we believe that that all students and staff have the right to study and work where they are respected for the contributions they make. SOAS is committed to providing an environment that is free from any form of gender based violence, abuse or harassment. We recognise that gender based violence is a problem that affects all of society, including the higher education sector, and we are committed to being at the forefront of the campaign to address this. Our ultimate aim is to promote safer campuses *for all*.

This guidance outlines initiatives intended to reduce the likelihood of incidents occurring on our campus by raising awareness amongst students and staff. It also sets out practical steps for the victims of gender based violence and those people supporting them.

Why is this guidance needed?

In the only national study to date, a survey by the National Union of Students (NUS) in 2010 found that:

- 68% of women students reported one or more kinds of sexual harassment on campus during their time as a student
- 16% experienced unwanted kissing, touching or molesting
- 14% of female students in the UK have experienced a serious physical or sexual assault while a student at university
- 12% have been stalked
- Over 10% were a victim of serious physical violence

ii). Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, 'gender based violence' includes incidents of sexual assault and rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual coercion, forced marriage and stalking. SOAS recognises that such incidents can occur in all relationships and situations, regardless of age, disability, economic status, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender reassignment, marital status and sexual orientation. As such, SOAS understands that all people, (including men in heterosexual and same gender relationships) can also be victims, as can transgender people.

Evidence demonstrates that both domestic and sexual violence are gendered and that the majority of harm is experienced by women and that the majority of people who do the harm are men, - *but this does not mean that 'most men' are offenders, nor that 'no women' are offenders.*

This guidance uses the term 'victim' throughout, rather than 'survivor'. This is because many victims do not survive gender based violence. However, this is not intended to diminish the resolution of those who choose not to define themselves as victims.

It will refer to the victim as a 'student'. However, most of the contents will equally apply if they are staff members or visitors to SOAS.

1. Initiatives to raise awareness and reduce the likelihood of incidents

1.1 Awareness-raising for students

SOAS recognises the need to challenge any tacit or explicit acceptance of gender based violence as it can have a harmful impact on friends and loved ones. It is, therefore, committed to raising awareness amongst its students and to empower them to recognise abuse and intervene.

As part of the commitment to raising awareness and preventing Sexual Violence, SOAS will facilitate consent workshops for students as part of their induction process and will provide tailored training materials for the Student Society officers. These resources will ensure an understanding of what is appropriate behaviour and help to prevent sexual coercion in a university setting.

1.2 Training for staff

The School's approach to raising awareness of and responding to incidents of sexual violence will feature in the Diversity and Inclusion training delivered on a mandatory basis as part of staff induction. In addition, key staff such as Personal Tutors/Academic Advisors, Anti-Harassment Contacts and Student Advice and Well-Being officers, will receive bespoke training on the best way to support students and staff in this situation.

We will highlight the issue of gender based violence in our mandatory training materials for new staff, and encourage colleagues to consider how they can embed it in school activities.

Internal publicity will help to ensure that all existing staff are aware of the School's approach as set out in this Guidance.

1.3 Working with the Student's Union

SOAS recognises that it must work closely with the Student Union in order to ensure all students understand what acceptable behaviour is at the school. Joint working on this issue will also help promote a better understanding of the causes and of initiatives that will successfully reduce incidents of gender based violence.

1.4 Monitoring

Working with the Student's Union, SOAS will monitor the levels of incidents of gender based violence through regular surveys of students. SOAS will also record reported incidents and regularly report on this as part of the annual equality and diversity report to the Board of Trustees. This data will be used to inform a review of the effectiveness of procedures and practices as set out in this document.

1.5 Disciplinary action

SOAS will consider taking appropriate formal or informal action as deemed appropriate in the circumstances in each reported case. Such action may fall within the terms of the Student Disciplinary Procedure. This may be the case if a complainant chooses not to refer the matter to the police.

A student making a complaint of gender based violence will be offered the support of the Student Advice and Wellbeing Team (see Page 11 for contact details). If required, the victim will be provided with such support on a 'fast-track' basis to avoid delay. SOAS recognises the courage needed for victims to report such incidents and will adopt a supportive approach as outlined in this guidance. As such, it will not seek to undermine the credibility of the victim by using a challenging or interrogative approach in any investigation.

The Student Disciplinary Procedure complies with the rules of natural justice, which confer on a student the right to know the case against them; the right to be given an opportunity to defend themselves; and the right for the case to be considered by an impartial arbiter. A student facing such an allegation can make use of the support services offered by the Student Advice and Wellbeing Team.

The fact that the allegation is or has been the subject of criminal proceedings or a police investigation shall not prevent SOAS from conducting its own investigation. However, any internal action may be deferred pending police investigation or prosecution. The School reserves the right to involve the police at any time where it considers it appropriate to do so (e.g. *if someone is at imminent risk of violence*), but will seek the consent of the victim in the first instance. The Student Disciplinary Procedure includes sanctions up to and including expulsion from the School.

2. Responding to an incident

2.1 What to do if you have been subject to gender based violence

Emergency assistance

If you have just been assaulted and there is an immediate risk for further incidents you should

On campus (including Vernon Square): call security on Ext 555 from the internal black phones located by the photocopiers in reception or on the 2nd, 3rd & 4th floors. Alternatively visit the 24 hour security desk in the Brunei Gallery.

If you need urgent medical help call for an ambulance - 999 or on campus on internal phones - 555

Casualties can also go directly to the 24 hour Emergency Department, University College Hospital, Ground Floor, 235 Euston Road, NW1 2BU

Off campus: Call the Police on 999

2.2 If you have been the victim of a serious assault you could:

- Find somewhere safe as you may be in shock. The SOAS First Aid Room on the first floor of the main building can be used. The code can be found in the Directorate (116) or the Diversity Office (108) or from the Security Desk (ext 555).
- Perhaps ask a friend to join you
- Don't drink, eat, wash, smoke, brush your teeth, clean your nails, go to the toilet or change your clothes until you decide what you want to do next
- Should you need to change clothing, ensure it is sealed and labelled in a clean paper bag
- Keep any used condom or bedding in a clean paper (not plastic) bag
- Contact the Rape Crisis National helpline on 0808 802 9999 for emotional support and to talk through your options. They can also provide information on specialist male survivor services in your area.

2.3 Where to get support

On campus during the day:

You may approach The Student Advice and Wellbeing team, The Student Union office or any member of SOAS staff who will sign-post you to appropriate services. SOAS academic and professional staff will set out the options available to you in accordance with this Guidance.

SOAS staff **will not** compel you to take any particular course of action that you are not comfortable with - *unless you or someone else may be at imminent risk of further violence.*

On campus or in SOAS accommodation during the night:

Security - Contact the SOAS 24 hour security desk in the Brunei Gallery on ext 555

Police – If you decide to make a report to the police, you, or (if you prefer), any of the contacts above can call them on 999(emergency) or 101 (non- emergency) for you. You can access the services of the Havens at any time, with or without the police, but you will have to call to make an appointment first. The forensic window is 3 days, but after this you can still go to the Havens for specialist medical care and advice. Call 0203 299 6900 (24hrs emergency) or 020 3299 1599 Monday to Friday (not emergency)

Off campus during the night:

You can call specialist support agencies listed in the section below and in Appendix A.

2.4 Deciding what to do next

The choices you have in terms of expert support and advice can vary according to the time and place at which the incident occurred. However, you can seek advice from a number of agencies at any time after the incident, *even years later* - support is not limited to those who choose to make an immediate report. Any decisions made will be yours alone and should be respected.

When deciding what to do next, you should be aware that reporting incidents of sexual violence **will not** adversely impact on your academic career or visa status, nor will it be used against you by the School.

2.5 Initial support:

You may decide you are not ready to report the incident to the police, or that this is not a course of action you wish to take.

You can refer yourself to the **Camden Safety Net** who are independent of the Police and provide services to the victims of sexual and domestic abuse who live, work or study in the London Borough of Camden. This includes **all SOAS students and staff** regardless of where you may live.

Camden Safety Net provides holistic and local support including the following services:

- Independent Domestic & Sexual Violence Advisors (IDSVA's) meet with victims of domestic and/or sexual violence and give advice and support
- IDSVA's will risk assess and devise action plans to enhance safety
- referrals and assistance linking to appropriate other agencies who can help
- follow-up services to ensure that appropriate help has been given
- counselling for survivors and their children
- confidence building workshops for women
- same sex domestic & sexual violence
- men's group for men who are abusive/violent in their relationships
- interpreters as needed
- access to specific cultural support
- support offered in health settings

Rape Crisis also provides advice and support to women and girls on a free and confidential basis. Rape Crisis can help explain the options available and answer questions that you may have.

You can also get support directly from specialist agencies known as The Havens (contact details below). They will help you in a number of ways including; initial assessments, forensic medical examination follow-up care such as counselling, tests and treatments.

You may, however, decide to report an incident to SOAS as a complaint under our Student Disciplinary Procedure if the incident involved another student at the school. This may be the case if you decide not to refer the matter to the police.

If the perpetrator is a member of staff or a contractor, you can make a complaint under the SOAS Student Complaint Procedure. This may be the case if you decide not to refer the matter to the police.

The fact that the allegation is or has been the subject of criminal proceedings or a police investigation shall not necessarily prevent The School from conducting its own investigation. However, any internal action may be deferred pending police investigation. The School reserves the right to involve the police at any time where it considers it appropriate to do so (e.g. *if you or someone else may be at imminent risk of further violence*).

SOAS will consider the impact of any reported incident of sexual violence brought to its attention as part of any mitigating circumstances in respect of academic assessment processes.

Help & support by phone

Camden Safety Net: Independent Domestic & Sexual Violence Advisors (IDSVA's): Access to specific culturally sensitive support and interpreters: **020 7974 2526** – Office hours only

Rape Crisis (women and girls only) – 0808 802 9999 (12 pm – 2.30 pm , 7 pm – 9.30 pm weekdays)

The Havens (Specialist centres in London for people who have been raped or sexually assaulted)
020 3299 6900 – Available 24 hours a day

2.6 Reporting the incident to the police:

If you decide to report the incident to the Police, call campus security on 555 (internal phone). If you are off campus, dial either 999 in an emergency or 101 (non- emergency).

If you contact the police to report the assault you will meet a Sexual Offences Investigative Trained officer (SOIT). They are your main police point of contact. The SOIT officer will support and guide you through every stage, including the investigation and going to court. They will keep you informed about how the investigation is going and answer your questions. They should also offer referral to the Independent Sexual Violence Advocate who will provide care, support and information through the legal process in a sensitive and compassionate manner.

An initial statement will be taken from you and if you are reporting within the forensic window of 3 days, (the period of time available to collect forensic evidence), you may be taken to the nearest Haven. In central London, this will be The Havens in Paddington, Whitechapel or Camberwell (contact details below). There you will be looked after by a Crisis Support Worker and Forensic Medical Officer (the doctor who can collect forensic evidence). They recommend that you take a supportive friend with you. Also take any bedding or used condom if relevant. You should be aware that although you have called the police, you can opt out of the reporting process at any point without losing the support of The Haven.

Alternative routes to this guidance

Harassment: This could include sexual, racial, or other kinds of harassment in the form of assault, threatening behaviour, or abusive remarks. Please see the *informal* [Dignity at SOAS Policy](#).

The Students' Union: See the Students' Union's [abuse and harassment section](#).

The service provided by, or the behaviour of a SOAS contraction (for example, catering or halls of residence): If you're unable to first deal with the complaint directly, write to the professional services director in charge of that service (for example, the Director of Estates and Facilities for catering).

The conduct of another student: Follow the School's [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).

The conduct of a staff member: Follow the [Student Complaints Procedure](#)

2.7 How to support victims of gender based violence

If the student or others are still at risk from the attacker, or if the student has an injury that requires medical attention you should consider the situation to be an emergency and contact security staff and call 999 for an ambulance and the police. Although you should seek it, you do not need the student's consent in these circumstances.

Creating a safe environment

- If it is **not an emergency situation**, offer the student a safe and quiet place where you will not be overheard or interrupted
- You should inform a colleague if you are alone with the student
- Ask whether the student would prefer to speak to someone of a different gender
- Assist the student by contacting a friend if this is what they want
- Your role is to provide immediate safety and support
- Allow the student to talk and do not anticipate what the incident involved
- Do not pressure the victim to disclose particular information
- Adopt a non-judgemental approach as people will react in very different ways to an assault

Above all – assume nothing and only do what the student consents to

Advise the student on the preservation of forensic evidence

Generally, forensic evidence from the body is taken up to 3 days after the incident. If the student wants to report the incident to the Haven or the police - *unless necessary* – it is recommended that they should not:

- Wash any part their body (including their hair)
- Brush teeth
- Smoke
- Eat or drink (including non-essential medication)
- Go to the toilet or discard any tampons or sanitary towels
- Remove or wash any clothing worn at the time of the incident
- Tidy the area where the assault took place

The student should be advised to preserve any possible evidence (e.g. photos, text messages or email trails). Any clothes that have been removed, or bed sheets or used condoms should be placed in separate clean paper bags with a note of when this was done.

If the student believes they may have been drugged, a urine sample can be taken at a Haven or the A&E at the Hospital.

2.8 Allow the student to talk, make brief notes

- Remember that you are not conducting an investigation, so take brief notes on what the student tells you and do not question what you are being told
- Make a note of the student's name, alleged assailant's details, date and time
- Make no assumptions and write down what the student says
- Show the student what you have written and ask them to confirm that it is correct
- Retain your notes with strict adherence to SOAS standards of confidentiality (see section 2.12)

2.9 Reporting to the police

- The student should decide whether they wish to report the incident to the police. This could be immediately or at some point in the future
- Even though you may not agree – it is not your choice ***unless there is a risk to the safety of the student or others in the vicinity***

Stop taking notes and immediately contact the police if the victim requests this course of

If the student decides not to refer the incident to the Police, you should provide them with a list of alternative agencies that can offer them support (see section 2.4 above).

2.10 Support for international students

Given the diversity of its student body, SOAS recognises the need to support international students who are more likely to be away from support networks. Some students will have particular cultural or faith based customs that are important to them. Therefore, it is particularly important in such circumstances to avoid making assumptions and to listen to what the student wants to happen.

Students should also be reassured that complaints of sexual violence will not undermine their academic career, nor risk their visa being withdrawn.

Alleged perpetrators will not have their visa's withdrawn as part of an internal investigation by SOAS .

Advice and signposting should also be available for students who have suffered from sexual violence or harassment before joining the university. The individual may still suffer from the effects of the abuse or harassment that could impact on their academic and personal life.

International students should be aware that can access emergency services at the nearest A&E Department and that Camden Safety Net centre can provide an interpreter if required.

2.11 Forced marriage

SOAS recognises the fundamental difference between forced and arranged marriages. It understands that arranged marriages are the cultural practice in some communities and require the consent of those involved. SOAS is aware that this is an issue that affects domicile and international students

According to the Home Office: *'A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. It is an appalling and indefensible practice and is recognised in the UK as a form of violence against women and men, domestic/child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights'.*

The Forced Marriage Unit

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is a joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office unit which was set up in January 2005 to lead on the Government's forced marriage policy, outreach and casework. It operates both inside the UK, where support is provided to any individual, and overseas, where consular assistance is provided to British nationals, including dual nationals.

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7008 0151

Email: fmufco.gov.uk

Facebook: [Forced Marriage page](#)

SHARAN

SOAS is also working with SHARAN: - an organisation dedicated to supporting Students facing forced marriage. SHARAN will provide expert support and guidance to both women and men in this difficult situation.

SHARAN's contact details can be found in the Appendix under 'external contacts' or on their website:

<http://www.sharan.org.uk/>

2.12 Confidentiality

It is essential that any person providing support to the victim of an assault respects the confidentiality of the individual and information provided. Any notes made and records taken must be locked in a safe and secure place and in accordance with the SOAS Data Protection Policy:

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/infocomp/dpa/policy/>

2.13 On-going Support

There are a number of sources for victims to seek on-going support following an incident of gender based violence. The following services will offer support regardless of whether they pursue any form of formal or informal action:

The SOAS Student Advice and Wellbeing team provide specialist support and counselling for SOAS students. <https://www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/>

Contact: Tel: 020 7074 5015 or Email: studentadviceandwellbeing@soas.ac.uk

Camden Safety Net offer advice and support, risk assess, devise action plans to enhance safety and provide counselling to victims. <https://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/policing-and-public-safety/domestic-violence/camden-safety-net.en?source=mega-menu>

Contact: Tel: 020 7974 2526 – Office hours only or Email: camdensafetynet@camden.gov.uk

Rape Crisis provide guidance to women and girls on support options available to them
Tel: 0808 802 999

3.0 References

3.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion

The terms of the policy have been developed in accordance with the requirements and obligations of The Equality Act (2010) Public Sector Equality duty.

An Equality Impact Assessment on this guidance was completed in November 2015 to ensure that any inadvertent disadvantage to any of the protected characteristics was addressed. Any subsequent review will be the subject of further assessment.

3.2 Ownership and review of this guidance

This guidance was developed by the SOAS Diversity and Inclusion Manager in 2015 in consultation with students, staff, and other SOAS stakeholders. External expert agencies and other HE institutions also provided support and comment on the approach that it recommends (see Acknowledgements).

This guidance will be reviewed by the Diversity Office in January 2017 unless legislative change or other factor necessitates an earlier date.

3.4 Acknowledgements

Much of the guidance included in this document has been taken from procedures previously developed by University of Sussex – Student Services and University West of England: Fenton, R. A., Mott, H. L., McCartan, K. and Rumney, P. (2014). The Intervention Initiative. Bristol: UWE and Public Health England.

SOAS acknowledges the debt owed to these institutions in the development of this guidance.

Thanks also to: SOAS Student Union, Camden Safety Net, Sharan and The Equality Challenge Unit

3.5 Appendix:

Useful contacts

i). Internal

SOAS security - ext 555

SOAS Student Union - 020 7898 4992

ii). External

Police: Dial 999 in an emergency or 101 to connect to your local police station

British Transport Police: Text 61016 to report non-emergency incidents on trains

Rape Crisis: 0808 802 9999 12pm-2.30pm, 7pm -9.30pm week days

Havens: Call 0203 299 6900 (medical and forensic support for women and men)

Victim Support: 0845 30 30 900 9am – 9pm weekdays, 9am – 7pm weekends

The Samaritans are available 24hrs a day to support you through any trauma including sexual assault.
08457 909090

Refuge: 0808 2000 247 (24 hour domestic violence helpline)

The Rights of Women Helpline: (legal advice for women) Textphone: 020 74902562

Survivors UK (male survivor organisation): <https://www.survivorsuk.org/>

Crossroads Womens Centre (Camden) : <http://www.crossroadswomen.net/>

Women's Aid: (domestic violence support) : <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/> or call 0808 2000 247

GALOP (London's LGBT anti-violence & abuse charity): <http://www.galop.org.uk/>

Broken Rainbow: <http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/help/helpline> or call 0845 260 5560

Press for Change: <http://www.pfc.org.uk/> Legal advice for Trans-people

National stalking helpline: <http://www.stalkinghelpline.org/> 0808 802 0300 09:30 – 16:00
Weekdays (except Wed 13:00 – 16:00)

If you require this guidance in an alternative format, please contact the SOAS Diversity Office by email at Diversity@soas.ac.uk or by phone on +44 (0)20 7898 4957/4958