WOMEN STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM vis-à-vis SDG 5 ON GENDER EQUALITY


Rita Trias Prats
Supervisor: Antoni Luna Garcia
Universitat Pompeu Fabra
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2. INTRODUCTION

“I had imagined my university years would be the best of my life (...) Until we discovered the group chat” (The Boar, 2019a).

Women students’ experiences of sexual harassment and gender-based violence in higher education in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) is the topic under analysis in this Bachelor’s Dissertation in relation to the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), and particularly, Targets 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual or other types of exploitation (United Nations, 2015: 18) which are part of the Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2015.

In 2017 – 2018 there were 2.34 million university students in the UK, of whom 57% were female and 43% male, with 41% of all students aged 20 years and under (HESA, 2019a). The examination of sexual harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault, as well as the present unequal and unsafe culture in universities in the UK carried out in this Dissertation, explicitly focuses on the experiences of women students. It is relevant to analyse young women as an independent group because women aged 16 – 25 are significantly more likely to be affected by gender-based violence (Donaldson et al, 2019) and sexual harassment (EIGE, 2017a) than any other age group. Nevertheless, the following sections can also apply to the experiences of female staff (54% were female and 46% were male of whom 54% of academic staff were men and 63% of non-academic staff were women in 2017 – 2018) (HESA, 2019b). The majority of the victims of violence and the individuals experiencing episodes of stalking, verbal and physical harassment are women, while men are the majority of the perpetrators. According to

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1 For the purposes of this Bachelor’s Dissertation, the term “higher education” is used to refer to an institution of higher learning whose students are 18 years of age or older. The word is used interchangeably with other terms like “university”, “campus”, “institution” and “college”.

2 Gender-based violence (GBV) against women is violence directed against women and girls. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) was defined by the UN as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private” (UN, 1993). Both terms GBV and VAW are used along this Bachelor’s Dissertation interchangeably since most GBV is perpetrated against women (VAW).

3 Sexual harassment is generally understood as “unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, violating the victim’s dignity and creating a hostile environment” (EIGE, 2017b). For the specific topic of this Bachelor’s Dissertation the expression is used to refer to behaviours listed in Figure 1 in the Annexes, included in the survey of the report Hidden Marks (NUS, 2010).
the results of the study *Hidden Marks* done by the National Union of Students (NUS) in 2010, 89% of stalking and 73% of physical violence perpetrators were men. Gender-based violence is the most brutal manifestation of gender inequality and a violation of human rights (EIGE, 2017b).

Considering the profile of students, in 2017 – 2018 of the UK domiciled students 4 25% were non-White and 13% had a known disability (HESA, 2019a). There is little disaggregated data available on the experiences of violence and harassment of students with disabilities or from ethnic minority groups. As a result of this lack of detailed information, I acknowledge the absence of analysis regarding the specific experiences they may face at university in relation to the intersecting inequalities based on race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, disability or age (Crenshaw, 1991). The analysis is partial as it is one-dimensional and disregards the impact of the other forms of oppression and discrimination apart from the division woman and man. However, I want to emphasize the importance of recognizing gendered vulnerabilities and multiple social identities who have been traditionally marginalised in research and policy; generally, there is a lack of analysis focusing attention on the lives and needs of LGBTQ (which encapsulates the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer), non-White (Black, Asian, mixed and other) and disabled individuals (Hagen, 2016). Higher education institutions and governments have to address the needs of specific groups and develop an approach to change the campus culture that will not be effective unless it is intersectional, that is unless cross-cutting oppressions are recognized (Hagen, 2016).

The purpose of this Bachelor’s Dissertation is not only to analyse the experiences of sexual harassment and gender-based violence suffered by women students in higher education in the UK but to point out and question the campus culture linked to these problems. It pays special attention to the factors of ‘lad culture’ and the neoliberal model of university. Even though there is no evidence to conclude that sexual harassment and sexism are directly a result of it, ‘lad culture’ is a renewed sexist set of misogynist values and behaviours linked to the ‘crisis of masculinity’, a mentality considered to be common practice and a culture spread among the community of young students in the UK (NUS et al, 2012). In addition, the prevalence of these problems is affected by the fact that universities seek to be high-ranked and preserve its reputation. Understanding what drives gender-based violence and what silences it is necessary

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4 UK domiciled students means that the UK was the student’s normal place of residence before starting their course (includes Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man residents) (HESA, 2019a).
to challenge the structural gender inequality that SDG 5 and its particular targets aim to achieve. Without problematising the everyday manifestations of sexism and gender inequalities, sexual harassment and violence are difficult to address. Therefore, there is a need for universities jointly with student organizations and national and international institutions to make a broad analysis and take a proactive approach that moves away from an individual understanding of these issues (Anitha et al, 2018).

The country of analysis is the United Kingdom, where I pursued my academic exchange (Erasmus) at the University of Warwick, from September 2018 to March 2019. The decision to focus my Bachelor’s Dissertation on the particular position of the UK vis-à-vis SDG 5 on gender equality came from my personal interest in the field of gender studies and the fact that I am a female student in higher education who may have witnessed and experienced the culture of sexism that this Bachelor’s Dissertation aims to highlight and denounce. Particularly, the continuing updates on the rape chat incident that went public while I was studying at the University of Warwick made me decide to put ‘lad culture’ and the experiences of harassment and gender-based violence affecting the community of women students at the centre of my analysis of the SDG 5 in the UK.

This Bachelor’s Dissertation takes a multidimensional approach. Firstly, it analyses the global and regional (UK) position towards SDG 5. Secondly, it critically analyses the position of the UK towards women students’ experiences of sexual harassment and gender-based violence in higher education in the UK (a historical analysis is made, the main indicators and data are provided, the factors that result in this problematic are discussed as well as the current legislation). Thirdly, the Warwick rape chat case is presented to exemplify the topic. Finally, recommendations and final remarks are included as well as references and annexes.

3. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SITUATION VIS-À-VIS SDG 5
   a. Global situation: SDG 5

The declaration of leaders signing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the most ambitious global development agenda in history (Equal Measures 2030, 2019a), included the vision of: “A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed” (British Council, 2016: 6). The 2030 Agenda, and specially SDG 5, are committed to achieving gender equality, empower all women and girls and end all forms of violence against them (UN Women, 2018)
leaving no-one behind (Equal Measures 2030, 2019a). The 2019 SDG Gender Index⁵ (Equal Measures 2030, 2019) finds that with just 11 years to go until 2030 about 40% of women and girls – 1.4 billion – live in countries failing on gender equality and that no country is on track to achieve equality by 2030 (Ford, 2019; see in Annexes), the global average score is 65.7/100. The SDG Report 2018 has reviewed the progress and gaps for all the goals (UN, 2018a). Data regarding SDG 5⁶ include:

- “Based on 2005-2016 data from 56 countries, 20% of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 who have ever been in a sexual relationship experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner (...) 49 countries have no laws that specifically protect women from such violence” (UN, 2018a). What is more, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2017) reported that on average “1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetimes”.

- In 2017 “an estimated 21% of women between 20 and 24 years of age reported that they were married or in an informal union before age 18” (UN, 2018a).

- In 2017 “1 in 3 girls aged 15 – 19 had been subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM) in the 30 countries where the practice is concentrated” (UN, 2018a).

The negative effects of VAW and sexual harassment are multiple: ongoing poor physical and mental health that can lead to stress-related and post-traumatic disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, eating and sleeping disorders, unsafe sexual relationships, induced abortions, sexually-transmitted infections, self-harm and even suicide (UN Women, 2018). According to the UN (2018b), gender disparities and risks increase when girls get older in terms of health, poverty, education, wellbeing and protection. Therefore, an analysis of young women students in higher education is relevant because university campuses create a particular set for disparity and violence to appear (UN Women, 2018). They play an important role in the development of young people (in terms of character, socialization, exploration of sex) and besides being

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⁵ Measures the state of gender equality in relation to 51 indicators across 14 of the 17 SDGs (SDGs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17) in 129 countries. It is measured with a scale going from 0 (full inequality) to 100 (full equality). On top of the Index are the Nordic countries (being Denmark the first with a score of 89.3) and at the bottom are Sub-Saharan African countries (being Chad the last with a score of 33.4), also facing extreme poverty and fragility. Country’s scores on the Index are highly related to their national income (Equal Measures 2030, 2019a).

⁶ The global indicators and data mentioned are just a part of what SDG 5 includes. The most revealing and meaningful indicators relevant to the topic of this Bachelor’s Dissertation (women students’ experiences of sexual harassment and gender-based violence) have been contemplated in this global portrait.
learning environments they are major providers of student accommodations, so become critical
environments for women studying and also living on them (Whittfield et al, 2015).

The literature and data available with respect to the topic of this report are mostly from the
West, especially the United States and more recently the European states, so, the evaluation of
the global situation takes the existent analysis of these regions as evidence of an issue that
actually is more extensive since women and girls represent half of the world’s population.
Moreover, it is worth mentioning that attention to VAW in universities has long been
widespread even though it has received special attention just recently (UN Women, 2018).

Studies from the United States (US) show that 40% of women students have been stalked and
92% have experienced sexual harassment, in fact, reports concluded that a campus with 10,000
female students could see about 350 rapes a year (NUS et al, 2012). Data from 1995 to 2013
from the US showed that 80% of people raped or sexually assaulted at university did not report
the incident to the police (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014 cited in UN Women, 2018). In 2013
76% of female students of 8 universities in Bangladesh reported they had suffered sexual
harassment. In 2016 a national survey showed that 51% of students in Australia had suffered
sexual harassment, 62% had witnessed or experienced any form of gender violence at university
in Spain in the same year. 70% of women at Cairo University (Egypt) had suffered sexual
harassment in 2015 and 69% of Chinese university students reported having experienced sexual
harassment (UN Women, 2018). These data make visible sexual harassment and gender-based
violence in higher education is a global, often silenced and not reported severe reality.

Existential international legislation is committed to addressing these issues under the following
frameworks:
- The Beijing Platform for Action (UN, 1995) calls for the elimination of VAW and, of
  special interest is its Strategic Objective L.4 which mandates to “Eliminate
discrimination against girls in education”.
- The CEDAW recognizes that “gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that
  seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms” (UN Women, 2018: 11).
- Commission on the Status of Women agreed in its 57th session in 2013 to emphasize the
  importance of education to end VAW (UN Women, 2018).

In terms of regional frameworks, it is relevant for the area of study of this report the Council of
Europe’s Istanbul Convention, further analysed in section 4. In the same lines, other regional

b. Regional Situation: the UK and SDG 5

“We will drive forward the implementation of the SDGs. We will continue to champion the rights of women and girls, making sure all girls get the education they deserve, and tackling horrific abuses such as female genital mutilation and the use of sexual violence in conflict” said UK’s Prime Minister Theresa May (2016 – 2019) in her speech to the UN in September 2016 (House of Commons, 2017: 6). Domestic engagement with the SDGs is critical to the UK’s standing position in the UN, an institution where it has a permanent seat at the Security Council and whose leading advocate role during the discussion of the Agenda 2030 was particularly relevant in terms of including gender equality in the SDGs (House of Commons, 2017).

Being that considered, the UK government has not set out a strategic plan for the achievement of SDG 5, when actually, the results of progressing on gender equality are reported to be an enabler and accelerator for all the other SDGs (UKSSD, 2018). Moreover, the principle of ‘leaving no-one behind’ is supposed to be followed throughout the implementation of all SDGs in the UK, yet any of the reports available include specific data or measures about gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the specific context of higher education. Most of the evidence this Bachelor’s Dissertation is based on comes from the independent research undertaken by the National Union of Students (NUS) and The Student Room (TSR, the UK’s biggest online education community) in partnership with the Revolt Sexual Assault campaign.

Although there has been progress, the UK is, as for every other country, far from reaching SDG 5. The 2019 SDG Gender Index gave the UK a score of 82.2/100 and position 17th (Equal Measures 2030, 2019a; Ibid 2019b). In the Gender Equality Index 2017, the UK achieved a score of 71.5/100 being 5 points above the EU average (66.2) but having decreased from fourth

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7 The Gender Equality Index 2017 (EIGE, 2017c), first developed in 2013, examines the progress and challenges in achieving gender equality across the EU. Member states’ equality is measured with a scale going from 0 (full inequality) to 100 (full equality). The domains of analysis are those relevant in the EU policy framework: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health. The domain of violence cannot be treated as the same way as the other domains because rather than measuring a gap between men and women (with the objective to reduce the gap) analyses women’s experiences of violence (with the objective to eradicate violence completely), therefore it is included as a satellite domain (EIGE, 2017b) (see Figure 2 in Annexes).
to sixth place from 2005 to 2015 (EIGE, 2017c). In the domain of violence (considered corollary of structural inequalities in the other domains) UK’s score was 29/100, slightly higher than the EU average (27.5) (EIGE, 2017c). Taking into account the data available from the UK’s Office for National Statistics (ONS) in 2017 – 2018, 6.26% of women had experienced partner abuse (slightly decreased from 8.65% in 2004 – 2005) (see Figure 3 in the Annexes) and 3.08% of women and girls aged 16 to 59 had been subject to sexual assault in 2016 – 2017 (slightly increased from 2.23% in 2013 – 2014) (see Figure 4 in the Annexes). In this context it is extremely significant to consider that rates of reporting remain low (British Council, 2016) and that underreporting is an issue faced by all surveys (EIGE, 2017b) (see Figure 5 in the Annexes).

A report published by the British Council in 2016 gives an overview of the field of gender equality across the UK nations as a whole (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). A general image of the situation of gender equality in the UK can be created with the following evidence:

- In terms of participation, power and leadership: the UK is ranked 39th in the world for women’s participation occupying 32% of the seats in the House of Commons and 26.4% in the House of Lords (as of February 2019, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019); with a ‘motherhood gap’ operating in the Parliament (British Council, 2016). In leadership positions in politics, business and public life, women hold 30% of the positions (British Council, 2016).

- In terms of education: in higher education young women outnumber and tend to outperform men, however, this is not translated later on fuller employment or highly paid work (British Council, 2016). The gender pay gap\(^8\) was of 8.6% among full-time employers in 2018 (ONS, 2018b).

- In terms of the economy: gender stereotypes on the capabilities and responsibilities result in women spending more hours than men doing informal unpaid domestic and child/adult caring work which is necessary but unrecognised (British Council, 2016). ‘Home production’\(^9\) was valued at £1,018.9 billion and represented 56% of the GDP in 2014 (ONS, 2016).

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\(^8\) The gender pay gap is calculated as the difference between average hourly earnings of men and women as a proportion of average hourly earnings of men’s earnings. The gap among all employers is higher (17.9%) as women work more in part-time jobs than men (ONS, 2018b).
In terms of justice and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): the UK has ratified the CEDAW (in 1986) and followed the Beijing Plan for Action but it has not ratified the Istanbul Convention (IC Change, 2018). Furthermore, sexual offences facilitated by technology may be increasing (British Council, 2016).

In terms of cultural sectors (arts, sports and technology): there is a persistent sexist and stereotyped representation of women in the media production (British Council, 2016) and women’s sports coverage obtains a merely 10% of all sports media coverage (Women in Sport, 2018). In the field of technology, women are absent representing just 23% of core STEM (science, technology, engineering and manufacturing) professionals (WISE, 2017).

4. POSITION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

a. Historical analysis and precedents

The impact of sexism, sexual harassment and gender-based violence has remained a silenced issue until recently (Donaldson et al, 2018). This developing field of research has highlighted the inconsistencies in universities approach and the lack of knowledge students have of the procedures of reporting. In fact, a 2014 survey by NUS in the UK noticed that 60% of the respondents were not familiar with them (Page et al, 2015). During the 1970-1980s, because of feminism and progressive social activism, social policies on the prevention of VAWG became an issue in the UK, Europe and the US (Donaldson et al, 2018).

As a response to the Donellan case in 1992, the Final Report of the Task Force on Student Disciplinary Procedures commonly known as the Zellick Report, was published in 1994 by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (now Universities UK10) with the aim to advise and give universities a set of guidelines about student disciplinary procedures (NUS, 2015). After the accusation of rape by another student, Austen Donellan was suspended from the university, but after bringing the case to court he was found not guilty. Following this verdict, Donellan brought legal disputes to the university (Kings College London), which paid substantial damages in financial and reputational terms. The Zellick Report was an attempt to clear the confusion and advise universities in cases of sexual harassment and violence. According to NUS (2015), it mainly aimed to protect universities from legal procedures and

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9 The Household Satellite Account measures and values the goods and services that are produced by households (home production) but are not included in the National Accounts (ONS, 2016).
10 Universities UK (UUK) is the representative organization for UK universities (House of Commons, 2018).
the loss of their reputation. The main advice given by the report was the following: (1) Rape and sexual assault should never be investigated via internal disciplinary procedures. (2) Universities should not report to the police without the consent of the victim. (3) Pending prosecution, universities are permitted to suspend or exclude a student. (4) Any disciplinary actions taken after the trial must take into account the verdict (NUS, 2015).

The most contentious and worrying issue of these guidelines was the recommendation to only undertake internal disciplinary procedures when a case had been formally reported to the police; the university was advised to suspend a student only when the accused was under judicial investigation (Donaldson et al, 2018). Following this advice, the victim could just get a response from the university when the rape or sexual assault had been reported to the police. The content of the Zellick Report was preoccupying considering that 82% of rape cases are never reported to the police and of those reported, only 1 in 5 results in court proceedings and, once in court, the process from report to verdict lasts a minimum of 1 year (NUS, 2015). The accused could continue at university and have contact with the victim (who may consider leaving the course) (NUS, 2010) and pose a risk to other students. Indeed, taking into account the length of the legal procedures, presumably once a verdict is made, the victim is not in university anymore (NUS, 2015).

The approach of the Zellick Report individualised criminal behaviour and depoliticised the issue of sexual harassment and gender-based violence against students, in the sense that complaints were made about an individual, not a department and not a culture (Page, 2015) therefore diverting attention from the structural problem (Donaldson et al, 2018). After pressures and evidence presented by individual universities, the NUS and other women organizations, Universities UK (UUK) established a Task Force to review the Zellick Report that resulted in the publication in 2016 of new guidelines for higher education institutions, the

Guidance For Higher Education Institutions. How to Handle Alleged Student Misconduct Which May Also Constitute A Criminal Offence11 (UUK, 2016a). Universities are no longer advised to wait until a case has been reported to the police to start internal proceedings. The report recommends measures including that institutions should adopt centralised reporting procedures, develop effective disclosure responses and run bystander intervention programmes (USV, 2018). Despite the fact that the existing legal framework allows universities to be held

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11 The report offers guidance on “all types of student misconduct which may constitute a criminal offence and provides some specific recommendations in relation to sexual misconduct” (UUK, 2016a: 1).
into account, actions ultimately depend on individuals reporting the case to the university and it being brought to court (Whitfield, 2018). Even though the Zellick Report has been criticised for being out of date, lacking an understanding of the nature of gender-based violence, prioritising the image of higher education institutions over their duty to create a safe and equal environment, and giving no guidance in regards of the support to the victim during the reporting process, it is still a not strict legislation used as a basis for some universities in the UK (NUS, 2015).

On another note, “concerns with student-on-student misconduct have also broadened to include sexual misconduct by staff” (USV, 2018: 2) in the discussion about suspensions and complaint procedures. To make visible sexual harassment when it occurs between academic staff and students is especially hard. There are a power and hierarchical relationship in place that incites silence, by reason of fear of retaliatory behaviour or loss of career position (particularly for postgraduate and PhD students whose contact with academic staff is very individualised) (Page et al, 2015). Indeed, to resist abusive behaviours, in this case can be complex, because when sexual misconduct has been happening in public, witnesses may have tended to fail to respond and object the harassment done by a well-positioned member of the university (Page et al, 2015). As follows, sexual misconduct is not recognised and affected students feel they cannot say anything, “If everyone knows what is happening, and yet no one objects to it, then what would reporting do it?” (Page et al, 2015: 43).

b. Current situation
   i. Main indicators

   “1 in 7 respondents had experienced a serious physical or sexual assault during their time as a student, 12 per cent had been stalked while at university or college, and 68 per cent had been a victim of one or more kinds of sexual harassment while they were at university” (NUS, 2010: 19).

   These appalling numbers presented in the report *Hidden Marks* (NUS, 2010), the first national report on the experiences of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault, are the results of a national online survey of 2,058 women students enrolled in courses in UK universities (in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) between 2009 and 2010. The report revealed that in most of the cases the perpetrators/offenders were known by the victim12 (including

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12 The term victim is used in *Hidden Marks* (NUS, 2010) to describe the respondents who “reported being subject to harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault” acknowledging that “some prefer to call themselves ‘survivors’” (NUS, 2010: 8).
partners, acquaintances, friends, neighbours, academic and non-teaching staff; in 81% of the cases of serious sexual assault and in 53% of the cases of less serious sexual offence), that just 4% of the students seriously assaulted reported the incident to the university and that 10% reported to the police\textsuperscript{13} (NUS, 2010).

The Student Room (TSR) and Revolt Sexual Assault conducted a survey on 4,500 students and recent graduates from 153 different institutions, with the aim to give power and voice to student survivors (Revolt Sexual Assault, 2018). The results of this consultation are the most recent data available at the time of writing this Bachelor’s Dissertation\textsuperscript{14}. Of all individuals surveyed 62% had experienced sexual violence, from those, 50% sexual harassment and 42% sexual assault. Considering female respondents, 70% had experienced sexual violence, 57% sexual harassment and 48% sexual assault in comparison to men, who had experienced 26%, 19% and 17% respectively. In the case of the individuals who self-identified as non-binary, the figures were 61%, 55% and 46% respectively and for those disabled 73%, 62% and 54% respectively. The report revealed that only 6% of those who had experienced sexual assault or harassment reported their experiences to the university and 6% to the police and that in 56% of the cases perpetrators were known to the victim (TSR et al, 2018) (see Figures 6, 7, 8 and 9 in the Annexes for additional data).

In addition, the European Commission conducted a survey which showed the prevalence of harassment and violence in UK universities. It reported that 34% of UK respondents had experienced sexual violence, occurring in most of the cases off-campus and during the victim’s first year (Stenning et al, 2012). Recently, in 2017, sexual harassment, misconduct and violence by UK faculty members were considered ‘epidemic’ after an investigation by The Guardian that uncovered that around 300 allegations had been made among 6 years from 120 universities (Batty et al, 2017; see in Annexes).

\textsuperscript{13} According to the Hidden Marks report the most common reason for not reporting was that “students did not feel that what had happened was serious enough to report” (NUS, 2010: 4). Taking into consideration the results of TSR et al (2018), when respondents were asked about not reporting to their university, of those students who had experienced sexual assault or harassment 56% thought it was not serious enough, 35% felt too ashamed and 29% did not know how to make a report.

\textsuperscript{14} There is no centrally-collected data about sexual violence at universities (House of Commons, 2018). The data available to this day has always been collected independently by stakeholders such as individual universities, the NUS or independent organizations (like TSR).
In 2012, NUS and researchers from the University of Sussex conducted the report *That’s What She Said* with the aim to analyse the profound structures of the problem. Particularly, they analysed ‘lad culture’ as a renewed form of sexism affecting every aspect of student life and criticised the fact that the university is being privatised, commodified and thought in economic terms. The interconnection of these two factors and their link to sexual harassment and violence will be further analysed below.

### ii. Factors

**‘Lad culture’**

‘Laddism’ is a particular culture\(^\text{15}\) or subcultural practice. The concept of ‘lad culture’ first emerged in the 1950s to critically refer to the masculinity displayed in magazines like *Playboy* and later on in the 1990s and 2000s it was represented in *Loaded, Nuts* and *Zoo*, so-called ‘lads’ magazines. Today, ‘lad culture’ has been used to describe UK student communities (NUS et al, 2012). It is linked to the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, a specific physicality, muscularity, aggression, violence, misogyny, homophobia and authority over others (mostly women), that represents a particular type of masculinity. Indeed, Phipps (2017a) suggests that it may be linked to particular states with a strong class system like the UK because literature and specific data on ‘lad culture’ is roughly existent in other countries other than the UK and Ireland. It represents a gender identity/expression that, despite being generalized and socially accepted, it is not engaged by all men. ‘Laddism’ has been seen as part of a ‘crisis of masculinity’, operating as a reaction to feminist and women’s movements, therefore, performed as a means of reclaiming territory, power and space (Phipps et al, 2015). Furthermore, ‘lad culture’ coexists and is linked to a culture that celebrates sexually liberated femininities, which makes students reluctant to talk about and report violence or abuse (Phipps et al, 2015).

The contemporary sexualised popular culture is characterised by a proliferation of sexualised stereotypical images, messages and ideals (seen in social media, marketing, advertising and pornography) and by an imposition of adult sexuality on young people (Papadopoulos, 2010). “The predominant message for boys is to be sexually dominant and objectify the female body” (Papadopoulos, 2010: 7). This proliferation results in the normalisation of sexual violence and maintains the perception that ‘boys will be boys’ (Papadopoulos, 2010). Similarly, the sexualisation of women seems to be seen as empowerment, serving too to normalise practices

\(^{15}\) Culture can be understood as “a set of shared values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and norms amongst particular social groups” (NUS et al, 2012: 13).
of violence against women and girls (Coy et al., 2012). A critical analysis of sexualisation is seen, for some, as a way to consider women as passive victims rather than agents of their own sexual identity (Coy et al., 2012).

Moreover, there is a tendency to think that we live in a post-feminist society in which equal rights between men and women have been achieved, an idea that is justified with the fact that there are more female students than male students going to university (Phipps, 2017a). In relation to ‘lad culture’, post-feminist assumptions work to silence experiences of sexism, harassment and violence and put in danger young girls (NUS et al., 2012). These forms of sexism are operating as defensive responses to the ‘battle of sexes’ women seem to be winning with the ‘feminisation’ of universities (Phipps, 2017a).

Contemporary ‘ladism’ is theorised as a homosocial bonding that has gained social and cultural power among young British males under the trinity of ‘drinking, football and fucking’. So, it is immensely relevant considering that alcohol consumption and sports play an important role in students’ life (NUS et al., 2012). It has been linked to the over-sexualised culture existing among young people (partly because of the easy access to the porn and erotic industry), which tends to normalise sexual violence and the objectification of women (Coy et al., 2012). ‘Laddish’ masculinities are performed, in particular, in contexts where alcohol is consumed (NUS et al., 2012) and in social spaces, like night clubs surrounding universities (Anitha et al., 2018). At the same time, ‘ladism’ operates in the context of sports, as a form of cultural code seen in team bonding activities like initiation rituals were ‘freshers’ are pressured to drink and do humiliating tests in order to show their masculinity; in order to be accepted in a club or a society there is a particular form of gender expression expected from the student (NUS et al., 2012). Other ‘lad’ activities include nude calendars, sexist themed parties or wet T-shirt contests (Phipps, 2017b). Lately, such problematic culture is affecting women as well in online communities and social media (Anitha et al., 2018).

All in all, although ‘lad culture’ is understood as one of a variety of the masculinities and cultures shaping attitudes and identities in the student communities of UK universities, it is very extended and dominates to a large extent the sexual and university life of young people (Phipps et al., 2015).
The neoliberal university

Harvey (2005) defines the neoliberal state as the institutional framework in which privatisation, deregulation and competition are encouraged in order to increase efficiency and productivity. The neoliberal state is the institution encouraging individual freedom and in it, “each individual is held responsible and accountable for his or her own actions and wellbeing” (Harvey, 2005: 65). Neoliberalism has transformed and shaped higher education institutions (Phipps, 2018), which have been pressured by these principles and practices until becoming part of a globalizing knowledge economy that seeks to “generate as much wealth as possible from knowledge production” (Canaan et al, 2008: 4).

Phipps (2018) sustains the idea that market ideologies are dominant in contemporary higher education. Higher education has been subjected to a process of marketization and commodification, consisting of “turning the educational service into a commodity bought in the marketplace” (Canaan et al, 2008: 3). Phipps (2018) states that in order to preserve a particular appearance, institutions ‘airbrush’ its flaws, in other words, seek to protect their reputation putting problematic issues “under the carpet”. Considering the issues of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, Phipps (2018) argues that they are institutionally reckoned up by, for instance, asking students to not speak out in order to preserve reputation in the highly competitive field of higher education (Phipps et al, 2015). In the UK, competition is clearly visible as universities are ranked in polarized ‘league tables’ (Canaan et al, 2008). The Guardian (Batty et al, 2017) reported that UK universities had paid compensations to students and staff and that accused staff had been given financial settlements to pressure them to resign.

The principles of neoliberal reform, following the 2008 financial crises, are visible in the recent UK policy developments, for instance on the rise of tuition fees (up to £9,000/year) (Rudd et al, 2017). Higher education in the UK was free until 1997 (Ainley et al, 2008). Under this privatisation, students are seen as customers and consumers and universities as producers and service providers of a structure that seems one of a market (Canaan et al, 2008). An environment of competition among students, departments and universities is in place. The result in campus cultures is translated into a promotion of corporate values, individualism and competition. These values can be identified as masculine so reinforcing ‘lad culture’ (NUS et al, 2012). Furthermore, the privatisation of university services like security or student support, or even the cuts on these services, diminish the safety of women students. Within the neoliberal
university environment, the devaluation of an institution after a case going public seems to be of higher impact than the act of violence it might be revealing (Phipps, 2018).

Then, in the event sexual misconduct is formally recognised and not silenced anymore, the problem is approached on an individual basis as if it is just the problem of an individual aggressor “rather than as being enabled by what the organization enabled” (Ahmed, 2017a). This approach is problematic because serves the university to diverge its responsibility and helps institutional sexism to stay invisible (Page et al, 2015). Moreover, the neoliberal university is characterised by complex complaint procedures and by confidentiality. Confidentiality, legally translated as confidentiality clauses and non-disclosure agreements (BBC, 2019a) displaces the problem of sexual misconduct and contributes to maintaining the reputation of the institution (Page et al, 2015). An analysis by the BBC (2019a) showed that 96 universities in the UK had spent £87m since 2017 on about 4,000 settlements, being unclear whether the reasons behind them were related to allegations of bullying, sexual harassment and misconduct or responding to other issues. During complaint procedures, secrecy serves to protect the student who has made the complaint, whilst protecting the person named at the complaint and by extension the institution (Page et al, 2015).

Building on the work of Sara Ahmed16, it is interesting to present the figure of the ‘feminist killjoy’. It refers to the individual that causes trouble and discomfort to others and to institutions when naming issues like sexism or racism. As she writes “it is as if these problems are not there until you point them out; it is as if pointing them out is what makes them there” (Ahmed, 2017b: 39). In the context of making a complaint about sexual misconduct in higher education, “to bring a problem to institutional attention can mean becoming the problem you bring – becoming what ‘gets in the way’ of institutional happiness” (Ahmed, 2012 cited in Page et al, 2015: 43). Considering the neoliberal university, to shed light about the problem of sexism, sexual harassment and violence, seems to make the complainer responsible of an act of disloyalty and damage of the reputation of a university (Ahmed, 2017a).

iii. Current legislation and adopted measures
On the one hand, there is guidance for universities on how to deal with sexual harassment and gender-based violence and to help them draft policies on the issue (as seen previously).

16 Ahmed resigned from her position at Goldsmiths (University of London) in 2016 in protest of the university’s failure to address sexual misconduct by a number of outstanding academics (USV, 2018).
Nevertheless, “central government has not placed specific legal obligations on them to deal with sexual harassment” (House of Commons, 2018) and “there is no obligation on universities to record or report these issues” (Long et al, 2018: 14). An audit about ‘lad culture’ conducted by NUS between 2014 and 2015 found that just 51%, of institutions of the 35 that were surveyed, had formal policy on sexual harassment; and of those existing, significant gaps on complaints and disciplinary procedures were found (USV, 2018). On the other hand, domestic and international legislation place clear duties and responsibilities on universities to address these issues consistently, they are discussed below.

**Domestic legislation**

There are two important laws universities have to comply in the UK: the Human Rights Act 1998 on the basis that they are state bodies and the Equality Act 2010 on the basis that they are education and service providers (Whitfield, 2018). Whitfield (2018) stresses the fact that higher education institutions should be proactive in their policy development and decision making, because although these pieces of legislation are very powerful, they are not enforceable if students continue to find barriers to report as a result of a lack of funding, knowledge or political will.

The **Human Rights Act 1998** (HRA), composed of a serious of sections, is the codification of the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law (Whitfield, 2018). The HRA makes unlawful for a public authority (like the university) to act in a way that is contradictory to a right contained in the European Convention (Whitfield et al, 2015), and so, it can be used to hold universities accountable. According to Article 3, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. The university has the obligation to protect individuals and investigate allegations, if it fails to do so it can be considered a breach of the safety and investigative duty under Article 3 (Whitfield, 2018). Following Article 8 on the “Right to respect for private and family life”, although difficult to argue universities’ positive obligation to it, a breach could be argued if the university fails to investigate repeated sexual incidents on campus where students live (Whitfield et al, 2015). The “Right to education” is also relevant (Whitfield et al, 2015). When it is read in accordance to Article 14 (“discrimination in relation to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms in the Convention”), it can be considered a human rights violation the university’s failure to provide the same access and safety to male and female students, for instance, in the case victims leave university courses (Whitfield, 2018).
The **Equality Act 2010** is the legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2017). It prohibits discrimination (direct and indirect), harassment and victimisation. It offers protection from these issues on the basis of ‘protected characteristics’ (age, disability, gender assignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014)\(^\text{17}\). A breach of the Act occurs when a person’s dignity is violated or a public authority has allowed the creation of an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (Whitfield et al, 2015).

What is of considerable relevance is that the Equality Act 2010 contains a public sector equality duty (the PSED) (Whitfield et al, 2015). The governing bodies of higher education institutions are public authorities (section 149), so, because of their PSED are required to exercise its function considering: the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment of women, the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with particular protected characteristics, as well as the need to foster good relations between different groups\(^\text{18}\) (Whitfield, 2018). It has to be taken into account that a university can be held accountable just for the harassment/discrimination of a student perpetrated by a member of the staff or the institution, not for harassment/discrimination perpetrated by another student (Whitfield, 2018). However, for example, if a university does not investigate an allegation that itself is creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, it is breaching the Act (Whitfield, 2018).

**European and international legislation**

Considering the European Union (EU), there are two important legal instruments that are significant for universities, from whom the UK is not likely to be retracted after Brexit. They are the Istanbul Convention and the EU Victim’s Directive. In addition, the UN Convention on

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\(^\text{17}\) Under the Equality Rights Act 2010 *Direct discrimination* (section 13) is the less favourable treatment of a person because of a protected characteristic. *Indirect discrimination* (section 19) is the provision, criteria or practice that puts a group sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage position. *Harassment* (section 26) is unwanted behaviour (verbal, non-verbal and physical) related to a protected characteristic or which is of sexual nature. *Victimisation* (section 27) is the wrong treatment of someone that has done a ‘protected act’ (such as a complaint to the education provider) (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014).

\(^\text{18}\) The university has to take these provisions into account when makes decisions about the policies and practices “on violence against women, governance of student societies and sports teams, campus security, housing, bars and social spaces” (Whitfield et al, 2015: 6).
the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is, on a global level, the strongest international legislation to use to end discrimination against women in all forms.

The Council of Europe Convention on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence – known as the **Istanbul Convention** – entered into force in 2014. The Convention was signed in 2012 by the UK but it has not been ratified yet. The Istanbul Convention is the existing legal framework in the European context that covers violence, rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), honour-based violence, and forced marriage (IC Change, 2018). It addresses measures to prevent violence, protects victims and prosecutes perpetrators and recognises that violence against women is a violation of human rights (Whitfield, 2018). It is of particular relevance for universities the obligation regarding prevention:

“Parties shall take the necessary measures to promote changes in the social and cultural patterns of behaviour of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men” (Council of Europe, 2014: 7 cited in Whitfield, 2018).

Although by signing the Convention the UK’s government has shown the intention and commitment to end violence against women through the publication of several reports about the progress towards ratifying it, it is not until its ratification when a state is legally bound to it and has the obligation to follow it (Whitfield, 2018).

The **EU Victim’s Directive** came into force in 2015 and establishes the minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. It aims to ensure that victims are treated and recognised with respect and dignity and that they receive proper protection, access to justice and support throughout legal proceedings (EUR-Lex, 2012).

The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women and Girls (**CEDAW**), has been both signed (1981) and ratified by the UK (1986) (OHCHR, n.d.). The Article 1 defines discrimination against women as:

“any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (UN OHCHR, 1979 cited in Whitfield, 2018).
Although it does not create rights, individual women can rely on it to argue about the interpretation of UK law in court as well as render a decision as unlawful if it has not taken the CEDAW into account (Whitfield, 2018).

c. Expectations for the coming years
Most of the activities known as initiation rituals, characteristic of ‘lad culture’, are being banned in UK universities (NUS et al, 2012). More feminist student-led societies are emerging across the UK as a result of cases that have gone mainstream in the media (Phipps, 2018). Sexual harassment and gender-based violence are no longer silenced, and universities are being held accountable and criticized both by students and by members of staff. And, it is relevant to mention that a case-by-case approach is being disrupted by collectives like the 1752 Group19 who proposes to start by framing the analysis of sexual harassment with the institution at the centre (Page, 2015). On 2018, UUK’s report Changing the Culture: One Year On20 stated that there has been progress made across the higher education sector in terms of implementing and improving preventative strategies and encouraging reporting; yet these have been focused on gender-based violence but not on harassment and on student-to-student but not on staff-to-student misconduct. Despite evidence of significant progress being made, there is clearly more to be done, Section 6 exposes a series of recommendations to tackle ‘lad culture’ and insist on institutions’ need to take a proactive role. This shift is indispensable considering that, still today, sexual harassment and gender-based violence is very much part of the student environment as the following section proves with the University of Warwick’s case.

5. STUDY CASE: University of Warwick’s rape chat case
On May 2018, 11 students from the University of Warwick were suspended by a Discipline Committee after an official complaint to the University (made on April 25, 2018). The formal complaint came about as a result of discovering a year and a half active Facebook group chat in which discussion had included gang-raping and sexually assaulting other female students from the University (as well as racist, anti-Semitic misogynistic and ableist language). “What do we do with girls? RAAAAAAAAPE”, “I cannot wait to have surprise sex with some

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19 The 1752 Group is a UK-based research and lobby organization working to end sexual misconduct in higher education (1752 Group, n.d.).

20 The Changing the Culture report (UUK, 2016b), carried out by the UUK Harassment Taskforce was a new guidance and set of recommendations to help universities tackle sexual violence. On 2018, The Changing the Culture: One Year On report (UUK, 2018) reviewed the implementation of both the first report and the Guidance For Higher Education Institutions. How to Handle Alleged Student Misconduct Which May Also Constitute A Criminal Offence (UUK, 2016a).
On the screenshots presented by the two complainants, there were 19 results for the word ‘rape’ (The Boar, 2018a). The accused students, all male and at that time close friends with the complainants, were part of the executive roles of different societies and sports clubs, organizations that in fact, had done charity work for the Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (CRASAC) (The Boar, 2018b). After having interviewed the women, the 11 men mentioned in the complaint were interviewed and a new discovery was made: after the first chat had been shut down, a second chat called “Boys 2.0” had been created including messages like “Let’s do it all again” (BBC, 2019b). The news of the group chats was published online by the student paper The Boar (Lee et al, 2019), they caused a widespread reaction and the case was reported along with national media. To the extent that on May 2019, BBC Three released a 30-minutes documentary (The Warwick Uni Rape Chat Scandal, BBC, 2019b) where students, university staff, an expert from CRASAC and a barrister examined the details of the Warwick case, considering it “far from over” (Lee et al, 2019). It proves the ways ‘lad culture’ is manifested on campus and serves to put into question how universities handle investigations on sexual harassment.

When the first investigation concluded (on June 2018), the involved students received the following penalties: one was banned for life, two received a ten-year suspension and two were banned for one year (Hallan, 2019). In January 2019, it was known that due to appeals, two of the students originally banned for ten years were set to return on the next academic course in addition to the two others originally suspended for one year, meaning that four of the group chat members were about to go back to Warwick on September 2019. The original complainants were not informed about the outcomes of these appeals and accused the University of Warwick of lack of transparency, lack of support and lack of commitment to ending the existing rape and misogynist culture (The Boar, 2019b; see in Annexes). One of the female students affected, said in an open letter published by The Boar “I feel terrified at the prospect of having these boys in my seminars and lectures, as they sit there feeling guilt-free” (The Boar, 2019a; see in Annexes).
The petition on Change.org Don’t allow those involved in group chat at Warwick Uni back. Say No To Violence on Campus compiled around 85,000 signatories, and online mobilization under the Twitter campaign #ShameOnYouWarwick trended. The news of the return provoked a strong reaction among students, the university staff, and the Students Union. On February 4, 2019, Warwick Vice-Chancellor’s Stuart Croft announced that the convicted students would not return to the university (University of Warwick, 2019a), without being clear about whether the decision had been made by the university or by the students themselves (Lee et al, 2019). This update of the case was discovered by the affected female students through the media and, in the BBC’s documentary, they reported that they had not received a personal apology from the university other than their press statements (Lee et al, 2019).

The online mobilization #ShameOnYouWarwick was followed by a mobilization on campus, the Reclaim Our University Demo21 on February 6, 2019 organized by the coalition of different societies (Warwick For Free Education, Warwick Enable, Warwick Pride, Warwick Sexpression22, Warwick Student-Staff Solidarity, Warwick Labour, Warwick Anti-Racism and Warwick Anti-Sexism societies) (Warwick For Free Education, 2019). Hundreds of students and academic staff protested at Warwick (they blocked the entrance to the Vice-Chancellor’s office asking for his resignation) (Rodger, 2019) (See Figure 12 in the Annexes). Additionally, in a Facebook statement, the organizers reclaimed accountability for the group chat case, a restructuring of the university practices and funding for an oppression-free and supportive university (Warwick For Free Education, 2019).

**What was the role of the actors involved? What does this case show about ‘lad culture’, sexual harassment and gender-based violence in universities in the UK?**

The Warwick rape chat case certainly is an example of ‘lad culture’. The messages of the chat normalise the sexualisation and objectification of women and support sexual harassment and rape. The ‘banter’ and jokes on rape serve the members of the chat as a homosocial bonding and group identity (NUS et al, 2012). The creation of a second chat after the discovery of the first one demonstrates that the students did not have any sense of guilt and prove that ‘lad culture’ is perceived as ‘banter’, as not serious and as if sexist jokes are fun (NUS et al, 2012).

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21 The Reclaim Our University Demo took place during my academic Erasmus exchange at the University of Warwick.

22 An interview to the President of this society, member of the Warwick SU, was undertaken for this Bachelor’s Dissertation (See Annex b).
Furthermore, contemporary ‘laddism’ happens in a new site: online social media; Facebook is used by a group of young men to frame and perform a patriarchal masculinity (Phipps, 2017a), Facebook represents a site with online anonymity, which enacts ‘lad culture’ easier than offline (Jordan et al, 2018). According to research, women are disproportionately the main target of cyber-violence\(^{23}\) (particularly young women aged 18 – 24), which is a growing and preoccupying phenomenon (EIGE, 2017d) since social media has become a fundamental site “through which young people develop gender norms and relationships” (Jordan et al, 2018: 192).

Considering the institution, over the course of the case the Warwick University released several statements saying that the behaviour of the students involved in the disciplinary processes and investigation was considered “abhorrent and unacceptable in any circumstance (…) goes against all of our values as a community” (University of Warwick, 2019b). The University of Warwick has a student complaint policy that outlines unacceptable behaviours and the process of reporting, including a particular section on social networking (Dignity at Warwick, University of Warwick, 2019c). However, this document is not usually publicized so students tend to not be aware of its existence (BBC, 2019b).

Moreover, confidentiality was justified by the institution (University of Warwick, 2019d) even though the silence and secrecy of the proceedings proved to not protect the students affected (they were not kept informed of the proceeding investigation). Warwick also stated that what was being revised by the second panel of the disciplinary process was not the guilt of the students but the duration of the sentences (University of Warwick, 2019b). In addition to the students’ response already exposed, the Students Union’s President Liam Jackson released a statement directed to the Vice-Chancellor stating that “students no longer have confidence that the current University systems (…) can keep a safe and respectful campus” (Warwick SU, 2019). The penalties’ reduction can be read as saying to students that sexual harassment is not considered by the university as that serious.

\(^{23}\) There are no agreed definitions of cyber VAWG at EU level. There exist various forms of cyber-violence like cyber stalking (by email, social media), non-consensual pornography (‘revenge porn’), cyber harassment or rape and death threats. Because data is scarce further research is needed to understand its impact, yet it is seen in most of the cases as a continuum of any form of offline violence (EIGE, 2017d).
This case serves as well to argue that universities are suffering a ‘neoliberal turn’ (Walby, 2011 cited in Coy et al, 2012). The advocacy for maintaining a certain reputation and competition is greatly present in a university that is a member of the elite Russell Group and ranked 11th in the UK according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2018 (Rodger, 2019) and 9th in the UK according to The Guardian 2020 University Guide (University of Warwick, 2019e). In addition to this environment, it is very questionable that the investigating officer appointed to examine the allegations to the chat, Peter Dunn, was holding at the same time the role of head of press officer, meaning he was responsible for dealing with the media as well as investigating the case (Lee et al, 2019). The complainants stated they thought “it was a very strange appointment (...) It just felt really violating (...) This person that’s writing press statements knows such intimate details about my life” (Lee et al, 2019). A conflict of interests existed, as the investigation was being undertaken by the same person responsible to maintain Warwick’s image in front of the national press.

Further, the case seems to be treated as an individual problem and not as an expression of an extended ‘lad culture’ on campus. That way, the university may be condoning ‘laddist’ attitudes and an environment that makes allowance for sexual harassment if the actions that were taken (reduction of penalties for the accused) did not respond to the values the institution says to hold.

This personalized understanding may be perpetuated as well by the portray made by the media (Phipps, 2018) because by focusing on the individuals suspended and the distinctive case of Warwick, the patriarchal structural issues that Warwick proves are not explained as a contemporary culture that is actually spread among the UK young student communities. Besides, the problem is not solved with the removal of a particular individual of university, it needs to be interpreted as collective and structural (Phipps, 2018).

The University of Warwick because of this incident has been publicly held accountable. This incident has made the higher education institution put under scrutiny its values and policies on sexual misconduct; the disciplinary policy and appeals process are being revised and will be publicly published on summer 2019 (University of Warwick, 2019a).

“We are deeply sorry about the distress that has been caused, first and foremost to the victims of the events surrounding the group chat. Many, inside and outside the University, have called into question our processes for dealing with the kind of abhorrent behaviour we saw in the group chat. Consequently, the University’s governing Council, including its Students’ Union representatives, agreed unanimously on 6 February to set up a review of our student disciplinary and appeals process” (University of Warwick, 2019a).
6. RECOMMENDATIONS

‘Lad culture’ and its damaging effects are to some degree present in every student community; being socialising and nightlife (with high amounts of alcohol consumption) the spaces where it is manifested the most. As it has been argued, universities are responsible for overcoming this culture and for creating a safer, more positive and more empowering culture on campus and thus make a shift from ignoring ‘lad culture’, not challenging it and socially and structurally facilitating it (NUS et al, 2012). Among other, the key recommendations to be made are: a zero-tolerant approach to harassment and violence in the university community (applying to students, staff, institutions and Students’ Unions), an institutional policy to tackle VAW (NUS, 2010) and to assure that appropriate report and support mechanisms are in place (UUK, 2016b).

UN Women (2018) has proposed a set of 4 principles to guide an effective response and prevention of sexual harassment and VAW on campus. The outline of this section follows these guiding principles as a basis to expose a broader series of key recommendations:

(1) A comprehensive approach: to work across multiple levels in order to assure consistency, that is, to coordinate and regularly assess initiatives between the university (from students, clubs and societies’ committees, and Students’ Unions staff to faculties and senior management staff) and local, national and international organizations and institutions as well as the justice system, the police force and local bars, clubs and rape crisis specialized centres (NUS, 2016a). Moreover, universities should take an approach that considers the following levels: individual (to build skills through awareness-raising campaigns and trainings on VAW); relationship (to build skills through trainings on consent and abuse); community (to cooperate with service providers like the National Health Services – NHS in the case of the UK and organizations like the NUS); and institutional (to create clear policies and mechanisms and widely promote them) (UN Women, 2018).

A comprehensive approach with cooperation of the groups within and associated to the educational community is key to tackle sexual harassment and violence on campus (NUS, 2016a). According to UUK (2016b), there is a correlation between those universities that have taken a cross-institutional approach and have avoid a decentralised structure and those reducing incidents and influencing real cultural change. Institutions and Students’ Unions are the key actors, accordingly, they have to work jointly to develop a strategy (and monitor its progress) to tackle the problem along with ensuring there is both an institutional policy that is survivor-
centred and zero-tolerant with violence and harassment (non-verbal and verbal) and that includes clear disciplinary procedures, and a set of support and reporting mechanisms everyone have access to and is aware of (NUS, 2010). As in prevention, it is vital to raise awareness of VAW among staff and students and equip them to identify and challenge any unacceptable behaviour (bystander programmes are discussed below); indeed, the education space that universities occupy need to be learning spaces where gender stereotypes and ‘lad’ masculinities are questioned. Also, legal education should be provided (Whitfield, 2018). The purpose of a coordinated strategy certainly is to attain durable changes in attitudes and practices (UN Women, 2010). So, it is fundamental that any strategy formulated to tackle sexual violence and ‘lad culture’ takes a long-term approach in order to ensure strong and effective changes (NUS, 2016a).

(2) A **Survivor-centred and a ‘do no harm’ approach**: clear prioritization of the rights and needs of survivors through the provision of quality services (medical care, psychological support, safety and legal assistance) and avoidance of blame (UN Women, 2018).

Universities are responsible for creating an environment where students feel safe. So, although most of the incidents take place in private, women have reported feeling unsafe around halls of residence, Students’ Unions and especially, nightclubs (NUS, 2010). Considering that extra-curricular activities are a huge part of the students’ life, sports clubs, societies and nightlife spaces (mostly within the umbrella of Students’ Unions) have to be spaces all students feel comfortable and included in; to do so, sexual consent courses should be compulsory and part of the university curricula. Many universities have already adopted zero-tolerant policies that set behaviour expectations and so back disciplinary regulations, to a large extent thanks to Students’ Unions and the NUS with initiatives like *Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment* and *I Heart Consent* (UUK, 2016b) intended to raise awareness, empower and protect students. As another example, public transport until late hours at night should be provided and security staff should be trained to recognize and deal with harassment and VAW (NUS, 2010). On the other hand, under no circumstances the focus has to be on the survivor’s behaviour (alcohol consumption or clothes) (UN Women, 2018), rather, accountability should stay with the perpetrator (NUS, 2010). Accordingly, all policies and strategies to raise awareness have to combat victim-blaming and adopt a non-judgemental manner (NUS, 2018).
(3) A Human rights-based approach: all individuals who report should be treated equally, especially those suffering multiple discriminations (based on race or sexual orientation and identity), indeed, economic and social factors have to be considered on the evaluation of cases and the implementation of strategies (UN Women, 2018).

(4) Perpetrator accountability: universities have to guarantee that perpetrators are held accountable and above all, that survivors are safe (UN Women, 2018).

As it has been mentioned, students have to be agents of change in order to challenge ‘lad culture’, so, bystander initiatives (like the ‘Intervention Initiative’24) (BI) have proved to increase willingness to intervene among their participants (UUK, 2016b). The implementation of a bystander programme, based on the idea that we are witnesses and bystanders at all time, aims to equip men and women with the confidence and the skills necessary to recognise VAW and sexual harassment and therefore decide to intervene, to take a proactive response. Its main challenge is the gap in understanding the context of the behaviour “in relation to broader social norms around gender and sexuality” (Jordan et al, 2018: 189), there is a tendency to point and identify people to blame, to individualise and even see incidents as gender neutral (NUS, 2016b).

Finally, another relevant issue is data collection which helps to understand the scale and nature of the problem. At the moment universities have no obligation to collect data (PHE, 2016), and the existent evidence proving that gender-based violence and harassment are present in UK universities, has been collected by individual and independent actors. It is relevant that universities start to conduct surveys because without previous analysis of its particular culture it becomes difficult to try to challenge it. Furthermore, effective reporting will improve data collection and enable institutions to assess regularly the effectiveness of their procedures (UUK, 2016b).

24 A free resource (toolkit of 8 sessions) for universities consisting on an evidence-based educational program for prevention delivered by trained facilitators (Public Health England, 2016).
7. FINAL REMARKS

In 2018 a group of 11 young male students were found to have a Facebook group chat to discuss about sexually assaulting female students (The Boar, 2018a). The Warwick rape chat case is just an example of a sexualised and ‘lad’ culture that persists among young people in the UK. Even though there is no centrally-collected data (House of Commons, 2018) evidence suggests that sexual harassment and gender-based violence, both perpetrated by students and by members of staff, is a very extended problem in UK universities that negatively impacts women students’ experiences at university. Indeed, it seems to be taking place in a neoliberal education environment that prioritises academic recognition and that is not interested on institutionally recognize the structural scale of this problematic and rather takes an individual approach that avoids putting the institution and a culture in the centre (Phipps, 2018).

As a response, several guidance on how to handle sexual misconduct have been provided to advise higher education institutions. Universities are responsible and have, as authorities of the public sector (as set in the Equality Act 2010), the duty to create an environment for learning where all students feel safe in, one where any offensive or intimidating act is not accepted (Whitfield, 2018). Universities need clear reporting mechanisms, effective systems of accountability, enforceable policies and prevention programmes that are regularly assessed and that consider the specific needs of each institution and of each group of students. Any strategy taken to tackle the problem, any policy or procedure implemented, must be comprehensive, take an approach that is based on the survivor and on human rights, and hold the perpetrator accountable (UN Women, 2018).

The Sustainable Development Goals could be a turning point for gender equality, yet no country is likely to achieve SDG 5 by 2030 considering the current indicators (Equal Measures 2030, 2019a). In an academic context where the future citizens of the world are being educated, the issue of sexual harassment and gender-based violence must be tackled and considered a priority. The UK is ranked 17th in the world in terms of gender equality (Equal Measures 2030, 2019b), yet the evidence presented is absolutely alarming. In conclusion, the issue of women students’ experiences of sexual harassment and gender-based violence is critical enough to not be just a responsibility of the universities. In order to achieve SDG 5 on Gender Equality action must be taken at all levels and must be strategically integrated in all policies to ensure that women students do not longer experience gender-based violence, which is the most brutal manifestation of gender inequality and a violation of human rights (EIGE, 2017b).
8. LIST OF REFERENCES


EIGE (2017d) *Cyber violence against women and girls*. European Institute for Gender Equality.


Women in Sports (2018) *Where are all women? Shining a light on the visibility of women’s sport in the media*. Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the EU.


9. ANNEXES

a. Figures

Figure 1. Behaviours considered sexual harassment on campus in the UK included in the *Hidden Marks’s Report*

1. Someone making comments with a sexual overtone that made you feel uncomfortable

2. Someone wolf whistling, catcalling or making noises with sexual overtones

3. Someone asking you questions about your sex or romantic life when it was clearly irrelevant or none of their business

4. Someone asking you questions about your sexuality when it was clearly irrelevant or none of their business

5. Someone exposing their sexual organs to you when you did not agree to see them

6. Someone groping, pinching or smacking your bottom when you did not agree to them doing so

7. Someone groping, pinching or touching your breasts when you did not agree to them doing so

8. Someone lifting up your skirt in public without you agreeing

Source: NUS (2010).
Figure 2. Gender Equality Index 2017: Indicator for violence in the United Kingdom (data from 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
<th>Severity</th>
<th>Disclosure</th>
<th>Additional indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since age 15</td>
<td>Percentage of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the past 12 months</td>
<td>Percentage of women who experienced health consequences of physical and/or sexual violence since age 15</td>
<td>Percentage of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from several types of perpetrators (current partner, former partner and/or non-partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-28</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: EIGE (2017c).
Figure 3. Percentage of women who experienced partner abuse in 2017–2018 in the UK

Source: ONS (2018a).

Figure 4. Percentage of women and girls aged 16–59 subjected to sexual assault in 2016–2017 in the UK

Source: ONS (2017).

Figure 5. Layers of data sources of Violence Against Women developed by EIGE (2017c) in the context of the Gender Equality Index

Source: EIGE 2017c.
Figure 6. Results regarding the consequences of experiencing sexual violence included in TSR and Revolt Sexual Assault’s Survey (data from 2018)

Students reported significant impact on self-confidence, mental health, studies and social life as a result of experiencing sexual violence.

**Academic consequences include respondents considering or engaging in;**

- **25%** skipping lectures, tutorials, changing or dropping certain modules to avoid the perpetrators
- **16%** suspending their studies or dropping out of their degree

Source: TSR & Revolt Sexual Assault (2018).

Figure 7. Results regarding support available included in TSR and Revolt Sexual Assault’s Survey (data from 2018)

- **9%** of students turned to student support services. The majority turn to friends for support
- **7%** of students living in halls of residence who have experienced sexual assault or harassment turned to someone responsible for welfare

Source: TSR & Revolt Sexual Assault (2018).
Figure 8. Results regarding attitudes towards sexual violence on university campuses included in TSR and Revolt Sexual Assault’s Survey (data from 2018)

- **51%** of respondents believed there was an understanding of what does and doesn’t constitute consent
- **53%** agree that there is a belief that going home with someone means you want to sleep with them
- **55%** agree that there are attitudes and behaviours that sexualise and objectify women
- **56%** agree that certain people believe they are entitled to sex
- **78%** agree that certain people blame the victim for the sexual violence they experienced
- **42%** agree that actions constituting sexual assault and harassment had become normalised at university
- **35%** agree that there is a belief that sexual assault and harassment are ‘not a big deal’
- **47%** agree that there is a belief that groping is sexual assault
- **45%** agree that there is a belief that people make false reports of sexual assault or harassment
- **33%** have no knowledge or very little knowledge about where to seek support if they experience sexual violence

Source: TSR & Revolt Sexual Assault (2018).
Figure 9. Results regarding witnesses and bystander intervention included in TSR and Revolt Sexual Assault’s Survey (data from 2018)

31% have also witnessed sexual assault or harassment at university

Of those who witnessed and intervened in incidents of sexual violence:

- 72% talked to the victim
- 4% reported the incident(s) to the university
- 2% called the police

47% of those who did not intervene simply did not know what to do

16% of all students believe incidents of sexual violence are regularly discussed

Source: TSR & Revolt Sexual Assault (2018).

Figures 10. Screenshot regarding the Warwick’s rape chat case


Figure 11. Screenshot regarding the Warwick’s rape chat case

b. Interview: description of the individual and transcript

Who? President of Warwick Sexpression.
When? 1pm, 13\textsuperscript{th} March 2019.
Where? Students Union, University of Warwick (Coventry, UK).

Warwick Sexpression is a society part of Warwick’s Students’ Union (Warwick SU, n.d.) and represents a branch of Sexpression:UK, a national charity led by students that “empowers young people to make decisions about sex and relations by running informal and comprehensive sex and relationship sessions” (Sexpression:UK, n.d.). Warwick Sexpression runs Welcome Week Events, Welfare Wednesdays (talks on topics like bodily changes, contraception, sex and consent, sexual orientation or the media) and organizes campaigns and actions like distributing condoms at POP! (Warwick SU’s party happening every Wednesday at the SU’s nightclub The Cooper Rooms) (Warwick SU, n.d.).

\textbf{Rita Trias Prats (RTP):} What does Warwick Sexpression do in general? What’s your main task?

\textbf{President Warwick Sexpression (PWS):} Our main goal is to teach sex and consent relations in local schools, so, trying to break down taboos and address misconceptions about gender, about sexism, shame. And trying to […] these ideas and addressing so that young people feel informed and make their own decisions about their bodies and feel a bit more empowered.

\textbf{RTP:} Do you think that sex education should be part of the curriculum at school?
PWS: Yes, definitely. And I’ve just been doing research about that and I know that on 2020 will be made, sex education will be made statutory and there are really changes. There has to be taught, it’s a kind of guidance, it’s a bit ‘wishy-washy’ but I think there are more problems to come with this new statutory because pleasure isn’t addressed and there’s a worry that if it’s not talked about by teachers that say I don’t really want to teach it, students are gonna leave being more confused and more worried.

RTP: So, do you think that for example the workshops organised by your organization, or the Netflix series Sex Education, are means to reach young people more easily compared to having teachers teaching it at school?

PWS: 100% and related to our work as we are young students, we try to approach the topic in an informal way rather than lecturing, so that young people feel more open and safer to talk about sex.

RTP: So, your campaigns target young people from 13 to 18 years old according to your website. Why is that? Why your work is not extended to target university students?

PWS: Well, we do a bunch of activities on campus in collaboration with the SU and other societies. It’s just that our goal is to reach younger people still going to school as at that age is when a lot of them start to engage with sex and we want to make available for them the information about relationships and sexuality we did not have access to when we were their age. But obviously universities should run more workshops or activities on the topic, […] we have to work on how to engage more students in all this given that it’s always the same people coming… like today that’s Wednesday and we’re supposed to be doing the event “Discuss with Us” at T-bar on masturbation and just the exec is here […]

RTP: Although it is problematic to draw direct and casual connections, research has proved that UK campuses are environments where ‘lad culture’ plays a huge role in students’ experiences… Do you agree?

PWS: Well… as you say it’s difficult to point to just one factor, there is everyone’s background, even what you study or the societies you’re member of […] but the imputs and models we’ve all got are those of men over women.

RTP: But are you familiar with the concept ‘lad culture’ and how it’s manifested?

PWS: Yes I mean ‘lad culture’ is very much going on though several initiatives are running, I think work is being done by the National Students Union and also SUs and on this sense I’m kinda optimistic.

RTP: As part of my analysis I am going to analyse the Warwick rape chat case… as it is very much related to my Dissertation and just happened while I was here. The Vice-Chancellor stated
that Warwick is a safe space and named the support mechanisms in place like the Wellbeing Support Services or the Residential Life Team. Also there’s the Dignity at Warwick Policy. Are these mechanisms just formalities?

**PWS:** Ok well I’ll answer on a personal basis, although our society is part of the coalition on that here in Warwick.

**RTP:** Yes, sure sure.

**PWS:** This started last year and obviously Warwick, as in the university has not done it well at all, then the news they were coming back without telling the affected […] just very infuriating and made us feel uncomfortable even embarrassed, because you’ve been studying happily here and overnight you realize that at the same time this has been going on…

**RTP:** So strategies like the Twitter campaign #ShameOnYouWarwick or the march were ways to hold this uni accountable?

**PWS:** As Sexpression Warwick and as the exec we took part with the rest of societies and students in the march in protest of the recent events, it was not only the return of the chat members to campus, but the ethos on campus and really shows to what extent consent and respect education needs to be put in the centre at universities.

**RTP:** Okey. […] and so in this sense considering that sexual harassment and threats related to gender-based violence acts like rape happen, would you agree that this example, here in Warwick confirms that a sexist culture, a ‘lad’ environment so to say is very much in place among young people?

**PWS:** I would agree, but I want to point out also that there is action taking place against this and that there is people and organizations and within academia really pushing for accountability and change, we are angry. My main concern I would say lays on what universities do, because here you can see that the SU is mobilized and we have policies and security on campus, but then happens what happened and you see that we’re still that far. […] Okey now I’m so sorry and I don’t mean to be rude but seems we’ll do the talk anyway so, actually you can join […]

**RTP:** Oh okey yes don’t worry in fact thank you so much for sharing all this with me.

**PWS:** I’m thinking now that maybe you’ll be interested there’s a guy I now, I can send you his mail that’s planning some kind of thing for men on campus, I’m not sure but like a kind of society or a series of events regarding masculinity, like targeting men on campus you’ll maybe be interested on talking to him.

**RTP:** Oh yes sure that would be great.
c. Selection of 5 local and national news

(1) “Sexual harassment ‘at epidemic levels’ in UK universities” (Batty et al, 2017)

Sexual harassment, misconduct and gender violence by university staff are at epidemic levels in the UK, a Guardian investigation suggests. Freedom of information (FoI) requests sent to 120 universities found that students made at least 169 such allegations against academic and non-academic staff from 2011-12 to 2016-17. At least another 127 allegations about staff were made by colleagues. But scores of alleged victims have told the Guardian they were dissuaded from making official complaints, and either withdrew their allegations or settled for an informal resolution. Many others said they never reported their harassment, fearful of the impact on their education or careers. This suggests that the true scale of the problem is far greater than the FoI figures reveal. “These numbers are shocking, but sadly, from our experience, are just the tip of the iceberg,” said Dr Ann Olivarius, senior partner at the law firm McAllister Olivarius. “Sexual harassment of students by staff members has reached epidemic levels in British universities. Most universities have no effective mechanism to stop staff from pressuring students into sexual relationships, and when it happens, any sort of disciplinary action is pretty much nonexistent. Those in charge are often colleagues who have many incentives not to intervene. “Young women are often terrified about the consequences if they make a complaint about a staff member. So often, when they do, the university’s chief concern is to downplay any wrongdoing and protect its own reputation by keeping the whole thing quiet.” Anna Bull, co-founder of the 1752 Group, set up to address staff-student sexual harassment in higher education, said: “There is evidence to suggest that the actual figures in the UK will be staggering. The Association of American Universities undertook a detailed survey of sexual assault and sexual misconduct in 2015 (student-student and staff-student). Surveys were completed on 27 campuses, with 150,072 students responding. The survey found reporting rates for sexual harassment – staff and student – [were] 7.7%, and only 28% of even the most serious incidents are reported to an organisation or agency.” Oxford University reported the highest number of allegations against staff by students, with 11 received by its central administration and 10 by colleges – though it said there may have been duplication between college and central administration figures. It was followed by Nottingham with 10, Edinburgh with nine, University of the Arts London (UAL) and Essex with seven and Cambridge with at least six. Oxford also had the most staff-on-staff allegations, with 17 recorded centrally and three by colleges – though again, there may be duplication. Next was Cambridge with at least seven, Portsmouth with six, and Exeter, York and LSE with five each. Nottingham and Goldsmiths said they had fewer than 10. Only five universities said they had compensated students. Goldsmiths, University of London, which has
been criticised for using non-disclosure agreements in settlements, paid out the most – £192,146 – followed by UAL, which gave about £64,000 to two students, plus an undisclosed sum to a staff member over an allegation of sexual harassment by a colleague. Legal experts and campaigners have cautioned that universities reporting a high number of allegations and investigations are not necessarily those with the worst problems. Indeed, higher figures might reflect that procedures there are more effective. A junior female member of staff at a university in southern England told the Guardian she had tried to raise concerns about sexual harassment in her department for five years, but no manager she contacted had taken action. “The worst thing is that there are many people who are suffering under this professor. Simply putting in a formal complaint will not do anything but make life hell for me and other women. He will never be fired. Everyone I have spoken to confirms this.” A graduate student who was sexually assaulted by a senior academic told the Guardian that her university in southern England had pressured her to drop her complaint. She said: “They offered me a settlement on the condition that I drop out of the programme and accept that no internal investigation on the member of staff would take place. “When I refused, they were forced to conduct an independent investigation; however, the investigation didn’t feel independent at all. In the end, none of my complaints were upheld, despite all the evidence of the member of staff’s behaviour towards me. The investigator concluded that the senior member of staff and I were ‘friends’, and that he had simply tried to ‘help’ me. The member of staff still has his post in the institution, he is still teaching and supervising students, whereas I am not even attending the campus, and I am completing my studies remotely.” Her complaint is now being investigated by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, which assesses whether universities have correctly followed their procedures. A senior lecturer at a university in the north of England told the Guardian she had raised an allegation of sexual harassment against a co-worker as an informal complaint but was told it would have to be treated as a formal grievance. The university went ahead with its own investigation and said it had found evidence of a relationship between the complainant and the accused, so it could not be sexual harassment. She denies there was any relationship. She was asked to withdraw her complaint in order to keep her position. Of those cases disclosed in response to FoI requests, 136 staff-on-student cases were investigated by universities. The vast majority were investigated internally; only a small number were investigated by the police. The survey also found that 38 staff left their university or changed jobs following allegations that they had sexually harassed students. Another 109 staff-on-staff cases were investigated, of which almost all were internal investigations. A further 48 staff left their university or changed jobs following allegations that they had sexually harassed colleagues. Although only three
universities – Goldsmiths, Liverpool John Moore and Plymouth – reported using non-disclosure agreements or confidentiality clauses in settlements, victims and experts said payments were often classified as being made for other types of misconduct, such as poor supervision or behaviour, to protect universities’ reputations. Edinburgh and LSE recorded the highest number of staff who left or changed jobs following allegations, with five apiece. The barrister Georgina Calvert-Lee, of McAllister Olivarius, said she knew of a case where a university investigator had downgraded a female student’s allegation of sexual harassment against a professor to a failure to report a consensual relationship. This avoided the need to take the matter before a staff tribunal, and the academic had found a job at another university. In another case, she said, the university administration had stepped in to persuade an academic accused of sexual assault to leave with a financial settlement and a non-disclosure agreement. Although most universities have policies on staff-student relationships, few record how many there are, raising questions about how such relationships are monitored. Legal experts and academics who examined more than 30 policies for the Guardian found none forbade such relationships and few discouraged them. Calvert-Lee said: “None of them really tackle the issue squarely and clearly. The one that surprised me in its blatant disregard for the weaker party was Lincoln College, Oxford, which says overtly that the reason that it wants a reporting of these relationships is to ensure it will not have an adverse effect on the reputation of the college.” The college said in a statement: “The college’s policy is to ensure it is informed of any relationships between employees and students that are inappropriate. This is for the protection of the people involved as well as the college.” Prof Nicole Westmarland, who led an independent inquiry into the University of Sussex’s handling of domestic violence, said: “It is the tip of the iceberg. Since being involved in the Sussex review I have had people from many other universities coming forward and telling me about their experiences and equally I’ve had other universities ask: was this just Sussex? And my answer is absolutely it isn’t.” Olivarius, whose law firm represents people who have been sexually harassed in the US and UK, called for a mandatory national system to tackle sexual harassment by staff based on the Human Rights Act and the Equality Act to replace “the current hodgepodge of systems”. She said: “There must be a ban on any sexual contact between university staff and all undergraduates, and between staff and graduates in the same field. The penalty for violating the no-contact rule should be swift termination with a public statement and a mandated report to a central UK registry.” A University of Oxford spokesman said: “A wide-ranging campaign across the university in recent years has made clear that sexual assault and harassment, whether by staff or students, will not be tolerated anywhere at Oxford. We see the number of students now coming forward to disclose or report incidents as reflecting the
The pro-vice-chancellor for education at the University of Cambridge, Prof Graham Virgo, said: “It is a very significant challenge for people to disclose sexual misconduct or harassment; as a result we have designed the procedure with student choice at its heart, so students can choose for their complaint to be heard in a way that suits them.” Stephen Marshall, university secretary and registrar at UAL, said: “There is no place for sexual harassment or gender-based violence at UAL. We are already working hard to improve how we handle and prevent incidents of harassment.” A University of Nottingham spokesperson said: “There have been no such allegations from students, relating to university staff, in the past three years and less than 10 incidents in the two years prior to this. Similarly with regards [to] allegations of staff from staff there have been less than 10 allegations in the last five years. Clearly our range of initiatives and policies around this issue is helping to drive this message home.” A University of Essex spokesman said: “We have a zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual harassment and have robust procedures in place for students and staff to report instances of sexual harassment.” A University of Edinburgh spokeswoman said: “We recognise that, on occasion, there will be legitimate complaints that individuals wish to raise and we actively encourage the reporting of concerns and maintain an effective complaints procedure for that purpose.”

(2) “11 Warwick students temporarily suspended after group chat exposed” (The Boar, 2018a)

(Trigger warnings: sexual violence, rape, racism, paedophilia, FGM).

A group of 11 students at the University of Warwick have been given precautionary suspensions following an official complaint to the University. The complaint came about as a result of a group chat in which discussion included raping and sexually assaulting other students from the University. In addition to a number of conversations about sexually assaulting other students, the chat is alleged to include racist, anti-Semitic, misogynistic and ableist language, as well as claims of paedophilic activity. The University’s investigation into the matter is still ongoing. This article includes screenshots of the alleged chat that have been presented as evidence in the investigation. The names of all involved have been redacted. Ninety-eight screenshots from the chat were submitted to the University as part of the complaint. Those handed precautionary suspensions include senior members of several society execs, both academic and sporting. Among those temporarily suspended are alleged to be social secretaries, tour secretaries, a careers officer and a treasurer, both outgoing and incoming. As part of their exec roles, several of the students represented Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (CRASAC) in the context of their society’s charity work. In messages seen by The Boar, there are multiple references to
rape. One screen shot reveals there were 19 results for the word “rape” in the group chat. Under one search for “rape”, the chat members discuss raping another female individual and her friends. In another exchange, one individual says he will rape a girl in his flat. Another chat member responds saying that this “Wouldn’t even be unfair”. A separate screenshot appears to show a member of the chat posting a screenshot of a student talking about their experience of sexual assault on social media, followed by a laughing emoji. Another screenshot shows one chat member talking of having “surprise sex” with freshers. In another exchange, this individual discusses having sex with a student in Year 10. The same individual makes multiple references to rape throughout the screenshots. In another exchange, the same individual states they will “pull anything with/without a pulse”. In a separate screenshot, this individual also claims “What do we do with girls? RAAAAAAAPAAAPE.” The individuals also discuss which female they would most like to ‘double foot’, with one chat member stating that the female “deserves hair straighteners on her flaps”. Another screenshot from the chat reveals a conversation which includes offensive and racist language, with individuals claiming they “love Hitler” and calls for a “crusade for racism”. The screenshots show that for a period of time the chat was named ‘Fuck Women, Disrespect them all’ with the nicknames of several members altered to ‘Grenfell’ and ‘Taxi Jew’. In another conversation, two chat members discuss another female individual who cannot be named. In this conversation, they also talk about Derrick Bird and ‘Fritzl’. Derrick Bird killed 12 people and injured 11 in a shooting spree in Cumbria in 2010. The Fritzl case concerns Josef Fritzl, who held his daughter captive and repeatedly raped her for twenty-four years. The Boar has also been provided with evidence that several of the students who have been temporarily suspended separately acknowledged the existence of the group chat. When originally contacted by The Boar to ask whether students had been suspended, the University stated: “From time to time the University will issue a precautionary suspension to a student or students while a potential disciplinary matter is being investigated. “The University would not normally comment further on such a suspension until the relevant processes had concluded.” The Boar will be following the investigation and will update you on any further progress. If you have been affected by any of these issues, please contact Wellbeing Support or Warwick SU Advice Centre. https://warwick.ac.uk/services/supportservices; warwicksu.com/advice. Alternatively, you can also contact the Coventry Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (CRASAC) on 02476 277777 – the helpline is open Monday-Friday, 10am-2pm, and Monday and Thursday evenings from 6-8pm. If phoning outside these hours, you can leave a voicemail message for someone from the helpline to phone you back.
(3) “A letter to Warwick: ‘You have forgotten about the victims’” (The Boar, 2019a)
The following is an open letter to the University by one of the female students named and talked about in the group chat, who asked The Boar to publish on her behalf.
Warwick, I have enjoyed some of the best times of my life so far at your institution – but more of the worst. Over the past eighteen months, I have relapsed twice into my depression. I have relapsed into my eating disorder. I have developed anxiety and have been on medication for it ever since. You have failed to protect countless students like myself, and don’t even have an adequate system in place to look after students who are suffering and hurting. I had imagined my university years would be the best of my life. I arrived and met some of the most amazing people I thought could exist, and made best friends I thought would be for life. Until we discovered the group chat. Words cannot describe the heartbreak that overcame myself and other victims. We were discussed so violently. We were humiliated, as if for sport. These boys were my friends – like my brothers. And they destroyed me. To think of the friendship, I had with them – to recall that some of them had slept on my floor, met my parents and knew where I lived – and then to read the threats made behind my back was beyond difficult. Racism, sexism, sexually explicit descriptions, ableism, threats of sexual assault, and homophobia. Are these issues on which Warwick has nothing to say? Does the university want its students to feel that such threats, comments and ‘jokes’ are acceptable and normal? This is the message sent out by the recent decision to allow the perpetrators back onto campus next year. Warwick consistently ranks as a top 10 UK university, and potential world leaders of the future are educated every day on our campus. It claims to be inclusive for all races, sexualities, sexes, genders and religions. Allowing the boys to return so soon means they have had nothing but a slap on the wrist. They have been in these sorts of chats before and whether it was a private chat or not, they made their intentions clear. The whole country saw the chat that was exposed. They then made another one. Even after being disciplined, there was no show of remorse. Most importantly though, you have forgotten about and humiliated the victims. This year has been mentally and physically exhausting – a nightmare that not even moving abroad has been able to protect me from. My university abroad has been far more helpful in offering support for my mental health than you, Warwick. I know I’m not alone when I say that coming back is no longer a prospect that excites me as it once did. In fact, I feel terrified at the prospect of having these boys in my seminars and lectures, as they sit there feeling guilt-free. Knowing that I may have to come face to face with them again just to continue my education is unacceptable. Even when this chat first came to my knowledge last year, only 3 of the 11 bothered to try to repair our relationship; one of them in particular was more concerned and vocal about me keeping my
mouth shut. Consider the staff too. Countless lecturers and researchers invest so much of their life into your institution. I doubt many will be comfortable teaching such students, and question whether they will want to continue teaching at a university that looks out for them. You expect us to return from semesters abroad and study alongside these men? You expect prospective students to continue applying to a university that prioritises them over those of us who do not feel safe? It is a source of shame for past, present and future Warwick alumni that you lack the courage to stand by us. Who are you protecting Warwick?

(4) “BREAKING: Group chat students back next year as Warwick accused of lack of transparency” (The Boar, 2019b)
An investigation by The Boar into the aftermath of the Warwick group chat scandal has revealed that students originally banned from campus are set to return next academic year, following an alleged lack of transparency on the part of the University. The students’ return follows an appeals process completed over summer that significantly reduced some of their punishments. It is understood that two individuals who were originally banned from campus for 10 years have had their punishments reduced to one year after appealing. This means that both will be able to return in the 2019/20 academic year. This also means of the five students originally required to leave or withdraw from the University, four will return next year, the exception being one student who chose to withdraw. Despite the University issuing a press release to announce the original outcome of the disciplinary proceedings in June, there have been no official announcements from the University regarding the latest appeals process. The original complainants also heard the University’s initial ruling from the press, who were informed before they were. When asked by The Boar in October 2018 whether any of the appeals had been successful, or if any disciplinary action had been altered, the University stated only that none of the individuals would be back on campus this year. They stated that “the two original complainants should have completed their degrees before any of those five individuals are due to return to campus” – commenting that they could not say any more due to “duties of confidentiality”. The complainants raised concerns over the alleged “deceitful” nature of press releases issued by the University. In response, the University stated to them that as well as “the need to protect all parties in the investigation and maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality”, the “timing and nature” of the press releases was based on “press interest”. After learning of the outcome of the group chat students’ appeals process, the original complainants submitted a Stage 3 complaint to the University. The request to advance to Stage 3 was rejected by the University as “its final decision”, with Vice-Chancellor and President
Stuart Croft determining that there were “insufficient grounds” to progress the complaint. This decision was taken by Stuart Croft as the Provost, who would normally make the decision, was involved in previous aspects of the complaint. Furthermore, it is understood that the complainants had to ask repeatedly for the results of the appeals process, despite being in regular contact with the University. The second appeal was held in late September, and the complainants were finally provided the outcome on 19 October, three weeks after they were told “it will be with you next week”. Due to the Student Complaints Procedure, the complainants could not make an official complaint against the University until the outcome of the appeals process had been delivered to them. This alleged lack of transparency is compounded by accusations of a lack of communication between those handling the complaint and other areas of the University. Some lecturers and members of staff in the students’ academic department have not been formally told of the outcome in the appeals process and are unaware of the changes. Others have expressed concerns over teaching the students when they return, and how the University expects them to facilitate seminars. When contacted for comment by The Boar, the University at first maintained that they will not be issuing further statements on the matter. Some of the students involved in the group chat were named online by other press outlets during the summer. The Boar asked the University how it intends to ensure their well-being and safety when they return to study next year, to which they declined to comment. Several hours later however, the University contacted The Boar again to comment: “The University’s focus since the conclusion of the investigation and disciplinary processes has been, and remains, to work to ensure that anyone involved in this matter who remains a student at Warwick is able to complete their studies while minimising any further contact between the original complainants and anyone who received a sanction from the Discipline Committee.” One of the complainants told The Boar: “I wanted to do a masters here but that’s not an option anymore. Other girls who were named and talked about in the chat are still going to be here next year in the same department.” Following the revelation, President Liam Jackson told The Boar on behalf of the Students’ Union: “The Students’ Union would urge anyone who has been affected by this story to come speak to us so we can help support in any way we can. “It is absolutely clear that the University’s disciplinary processes need changing as soon as possible, and the Union will continue to push for this in the coming days and weeks.” The story first made national headlines in May after being broken by The Boar, with protests on campus against rape culture following after. The University announced the outcome of their initial investigation in June, with two students originally banned from campus for 10 years and a third for life. In October, there were reports that some students had returned to campus this year that
were not originally supposed to, which was denied by both the University and the Students’. However, the University did not clarify at the time on whether any of their initial outcomes had been altered.

(5) “Not one single country set to achieve gender equality by 2030” (Ford, 2019)

No country in the world is on track to achieve gender equality by 2030, according to the first index to measure progress against a set of internationally agreed targets. Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, said the index, launched on Monday, “should serve as a wake-up call to the world”. Even the Nordic states, which score highly in the index, would need to take huge strides to fulfil gender commitments in the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), which 193 countries signed up to in 2015. The goals are considered the blueprint for global efforts to end poverty and inequality and halt the climate crisis. The deadline to meet them is 2030. The inaugural SDG Gender Index, developed by the Equal Measures 2030 partnership, found that 2.8 billion women and girls currently live in countries that are not doing enough to improve women’s lives. The index measured progress in 129 countries, marking them from zero to 100 – 100 meaning equality has been achieved – on 51 targets in 14 of the goals. These targets either specifically reference gender equality, or touch on issues that have a disproportionate affect on women and girls, such as whether women have access to mobile banking, or the internet, or a safe water source. According to the index, countries with an overall score of 90 or more are making excellent progress, while those scoring 59 or less are making very poor headway on achieving the goals. The average overall score for the 129 countries in the index – home to 95% of the world’s women and girls – was 65.7, considered a poor result in the scoring system. Women’s underrepresentation in parliament, the gender pay gap and gender-based violence were among the areas all countries were struggling to tackle. Only 21 countries achieved marks of 80 or above, with the top country, Denmark, achieving 89.3. The UK, came 17th with a score of 82.2. Twenty-one countries scored lower than 50, with Chad at the foot of the table with a mark of 33.4. Of particular concern for those involved in compiling the index was that more than half of countries scored poorly on efforts to achieve SDG 5, the much lobbied-for standalone goal to end gender inequality and empower women. The goal contains specific targets to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, end female genital mutilation and child marriage, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and uphold women’s reproductive rights. Alison Holder, director of Equal Measures 2030, said: “I don’t see any countries taking the ambitious action needed to tackle intractable problems – even the best scoring countries. “I don’t see how naturally these problems will go
away. Even among the best scoring countries there are still massive problems.” As well as concerns over slow progress, Holder said she feared achievements could be undone, given the current rollback of abortion laws in the US and challenges to commitments to women’s rights at the United Nations. The US ranked 28th in the index with a score of 77.6 points. “It’s clear that even in countries at the top of the index that progress is never guaranteed,” said Holder.

“We need to guard against countries falling backwards.” Memory Kachambwa, executive director of the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (Femnet), said what is happening in the US, and the power the Trump administration has to influence key language in international agreements, set a worrying precedent. “It’s worrying at an international level because it gives a foothold to other governments to continue to repress women,” she said. “Parties who are very much against women’s rights and gender equality are growing stronger and stronger and are able to have lot of influence in policy spaces a global level.” Although disappointed with the pace of change, she added that the index did at least offer a clearer picture on how countries were doing. “When we talk to policymakers, they say they want the evidence [of gender inequalities]. We now have the evidence,” she said. Europe and North American countries topped the index, while the bottom was dominated by African states. But the index noted that all countries had “different starting points” and, on some targets, states with low GDP were making better progress than wealthier nations in. Denmark, for example, ranks behind Georgia, Kazakhstan and Lithuania on education, partly because the country has a lower percentage of young women who have completed secondary school. It also has fewer women MPs than Senegal and Rwanda, despite the Nordic state having a GDP per capita 56 times higher than Senegal. The bottom 20 countries scored higher than the top 20 for breaking down their budgets by factors such as gender, age, income or region. Women are more likely to have their needs for family planning met in Brazil, China and Nicaragua, than in Canada, the Netherlands and Norway. The index, launched at the Women Deliver conference in Vancouver, will be updated in 2021 and at regular internals until the 2030 SDG deadline. Data are drawn from UN agencies, the World Bank, NGOs, thinktanks and from the consultancy firm Gallup. Equal Measures 2030 is a partnership of civil society and the private sector, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Women’s Health Coalition, KPMG, Femnet, Plan International and Women Deliver. It was set up in 2016 to provide women’s rights advocates with the data they need to hold governments to account for their SDG commitments.