

Guidelines for Preventing Sexual Harassment

Definition

Sexual Harassment is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating the recipient's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.'

Certain kinds of harassment are unlawful; other kinds of harassment may arise from genuine misunderstandings between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, contexts and attitudinal positions; but unlawful or not and deliberate or not, any unwanted conduct that has any of these effects should not be tolerated as part of our work and the work of our institutions. All staff and students have a responsibility to acknowledge imbalances in power relations and be prepared to report, address and resolve instances or allegations of harassment within our institutions swiftly and sensitively.¹

Principles

The guidelines offer advice on preventing sexual harassment or other forms of inappropriate sexual behaviour, taking account of:

- the nature of the subject area, which embraces diverse range of creative practices, some of which may be innovative, experimental and challenging.
- the modes and methods of learning and teaching particular to the performing arts, such as staging and/or devising of productions, practical workshops, training sessions, and placements. Many of these may involve forms of physical contact and methodologies that touch on or draw on material of a personal nature, and may include intensive small-group or one-to-one working. These activities may also occur outside of 'normal' working hours and often foster informal social interactions.

It is not the intention of these guidelines to attempt to curtail academic or artistic freedom, nor freedom of choice made by consenting adults. Rather the aim is to encourage these

¹ These guidelines are discipline-specific and advisory, outlining what as a community we might consider to be 'good practice'. Implementing all or any of the suggestions within them is voluntary and a matter for individual departments in consultation with students. They do not constitute terms and conditions or provide grounds or basis for disciplinary action against staff or students, which must refer to formal, published legal and institutional policies and procedures.

freedoms to be exercised in an ethical, responsible and appropriate manner and with an awareness of inequalities of power.

These guidelines are intended to be inclusive, covering all genders (including transgender women and men and gender-neutral and gender fluid persons) and in regard to an awareness of the way behaviours, assumptions, attitudes, expectations about gender intersect with sexuality, ethnicity (culture and/or 'race') class, disability and age. These guidelines are for teaching staff, students, technicians, administrative staff, visiting speakers and professionals, external contributors to teaching and learning (hereafter 'participants') and we acknowledge that harassment can occur between and within any of these groups.

Key guiding principles in preventing and addressing issues of sexual harassment identified by the working party are **Responsibility, Care** and **Consent**.

Responsibility

We have a **shared responsibility** to address sexual harassment by ensuring we:

- understand what constitutes harassment, acknowledge it when it happens, are prepared to challenge questionable attitudes and patterns of behaviour
- are prepared to take part in relevant training
- regularly revisit and update our knowledge of institutional policies, reporting structures, and procedures
- ensure that all students and staff (including part-time, visiting or off-site participants) are aware of these policies and procedures and that they apply to all activities occurring as part of the work of our institutions
- ensure there are clear pathways for reporting harassment at all stages and levels
- recognise that differences and misunderstandings will occur between people within a workplace and learning community and that addressing conflict quickly and sensitively and in a clear and transparent fashion may avoid long-term distress for all concerned
- take appropriate action if we become aware of sexual harassment in any form to stop it happening. As well as supporting an individual to access the formal procedures for reporting this may include:
 - actively acknowledging behaviour that may constitute harassment if we witness it and checking if the individual subjected to this behaviour has been adversely affected.
 - advocating for someone who feels too distressed or intimidated to make a complaint of harassment
 - helping build a record to establish evidence of harassment either in regard to an individual or a 'culture' of harassment and build a case that will help bring it to an end and prevent it in the future.

Care

We have a fundamental duty of **care** to ourselves, to colleagues, to staff and to students. We accept that there is no pedagogical or academic value in causing unnecessary distress. Therefore we have a duty of care to:

- ensure that students are supplied with information that makes clear the nature content and approaches of programmes of study and of specific courses (or modules) before they sign up to them
- do our best to prepare students when their studies or practical activities include sexually shocking, difficult material or practices which may be exceptionally challenging, or painful in other ways (accepting that it is impossible to cover all issues that may upset or disturb specific individuals)
- acknowledge that not all difficult or painful experiences are valuable. 'This is what it's like in the industry' is never an appropriate justification for questionable behaviour. We should model best practice in universities and conservatoires to help bring about the change we want to see in the industry
- think hard about the patterns in the material we offer the students; while part of our work is to give students access to canonical works and practices, these may embody ideas and attitudes that cumulatively enshrine power inequalities and place certain people in sexually vulnerable roles
- focus - in all communications with each other, written or spoken – on the work, not the person, with an alertness to the (sometimes hidden) power relations in our relationships with each other and in our institutions
- recognise that even outside our institutions – the pub, the theatre trip, the rehearsal, the conference – the student still a student, the lecturer is still a lecturer and equally not all participants are in comparable positions of power in regard to each other
- acknowledge that there are no grey areas. The very concept of a 'grey area' signals a potential breach of respectful and appropriate professional behaviour. We should always work to pursue clarity in our mutual working relationships.

Consent

While we should be able to assume that, in accepting places on degree programmes, students have made an informed choice and therefore consent, in general terms, to the broad range of activities on the degree, this does not entail consent to every particular activity.

For the purposes of this document, consent must be:

- *informed* (we must know what we are consenting to)

- *voluntary* (it must be as possible to withhold as to give consent)
- *explicit* (it must not be assumed, asked for casually or by default)
- *specific* (it must be tied to particular processes, activities or projects)
- *time-bound* (consent is not a single event confined to the start of a process; it must be confirmed, especially as the activity changes and develops, allowing for the possibility of consent being renegotiated or withdrawn).

Given the inherently participatory and embodied nature of many of our teaching practices these guidelines take the notion of that we have a duty of **consent** as a fundamental principle, recognising that

- students may feel pressure from peers to participate in activities that make them feel uncomfortable, as well as pressure from staff and/or the broader industry to embrace a level of exploitation in order to demonstrate a willingness to 'get ahead'
- some theatre practices and traditions come with associations that refusing to participate is a sign of failure (for being not free enough, not open enough, not brave enough, etc.), and we should make the space to critique these values and not unreflectively reproduce them
- participants from different countries and cultural backgrounds may have different attitudes to and experiences of authority and deference and all have a duty to take these cultural differences seriously in finding ways to solicit and express consent.

Active and ongoing discussions about consent are valuable because they help articulate what institutional conduct or anti-harassment policies might mean in the particular contexts of a specific rehearsal room, teaching space or creative process, and involving a particular group of participants.

For example, we might:

- establish ground-rules at the start of a process (e.g. asking 'what expectations do we have of each other?') and clarify what will happen if those rules are bent or broken
- discuss how to ask for assistance, including from those outside of the immediate group, as well as establishing non-verbal cues for pausing or halting a process
- acknowledge and explain the rationale for potential challenges or risks of particular intimate, physical or exposing exercises (e.g. ask 'what are the demands of this project/session?' 'What is the rationale for doing them?')
- anticipate project-specific circumstances that may require particular measures of care and support (e.g. rehearsals involving nudity; devising process involving autobiographical disclosure or workshops that involve extensive physical contact)
- give participants detailed information about a process (e.g. an exercise involving body contact, or biographical disclosure) through demonstration or verbal/written

description in advance of the session to allow for careful consideration of what may be involved

- provide space within a rehearsal or teaching process to reflect on that process ('what have we learnt about how the project is working? is there anything we need to change?').

These examples are not intended to be definitive and may not be appropriate within the context of any given project. Nonetheless, they describe different ways in which consent may become an active process.

Summary

These guidelines arise from a conviction that we have a duty of care to ourselves and each other, a duty to make explicit the processes of establishing consent in our work, and a shared responsibility to challenge and prevent sexual harassment in our discipline. We strongly encourage colleagues to discuss these guidelines amongst themselves and with students to ensure clarity, collective understanding and agreement on these issues and how to deal with them

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