

**Year 3 Public Description of Work for  
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

The 1752 Group

**Who is the Practitioner in Faculty-Staff Sexual Misconduct Work?:  
Views from the UK and US**

**Relevant Rubric Area:**

Improved policies; Evaluating Policies and Procedures

**Description of Work:**

This briefing introduces our article *Who is the Practitioner in Faculty-Staff Sexual Misconduct Work?: Views from the UK and US*. The authors' respective previous work in this area led to our collaboration on this work. We were co-organisers of the National Science Foundation-funded conference *Faculty and Staff Sexual Misconduct* in 2019 at University of Wisconsin, Madison. While universities have engaged in significant work to grapple with student-student sexual misconduct, attention to misconduct perpetrated, and experienced, by higher education employees is relatively nascent. From our discussions and workshops at this conference, we realized there was a wealth of learning to be accrued from conversations and comparisons across the US and the UK, as activists and academics have been pushing for improved practices in this area in both jurisdictions.

In this publication, we analyzed publicly available policy documents on faculty and staff sexual misconduct (FASSM) from two US and two UK universities and mapped out the range of investigative, reporting, and sanctioning processes. In analyzing procedures to produce the diagrams, we were looking for how a victim-survivor might navigate the university structure. We analysed these documents to ask:

- (1) How do institutional policies in the US and UK address sexual misconduct perpetrated and experienced by faculty and staff?
- (2) Which institutional entities do policies direct victims/survivors and perpetrators towards when sexual misconduct occurs?

In order to answer these questions, we introduced two categories of staff/faculty who handle reports of FASSM: *actors* and *practitioners*.

- **Actors** are **staff/faculty tasked with administrative duties in handling sexual misconduct reports**, for example as part of their assigned roles within their department, school, or human resources department.
- **Practitioners** are **staff/faculty with specialized knowledge and training** that enables them to prioritize victim-survivor needs. This could include specialist victim support services, human resources, administrative management, US Title IX officials, lawyers in and out of workplaces, faculty/staff receiving disclosures, or faculty/staff supporting students.

The critical difference between an *actor* and a *practitioner* in this context is that *practitioners* have specialized knowledge and ability to implement actions that prioritize victim-survivor needs while *actors* are those tasked with administrative duties in the complaint and/or disciplinary process.

## Year 3 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

### Key finding

**Our mapping of institutional policies shows that university processes for tackling FASSM rely on *non-specialist faculty and staff, i.e. actors.*** They may be the only individuals that victims/survivors encounter in navigating university processes. We found that processes for addressing FASSM de-center practitioners and charge multiple actors - who are unlikely to have specialist knowledge or training - with responsibility for decision-making. It was difficult to identify specialist practitioners with expertise to support victim-survivors of FASSM; in all but one of our four US and UK case study institutions, 'actors' are more prominent than 'practitioners', but actors' role in this process is not always clear.

This means that for potential complainants – as well as victim advocates, lawyers, and institutional equity units acting for victim-survivors – it is not easy to identify who is responsible for investigating and sanctioning sexual misconduct. This difficulty stems in part from the existence of many policies and procedures tied to the processes that begin when sexual misconduct is reported. This is also a problem because each additional point of contact for a reporting party who lacks skills and expertise in providing trauma-informed support has the potential to compound harms and fail in meeting victim-survivor needs.

Finally, one of the most striking findings from our translation of these four university policies into diagrams is the lack of coordination with offices working on diversity, equity and inclusion as well as between Title IX and Title VII. Given the evidence that women, especially women of color, and LGBTQ people are most likely to be subject to FASSM, this is a significant gap.

To summarise, our analysis shows that there remains – even in the US system where procedures are more clearly delineated through the existence of Title IX offices – considerable complexity in identifying where to access to specialist support for FASSM.

The full article, with the policy diagrams from the four case study institutions, will be published in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence in 2022.

**Website for further information:** [www.1752group.com/sector-guidance](http://www.1752group.com/sector-guidance)

**Point of Contact Name:** Anna Bull

**Email Address for Point of Contact:** [anna.bull@1752group.com](mailto:anna.bull@1752group.com)

## Year 3 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

### References and further reading:

Bull, A., Rye, R., 2018. *Silencing students: institutional responses to staff sexual misconduct in higher education*. The 1752 Group/University of Portsmouth.

[https://1752group.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/silencing-students\\_the-1752-group.pdf](https://1752group.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/silencing-students_the-1752-group.pdf)

Bull, Anna, Tiffany Page, and Jayne Bullough. 2019. "What Would a Survivor-Centred Higher Education Sector Look Like?" In *A New Vision for Further and Higher Education*, edited by Sol Gamsu, 73–82. London: Centre for Labour and Social Studies.

[http://classonline.org.uk/docs/A\\_New\\_Vision\\_For\\_Further\\_and\\_Higher\\_Education\\_220519\\_1647\\_forwebv1.pdf](http://classonline.org.uk/docs/A_New_Vision_For_Further_and_Higher_Education_220519_1647_forwebv1.pdf)

Bull, A., Calvert-Lee, G., Page, T., 2020. Discrimination in the complaints process: introducing the sector guidance to address staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2020.1823512>

Bull, Anna, and Tiffany Page. 2021. 'The Governance of Complaints in UK Higher Education: Critically Examining "Remedies" for Staff Sexual Misconduct'. *Social & Legal Studies*, April, 09646639211002243.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639211002243>.

Page, T., Bull, A., Chapman, E., 2019. Making Power Visible: "Slow Activism" to Address Staff Sexual Misconduct in Higher Education. *Violence Against Women* 25, 1309–1330.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219844606>

Libarkin, J. (2019). Academic Sexual Misconduct Database. Retrieved November 1, 2020, from

<https://academic-sexual-misconduct-database.org/>.

National Union of Students, (2018). *Power in the academy: staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education*. London: NUS. Available: <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/nus-staff-student-sexual-misconduct-report> [accessed 4.19.18].

The 1752 Group, McAllister Olivarius, 2020a. *Sector guidance to address staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education: Recommendations for reporting, investigation and decision-making procedures relating to student complaints of staff sexual misconduct*.

<https://1752group.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/the-1752-group-and-mcallister-olivarius-sector-guidance-to-address-staff-sexual-misconduct-in-uk-he-1.pdf>