



Sexual Health and Wellbeing Policy
for Students and Staff

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

As part of the Healthy UL framework, University of Limerick (UL) seeks to develop a culture to support sexual health and wellbeing within the institution. The purpose of this policy is to provide information to students and staff on establishing healthy sexual relationships in a respectful and safe manner. The policy sets out what supports are available on and off campus to help ensure that the student and staff experience at UL is positive, safe and respectful and to help provide an environment in which every member of the campus community can thrive, lead a healthy and fulfilling life and develop to their full potential.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 To whom does this policy apply?

This policy covers

- all students
- all current employees

1.2.2 In what situations does this policy apply?

This policy applies to conduct during UL activities, both on and off campus.

1.2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?

The policy was developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including the Office of the Director of Human Rights, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (HREDI); the Consent Framework Steering Group; Student Life representatives; Student Affairs Division representatives; and Rape Crisis Midwest.

The Sexual Health and Wellbeing Group, which is a subgroup of Healthy UL, recommends a partnership approach be taken to communicating the contents of the policy to students and staff. A plan to disseminate the policy will be agreed by the HREDI Office, the Consent Framework Steering Group, Student Life and the Student Affairs Division. The plan will include an annual review of the policy.

1.3 Definitions

Refer to Appendix A for definitions of the following terms:

- Aggravated sexual assault
- Consent
- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Rape
- Safe sex
- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual health
- Sexual violence
- Unplanned pregnancy

2. Context

2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context

UL is cognisant of the legal framework within which this policy will operate and will reflect the institution's commitment to meeting its obligations under the following acts:

- [Employment Equality Acts \(1998-2023\)](#)
- [Equal Status Acts \(2000-2021\)](#) (Unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature; if a person is sexually harassed while accessing goods or services, the service provider may be held responsible.)
- Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011
- Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. (All public bodies in Ireland have a responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans.)
- Employment Equality Act 1998 (Code of Practice) (Harassment) Order 2012 and Employment Equality Act 1998 (Section 76 - Right to Information) Regulations, 1999
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017
- Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990 Revised
- Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020
- Health and Safety Acts 2020

3. Policy Statements

3.1 Sexual Rights

A person's sexual health and wellbeing is based on having a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships and the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences that are free from coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.

3.2 Duty of Care

UL has a duty of care to all its students and staff to provide a safe and respectful campus free from any form of sexual harassment or sexual violence.

UL is committed to proactively maintaining an environment that is safe and free from homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

3.3 Training and Awareness Raising

UL will provide education and training to students and staff on sexual health and wellbeing. This will include embedding Speak Out¹ across the UL website for ease of accessibility, delivering consent workshops, providing disclosure and bystander training, and forming a Student Designated Contact Persons Panel (SDCPP).

4. Related Procedures

This policy is linked to the [Sexual Violence and Harassment \(SVH\) Policy](#) to ensure that students and staff develop a clear understanding of what a consensual sexual relationship is

¹ An online and anonymous platform for reporting incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination, hate crime, coercive behaviour/control, stalking, assault, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape

and acquire the capacity and confidence to challenge and report any form of unwanted sexual behaviour. The purpose of the SVH policy is to

- strive to provide a campus environment in which all members of our community feel safe and are respected
- support staff and students who have experienced any form of sexual harassment or sexual violence
- respond to disclosed incidents that breach this policy

Breaches of this Sexual Health and Wellbeing policy will be dealt with through the [Sexual Violence and Harassment \(SVH\) Policy](#) and [Sexual Violence and Harassment \(SVH\) Procedure](#).

5. Related Documents

This policy aligns with the following UL policies and procedures, all of which can be found on the [Policy Hub](#):

- Sexual Violence and Harassment (SVH) Policy for Students and Staff
- Sexual Violence and Harassment (SVH) Procedure for Students and Staff
- Policy and Procedures for Workplace Dignity and Respect
- Student Dignity & Respect Policy and Procedures
- Student Code of Conduct (part of Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures)
- Acceptable Behaviour in the Workplace Policy
- Student Fitness to Practise Policy
- Student Fitness to Study Policy

The policy also aligns with the Government of Ireland's [Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#) and [National Sexual Health Strategy 2015–2020](#). The latter is a Department of Health strategic framework for the sexual health and wellbeing of the Irish population. Its vision is that everyone in Ireland will experience positive sexual health and wellbeing and will have access to high-quality sexual health information, education and services.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix A: Definitions

Term	Definition
Aggravated sexual assault	Aggravated sexual assault is defined under Section 3 of the Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990 as “a sexual assault that involves serious violence or the threat of serious violence or is such as to cause injury, humiliation or degradation of a grave nature to the person assaulted”.
Consent	<p>The HEA’s #UnmuteConsent Campaign defines consent as “the freely given verbal or non-verbal communication of a feeling of willingness to engage in sexual activity”. Section 48 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 specifies that “A person consents to a sexual act if he or she freely and voluntarily agrees to engage in that act”. The Section 48 definition is currently the most accepted definition of sexual consent. Sexual consent involves ongoing, mutual and, preferably, verbal communication.</p> <p>While the list of situations in which there is no consent is open-ended, here are some examples. There is no consent if the victim is asleep or unconscious, is forced or threatened with force, has a physical disability that prevents them from communicating whether they agree to the act, or is mistaken about the nature and purpose of the act or about the identity of the other person involved in the act. Furthermore, there is no consent if the only indication of consent comes from another person or if the victim is being unlawfully detained at the time of the act. The law is also clear that failure to resist is not consent and that consent, once given, may be withdrawn at any time before or during the act.</p>
Healthy and respectful relationships	Healthy and respectful relationships involve an expression or acceptance of perspectives, boundaries, beliefs and values in a respectful manner. Such relationships involve good communication, respect for the other person, trust, honesty and understanding.
Rape	Legally, Irish law defines rape as “Penetration of the vagina by the penis where the man either knows that the woman does not consent to sexual intercourse or is reckless as to whether she consents or not. Penetration (however slight) of the anus or mouth by the penis. Penetration of the vagina (however slight) by any object held or manipulated by another person” (Rape under Section 2 Criminal Law (Rape) 1981 Act as amended. Rape under Section 4 Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990 as amended). Proof is necessary that the penis entered the vagina, but even a very slight degree of penetration is enough.
Safe sex	Sex is considered to be safe when people take precautions to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unplanned pregnancies. Safe sex does not involve the exchange of bodily fluids, including semen, vaginal fluids or blood.
Sexual assault	Sexual assault is defined under Section 2 of the Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Act 1990 Revised as “the offence of indecent assault upon any male person and the offence of indecent assault upon any female person”. Absence of consent is necessary to prove this offence. An assault that takes place in circumstances of indecency is known as sexual assault. It includes any sexual touching without consent and is not limited to sexual touching involving penetration. Technically, the word ‘assault’ also covers actions that put another person in fear of an assault.

Term	Definition
Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature and is against the law. The Employment Equality Acts (1998-2023) prohibit sexual harassment within the workplace. Sexual harassment is behaviour that damages a person's dignity, such as making loud remarks about the person's body or attractiveness or putting the person in a hostile situation or environment by, for example, displaying pornographic posters. Sexual harassment can take many forms, including actions, gestures, spoken or written words, emails, text messages and social media posts.
Sexual health	Sexual health is an important part of our overall health and can include disease prevention, fertility control and having a positive approach to sexual relationships, sexual experiences and sexuality. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines sexual health as "a state of physical, emotional, mental and societal well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity." Sexual intimacy should be a consensual, safe and enjoyable experience for everybody.
Sexual violence	Sexual violence is any sexual act that occurs without consent, through force, threat, coercion, manipulation or control. Some forms of sexual violence include rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation. Anyone can become a victim of sexual violence, regardless of age, gender or sexual orientation.
Unplanned pregnancy	An unplanned pregnancy is either unintended, unwanted or mistimed. It is often the result of not using contraception or not using it regularly and accurately.

6.2 Appendix B: Supports

Internal Supports

Service	Phone	Website or email address
Student Health Centre	061-202534	Student Health Centre
UL Student Counselling & Wellbeing Service	061-202327	Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service
Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention and Response Manager		maria.healy@ul.ie
Students' Union Advocacy & Advice		AdviceHub@ul.ie
Postgraduate Students' Union		psu@ul.ie
Student Designated Contact Persons Panel		Student Designated Contact Persons Panel
UL Campus 24-Hour Emergency	061-213333 (ext. 3333) 061-202700	UL Security
UL Campus Security	061-234600	UL Security
Chaplaincy		Chaplaincy john.campion@ul.ie sarah.orourke@ul.ie
Employee Support Service	Freephone: 1-800-201346	Employee Support Service
Image Based Sexual Abuse – Report & Support		Hotline.ie
Rape Crisis Midwest	061-311511	info@rapecrisis.ie
Free Crisis Textline	Text UL to 50808	
Student Information & Support Coordinators	061-202324	studentsupport@ul.ie

External Supports

Service	Phone	Website or email address
Text 50808	Free 24/7 support in a crisis: Text HELLO to 50808	https://text50808.ie/
Samaritans	National Helpline: 116-123	https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/samaritans-ireland/
Rape Crisis Midwest	1800-311511 *086-8238443 (text only)	Home Rape Crisis Midwest
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre	24-hour helpline: 1800-778888	Your local rape crisis centre/network: https://www.rapecrisishelp.ie/find-a-service/ https://www.drcc.ie/

HSE		https://www2.hse.ie/services/sexual-assault-treatment-units/rape-sexual-assault-where-to-get-help.html
University Hospital Limerick	061-301111	
Sexual Assault Treatment Units		https://www2.hse.ie/sexual-assault-treatment-units/
Women's Aid	24-hour helpline: 1800-341900	https://www.womensaid.ie/
Men's Aid	National Confidential Helpline: 01-5543811	https://www.mensaid.ie/
Gardaí	061-212400/999	https://www.garda.ie/en/crime/sexual-crime/
HSE My Options	Freephone: 1800-828010	https://www2.hse.ie/unplanned-pregnancy/
LGBT Ireland	National Helpline: 1890-929 539	https://lgbt.ie/

*For those who are deaf or hard of hearing, Rape Crisis Midwest provides a text service to 086-8238443, operating Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 6.30pm. Rape Crisis Midwest also has a webchat service available Monday to Friday, 10am to 2pm (excluding bank holidays).

7. Document Control

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