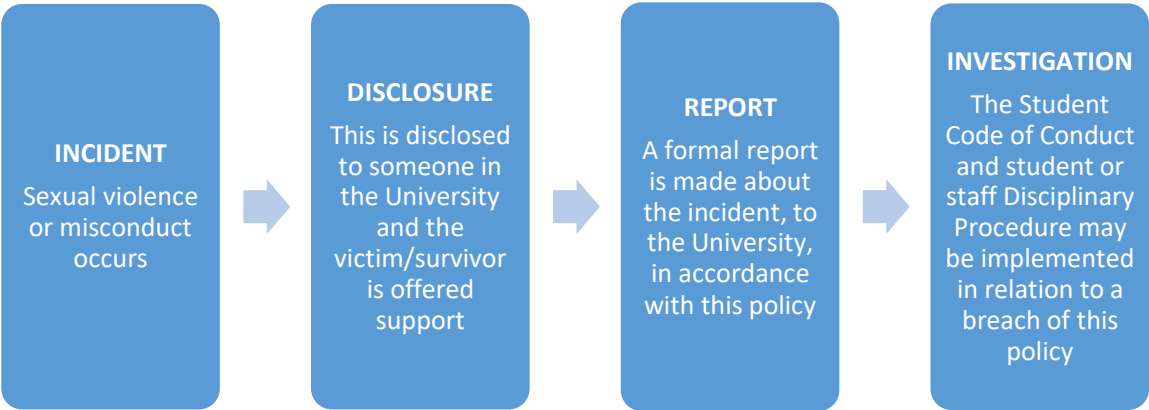




UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH

## Student Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy

<b>Version number</b> 1.0	<b>Status (draft/final)</b> Final	<b>Owning Directorate / Faculty</b> Academic Registry		
<b>Summary of any amendments:</b> New policy				
<b>Document objectives:</b> This policy outlines the University of Plymouth's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of sexual violence and misconduct (SVM) and examples of inappropriate behaviour</li> <li>• Overriding principles in relation to preventing SVM and supporting victims/survivors</li> <li>• This policy encompasses the following procedure:</li> </ul>  <pre> graph LR     A[INCIDENT Sexual violence or misconduct occurs] --&gt; B[DISCLOSURE This is disclosed to someone in the University and the victim/survivor is offered support]     B --&gt; C[REPORT A formal report is made about the incident, to the University, in accordance with this policy]     C --&gt; D[INVESTIGATION The Student Code of Conduct and student or staff Disciplinary Procedure may be implemented in relation to a breach of this policy]     </pre>				
It is important to note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not everyone who makes a <b>disclosure</b> will choose to make a formal <b>report</b></li> <li>• Not everyone who makes a formal <b>report</b> will ask for an <b>investigation</b> to take place</li> <li>• Support is offered throughout, from point of disclosure, to all involved</li> <li>• We will never make a report on behalf of a victim/survivor without their consent</li> </ul>				
<b>Intended Recipients:</b> This policy relates to students who are affected by sexual violence and misconduct, and is for use by students, staff and other third parties				
<b>Approving Body and Date Approved</b>		Board of Governors, July 2020		
<b>Date of Issue</b>		1 <sup>st</sup> August 2020		
<b>Review Date:</b>		2 years from above		
<b>Contact for review:</b>		Head of Student Services		
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Replaces</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1.0	July 2020	Alice Ludgate	Not applicable	New policy

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Plymouth (UoP) does not tolerate sexual violence and misconduct (SVM). We are committed to providing an environment where all members of our community feel safe, are respected, and can study, work and live free from harm.
- 1.2. Statistics indicate that at least 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced sexual assault since the age of 16 (over 4,000,000 people in England and Wales in 2017). Only around 15% of people who experience sexual violence report it to the police; the majority of cases are not reported and many people never talk about their experience.
- 1.3. We recognise that SVM occurs in all parts of society, including higher education, and can be experienced by anyone, regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. SVM can be obvious or it can be difficult to recognise, and nationally it is underreported. Therefore through policy and other activities, we are seeking to raise awareness of SVM and encourage disclosure, embedding a culture that does not tolerate such behaviour and is able to challenge it.
- 1.4. We are pleased to work closely with external organisations in both eliminating all forms of SVM and in supporting people who have experienced it, including the police, NHS and third-sector organisations such as charities.
- 1.5. This policy outlines our position on SVM and how we handle disclosure, reports and the link with both the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure (for complaints about students) and the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (for complaints about members of staff). Any complaints about students engaged on professional programmes may be dealt with in accordance with the relevant 'Fitness to Practise' policy.
- 1.6. This policy does not apply to staff who have experienced SVM, however does include the scenario of a report of SVM being made by a student against a member of staff.
- 1.7. This policy does not describe the investigatory procedure following any formal report of SVM. The procedures are described in the policies listed under 1.5.
- 1.8. This policy applies to students at UoP sites of delivery. The University requires partner institutions to have a similar or equivalent policy that also addresses issues of local concern, legislation, regulation or culture. Partner institutions are welcome to use or adapt the University policy. A copy of the partner policy should be logged with Academic Partnerships and may be subject to review. In the absence of a local policy, this University of Plymouth policy will apply.

## 2. Terminology and examples of inappropriate behaviour

*For the Glossary, see Appendix 1.*

- 2.1. SVM is defined by UoP as any unwanted sexual act or activity, or series of acts or activities, including rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. It includes any

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unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion or manipulation, such as sexual exploitation and sexual intimidation.

- 2.2. SVM does not always manifest in acts of physical violence, this is a myth. SVP does include physical acts such as rape but also includes behaviours such as “revenge porn”/image-based violence, victim-blaming and rape jokes. Section 3 of this policy includes examples of behaviour UoP considers inappropriate under the heading of SVM.
- 2.3. This policy does not cover non-sexual violence and misconduct, which is considered as part of the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.
- 2.4. Examples of potentially inappropriate behaviour are included in Appendix 2.

### **3. Policy principles of identity, confidentiality and safeguarding**

- 3.1. Disclosing an experience of SVM will likely be incredibly difficult. Barriers to disclosure include fear, shame, disbelief, denial, thinking they won't be believed or being unaware that SVM has occurred. Taking the step to disclose SVM will have taken courage, resilience and bravery and we will always listen to people who make disclosures and offer them support.
- 3.2. We will be guided by the student making the disclosure of SVM (the “reporting student”) as to the action they want UoP to take (if any), and will not take this choice away, except where safeguarding concerns exist (see 3.5), including ‘Fitness to Practice’. In such instances, we may decide to continue with an investigation owing to the seriousness of the allegation(s) and both the need to safeguard other people and the need for students on professional programmes to abide by their relevant professional standards.
- 3.3. The reporting student may disclose the identity of the person who committed the act of SVM who we will refer to as the “responding student” or “responding member of staff”. We avoid using criminal language, such as “perpetrator”.
- 3.4. Any personal information gathered as part of a disclosure will remain confidential, only used in accordance with the relevant investigatory process or to assist a police investigation (if applicable).
- 3.5. If we have reason to believe anyone is at risk of harm or abuse, we will take action in order to safeguard them (this includes any concerns about the safety of an under 18-year old). This is as described in the University Safeguarding Policy<sup>1</sup>.

### **4. Disclosures of SVM**

*For the Disclosure and Reporting flowchart, see Appendix 3.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/regulations>

## Student Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy

- 4.1. Disclosure is different to reporting. A student may make a disclosure of SVM (the “disclosing student”), which is where they tell someone that SVM has occurred. Upon doing so, they will usually be advised about their options for reporting (Appendix 3) and available support (Appendix 4). Students making a disclosure may not have any expectation of further action being taken, and they may consider this disclosure to be private.
- 4.2. In the event of a third party (e.g. another student/a friend) disclosing an incident of SVM on behalf of someone else, this person will be advised about the options for reporting and available support (as per 4.1) and we’ll support this person to help the victim/survivor access this information. Ultimately if the victim/survivor does not want to access support or make a report, this is their choice.
- 4.3. Students might choose to tell us about an incident that happened recently or some time ago, and we will offer them support regardless of when it happened and who was involved (which could be someone unconnected to the university).
- 4.4. A student can disclose SVM but not make a formal report. They may still access support from university services. A member of staff receiving a disclosure will not make a named report or instigated onward referral without the student’s consent, except where concerns about safeguarding or ‘Fitness to Practise’ or arise, in which cases members of staff may have a professional duty to make a formal report.
- 4.5. The person receiving the disclosure should avoid asking specific questions about what happened (Appendix 5). This avoids the reporting student needing to re-tell their story multiple times, potentially reliving the trauma of what happened, and also protects any investigation process should one follow.
- 4.6. If the disclosure is of sexual assault or rape, the student has the option to self-refer to the **Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)** (Appendix 6). Anyone can attend a SARC independent of making a decision about formally reporting the incident to the university or police. The benefit of doing so is that the SARC can securely preserve evidence in the event the student does later choose to report to the police. This is particularly important if the incident happened in the past 7 days.
- 4.7. If a disclosing student does not wish to make a formal report to the university, they could make an anonymous report or the person receiving the disclosure can do this on their behalf, which allows trend monitoring by the university (see 5.1).
- 4.8. If the student wishes, they may report the incident to the police (see 6) regardless of whether they want to report to the university.

## 5. Reporting

*For the Disclosure and Reporting flowchart, see Appendix 3.*

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- 5.1. All student reports of SVM should be made to UoP using our reporting tool, called “Speak Up”, available online<sup>2</sup>, which has the option to report anonymously or with a name.
- 5.2. Once a report has been made, the reporting student (if they give their name) will be contacted within 3 working days by a representative from Student Services, with more information about their options and support, including how we will carry out a risk assessment. Their options will vary depending on if the responding person (the person who is alleged to have committed the act of SVM) is another student (see 9) or a member of staff (see 10).
- 5.3. If the reporting student wants to make a report but does not want any further action taken by the university, such as an investigation, we will put into place support for the student, the priority being to enable them to carry on with their studies or engaging in their research and accessing any wellbeing support. The only instance we might take action without the reporting student’s consent is where there is a safeguarding or ‘Fitness to Practise’ concern.
- 5.4. If the student wishes, they may report the incident to the police (see 6) regardless of whether they want to report to the university. A decision not to report to the police does not prejudice any university response to a student report.

### **6. Police involvement**

- 6.1. It is the choice of the reporting student about whether to report the incident of SVM to the police. We will not report instances of SVM to the police or any other agency without the reporting student’s explicit consent, unless there are safeguarding concerns (see 3.5). We will always support students to report to the police if they so wish, and will work with the police if/as necessary in accordance with our Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.
- 6.2. A student who reports SVM to the police has the option to give their consent for the police to inform the university about the progress of the investigation, to avoid the need for the student needing to update the university themselves.
- 6.3. If the university is aware that a police investigation is ongoing, Student Services, in conjunction with relevant Faculty staff (and other departments as appropriate, such as Student Accommodation), will complete a risk assessment to inform any precautionary measures put in place to protect students (both the reporting student and the responding student, as well as other students) and staff, and also to ensure no impediment is caused to the police response. Please refer to the ‘risk assessment’ section of the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.
- 6.4. A decision by the police or Crown Prosecution Service (or other law enforcement agencies) to take no further action in relation to a criminal matter or an acquittal at a trial does not preclude the university from taking action nor does it mean the reporting student has made a vexatious or malicious report. The University cannot make a determination on criminal guilt,

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<sup>2</sup> Speak Up: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/speak-up>

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and any internal investigation is focused exclusively on whether a breach of the university's Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure and/or Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy has occurred (or any other relevant policy). The internal process cannot therefore be regarded as a substitute for a police investigation or criminal prosecution.

- 6.5. Where a student has been convicted of a criminal offence or accepts a police caution in relation to behaviour that falls within the scope of this policy (or any other relevant policy), the conviction/caution will be taken as conclusive evidence that the behaviour took place and may be pursued as part of the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.

### **7. Support for students**

- 7.1. We are committed to providing support to any students affected by SVM, including providing information and guidance, and we may implement precautionary and supportive measures for any persons involved (the reporting party, the responding party, witnesses or other students and staff) after a disclosure is made and whilst an investigation by the university or police is ongoing.
- 7.2. Support to all students remains available irrespective of whether a university or police investigation takes place or whether that investigation results in a sanction being imposed, for instance mental health and counselling support, for both the reporting student and the responding student (as well as any witnesses).
- 7.3. In cases of disclosure of sexual assault or rape, the reporting student will be signposted to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) and advised that they can attend this centre even if they are unsure about whether they want to report the incident. See Appendix 6.

### **8. False reports of sexual violence**

- 8.1 All reports of SVM will be taken seriously by the university.
- 8.2 Research suggests that the impression of the public is that false allegations of sexual violence are common and that innocent people suffer as a result of being wrongfully accused. False allegations of sexual violence are no more common than they are for other crimes, the perception that they are harms victims/survivors.
- 8.3 Whilst extremely rare, we recognise that malicious or vexatious complaints could be made and in instances where there is evidence of this, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken against the reporting student in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure.
- 8.4 Reports of SVM not found to be accompanied by evidence are not assumed to be false reports. Those people who are involved in an investigation as a responding student or responding member of staff will be afforded the opportunity through any investigation to reply to the allegations against them, including if they believe the allegations are malicious or vexatious.

## **9. The procedure for handling reports where the responding person is another student**

- 9.1. Experiencing SVM can be very harmful and students may not initially recognise this harm, or may need to wait some time before making a formal report. Because of this, there is no time limit within the university for making a report of SVM, and we encourage students to report (either anonymously or with their name), to help us keep other students and staff safe. It is important to note that some legal avenues open to victims/survivors do have deadlines.
- 9.2. Before taking any action, the reporting student will be invited to attend an initial meeting with a member of staff from Student Services. The decision about whether or not to launch an investigation will be explained at this initial meeting; the university will not formally investigate the incident or inform the responding student (or any other student) prior to this meeting, except in cases of safeguarding or 'Fitness to Practise' concerns (see Section 3). Any action taken will be handled sensitively to protect all parties.
- 9.3. If the reporting student does not give consent for the responding student to be informed of the allegation against them, an investigation will not proceed except in cases of safeguarding or 'Fitness to Practise' concerns (see Section 3).
- 9.4. If the reporting student gives consent for the allegation to be shared with the responding student, but does not want their identity shared, Student Services (the Student Conduct Team) will consider the practical implications of this (e.g. whether there is sufficient evidence and opportunity for the responding student to be able to reply to the allegations). If an investigation does take place, we may be unable to prevent the responding student guessing the identity of the reporting student, if for instance there were no other witnesses.
- 9.5. The responding student will be offered guidance and support throughout the investigation and we do not presume guilt. We carry out an impartial investigation in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure and in conjunction with any police investigation (if the matter is under investigation by the police).
- 9.6. If an investigation does not commence as per 9.2 or because the reporting student does not wish this to happen, other outcomes of a report of SVM may include:
  - Provision of further support to the students involved, which may relate to academic, accommodation, finance, health and wellbeing matters
  - Appropriate communication with the parties involved
  - Collection of further information to inform the management of the situation, and decisions may be considered such as moving accommodation (if in university-managed halls) or options to move academic groups if students are on the same programme.
- 9.7. Following an investigation, should the University find the allegation of SVM to be proven, and in turn a breach of this policy, sanctions may be placed upon the responding party up to and including expulsion from university.

## **10. The procedure for handling reports where the responding person is a member of staff**



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- 10.1 Experiencing SVM can be very harmful and students may not initially recognise this harm, or may need to wait some time before making a formal report. Because of this, there is no time limit within the university for making a report of SVM, and we encourage students to report (either anonymously or with their name), to help us keep other students and staff safe. It is important to note that some legal avenues open to victims/survivors do have deadlines.
- 10.2 Before taking any action, the reporting student will be invited to attend an initial meeting with a member of staff from Student Services. The decision about whether or not to launch an investigation will be explained at this initial meeting; the university will not formally investigate the incident or inform the responding member of staff prior to this meeting. The decision about whether or not to launch an investigation will be taken by the reporting student's faculty in liaison with Human Resources.
- 10.3 If the reporting student does not give consent for the responding member of staff to be informed of the allegation against them, an investigation will not proceed. There may be, however, certain circumstances where the University is required to take appropriate action to prevent potential harm to the reporting student or others at the University. Where this is the case, the reasons for taking such action will be fully explained to the reporting student.
- 10.4 If the reporting student gives consent for the allegation to be shared with the responding member of staff, but does not want their identity shared, Student Services (the Student Conduct Team) and Human Resources will consider the practical implications of this (e.g. whether there is sufficient evidence and opportunity for the responding member of staff to be able to reply to the allegations). If an investigation does take place, we may be unable to prevent the responding student guessing the identity of the reporting student, if for instance there were no other witnesses.
- 10.5 Human Resources will guide and support members of staff throughout the investigation and the university will not presume guilt. Staff may also be supported by their trade union (if they are a member). Any investigation would be impartial, carried out in accordance with the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and in conjunction with any police investigation (if one is taking place).
- 10.6 If an investigation does not commence as per 10.2 or because the reporting student does not wish this to happen, other outcomes and methods of support for the reporting student can be agreed with Student Services.
- 10.7 Following an investigation, should the University find the allegation of SVM to be proven, and in turn a breach of this policy and employment contract, sanctions may be applied to the responding party up to and including dismissal from the university (for more information please see the staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure).

## 11. Impact on academic progress

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- 11.1 Any student whose studies are affected or impacted by SVM can apply for extenuating circumstances in accordance with the Extenuating Circumstances Policy. This includes the reporting students and others who may be affected (the responding student and witnesses, for example)
- 11.2 Students engaged on programmes where there is also a 'Fitness to Practise' policy are expected to exhibit the highest standards of professional conduct and behaviour. Accordingly, any complaints made of SVM may be addressed via these policies.

### **12. Monitoring and record keeping**

- 12.1. The university maintains a central record of incidents to effectively engage in prevention and response initiatives. Student Services maintain a record of anonymised reports of SVM incidents involving students for trend monitoring purposes.
- 12.2. All records are maintained in accordance with the University's Records Retention Schedule:  
[https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/5/5951/Records\\_Retention\\_Schedule\\_v1.0.pdf](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/5/5951/Records_Retention_Schedule_v1.0.pdf)

13. Appendix 1 - Glossary

<b>Alleged perpetrator</b>	This language is often used by the police and criminal prosecution service to refer to the person who is alleged to have committed an act which may constitute a criminal offence. In the University, the language “responding student” will be used instead.
<b>Assault by penetration</b>	In UK laws the offence of “assault by penetration” exists alongside rape and sexual assault, defined as a person intentionally penetrating the vagina or anus of another person with a part of their body or anything else, without the other person’s consent. This crime has the same sentence as the crime of rape, and can be as traumatic and harmful for the victim/survivor as non-consensual penetration with a penis.
<b>Cat-calling</b>	When someone shouts harassing and sexually suggestive, threatening or derisive comments at another person publicly.
<b>Coercion</b>	Persuading someone to do something by using force or threats.
<b>Consent</b>	An agreement between participants to engage in sexual activity. It doesn’t have to be verbal, however verbal agreement can help the parties respect each other’s boundaries. Consent can be withdrawn at any time for any reason and consent can be given but the activity unwanted.
<b>Cyber-violence</b>	Online behaviour that constitutes or leads to harm against the physical, psychological and/or emotional state of an individual or group. It includes stalking, unwanted advances, online harassment, non-consensual sharing of sexual images and non-consensual sharing of private information.
<b>Disclosure</b>	When someone tells another person they have experienced SVM.
<b>Domestic abuse</b>	An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, financial abuse and coercive control, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common. In the vast majority of cases it is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men.
<b>Female genital mutilation</b>	A procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, and there's no medical reason for this to be done.
<b>Grooming</b>	The process an abuser uses to desensitise someone, to make them less likely to reject or report abusive behaviour. Grooming can happen when there is a power differential within a relationship, which the abuser exploits for their own gratification. This is most commonly recognised as a tactic used by perpetrators of child sexual abuse and exploitation, both on children and parents. However, adults can also be groomed.
<b>Groping</b>	Touching another person’s body without permission.
<b>Rape</b>	Rape is legally defined in the UK when a person intentionally penetrates another's vagina, anus or mouth with their penis, without the other person's consent. (See also “assault by penetration”).
<b>Rape culture</b>	A culture in which dominant ideologies, media images, social practices and institutions promote or condone, explicitly or implicitly, the normalisation of sexual violence and victim-blaming. Incidents are ignored, trivialised, normalised and/or made the basis of jokes.
<b>Reporting</b>	When a victim/survivor chooses to make a formal report about an incident of SVM to the University and/or the police
<b>Reporting student</b>	The student who has made a report of SVM.
<b>Responding student</b>	The student who is alleged to have carried out the act of alleged SVM.

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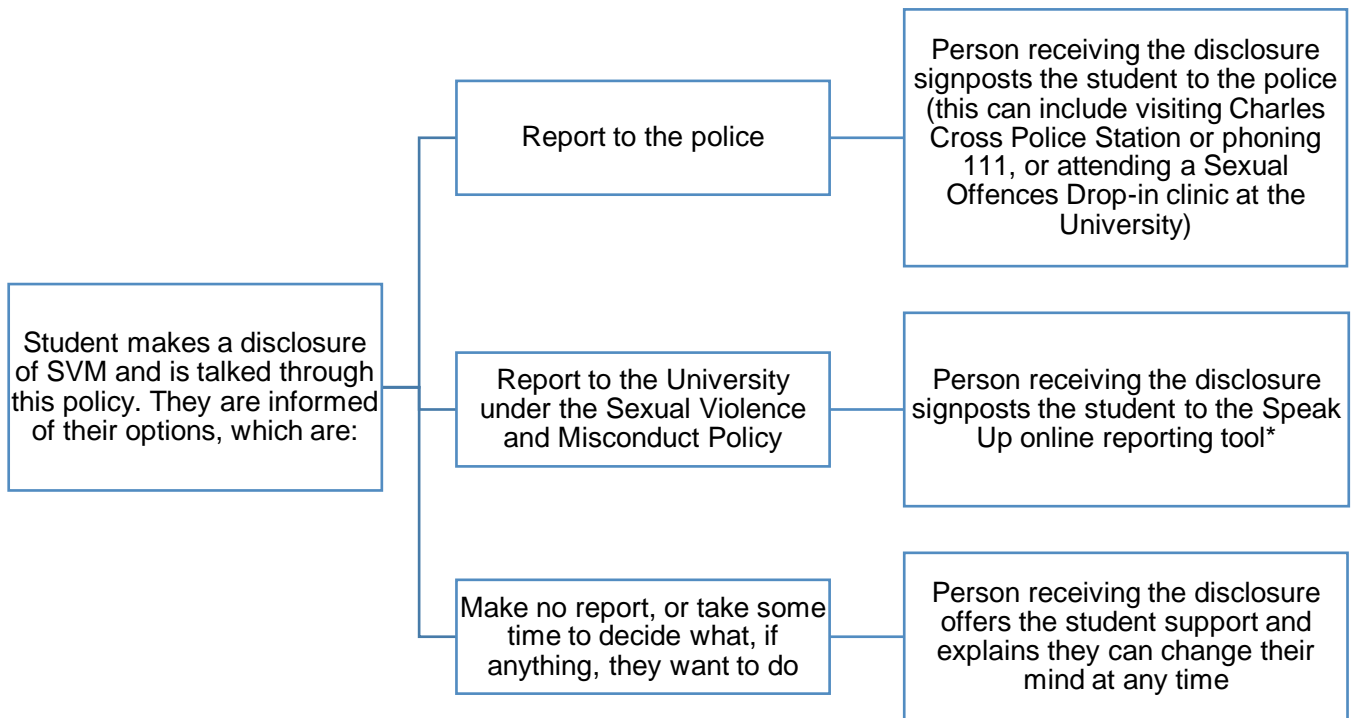
<b>Revenge porn</b>	Sometimes referred to as image-based violence, as victims/survivors find the term “revenge porn” distressing. An umbrella term that includes the non-consensual production of sexual photos or videos (such as “up-skirting”) and the distribution of sexual photos or videos of an individual without the consent of the person in the image/video. The images/video may have been shared consensually (see “sexting”).
<b>Sexting</b>	Sending someone explicit photographs, videos or messages via mobile phone or online platform (when sent consensually, this is not considered SVM, however see “Revenge porn” in the Glossary).
<b>Sexual assault</b>	Sexual assault is an act or threat of physical, psychological and emotional violation in the form of a sexual act, inflicted on someone without their consent. It can involve forcing or manipulating someone to witness or participate any sexual acts.
<b>Sexual Assault Referral Centre</b>	A Sexual Assault Referral Centre is a place where anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted can go for specialist medical and forensic services.
<b>Sexual exploitation</b>	Actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, power, or trust, for sexual purposes including but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
<b>Sexual harassment</b>	Any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which violates your dignity, makes you feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated, or creates a hostile or offensive environment.
<b>Sexual misconduct</b>	Any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that is committed without consent or by force, intimidation, coercion or manipulation, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and sexual intimidation
<b>Sexual violence</b>	Any unwanted sexual act or activity including rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and female genital mutilation
<b>Slut-shaming</b>	This is a derogatory term. It can include criticising a woman for her real or presumed sexual activity or for behaving in ways that one thinks are associated with her real or presumed sexual activity.
<b>Stalking</b>	Persistent and unwanted attention that makes you feel pestered and harassed. It includes behaviour that happens two or more times, directed at or towards you by another person, which causes you to feel alarmed or distressed or to fear that violence might be used against you.
<b>Stealthing</b>	When a man removes a condom during sex, without consent, after agreeing to wear one.
<b>Survivor</b>	Someone who has experienced SVM (some people prefer this term, or the term “victim”).
<b>Survivor-centred</b>	Prioritising the support and rights of the victim/survivor of sexual violence and misconduct.
<b>Victim</b>	Someone who has experienced SVM (some people prefer this term, or the term “survivor”).
<b>Victim-blaming</b>	Blaming the occurrence of sexual assault on the survivor instead of the person who committed the sexual assault. Victim blaming can be very implicit. For example, recommending that one does not wear revealing clothing, travel alone at night, or engage in sexting implies that such actions provoke sexual assault. A non-victim blaming response acknowledges that people make choices to violate the bodily integrity of others, and that they alone are responsible for these choices.

**14. Appendix 2 – Examples of inappropriate behaviour (examples of SVM)**

Please note the order of the behaviour listed below is not to imply seriousness. We have listed the behaviour on a continuum to illustrate that it is interconnected and often originates from similar patterns of belief.

Following another person without good reason, with no threatening or abusive behaviour	Pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour including domestic abuse	One off acts of nudity involving inappropriate display of sexual organs to others, not focused upon any individual and not in contravention of the Safeguarding Policy	Sexually touching someone without their consent  Kissing someone without their consent, with evidence of using force	Sexual acts under pressure, e.g. when one person complies to “keep the peace” or avoid negative consequences
Non-physical contact			Physical contact	
Making a single remark (in person/online/other means) of a sexual nature, without meaning to cause offence	Recording, sharing and/or distributing intimate images or recordings of another person without their consent  Arranging or participating in events which may be assumed to cause degradation and humiliation to those who have experienced sexual violence	Frequent or repeated failure to comply with disciplinary recommendations, decisions, sanctions  A conviction of a criminal offence or a police caution in relation to behaviour that falls within the scope of the SVM Policy	Kissing another person on the hand or cheek without consent, where force or harassment was not evident	Attempting to engage or engaging in a sexual act without consent, including rape

15. Appendix 3 – Disclosure and Reporting Flowchart



\* <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/speak-up>

**In all cases of disclosure**, a student will be signposted to support services as described in Appendix 4.

**If a student discloses a sexual assault**, depending on the nature of this assault it may be appropriate for them to self-refer to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (see Appendix 5).

## 16. Appendix 4 – Support for students

A student may have very mixed feelings about what happened; people react differently and we shouldn't put pressure on students to follow a particular course of action. Use this guidance to inform students about the support, and allow them to choose what, if anything, they want to do.

### University support services

- **Mental Health and Counselling:** students can complete an online referral form for support: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/making-an-appointment>
- **Big White Wall:** students don't have to come and speak to our staff, they can access mental health support online by registering for free at [www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)
- **In the moment listening:** From 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday we have the Listening Post in the Student Hub, students can talk to a trained volunteer listener about whatever they are feeling, and receive warm and friendly support and advice
- **Pastoral and Spiritual Support:** drop-in to 1 Kirkby Place between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday, for some quiet time or an informal conversation
- **For other queries,** perhaps about disability, funding, immigration and anything else, students can visit the Student Hub, phone 01752 587676 or email [studentservices@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:studentservices@plymouth.ac.uk)

### External support services

- The University Medical Centre has professionals available to support students, more information (including registration) is online: <https://plymouthstudenthealth.com/> or students can visit the Medical Centre (located in the Wellbeing Centre) on campus
- The **Students Union Advice Centre:** [www.upsu.com/advice](http://www.upsu.com/advice)
- **Devon and Cornwall Police** offer Sexual Offences Drop-in advice from 6pm to 8pm throughout the academic year, find out the date of the next drop-in session here: <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/whats-on/sexual-offences-surgeries>
- **First Light** for anyone wanting to access support following domestic abuse or sexual violence: <https://www.firstlight.org.uk/>
- **Rape crisis,** who can signpost to local services: <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/>
- **Counselling (ref. domestic abuse):** <https://www.simplycounselling.org/domestic-abuse/>

### Support for female victims/survivors of domestic abuse

- **Women's Aid:** <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

### Support for male victims/survivors

- **Survivors UK:** a charity dedicated to supporting male survivors of sexual abuse and rape: <https://www.survivorsuk.org/>
- **Operation emotion:** a charity dedicated to supporting male survivors of sexual abuse: <https://operationemotion.co.uk/>

### Other useful services

- **Plymouth Domestic Abuse Service:** <https://www.sanctuary-supported-living.co.uk/find-services/domestic-abuse/devon/plymouth-domestic-abuse-services-pdas>
- **LGBT Helpline (The Intercom Trust):** 0800 612 6010 for advocacy and support

## 17. Appendix 5 – How to handle a disclosure of SVM

A student might disclose something that happened recently or some time ago and your approach to responding to this may vary (but please don't assume the disclosure is about something that happened recently). Training to accompany this guidance is bookable via employee self-service.

Students wishing to disclose SVM may approach a member of staff they feel comfortable talking to and/or who shares a similar identity to them, e.g. trans or non-binary students may wish to disclose to a member of staff who is trans or non-binary, or LGBT+ students may wish to make a disclosure in a place marked as an LGBT+ Breathing Space (although this is not a requirement).

- ✓ **Check that the student is safe**, if they are in danger or in need of immediate medical attention, call 999
- ✓ **Let the student use their own words**: do not replace their words with your own, ensure any notes you make reflect exactly what the student said, even if it includes swearing/words you wouldn't use yourself. For instance, if the student says "s/he had sex with me, but I didn't want to", do not write "s/he was raped" nor should you ask "are you saying you were raped?", because this is a leading question. Anything the student tells you, if they later decide to go to the police, could be used as evidence to support a conviction and you could be called as a witness (with the university's support)
- ✓ **Let the student know we support them**:
  - "Thank you for telling me this, I am so sorry to hear this happened"
  - "We will support you and will be led by you as to what, if anything, happens next"
  - "There are professional, friendly and experienced staff within the university and organisations outside of the university who can help you with this"
- ✓ **Understand why a student might want to talk to the University**, for example:
  - They might want support
  - They might feel unsafe if the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff / a student
  - They might want to know what to do, even if the alleged perpetrator is not someone connected to the University
  - They might be worried about the impact on their wellbeing and/or academic progress
- ✓ **Explain what the University could do next**:
  - With the student's consent, the incident could be reported (anonymously or with the student's name) and we could start an investigation into what happened
  - Regardless of any investigation, we can offer that student support with both their academic progress and their wellbeing (they do not have to make a formal report in order to submit an extenuating circumstances claim nor to access emotional support)
- ✓ **Refer the student to appropriate support** as outlined in Appendix 4
  - If the student agrees, you could walk with them to the Student Hub and ask to speak confidentially to a Student Services Advisor about what has happened – this might depend on the nature of the incident and how recently it took place
  - If that's not possible or appropriate, you could signpost them to the Speak Up online report, or our online referral form for mental health and counselling
  - If the student has been recently sexually assaulted, make them aware of the SARC (Appendix 6)
- ✓ **Check in with the student** after you've spoken, again depending on what happened and when, you might want to send the student an email or arrange a support meeting



## Student Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy

- ✓ **If they wish, allow this to be the one and only time they discuss the incident;** some students will want to tell someone but then not have to discuss the incident again or take further action
- ✓ **Look after your own wellbeing** after such a disclosure: disclosures can be received by anyone, and it's a sign of trust that the student has told you. But, speak to your line manager or take action to access support for yourself afterwards, for more information please see the HR Community:  
<https://liveplymouth.ac.sharepoint.com/sites/u114/SitePages/Site%20Home.aspx>

## 18. Appendix 6 – The role of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre

Across the UK there are Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs). These are specialist medical and forensic services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted. In Plymouth, the SARC is located in Estover, and open 24 hours a day (you need to phone first or refer online – 0300 303 4646 or <https://sarchelp.co.uk/get-help/>).

**To find out more, visit the website: <https://sarchelp.co.uk/>.** A SARC offers support from a crisis worker along with forensic medical facilities and examination facilities, sexual health and contraception information, HIV medication, follow-up emotional and practical support from an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor, information about police reporting or sharing information anonymously, advice about personal safety, and information about other support services.

To find a SARC in another region, visit the Rape Crisis website: <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/looking-for-information/sexual-assault-referral-centres-sarcs/>

**When visiting a SARC, you can take a friend or trusted person with you, if you wish, or you can visit alone.**

### When to visit a SARC?

Any time after any sexual assault or rape. However, 7 days is usually the longest time that forensic evidence can reliably survive. After this time, no matter how long ago the incident occurred, the SARC can still help with sexual health care, counselling, advice and support (but cannot gather forensic evidence).

**SARCs are for men, women and children, regardless of age, sexuality or gender, you will be believed and treated with dignity and respect.**

### What will it look like?

To see a video tour and hear from a Crisis Worker, visit this webpage: [https://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/news/plymouth-news/plymouths-new-sexual-assault-referral-2515731?utm\\_source=sharebar&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=sharebar](https://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/news/plymouth-news/plymouths-new-sexual-assault-referral-2515731?utm_source=sharebar&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=sharebar)

**Even if a victim/survivor doesn't want to report to the police, forensic evidence can be held for up to 24 months, with their agreement, in case they decide to report later**