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**Tackling hate and
harassment in Higher
Education: Thinking
creatively and
inclusively about
research and policy-
making**

Overview



1. Hate and Harassment in higher education

What does it look like? Why does it happen? What are the impacts?

2. How are universities responding to hate and harassment?

What existing frameworks exist and what's working?

3. What are the ongoing barriers to progress?

What can we learn from victims' accounts of hate and harassment?

4. Thinking 'differently' about our way forward

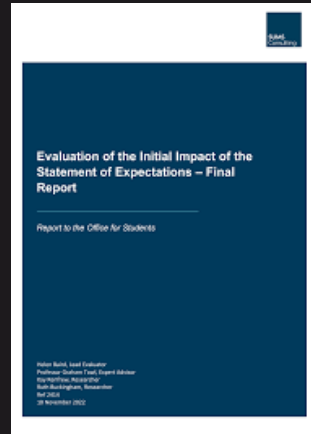
How could we encourage meaningful cultural change?

Issues within a higher education context

- A crisis of social relations has seen levels of reported hate crime hit all-time highs across the globe.
- Universities are not immune from outside tensions and act much like 'micro-cities'.
- Victims can be targeted on the basis of any assumed identity/ies, although research has focused on and uncovered prolific levels of race- and gender-based harassment.
 - 24% of minority ethnic students have been subjected to racially motivated harassment at university (EHRC, 2019).
 - 10% of Muslim students feel unable to fully engage with their course material out of fear of being deemed 'radical' and almost 50% cite broader structural barriers, such as being forced to choose between attending a university class or a religious event (Akel, 2021).
- The diversity of student communities contrasts markedly with the under-representation of minority ethnic and faith groups within academic communities. This poses specific challenges in the context of hate and harassment:
 - Lack of recognition, empathy and ownership amongst academic staff and senior leaders.
 - Unwillingness amongst students to share experiences of victimisation.

The harms of hate and harassment

- Research conducted by the Centre for Hate Studies has established that targeted victimisation has profound, lasting and wide-ranging impacts. They include:
 - Physical injury and development of, or worsening of, physical health conditions
 - Impacts upon emotional wellbeing and mental health
 - Financial and behavioural implications
 - Impacts upon families and the wider community
 - The harms associated with hate and harassment within higher education can be clustered into three key themes:
 - Reduced sense of wellbeing
 - Decreased engagement and attainment
 - Increased attrition
 - Are the harms caused by experiencing hate and harassment getting worse for students?
 - Increased presence of online harassment, the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis all compound and exacerbate the impacts of victimisation and the fear of being targeted.
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How are universities responding to hate and harassment?

Calls for action have showcased the need for effective and meaningful responses from within HE. These have taken the form of:

- **Disclosure systems:** Platforms such as Report & Support allow for individualised responses.
- **Evidence-based responses:** Catalyst funding enabled various institutions to explore 'what works'.
- **Regulatory and league table pressures:** Degree awarding, reputational and quality markers linked to student wellbeing, safety and belonging.
- **League table implications:** Assessing cultural change and student belonging/attainment
- **Reporting on outcomes:** Some institutions publish on formal outcomes.
- **Policy transparency:** Various calls from DfE and OfS for clear, useable, inclusive policies.

Barriers to progress

What is not working?

- OfS' Statement of Expectations evaluation found the need for increased responses from across the sector.
- Whilst policies are developing, these are scarcely communicated to students or are unable to protect them.
- Those subjected to more subtle forms of hate are particularly absent from responses.

Why are there barriers to change?

- There is a widespread lack of understanding as to the experiences and needs of many student victims.
- Between and within institutions, much good (and bad) practice happens in silos.
- Rather than top-down policy we need to think about changing the culture.

“Nowadays I cannot go outside, or I choose to go outside as [little] as possible.”

CHS Catalyst for Change (2020) research reported on the human impacts of unsuccessful anti-harassment initiatives:

- Of the 565 respondents, 227 (41%) disclosed having been subjected to some form of hate-based harassment whilst registered as a university student.
- 74% of participants disclosed feeling upset in response to the incident(s), 55% felt vulnerable, 15% felt suicidal, 24% wanted to leave the University, 27% cited a decrease in attendance and 28% discussed a decrease in attainment.
- Despite the extreme nature of impacts, only 28% of victims had reported or disclosed the incident(s) to anybody and 23% had accessed support.

Thinking 'differently' about tackling hate and harassment



- Still a need to challenge our definitions of 'harassment'
 - Victim-centred and victim-led definitions could allow us to better capture the full spectrum of victimising behaviours.
- Student satisfaction increases when students are treated as 'partners' and where they have a clear input into organisational policies (Piper and Emmanuel, 2020; Beech and Wolstencroft, 2022)
- Increase opportunities for students to co-produce research and co-inform evidence-based policy.
- Facilitate more 'difficult' conversations using creative methods
- Using arts-based methods to engage victims and young people in sensitive and 'difficult' conversations is increasingly happening although often in silos (Tumanyan and Huuki, 2021; Burch, 2022)