

## Title of Proposal: Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment and Lad Culture

### Background

1. That according to the National Union of Students' (NUS) lad culture report *That's What She Said*<sup>[1]</sup> (published September 2014), "lad culture" is defined by participants as a group or "pack" mentality residing in activities such as sports and heavy alcohol consumption, and "banter" which is often sexist, misogynistic, and homophobic.
2. Groping in nightclubs was viewed by some as part of a "normal" night out<sup>[2]</sup>
3. The survey of 2,156 students also revealed that **one in four students** (26 per cent) – and 37 per cent of women<sup>[3]</sup> – have suffered unwelcome sexual advances such as groping and touching at universities
4. In addition, the survey also revealed **62 per cent of the students** had heard jokes being cracked about rape or sexual assault<sup>[4]</sup>
5. **75 per cent** of students were aware of online communities such as UNILAD and LADBIBLE, with almost two-thirds of women students (63 per cent) agreeing that these contribute to an unfair representation of women<sup>[5]</sup>
6. Jamie Street's UNILAD article entitled *Sexual Mathematics* sought to trivialise and encourage rape. The article stated: "if the girl you've taken for a drink... won't spread for your head, think about this mathematical statistic...85% of rape cases go unreported. That seems to be fairly good odds"<sup>[6]</sup> and that attackers should call out "surprise"<sup>[7]</sup> - thus making light of rape
7. In 2010 NUS conducted the first ever UK-wide study of women students' experience of harassment, stalking, violence and sexual assault – entitled *Hidden Marks*
8. The *Hidden Marks*<sup>[8]</sup> report (based on a survey of 2,058 women in further education and higher education in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) revealed that **68 per cent** of respondents had been victims of one or more kinds of sexual harassment on campus during their time as a student, 1 in 7 respondents had experienced serious physical or sexual assault, and 12 per cent had been stalked while at university
9. In October, the LSE Men's Rugby club distributed leaflets which were sexist, homophobic and classist –referring to female sports players as "slags" and "beast-like", and King's students as "scum" who enjoy "homosexual humiliation"<sup>[9]</sup>
10. It was later found that LSE Men's Rugby Club had a history of racism and misogyny – prospective members had been involved in actions including "blackening up", and playing Nazi-themed drinking games on tour which lead to a Jewish student's nose being broken<sup>[10]</sup>

11. *Good Night Out* is a national UK and Ireland wide campaign started by street-activist group Hollaback London to end harassment of women and LGBTQ at student venues
12. *Good Night Out* aims to produce innovative zero tolerance-training resources for students' union staff as part of NUS' national strategy to tackle lad culture on campus.
13. The *Good Night Out* is dedicated to raising awareness of the issue of harassment on night out, and aims to help clubs, bars, and pubs tackle and prevent it and deal with it more effectively by training staff, security and management on how best to handle and prevent harassment<sup>[11]</sup>

14. NUS's hidden marks report into the experiences of women students state:

- a. 97% of women students felt safe on university premises during the day in comparison to 1 in 3 feeling unsafe during evenings.
- b. 68% of women students have experienced harassment in or around their institution.
- c. Behaviour such as groping, flashing and unwanted sexual comments has become almost 'everyday' occurrences for some women students.
- d. 12% of women students reported being stalked.
- e. 1 in 10 women students has been the victim of serious physical violence.
- f. 1 in 10 victims of serious sexual assault were given alcohol or drugs against their will before the attack.
- g. Students were the majority of perpetrators in most categories of harassment – the exception being physical violence where 48% of offenders were students.

## Principles

1. The following behaviours are unacceptable: - Unwanted sexual comments, including comments about someone's body or private life. - Unwelcome sexual invitations, innuendoes, and offensive gestures. - Wolf whistling, catcalling or offensive sexual noises. - Groping, pinching or smacking someone's body. - Moving or grabbing someone's clothes without agreement. - Exposure of sexual organs without consent.
2. Objectification, fetishisation and stereotyping of women do lead to a culture of sexual harassment and its normalisation.

3. The levels of reported harassment, partially that of sexual harassment severely under-represents the true number of incidents due to normalisation of harassment, embarrassment of the individual and fear of repercussions.
4. We should be a leading organisation on fighting sexual harassment both in services and charitable objectives by building upon current policies referring to harassment.
5. The Students' Union has a core principle to be diverse and in the context of this policy that means being inclusive to all students by striving to eliminate sexism.
6. That any plan of action should be gender neutral in its language and approach as all students should be free from sexual harassment regardless of their gender.
7. KCLSU Safe Space policy is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive space for all students
8. That all students should be free from intimidation or harassment resulting from prejudice or discrimination on ground of age, disability, marital or maternity/ paternity status, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, trans status, socio-economic status, or ideology or culture, or any other form of distinction<sup>[12]</sup>
9. Lad culture encourages “banter” that is sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, racist and classist
10. Sexism takes a variety of forms in lad culture - in particular the trivialisation of sexual abuse
11. That lad culture is a term attaches a veneer of respectability to what’s really “sexism with an alibi”, and produces the fatalistic “boys-will-be-boys” dismissal<sup>[13]</sup>
12. That sexual harassment and violence are very much related to “lad culture” - this includes verbal harassment and “catcalling”, as well as physical harassment and sexual molestation<sup>[14]</sup>
13. That LSESU’s decision to disband LSE Men’s Rugby Club for the rest of the academic year was an appropriate course of action in that it made clear that lad culture promotes sexism, homophobia, racism and classism, and would therefore not be tolerated at a Higher Education Institute (HEI)
14. The training received as part of the *Good Night Out* Campaign will ensure staff know how to appropriately handle reports of sexual harassment – including how to speak to students who might be in distress
15. *Good Night Out* would ensure that students feel comfortable reporting incidents of sexual harassment (and even other types of abuses), and can trust that their report will be taken seriously

## Idea/Proposal

1. To take a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and Lad Culture.
2. To promote the Union's stance on sexual harassment through a publicity campaign in consultation with the Women's Officer.
3. To call upon the University for an updated sexual harassment policy in light of the hidden marks report.
4. To:
  - a. write and implement a sexual harassment plan of action.
  - b. Ensure staff are given the correct training in order to understand and implement the policy.
  - c. Ensure all staff are aware and confident in both the policy and implementation.
5. To not display images in the Union which objectify, fetishise or stereotype people.
6. To task the Women's Officer with carrying out a review of this policy in terms of its effectiveness and implementation
7. To report to Council what the plan of action is and lay out clearly a time line for its implementation.
8. To take all actions necessary to be an NUS recognised Zero tolerance Union by the start of the next academic year.
9. For CULSU to sign up to the *Good Night Out* Campaign. If the Union has done so already, for it to actively support the Campaign (via training of staff and security) once the promotional material has arrived.
19. CULSU should support the NUS Lad Culture campaign by completing the lad culture audit as requested from NUS and becoming a pilot union for their work should the opportunity arise

[1] <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-calls-for-summit-on-lad-culture/>

[2] <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-calls-for-summit-on-lad-culture/>

[3] <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Campaigns/That's%20what%20she%20said%20full%20report%20Final%20web.pdf>

[4] <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Campaigns/That's%20what%20she%20said%20full%20report%20Final%20web.pdf>

[5] <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/nus-research-reveals-one-in-four-students-suffer-unwelcome-sexual-advances/>

[6] <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/feb/12/uni-lad-website-closure-banter>

[7] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-16852406>

[8] <http://hiddenmarks.org.uk/2010/>

[9] <http://roarnews.co.uk/wordpress/?p=13591>

[10] <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/oct/09/lse-rugby-club-racism-misogyny>

[11] <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/blogs/blog/SusuanaAntubam/2014/10/02/Get-ready-for-Good-Night-Out/>

[12] <http://www.kclsu.org/safespace/>

[13] <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/oct/15/lad-culture-thrives-in-our-neoliberal-universities>

[14] <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-calls-for-summit-on-lad-culture/>