

## Survivor Handbook SOAS Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy November 2020 Approved by the Executive Board

This handbook is for those in the SOAS community who have experienced any form of sexual or gender-based violence (henceforth referred to in this document as SGBV). This document outlines the way you can expect to be treated by SOAS, explains some of your options and a little on how investigations work. There is an additional handbook for those that support survivors that can be found here:

https://www.soas.ac.uk/admin/governance/policies/file151214.pdf. This handbook accompanies SOAS's Sexual and Gender Based Violence Policy

https://www.soas.ac.uk/admin/governance/policies/file151215.pdf which sets out expectations of staff, students and visitors to the School and how SOAS will respond and prevent incidents of reports of SGBV.

## What you can expect from SOAS

- We will believe you, take you seriously, treat you compassionately and work to understand how we can best support you to take the next steps that are right for you
- SOAS encourages people to inform someone if they experienced sexual violence, harassment and/or misconduct.
- SOAS understands the importance of minimising the number of times you have to disclose information or tell your story.
- SOAS processes are designed to limit the burden on you as the victim/ survivor that means limiting the burden on your time, resources and your emotions too. We will fast track you to the support you need, which includes things like counselling
- There are lots of options for you to get support or make a report. You don't have to report what happened in order to access support; however, we may not be able to take action against another student unless a proper report is given. We are limited in what action we can take against alleged perpetrators that aren't students, but we will do everything that is in our power to support you.

## How to Find the Right Next Step for You

It's essential that you feel equipped to make decisions that are right for you, at the right time. It's our job to talk you through these options and support you with whatever it is that you decide to do next. If you'd like a meeting to discuss this, please email

studentadviceandwellbeing@soas.ac.uk to set up a meeting or call. From there we can talk this

through, this conversation doesn't commit you to take any particular action and can remain anonymous (so long as we don't believe you or anyone else are in imminent danger).

How can I tell someone what happened?

There's a range of options available to you, so you can pick one that feels most comfortable to you at a time that's right for you;

- -Tell a tutor, in person or via email
- -Email Student Support Services, who are specially trained to respond to SGBV
- -Report via Report and Support

What happens next is in your control. Once we know what's happened there's a few different options available to you from SOAS. You can make a criminal complaint to the Police too, during which, SOAS can provide you with

Decide to keep your report anonymous

You can do this by using Report and Support or by telling the person you disclosed to that you'd like what happened logged in the system without your name attached. SOAS will use your story to better spot gaps and improve our work in this area. If you report via Report and Support we won't be able to give you emotional care, as we won't know who you are

The only reason we may not be able to keep confidentiality is if we believed that you or someone else was at risk of serious harm

You can access support without making a report. You don't have to go in to any detail you don't want to, just reach out to a tutor or member of the Student Support staff and a package can be made to help you. This can include but isn't limited to;

- -Compassionate leave
- -Extensions on university deadlines
- -Counselling

If you'd like more action to be taken, you will likely need to make a report which kicks off an investigation. Your case will be assigned to a specially trained member of staff. Lots of support will be available to you while this process takes place, including;

- -Compassionate leave
- -Extensions on university deadlines
- -Counselling
- -Enforced distancing from the accused, which can include their suspension pending investigation

## Investigations

You don't have to go to the police for SOAS to use our own disciplinary procedures. The Student Disciplinary Procedure includes sanctions up to and including expulsion from the School. The Staff Misconduct Procedure includes the categories of gross or serious misconduct, and sanctions include a first and final warning, a period of suspension without pay and dismissal.

When a report is made, the person who has been accused will be made aware as they need to have a right to defend themselves through SOAS's procedures if they choose to. Both you and the accused have the right for the case to be considered by an impartial party.

An investigation will begin, in which evidence is gathered in order for SOAS to make a decision on the necessary outcomes. Throughout the investigation SOAS will:

- Treat you fairly and compassionately, keeping you as up to date as possible with the progress of your case.
- Provide you with a support package that can include; counselling, flexibility on university commitments, compassionate leave and enforced distance from the accused (which can include their suspension)
- Ensure those that work on your case are specially trained to do so

Throughout the investigation process, we may become aware of intelligence that indicates to us that someone is in imminent risk of harm. We may have to involve external services (which may include the police). If this did happen, we would seek to keep you (the survivor) informed of our decision if it's safe to do so.