

Additional Guidance on

Reporting Student Sexual Misconduct

Item	Contents	
1.	Introduction	2
2.	Reporting Sexual Misconduct	2 - 3
3.	Investigation and outcome considerations	3 - 4
4.	Disclosure and information sharing	4 - 5
5.	Misconduct process workflow	6
6.	Sexual Misconduct Definitions	7 - 12

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance is intended to be used in cases where a student's report of misconduct involves allegations of sexual misconduct. It should be read and applied in conjunction with the RVC's overarching [RVC Student Misconduct Procedures](#). While the general misconduct framework provides the foundation for managing student behaviour concerns, this document offers specific guidance for responding to reports of sexual misconduct, acknowledging the unique sensitivities and complexities these cases present.
- 1.2 At the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), we recognise that incidents of sexual misconduct are complex and highly sensitive issues. Sexual violence can be experienced by anyone regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, age, disability, faith, ethnicity, nationality and economic status. We recognise the significant impact of all experiences of sexual misconduct and acknowledge the potential detriment to studies, regardless of when the experience occurred. Our approach to these incidents must therefore be both compassionate and robust.
- 1.3 All disclosures or reports of sexual misconduct will be addressed thoroughly and sensitively, with a trauma-informed approach that prioritises safety, confidentiality, and fairness. These matters will be managed with the necessary expertise and procedural rigour to ensure accountability, support those affected, uphold due process, and maintain trust in the institution's response.

2. Reporting Sexual Misconduct

- 4.1 Following an incident of sexual misconduct, which can take many forms, including but not limited to those defined in the [RVC Sexual Misconduct Definitions Guidance document](#), students may disclose in different ways. Students may choose to disclose the incident to a member of staff to seek support. This is not the same as making a formal report to the RVC to initiate the Student Misconduct Procedure. A disclosure is simply a student telling a member of staff what happened so they can be directed to support and explore reporting options.
- 4.2 In addition to disclosing to a staff member, students wishing to make a named or anonymised disclosure of sexual misconduct or harassment can also use [RVC Report and Support](#) to do so. The action that the RVC can take when receiving anonymous reports will be limited, but we will use the information to help identify any trends which can help direct prevention and support initiatives.

- 4.3 All disclosures will be treated confidentially and sensitively, and appropriate support will be offered to anyone making a disclosure.
- 4.4 Following a disclosure, students have the following options: 1) Report to the police, 2) Report to the RVC 3) Access support only.
- 4.5 All students who disclose to a staff member should be signposted to the Advice Centre (advice@rvc.ac.uk), where an adviser can discuss these options in more detail, provide emotional and mental health support, help students to access external specialist support where appropriate and liaise with staff about any academic adjustments that should be made for the student. Any students submitting non-anonymous reports through RVC Report and Support will be contacted by the Advice Centre, who will offer support as outlined above.
- 4.6 We will respect the student's right to decide what course of action they wish to take and will not take any action or pass on information without their consent. The only exceptions to this are where:
- It is considered an emergency, and there is a risk of imminent harm to self or others
 - There are safeguarding implications (the report involves people under 18 or vulnerable adults).
- 4.7 Students wishing to make a formal report to the RVC so that the incident can be investigated can complete the [RVC Student Misconduct Report Form](#) along with any supporting evidence to studentmisconduct@rvc.ac.uk. The RVC is unable to consider anonymous reports under our Student Misconduct Procedure.

3. Investigation and outcome considerations

- 3.1 In cases of alleged sexual misconduct, it is essential to clarify the limits of an internal investigation. Internal disciplinary processes are civil in nature and are not intended to determine criminal liability. For instance, while an institution may not be able to determine definitively whether rape has occurred, a decision that lies within the scope of the criminal justice system, it can and must consider whether the alleged behaviour constitutes a breach of its internal codes of conduct, policies, or values, such as those set out in the [RVC Charter](#).
- 3.2 Robust decision-making in misconduct cases, particularly those involving complex and sensitive allegations such as sexual misconduct, requires a transparent and well-reasoned approach to evaluating evidence. Where the weight of evidence varies or accounts conflict, it is essential that we set out how different pieces of evidence have been assessed and balanced. Our decisions will include a rationale that explains how conclusions were reached, ensuring clarity, fairness, and accountability in the outcome.

- 3.3 Clear documentation of how conclusions were drawn, including credibility assessments, consideration of corroborating or contradictory materials, and rationale for any penalties, is vital. This ensures not only procedural fairness but also that all parties can understand the basis of the decision, even if they disagree with the outcome.
- 3.4 Hearsay evidence is defined as '*where a witness reports what another person said or experienced*'. We acknowledge that in serious cases of sexual misconduct, direct evidence may not always be available. In such circumstances, hearsay may be relevant and can be taken into account, provided its reliability is assessed carefully. Our decision-makers should evaluate all evidence, direct or indirect, within the broader context of the case, and reach conclusions based on the civil standard of proof: that something is more likely than not to have occurred.

4. Disclosure and information sharing

- 4.1 In cases involving allegations of sexual misconduct, the sharing of outcomes with both the reporting and reported students will be handled in accordance with Section 21 of the [RVC Student Misconduct Procedures](#). These published principles ensure that information shared is proportionate, appropriate, and respectful of all parties' rights to privacy while maintaining transparency around decisions that directly affect them.
- 4.2 The outcome communicated to each party will include only the information necessary for them to understand the result of the process and any actions or sanctions that directly impact them. The reported student will be informed of any findings and sanctions against them. The reporting student will be informed of the outcome of their complaint and any measures put in place that may affect their ongoing engagement with the RVC.
- 4.3 In some instances, RVC may consider disclosing limited additional information to ensure appropriate safeguarding, academic adjustments, or support. These decisions will be guided by data protection principles and will only be made when it is lawful, necessary, and proportionate to do so. Any such disclosures will be handled sensitively, with a clear rationale, and documented appropriately.
- 4.4 All disclosures are made in line with the RVC's privacy policies, safeguarding responsibilities, and relevant legal frameworks such as the UK GDPR.
- 4.5 Students involved in sexual misconduct cases will be reminded that while the process is confidential, confidentiality is not absolute. Information may be shared internally or externally, where:
- There is a safeguarding risk to the student or others.
 - There is a legal obligation to report (e.g., in criminal investigations)

- Academic or support adjustments are necessary and require limited information sharing.
- 4.6 Staff handling such cases will be trained to manage confidentiality and disclosures sensitively, ensuring that students understand how their information will be used and why.
- 4.7 The RVC recognises the importance of managing contact between parties during the investigation and the Panel hearing (if applicable). The RVC may implement attendance or participation arrangements, e.g., adjustments to Panel proceedings like separate rooms, questions directed through one person to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all students involved.
- 4.8 These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, with a primary focus on student safety and wellbeing. At the same time, RVC is committed to ensuring fairness by safeguarding each student's right to fully and appropriately present their case.

Useful links and information:

- [Sexual Misconduct and Violence website](#)
- [RVC Sexual Misconduct and Violence Support and Advice](#)
- [LEARN – Student Hub and Services](#)
- [Compassionate Communications in Higher Education | Academic Registrars Council](#)
- [RVC Report and Support](#)
- [RVC Student Misconduct Procedures](#)
- [RVC Student Misconduct Reporting Form](#)
- [RVC Sexual Misconduct Definitions Guidance](#)

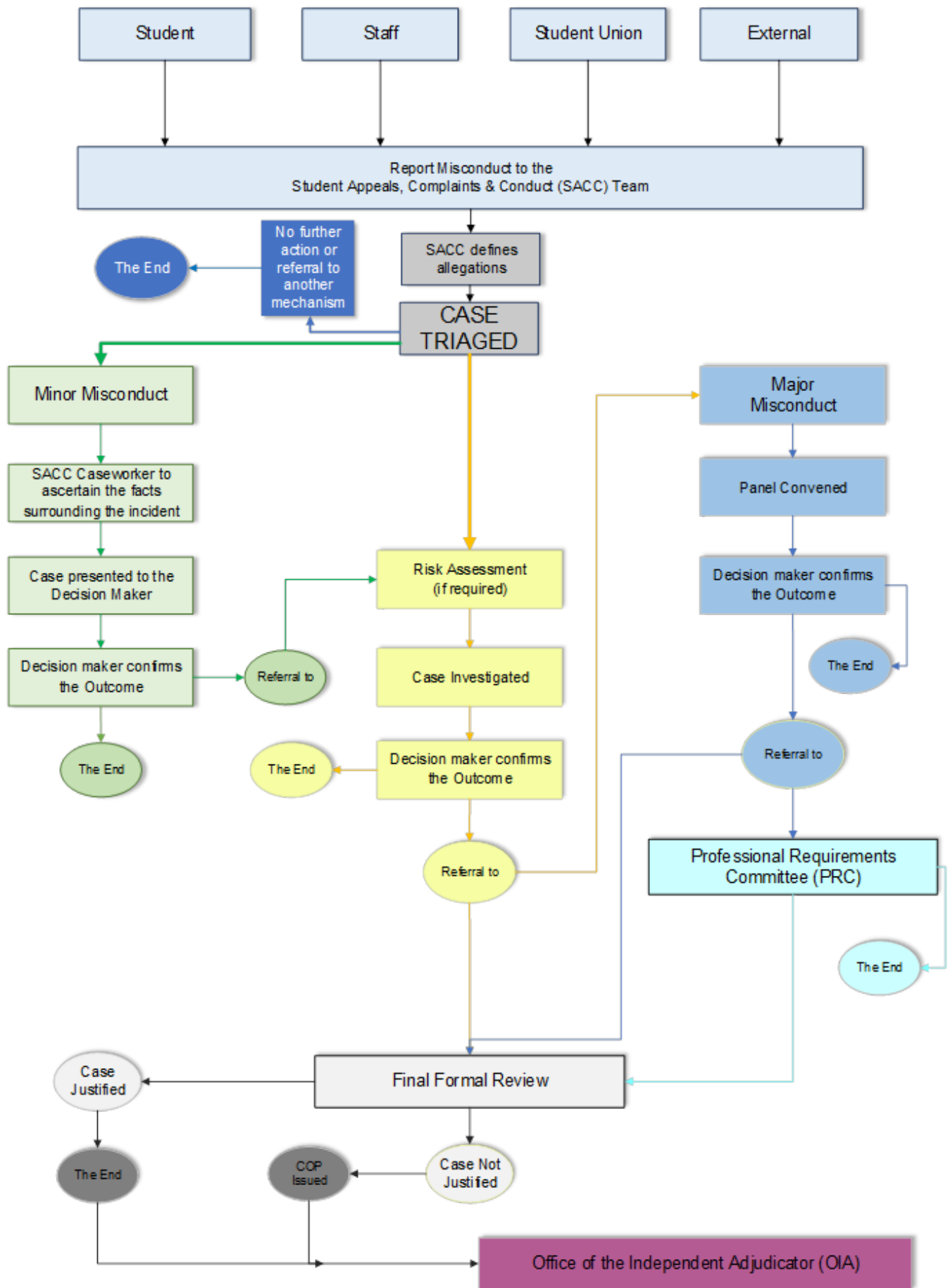
RVC Student Misconduct Procedure

10 Calendar Days

50 Calendar Days

30 Calendar Days

12 months



Sexual Misconduct Type	Definition	Examples of behaviours
Disclosure	Where a student informs a member of RVC staff about an incident of sexual harassment or misconduct. This is not the same as making a formal report to the RVC for the purposes of initiating the Student Misconduct Procedure. A disclosure is simply a student telling a member of staff what happened so they can be directed to support and explore reporting options.	
Sexual misconduct	Any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and including, but not limited to: i. sexual harassment; ii. sexual assault; and iii. rape.	
Sexual Harassment	Unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which: ▪ violates your dignity ▪ makes you feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated ▪ creates a hostile or offensive environment You don't need to have previously objected to someone's behaviour for it to be considered unwanted.	Some examples of sexual harassment include: ▪ physical behaviour, including unwelcome sexual advances, touching and various forms of sexual assault ▪ displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature ▪ sending emails with sexual content ▪ Emphasising the sex of a person or group in a negative way ▪ Suggestive and/or unwelcome sexual comments or gestures ▪ Unnecessary and/or unwelcome physical contact ▪ Pulling at or lifting someone's clothing and/or exposing their body (in public or private) without consent ▪ Unwelcome, sexually explicit comments or language via the internet

		▪ Displaying or sending pornographic, degrading or indecent images electronically
Harassment	Unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which may (intentionally or unintentionally) violate a person's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if they create an offensive environment.	▪ unwanted physical conduct or 'horseplay', including touching, pinching, pushing, grabbing, brushing past someone, invading their personal space and more serious forms of physical or sexual assault ▪ offensive or intimidating comments or gestures, or insensitive jokes or pranks ▪ mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability ▪ racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender ▪ outing or threatening to out someone as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender ▪ ignoring or shunning someone, for example, by deliberately excluding them from a conversation or a social activity.
Sexual assault	When a person commits sexual assault, if they intentionally touch another person, the touching is sexual and the person does not consent. It involves all unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature and ranges from pinching, embracing, groping and kissing, to rape and serious sexual assault which	

	involves penetration without consent. 'Sexual assault by penetration' involves the penetration of the vagina or anus by a body part (such as fingers or tongue) or anything else (such as a bottle or vibrator) without consent. Rape is a form of sexual assault, but not all sexual assault is rape.	
Rape	Is the penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth by a penis, without consent.	
Sexual consent	Is a voluntary agreement to engage in a sexual activity. There must be freedom and the capacity to make this choice.	▪ Being the right age ▪ Being sober ▪ Having the mental and physical ability to freely agree ▪ Not being threatened or afraid of harm ▪ Not being detained against their will ▪ It's OK to consent to one form of sexual activity but not to another ▪ Consent can be withdrawn at any time. ▪ It's not enough to assume someone wants sex, consent should be sought and freely given with no coercion. ▪ Sex without consent is a crime; either rape or sexual assault
Controlling behaviour	Is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.	
Coercive behaviour	Is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, frighten, isolate or create dependence.	
Domestic/ Relationship abuse	Any incident of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are 'personally connected', regardless of their gender or sexuality. Domestic abuse can	Relationship/Domestic abuse can look like things such as:

	be, but isn't limited to: ▪ physical ▪ emotional ▪ psychological ▪ sexual ▪ financial Examples of people who are 'personally connected' include: ▪ relatives, including half and step relatives ▪ married couples, or couples who used to be married ▪ civil partners, or former civil partner ▪ people who have ever agreed to marry, or enter into a civil partnership agreement with each other ▪ people who have had an intimate relationship with each other ▪ people who are parents of the same child, or have ever had a parental responsibility for the same child.	▪ Withholding money or preventing someone from earning money ▪ Taking control over aspects of someone's everyday life, which can include where they go and what they wear ▪ Not letting someone leave the house or see friends/family ▪ Reading emails, text messages or letters ▪ Threatening to kill or harm them, a partner, another family member or a pet ▪ Domestic abuse also includes honour-based abuse and forced marriage.
Sexual violence	Is a term used to describe any sexual behaviour that is not consensual, for example, rape or sexual assault? But it isn't limited to physical violence – coercive behaviour, sexual harassment and voyeurism can all constitute sexual violence. It can affect anybody regardless of their gender or sexuality.	
Sexting	Means sending a sexually explicit image, video or message either using a mobile phone or online.	
Revenge porn	Is a form of image-based sexual abuse. This term includes creating, disclosing or threatening to disclose nude, sexual or sexually explicit photographs, films or messages without consent and with intent to cause distress. The perpetrator may be a partner, an ex-partner, a friend, a family member, an acquaintance, a colleague or a stranger. While some perpetrators may be motivated by of desire to seek revenge, others might engage in this behaviour for other reasons, such as peer pressure or sexual gratification.	
Abuse of power	Is defined as the misuse of authority or position by an individual in power, typically leading to unjust or	

	harmful actions against others. An example of this would be a situation where a relevant staff member exploits a position of power in relation to a student so as to apply pressure in a way which: i. may result in the student doing something, or refraining from doing something, that they may not have otherwise done; and ii. that action or inaction could reasonably result in something that falls within the scope of an intimate personal relationship.	
Stalking	Is a form of harassment, but the stalker will have an obsession with the person they're targeting, and their repeated, unwanted behaviour can make the victim feel distressed or scared.	Stalking may include: ▪ following someone ▪ going uninvited to their home ▪ hanging around somewhere, they know the person often visits ▪ watching or spying on someone ▪ identity theft (signing up for services, buying things in someone's name) ▪ writing or posting online about someone if it's unwanted or the person doesn't know it.
Voyeurism	Involves a person observing or recording, for their sexual gratification, another person doing a private act.	
Upskirting	It is an informal term for a type of voyeurism when someone uses equipment like a camera or mobile phone to take photos or videos underneath a person's clothes, without their permission.	
Stealthing	Is when someone removes a condom during sex without the other person's consent or lies about having put one on in the first place.	
Sextortion	Is a type of online blackmail. It's when someone threatens to share sexual pictures, videos, or information about you unless you pay money or do something else you don't want to.	
Victim blaming	Is when the victim of an offence is held responsible or partly responsible for what happened to them.	
Gender-based	Is violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex OR gender identity. It	

Violence (GBV)	includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life.	
Slut shaming	Is when someone uses derogatory names and makes comments to make another person feel guilty or ashamed about their (supposed) sexual activities and encounters.	