

Workshops: Professional Boundaries and Sexual Harassment Experienced by Postgraduate Researchers.



Implementation Plan

Key points for running our workshops at your institution

We deliver both staff and student training workshops in person at your institution. We will work closely with you to promote the workshop and support participant recruitment. If in-person sessions are not possible, we may be able to deliver online workshops but in-person is our preferred mode of delivery.

1. **Initial queries.** You can send an initial enquiry to contact@1752group.com – let us know which workshops (staff, postgraduate students, HR training) you're interested in and how many participants you hope to reach. We'll follow up to provide a quote.
2. **Planning meeting.** If you decide to go ahead, we'll hold an initial planning meeting online – usually about 30-45 mins.
 - a. This should be attended by the person responsible for administrative support (as outlined in the next point) as well as the staff member responsible for booking/overseeing this work. If possible, please also invite a member of staff responsible for sexual violence support from the central institution so they are aware of the sessions and their content, as they may receive disclosures after the sessions.
 - b. We will discuss a recruitment strategy (see point four) to ensure that people are incentivised and encouraged to attend.
 - c. You will be able to ask any questions about the points outlined below.
 - d. At this stage, please let us know whether there are specific contextual factors which we need to be sensitive to (for example, see FAQ).
 - e. At this stage, please provide us with information on support services within your organisation that we can signpost participants to before and during the sessions.
3. **Administrative support:** We will need support from a named member of staff for administrative support within the department(s) where training is taking place, who is in regular contact with staff and/or postgraduate students. This is a relatively small time commitment but they need to be available to book rooms, send out recruitment emails, keep track of sign-ups, respond to queries, and to be a point of contact for us throughout the process.
4. **Recruitment.** It can be challenging to get staff and PGRs to sign up for these sessions.
 - a. Messaging should go out from senior staff in the department/research group to strongly encourage attendance. We suggest that the template emails provided below for recruitment are sent by senior staff.
 - b. It is crucial to start recruitment at least four weeks before the session. We will provide the information and text for the adverts.

- c. We will ask your team (the administrative support) to set up the sign-up sheet and share it with us so we can track numbers.
5. **Minimum numbers.** We ask for minimum numbers of staff and students for each session. Participation numbers per session –
 - a. PGR session – minimum 8 and maximum 25
 - b. Staff session – minimum 6 and maximum 30
 - c. Multiple sessions can be arranged where demand is high.
6. **Venue.** You will need to book a room with the following requirements:
 - a. AV access for presentation. Visitor access to AV systems and the internet will need to be arranged by the hosting HEI.
 - b. Able to accommodate group work. Lecture theatres should be avoided.
 - c. In an easily accessible location for your staff and/or students.
 - d. The room needs to be booked for the duration of the session, plus at least 30 minutes before and after the session.
7. **Refreshments.** Particularly for the PGR session, as it is longer, we recommend you arrange tea/coffee and biscuits/cake. This also helps to incentivise attendance.
8. **Sexual violence/harassment support staff.** If you have a specialist sexual violence and harassment staff member or team at your HEI, we strongly recommend that someone from that team should attend the last 15 minutes of the session and be available if anyone should need advice after the session.
9. **Pre-session materials.** To support safer training spaces, we send an outline of the session and the case study/ies in advance so participants know what to expect, particularly any survivors who plan to attend. We'll discuss with you the best way to share these resources.
10. **Evaluation.** We are currently evaluating the workshops. This includes a pre-workshop survey, one immediately afterwards, and a final one 3 months after the workshop. It is entirely voluntary and anonymous. We'll send details in advance to participants along with the resources.

FAQs

[This is a sensitive issue; is the content of the workshops also sensitive?](#)

We don't include any detailed depictions of abuse in the sessions. We use a pseudonymised case study which includes a description of harassing behaviours and the impact on the person targeted. We send this in advance so participants are informed about what to expect and can read it in advance of the session. We include content warnings and encourage participants to do whatever they need to feel safe, such as taking a breather at any time. The workshop facilitators are experienced in responding to sexual misconduct disclosures and can offer additional signposting if participants need it. As noted above, we will work with your institutional specialist teams to promote their work and encourage help seeking.

[Our institutional response to staff-to-student sexual misconduct is under review. Is it still appropriate to run the workshops?](#)

Many UK HEIs are in the same situation. We recommend that you don't wait but go ahead. However, it's important to be transparent with participants about the fact that the institutional response is still a work in progress. This includes highlighting the fact that work is underway, that change is coming. Bringing PGRs and staff on board with the change process can help in gathering momentum. We recommend running [our half-day training session for HR staff](#)

and others handling staff-student sexual misconduct alongside the professional boundaries workshops to support improved responses to reports.

We would like you to deliver the PGR sessions only. Is that possible?

Our recommended model is to run sessions for **both** staff and PGRs in the same department to support co-created culture change. However, our primary goal is to reach as many participants as possible and as such, we will work with your specific needs wherever possible.

Can we open these sessions across the whole university rather than just within one department?

Our recommended model is to run sessions within a department, School, or research group. This is because one of the goals of the session is to develop a shared understanding of professional boundaries within an academic community. We hope the workshops will be a catalyst for a wider departmental discussion about professional boundaries and appropriate behaviour. It therefore works best with a department, school, or other cohorts of staff where there is an opportunity for the work to be taken forward after the workshop ends. As such, running general sessions across the institution does not achieve this aim, as different disciplinary communities tend to have different cultures.

However, if there are good reasons why the sessions can't be run at department/School level, we will consider running sessions that are open to all staff/PGRs across the HEI rather than just at department level.

Session outlines for advertising and sign up

PGR Workshop Advert

Recognizing professional boundaries and sexual harassment as a PGR

Led by The 1752 Group

ADD DATE, TIME, AND PLACE, AND SIGN-UP DETAILS (2.5 hours)

PGRs are likely to encounter issues relating to sexual harassment and professional boundary violations during their studies or careers, whether as bystanders, Graduate Teaching Assistants, conference participants, line managers, or through being targeted for harassment themselves. However, shared understandings of appropriate boundaries in higher education are often lacking. At the same time, power imbalances between staff and PGRs create a context where sexual harassment and other abuses of power are more likely to occur.

The aims of this session are therefore:

- To support PGRs to recognise sexual harassment and other boundary-blurring behaviours that may be experienced by themselves and/or their peers
- To introduce the concept of professional boundaries
- To enable PGRs to better recognise and respond to inappropriate behaviours in different academic contexts

- To ensure PGRs understand how to raise concerns relating to these issues or to report them
- Provide skills and knowledge relevant to EEDI (equity, equality, diversity and inclusion) that will equip PGRs to tackle these issues in their careers as future academics and leaders.

This interactive session is led by trainers with expertise in this area and draws on recent research evidence. It will include discussion of an anonymised case study of boundary-blurring behaviours in higher education.

The case study, along with details of how we will hold a safer space, will be shared a few days in advance of the session.

PGR Follow-Up Advert

To All [Department/School/Research Group] PGRs,

Recognizing professional boundaries and sexual harassment as a PGR

[The 1752 Group](#)

ADD DATE, TIME, AND PLACE, AND SIGN-UP DETAILS (2.5 hours)

Funded by UKRI Enhancing Research Cultures Fund, and endorsed by your [Graduate Research School] and Head of Department XXX, this workshop is an opportunity to enhance your knowledge and skills in understanding and responding effectively to sexual harassment and the role of professional boundaries in preventing such abuses of power.

Equality, equity, diversity and inclusion is becoming a key skill required by employers within academia and beyond. The skills and knowledge you will gain from the workshop will **enable you to recognise and respond to sexual harassment both during your time as a PGR, and also as a future academic and leader with people management responsibilities.**

PGR feedback on previous sessions has been extremely positive, for example:

“I found this session really valuable. The structured discussion worked really well to amplify the message, and the balance of content volume and pace was perfect. The coordinators set a really positive tone that made this difficult topic seem approachable. Thank you again for this workshop - I'll certainly recommend it to colleagues in future.” (PhD student)

You can sign up for the session [\[here\]](#).

Staff Workshop

Professional boundaries and sexual harassment experienced by PGRs: staff training session

[The 1752 Group](#)

With thanks to The Enhancing Research Culture Fund

ADD DATE, TIME, AND PLACE, AND SIGN-UP DETAILS (1.5 hours)

The term 'professional boundaries' denotes appropriate standards of behaviour by professionals in working with adult clients, patients or students (Cooper, 2012). However, in higher education shared understandings of appropriate boundaries are often lacking. At the same time, power imbalances between staff and PGRs create a context where sexual harassment and other abuses of power is more likely to occur; around 10% of women postgraduate students (including PGRs) are targeted for sexual harassment during their studies (Cantor et al, 2019; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017). As well as the significant detriment experienced by those targeted, sexual misconduct can impact whole departments, even long after one or both parties has left. The role of professional boundaries as a tool for prevention is highlighted.

The aims of this session are therefore:

- To reflect on shared understandings of professional boundaries within the School/department
- To ensure staff can recognise sexual harassment - including more subtle forms - and know how to support PGRs and colleagues to recognise/raise this

This session will include discussion of an anonymised case study, used with permission, of boundary-blurring behaviours in higher education. The case study, along with details of how we will hold a safer space, will be shared a few days in advance of the session.

[Staff Follow-Up Advert](#)

Professional boundaries and sexual harassment experienced by PGRs: staff training session

[The 1752 Group](#)

With thanks to The Enhancing Research Culture Fund

ADD DATE, TIME, AND PLACE, AND SIGN-UP DETAILS (1.5 hours inc. evaluation)

There is increasing recognition across academia that our organisational culture has a significant impact on both the quality of our work and our experience of working life. This can be seen in changes at sector level, with funding bodies such as UKRI developing programmes to address research culture, and the Office for Students looking to regulate HEI responses to harassment and sexual misconduct.

Abuses of power such as sexual harassment can have life-changing consequences for those targeted, and can also undermine the culture and cohesion of a department, affecting morale long after one or both parties have left. According to two large-scale studies (n = 30,000), 10% of PGR women experience sexual harassment from staff.

This workshop uses a 'real world' case study to explore sexual harassment as an abuse of power and to signpost staff to where to get advice and support for PGRs and colleagues. It also considers the role of professional boundaries as a method of preventing sexual harassment, with space to discuss how to handle boundary-blurring behaviours from staff and students.

Feedback from staff attending previous sessions has been very positive; for example “**Very helpful session and very well run.** I would make it compulsory for staff to attend.”

You can sign up to attend the session [here].

Pre-session email to accompany pre-session reading materials, i.e. case study/ies and evaluation consent and information (if relevant)

Staff Workshop

Dear All,

We're looking forward to meeting you at the workshop on *Professional Boundaries and Sexual Harassment Experienced by PGRs*, taking place on **XXX, at XXX in XXX**.

The aims of the session are as follows:

- To ensure staff can recognise sexual harassment - including more subtle forms - and know how to support PGRs and colleagues to recognise/raise this
- To reflect on shared understandings of professional boundaries within the School/department

We recognise this is a sensitive topic, so with this in mind, we are sharing some information in advance to help with preparation. You can find details of support organisations in the consent and information form, or [here on The 1752 Group website](#).

Please read the attached documents before the session - there will be some time to refresh your memory during the workshop.

The first document includes the **case study**. It does not contain any graphic/explicit descriptions of sexual violence, but it does include a first-hand account of sexual harassment and the impact. 'Andrea' has given enthusiastic permission for us to use her experience in this workshop.

The second document is an **Information and Consent Form**. We are carrying out an evaluation of this workshop and when you come along on Wednesday, we will invite you to participate in it. Your participation in the evaluation would be hugely valuable in assessing the effectiveness of the training. However, it's entirely optional and you can still participate in the workshop if you don't want to take part in the evaluation.

Please bring a laptop or tablet so you can access the case study, and take part in the Mentimeter, as well as the surveys if you wish.

If you have any questions, or suggestions for how we can hold a safer space for our workshop, please feel free to email anna.bull@york.ac.uk.

Many thanks

PGR Workshop

Dear All,

We're looking forward to meeting you at the workshops on *Professional Boundaries and Sexual Harassment Experienced by PGRs*, taking place **XXX at XXX in XXX**.

The aims of the session are as follows:

- To enable PGRs to recognise sexual harassment and boundary-blurring behaviours that may be experienced by themselves and/or their peers;
- To introduce the concept of professional boundaries;
- To enable PGRs to better recognise and respond to inappropriate behaviours in different academic contexts;
- To ensure PGRs understand how to raise concerns relating to these issues or to report them.

We recognise this is a sensitive topic, so with this in mind, we are sharing some information in advance to help with preparation. **Please read these documents before the session.** You can find details of support organisations [here on The 1752 Group website](#).

The first document includes **two case studies**. The case studies do not contain any graphic/explicit descriptions of sexual violence, but it does include a first-hand, real-world account of sexual harassment and the impact - both 'Andrea' and 'Amy' have given enthusiastic permission for us to share their stories.

We hope to have a good discussion about the case studies, but you are welcome to take a breather at any point – no need to ask or explain. We will provide a list of resources and organisations that support survivors after the workshop.

The second document is an **Information and Consent Form**. We are carrying out an evaluation of this workshop and when you come along on Thursday, we will invite you to participate in it. Your participation in the evaluation would be hugely valuable in assessing the effectiveness of the training. However, it's entirely optional and you can still participate in the workshop if you don't want to take part in the evaluation.

Please bring a laptop or tablet so you can access the case study, and take part in the Mentimeter, as well as the surveys if you wish.

If you have any questions, or suggestions for how we can hold a safer space for our workshop, please feel free to email anna.bull@york.ac.uk.

Many thanks