

Rt Hon Maria Miller MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

6 November 2018

Dear Mrs Miller,

I'm writing to you following the publication of the Women and Equalities Committee's report on 'sexual harassment of women and girls in public places' and, specifically, the chapter on women's safety at university.

Universities UK welcomes much of the committee's report, and the acknowledgement that sexual harassment at university takes place in a particular context. We have been clear that there is no place for sexual violence, harassment or hate crime on campus and have developed a proactive programme of work to support implementation of our Taskforce to examine these issues' recommendations. Our March 2018 survey results showed real progress had been made in many institutions, including an increase in the number of disclosures of harassment and the establishment of a range of successful reporting mechanisms. As acknowledged in the committee's report, and outlined in evidence from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, underreporting is common and therefore a barrier to further progress.

We do however recognise there is more to be done to address sexual violence, harassment and hate crime affecting students. To this end we currently have a survey out to all 136 UUK members that has been designed as a self-assessment exercise to support universities to identify where further work is needed alongside areas of positive change. The outcomes of this survey will be used to determine where further action and guidance from UUK is required to support the delivery of continuous improvement in this important agenda. We are holding our third national conference to tackle all forms of harassment and violence on 5 December 2018 and will be sharing initial findings with attendees then. Unfortunately there is an existing commitment in your diary that prevents your attendance at the conference, however I would be delighted to meet you early in 2019 to discuss this ongoing programme of work and next steps.

As acknowledged in the report, there is now an increased focus on staff-to-student sexual misconduct at university. In order to address this serious issue, we have established a new Advisory Group chaired by Professor Cara Aitchison, Vice-Chancellor at Cardiff Metropolitan University with academics, the NUS and expert practitioners to provide guidance on addressing abuse and harassment perpetrated by university staff. As the representative body of universities we take our responsibility to support our members across the UK tackling all forms of harassment and abuse incredibly seriously, including through sharing best practice and applying pressure to engage with the agenda and provide evidence of progress.

To note, alongside a strong programme of work to tackle sexual violence and harassment we are carefully examining the role Universities UK can play to support members to address race-based hate crime and the growing problems of online harassment. Again, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the work of your committee on these areas and further explain the role Universities UK plays leading the sector in tackling abuse, harassment and abuse.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Dame Janet Beer**  
**President, Universities UK**