

Consent.

Do you get it?

AUBSU's Guide to Consent

If this issue is triggering to you, please don't feel like you need to read this guide. We'll be speaking quite plainly about some sensitive issues.

While reading, you may find that this guide affects you more than you thought it would. If this is the case, then think about seeking further support. We've put together a list of support services that you can find [here](#).

However, if this topic makes you uncomfortable because this isn't something that you usually think or talk about, then do read on. It's important to understand consent and to be able to communicate openly about this issue.

Why should I read this guide?

We know that you've probably heard about sexual consent before: "No" means "No".

But sexual consent is a lot more complex than that. Sometimes "Yes" can still mean "No". And there's sexual harassment, online image-based abuse, 'lad culture' and other issues to consider too.

That's why we've put together this guide. We'll talk you through sexual consent, the law and what this means for you. We've also included some information on supporting your mates and reporting.

At the back of this guide you can find additional support links.

Take a read through at your own pace and make sure that you fully understand sexual consent, both for yourself and for the impact that you could have on other people.

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MYTHS & FACTS

MYTH 'ALCOHOL, DRUGS, STRESS, OR DEPRESSION CAUSES SOMEBODY TO RAPE/SEXUALLY ASSAULT ANOTHER PERSON'

FACT IT IS THE ATTACKER COMMITTING THE OFFENCE, NOT THE DRUGS/ALCOHOL. LIKEWISE, STRESS/DEPRESSION DOES NOT JUSTIFY IT. THERE ARE NO EXCUSES.

LIFE

MYTH 'PEOPLE OFTEN LIE ABOUT BEING RAPED BECAUSE THEY REGRET HAVING SEX WITH SOMEONE, BECAUSE THEY WANT ATTENTION, OR OUT OF SPITE'

FACT ACTUALLY, THIS RARELY HAPPENS. IN FACT, THE VAST PROPORTION OF SURVIVORS CHOOSE NOT TO REPORT TO THE POLICE FOR THE FEAR OF NOT BEING BELIEVED.

MYTH 'ONLY YOUNG ATTRACTIVE WOMEN OR GIRLS GET RAPED OR SEXUALLY ASSAULTED'

FACT PEOPLE OF ALL AGES, APPEARANCES, GENDERS, SEXUALITIES, RACES, AND RELIGIONS ARE RAPED. RAPE IS AN ACT OF VIOLENCE AND CONTROL; ATTRACTIVENESS OFTEN HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.

MYTH 'NOT USING A CONDOM, EVEN THOUGH I SAID I WOULD, IS NOT AN OFFENCE'

FACT IF SOMEBODY CONSENTS TO HAVING SEX ON THE CONDITION YOU WEAR A CONDOM, THEN REMOVING IT WITHOUT YOUR PARTNER KNOWING OR CONSENTING IS A SEXUAL OFFENCE.

MYTH 'IF TWO PEOPLE HAVE HAD SEX WITH EACH OTHER BEFORE, IT'S ALWAYS OK TO DO IT TOGETHER AGAIN'

FACT CONSENT MUST BE GIVEN EACH TIME YOU ENGAGE IN SEXUAL CONTACT, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU HAVE DONE IT TOGETHER BEFORE.



Myths & Facts

There are a lot of common misconceptions and myths surrounding consent and sex. These can make it hard for victims and survivors to come forward and get support, especially when these myths put the blame on the victim or confuse what consent is.

It's important to deconstruct these misconceptions and ensure that everyone understands consent fully and clearly.

What is consent?

Sexual consent is an agreement to participate in a sexual activity. It's all about setting your personal boundaries and respecting your sexual partner in their boundaries too.

Before being sexual with anyone, you need to know if they want to be sexual with you too, how far they want to go and understand their personal boundaries. This could be communicated verbally or non-verbally before or at any stage of physical contact.

Without consent, sexual activity is sexual assault or rape. That includes kissing or touching someone anywhere on their body, as well as penetration or oral sex.

Here are the basics of consent. Consent is:

- **Freely given.** Consenting is a choice you make without pressure, manipulation, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- **Reversible.** Anyone can change their mind about what they feel like doing, anytime. Even if you've done it before, and even if you're both naked in bed.
- **Informed.** You can only consent to something if you have the full story. For example, if someone says they'll use a condom and then they don't, there isn't full consent.
- **Enthusiastic.** When it comes to sex, you should only do stuff you WANT to do, not things that you feel you're expected to do.
- **Specific.** Saying yes to one thing (like going to the bedroom to make out) doesn't mean you've said yes to others (like having sex).

CONSENT IS NOT...

X Assumed

X Pressured

X Silent

X Reluctant

X Unconscious

Do you like that?

Can we use a condom?

Communication is key

Talking openly about sex can be uncomfortable or embarrassing but it's really important to communicate with your partner. You'll probably find that by talking with your partner that this will improve your sexual experience with each other too.

Be sure to tell your partner what you want, when you want it and how you want it, and find out the same from them. Don't pressure anyone into doing something that they don't want to do or aren't ready for. Likewise, don't feel that you have to do anything that you aren't comfortable with.

How's that for you?

Can I touch you here?

Does this feel good?

Sexual Harassment

We often think of consent as only being connected to rape or sexual assault but there are a whole range of acts that make others feel uncomfortable, not to mention illegal.

Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature which:

- violates your dignity
- makes you feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated
- creates a hostile or offensive environment

Sexual harassment isn't always of a physical nature. Some common examples of sexual harassment are:

- sexual comments or jokes
- physical behaviour, including unwelcome sexual advances, touching and various forms of sexual assault (this could be on top of clothes)
- displaying or sharing pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- sending unwanted messages with a sexual content



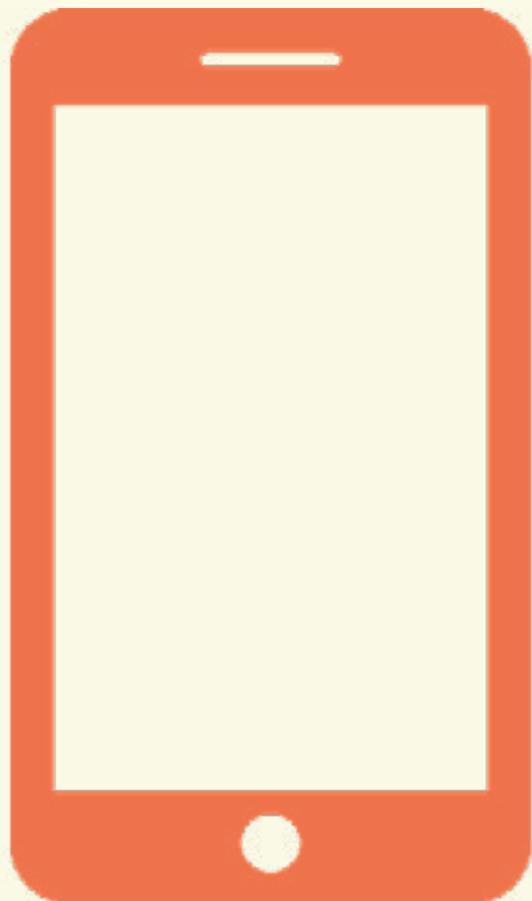
You need to ensure that the person you are doing these things with is comfortable with it and consents to you acting in this way. For example, only touch a friend on the knee if you know that they are happy to be touched in this way.

Likewise, only make sexual jokes if you are sure that the recipient is comfortable and does not take any offence. If you're at all unsure: don't do it. Simple.

Image-based Sexual Abuse

We're a digital world now and unfortunately we now encounter digital forms of abuse. Image-based sexual abuse has been on the rise along with more and more cases of sexual images being created and/or distributed without the subject's consent.

You might know this as 'Revenge Porn' but it could also be the distribution of sexual images that have been stolen and then shared.



Here are some examples:

- Upskirting (non-consensual taking of images or videos up someone's skirt).
- Recording & sharing acts of sexual abuse.
- Threatening somebody with exposure of images. Images could also be used to coerce someone into doing something that they do not want to do because they are afraid of this exposure.
- Pornographic Photoshopping (editing someone's face onto a pornographic image and sharing it online).

Image-based sexual abuse can be a very harmful and damaging act. As such, there are now laws in place to prevent this from occurring. However, this does not cover all acts and there is no certain guarantee of prosecution. Further to this, image-based sexual abuse can be a difficult thing to recover from, regardless of the consequences for the perpetrator.

Therefore, it should be taken seriously and something that you are aware of.

The Law

Consent is defined by section 74 Sexual Offences Act 2003:

“Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs.”

So by the law, consent has three components:

CHOICE someone should choose when, how and with whom to have sex, each time.

FREEDOM someone should be free to make these choices and are not forced to consent by their circumstances.

CAPACITY a person is capable and able to make these choices. I.e. they aren't unconscious or too drunk to make this decision.

The legal age of consent to most forms of physical activity is 16 in the UK (though this is not automatic consent. You still need to ensure that they consent in the ways stated above).

If you know that someone cannot or does not consent to you touching or being sexual with them in any way then you are breaking the law.

If you haven't consented to sexual activity, you have a legal right to take action and report it as a crime, if you choose to do so.

Simplifying it

We know that can be a lot to take in and sometimes it's hard to apply to everyday life. We've come up with a few pieces of advice to help you navigate through social situations or awkward scenarios:

Buying drinks

Buying someone a drink is a nice gesture. Remember that it isn't a transaction for someone's time, attention or physical intimacy. Also, some people will be wary of getting bought drinks (or simply might not want one) so respect their refusal if they decline your offer.

Accepting rejection

You aren't entitled to another person's attention. They're allowed to not be interested. They don't have to have a partner already or say, "Sorry I'm already seeing someone". Accept their decline at face value and respect it.

For the 'gram...

We live in the 21st Century - if something funny happens, it gets captured, shared in the group chat or posted online. Be sure to take a second to think about what you're sharing and whether the subject of a photo or video is okay with it being shared. Once posted, it's hard to take back.

No-tolerance

Some acts of sexual harassment and sexual assault are 'normalised' by social culture. For example, making jokes about rape or using demeaning language could influence other people in their own attitudes and the way they act towards other people - especially when concerning statements are dismissed and written off as "banter". This goes for in person and online, like in group chats.

If you want to take action then call out offensive and disrespectful attitudes, both to strangers and in your own social circles. By showing that this isn't something you tolerate, you'll be educating others on what is and isn't acceptable behaviour. **We all need to contribute to help change attitudes and create a safer environment for everyone.**

Lad Culture

'Lad culture' can be viewed as the manifestation of the above, where a group of people embody a sub-culture of 'banter', which is often sexist, misogynist, or homophobic.

This movement, especially prevalent in universities, is incredibly damaging as it trivialises serious issues such as consent, rape and harassment. It also puts a lot of pressure on people to act a certain way and promotes a form of masculinity harmful to both women and men.

While these attitudes are part of a wider societal issue, lad culture is still something to be aware (and wary) of.

Supporting Friends & Reporting

It's not your decision to report an assault or rape that did not happen to you. You must always talk to the person involved and respect their decision for how they want to proceed, even if their decision is to do nothing.

However, there are some things you can do to help support that person...

Do Listen. Believe them. Reassure them that they are not alone.

Don't Judge them or blame them for what happened. The blame should only be placed on the person who committed the assault.

Do Encourage them to get help. This could be seeking medical attention, talking to a qualified counsellor or joining a support group. Offer to drive them or go with them.

Don't Pressure them. It's their decision if they want to report the assault or not. Respect their decision and let them know that you'll support them whatever they decide.



In some cases, you might know the perpetrator and not the victim. Perhaps a friend confided in you about what happened and you recognised it as sexual assault or you saw sexual images posted in an online group.

Again, it's not up to you to report the assault if you were not the victim. However, if you feel safe to do so, you could speak with the person who is alleged to have committed the assault and encourage them to come forward or try to resolve the issue themselves.



What should I do if I was raped or sexually assaulted?

1. Remember that it's not your fault. You may be feeling a range of emotions but whatever you feel, just know that what happened is not in any way your fault. You shouldn't blame yourself for anything you did or didn't do.
2. Make sure you're safe. If you're in immediate danger, call 999. Otherwise, get to somewhere you know that you're safe or call a friend who can help.
3. Try not to do anything to change your appearance, including washing. If you do have to change your clothes, then pack the clothes you were wearing in a clean bag so that they can be inspected. You need to make sure that any evidence can be collected, including evidence on your body. Also if possible, don't go to the bathroom, comb your hair, eat, smoke, drink or take any drugs.

4. Get medical care. You'll need to get to the hospital or a sexual assault referral centre (such as [The Shores](#)) right away if you have any physical injuries or want to collect evidence from your body (you don't need to decide right away whether to press charges if you do have evidence collected.) You might then want to think about getting a HIV test or STI/STD tests. If you require it, you can also take a morning after pill (you can take this up to 5 days after unprotected sex).
5. Get further support. Dealing with the aftermath of rape or sexual assault can be overwhelming. But you're not alone. It may help to talk to a trusted friend, family member, or counsellor. You can find some support links on the next page.
6. Think about talking to the police. It's completely up to you if you report the crime or not but it's your right to do so. Support services can assist you in reporting to the police and support you throughout this process.

False Accusations

While it isn't common, sometimes people do spread false accusations of sexual assault or rape. This could be in the form of an official complaint or a rumour circulated in social groups or posted online.

This can have a really damaging effect on the accused, especially when there is no evidence to suggest that the accusation is false.

Remember, quite often you won't know the full story or all the details of a situation. It's important not to judge or act in a disrespectful way towards someone, regardless of what you might think you know.

Research for the Home Office suggests that only 4% of cases of sexual violence reported to the UK police are found or suspected to be false.

False accusations can:

- Impact the accused's relationships. Often people close to the accused turn on them or change their opinion of the person.
- Impact the accused's reputation. It's not only personal relationships that can be effected but their professional relationships and the way that people (even strangers) react to them.
- Cause the accused person to be the target of online and offline abuse. If the person's name is made public, they could experience online abuse on a large scale.
- Cause emotional damage and distress.
- Result in the accused person going to prison or getting a criminal record.



The best way (and often one of the only ways) to defend yourself against false accusations is to ensure that you know the law and fully understand consent.

It also helps to be aware of the law and understand consent legislation before accusing anyone of rape or sexual assault.

What action can AUB take?

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted by another AUB student, you can report this to AUB. The University can't investigate an allegation of rape or sexual assault, and it won't have access to forensic evidence – but AUB's student disciplinary policy can investigate an allegation of sexual misconduct and make a judgement based on the balance of probabilities.

Whilst the University can suspend or even terminate a student's studies, AUB has a duty to support all students, and wherever possible will look at what can be done to enable both students to continue their studies.

If you are thinking about submitting a formal complaint or make an allegation of sexual misconduct, contact Heidi Cooper-Hind, Head of Academic and Student Services.

Email: hcooperhind@aub.ac.uk

You can also speak to someone at Student Services Reception.

AUBSU

Visit our AUBSU [advice page](#) for more information about local support services.

If you have any questions or issues, you can get in touch with the AUBSU team:

AUBSU (Students' Union)

studentunion@aub.ac.uk

SU Activities & Communities Coordinator

Nuala: nclarke@aub.ac.uk

SU Democracy Coordinator

Beth: bdovey@aub.ac.uk

SU President

Louise: lhall@aub.ac.uk

SU Vice-President

Kamila: kdowgiert@aub.ac.uk

Further Support & Resources

- [AUB Student Support](#): provide on-campus wellbeing and counselling support with staff who have received training in sexual assault
- [STARS Sexual Trauma And Recovery Service](#): offers specialist emotional and practical support to survivors who have suffered sexual violence of any kind at any time, including ongoing counselling
- [The Shores](#): Dorset Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) will collect evidence and can provide an ISVA to support through any criminal investigation and prosecution
- [Over The Rainbow](#): provides sexual health services and support for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community

Further Support & Resources

- [Dorset Mind](#) provide support, advice and information on mental health and can connect you with local support groups
- [Samaritans Helpline](#) offer a safe space for you to talk at any time and can help you explore your options, understand your problems better, or just be there to listen
- [Sexual Health Dorset](#) offers advice and information on sexual health and can provide STI screenings, pregnancy testing, contraception and emergency contraception

Check [our calendar](#) for on-campus sexual health drop-ins with [Sexual Health Dorset](#)