

Confronting 'lad culture' in higher education

**Summary of responses to the
consultation and call for evidence**

Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	5
Responses to the call for evidence	7
Evidence of the <i>prevalence</i> of 'lad culture'	7
Evidence of the <i>effects</i> of 'lad culture'	10
Examples of the effects on other equality areas	12
Responses to the consultation	14
Examples of actions taken to challenge 'lad culture'	14
The effectiveness of these actions	15
Recommendations for combatting 'lad culture'	15
Additional observations	18
Appendix A: Students' union respondents	19
Appendix B: Individual respondents	20

Executive summary

Executive summary

The consultation and call for evidence on 'lad culture' in higher education was designed as part of a process to involve all stakeholders in identifying the solutions to the issue of 'lad culture' on campus, as previously identified by research published in NUS' *That's what she said* report. The consultation and call for evidence received a total of 54 valid respondents; 39 from individuals and 15 from students' unions.

Respondents reported a high prevalence of 'lad culture' on campus, confirming the findings of *That's what she said*. Examples of 'lad culture' on campus were cited as occurring in: extra-curricular activities, social spaces, and learning and teaching. The respondents also identified 'lad culture' in areas of the student experience not previously explored by the research, including media and social media, and student democracy and representation.

The effects of 'lad culture' on campus identified by respondents again mirrored the findings of *That's what she said*. The effects of 'lad culture' in higher education included the atmosphere on campus, exclusion and self-exclusion, peer pressure, and personal impacts.

Respondents were also asked to consider other aspects of student identity and other equality areas in addition to gender where 'lad culture' had had significant effects. Sexual orientation and gender identity were the most commonly mentioned equality areas, while race was also highlighted as relevant to this issue.

Respondents identified a broad array of actions and activities that they had undertaken to challenge 'lad culture' at their institution. The most popular of these included: implementing zero tolerance policies, a student-facing advertising campaign, increased regulation of union-affiliated clubs and societies, and

providing training on issues related to 'lad culture' for some or all students.

Respondents found it difficult to assess the effectiveness of their actions and activities, but in general it was felt that these actions had started a conversation on campus, improved responses to incidents of 'lad culture', and led to more women speaking out about their experiences.

Recommendations for students' unions centred on actions similar to those that students' unions were already undertaking such as zero tolerance policies, taking a public stance against 'lad culture', and taking action to start a conversation on the issue.

Recommendations for universities and other higher education institutions included the institutions themselves creating zero tolerance policies, improved procedures for dealing with complaints and incidents associated with 'lad culture', and incorporating issues of 'lad culture' into the curriculum.

There was broad support for NUS' current work on 'lad culture' and respondents encouraged NUS to support students' unions to undertake more work on 'lad culture' locally.

Respondents recommended that higher education policy makers acknowledge 'lad culture' as a serious issue in the sector. There were also some individual recommendations about ways that policy makers can incorporate 'lad culture' issues into the higher education policy landscape.

Introduction

Introduction

In March 2013, NUS released *That's what she said: Women students' experiences of 'lad culture' in higher education*. The report, based on research commissioned by NUS and carried out by independent academics at the University of Sussex, found that many women students experience a prevailing 'lad culture' as part of their higher education experience.

The research defined 'lad culture' as a group or 'pack' mentality residing in activities such as sport and heavy alcohol consumption and 'banter' which was often sexist, misogynistic, or homophobic. The research identified that this prevalence of 'lad culture' had had a negative impact on many women students' experiences in higher education.

NUS responded to the report by noting that both the higher education sector and the student movement must take action to combat the emergence of 'lad culture' in higher education; it is not something that NUS can accomplish alone. The goal is that all stakeholders have ownership over finding solutions to the emergence of a culture that is at odds with our values and is damaging to students.

As the next step in this work, NUS sought the views of students and students' unions about 'lad culture' in higher education. The consultation and call for evidence was opened on 7 October 2013 and closed on 1 November 2013. It was advertised via NUS' email, website, and social media networks, and was also covered by some news outlets.

The consultation and call for evidence was open to respondents in an individual capacity, as well as for students' unions to respond as an organisation. Students' union responses were required to have been approved by both the president and the women's officer of the union (or equivalent positions).

In total, 56 responses were received, consisting of 39 individual responses and 17 responses from a students' union. Two responses which were submitted as students' union responses were deemed invalid because no union name or contact details were provided. Nine individual responses with no name or contact details included were *not* disregarded, as it was deemed acceptable for individual students to submit anonymously. This resulted in a total of 54 valid responses, 15 from students' unions and 39 from individual students. A list of students' unions and individual students who submitted responses can be found in Appendices A and B.

The responses for students' unions and individuals were analysed separately, using qualitative thematic analysis, question by question. Themes and concepts that recurred in different parts of the consultation were also noted for consideration.

This report summarises the responses to each of the questions in the consultation and call for evidence before noting some overarching themes and observations.

Responses to the call for evidence

Responses to the call for evidence

The call for evidence invited students' unions and individuals to share evidence in relation to three areas: the prevalence of 'lad culture', its effects, and the specific impacts of 'lad culture' as it relates to other equality areas. Respondents were encouraged to share research or other evidence gathered systematically, as well as case studies or personal experiences.

Evidence of the prevalence of 'lad culture'

Extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities were a key area in which both individual and students' union respondents located 'lad culture' at their institutions, echoing the findings of *That's what she said*.

The most common example given by students' union and individual respondents concerning the prevalence of 'lad culture' involved examples of behaviour by sports teams, often surrounding initiations or other nights out. Ten of the 17 students' unions responses mentioned sports teams, as did 13 of the 39 individual responses.

"We held an open forum on lad culture and whether or not it was a problem at Newcastle... many said that Wednesday nights (our sports clubs' night out) were what they most associated with lad culture... Teams like rugby, football, and hockey were the most frequently mentioned as being associated with 'laddish' behaviour, heavy drinking and groping, and more than one woman at the meeting said she had been force-kissed by a man on a sports night out." – Newcastle University Students' Union

Although sports teams were the most commonly-cited type of club to be associated with 'lad culture', other types of clubs, such as political clubs, were also cited.

In addition to the way that participating in certain societies and clubs can seem to require or fuel participation in 'lad culture', respondents also highlighted that women who were active in

feminist societies or similar organisations could be the target of negative treatment or harassment as a result, which again is consistent with the findings of *That's what she said*. Five individual respondents and one students' union response mentioned this as an issue.

"While building up the feminist society at Nottingham Trent... we came under a lot of attack for doing what we thought we ought to be doing. We experienced trolls on our Facebook group... One boy claimed we were all up for equality until we want someone to pay for the meal. For these reasons our group is closed. It will perhaps make it hard for people to know that we are there, but at the same time we don't want to deter students who have already found us because a young student can call them horrible names at a safe distance." – Individual respondent

From these responses, it is clear that 'lad culture' impacts students' extra-curricular experiences across a wide variety of interest areas. The responses serve as validation for the issues identified in *That's what she said*. In particular, the targeting of students involved in feminist activities demonstrates the way in which 'lad culture' is at odds with the values of the student movement, which unequivocally believes in equality and liberation.

Social spaces

In addition to clubs and societies, respondents described the social sphere of university life in general as a place where 'lad culture' was particularly prevalent. These responses were focussed around nights out and drinking. 'Laddish' activities in the beginning of term, or at events designed for first years, were also frequently cited.

Nine individual responses and five students' union responses referred specifically to nights out. In keeping with the findings of *That's what she said*, excessive drinking in and of itself was sometimes cited as evidence of 'lad culture', but more often the types of activities that take place when students have been drinking heavily

were emphasised. Five individual responses and four students' union responses referred to drinking games and binge drinking.

"Drinking games about people's sexual activity happen. These tend to shame women but praise men. They are predicated on making women sexually available to men." – Oxford University Students' Union

This theme of 'double standards' for women's sexual activity was also raised by three individual responses. A culture of 'competition' in social situations, including competition about alcohol intake and sexual 'conquests' was also identified by three individual respondents as an evidence of the prevalence 'lad culture' in social situations.

Women students being subjected to harassment or assault in social spaces was the second most common example of 'lad culture' given by students' unions, with eight students' unions including it in their response. Eight individual respondents also mentioned harassment or assault, making this the fourth most common example given by individuals. As in *That's what she said*, this type of harassment was often characterised as part of a normal night out.

The University of Nottingham Students' Union submitted evidence from their recent research into students' experiences of sexual harassment.

"A female student was at a uni night out and a man slapped her bum. She protested and he laughed with his friends... in another club, she danced on a raised platform and a man put his hand up her skirt. The student feels that it is a risk to go to these kind of places." – University of Nottingham Students' Union

Research from Nottingham and Nottingham Trent students' unions found that victims of this type of sexual harassment rarely reported it, again echoing the findings of *That's what she said* as well as NUS' earlier report into women

students' experiences of sexual harassment and violence, *Hidden Marks*.¹

Respondents also highlighted that perpetrators often were unaware that their actions could constitute sexual harassment, compounding the problem.

The prevalence of offensive or demeaning language, often referred to as 'banter', in social situations was particularly salient to individual respondents, 10 of whom mentioned it, as compared to three students' union responses.

"Women aren't people' was chanted at [drinking game] circles during 2012/13." – Warwick University Students' Union

The responses described 'banter' as a term used to excuse offensive or demeaning speech.

"A quiz which included, amongst other offensive comments, "Is it still rape if you kill her first?" The host later argued that this was supposed to be 'banter'." – Individual respondent

"Students report the acceptance of particular types of humour. Gender-, sexuality-, and rape-based humour is unfortunately very common, and students either feel they cannot complain or their complaints have no impact." – Cardiff University Students' Union

Taken together, the responses in the area of student social life paint a picture of a social sphere which is highly influenced by 'lad culture', confirming the findings of *That's what she said*.

Learning and teaching

That's what she said found that, although 'lad culture' was said to mainly effect the social side of university life, although the study participants did describe their education as 'gendered' in ways that were related to 'lad culture'. Discussions of the prevalence of 'lad culture' in the academic environment made up a small but significant proportion of responses; two students' unions and seven individual responses discussed this issue. These responses drew a more explicit link to 'lad

¹ More information available at <http://hiddenmarks.org.uk/2010/>

culture' than participants in the *That's what she said* research.

"'Lad culture' and 'banter' can be seen in lectures and seminars as well as on nights out... I would just like to emphasise that the attitudes towards women in certain disciplines are still negative in nature. Also vice versa... I often witness my male friends being on the receiving end of so-called 'banter' for doing a 'soft subject'. I worry that this adds even more pressure upon these young men to accept and partake in 'banter' as a defence mechanism." – Individual respondent

"When seriously asking the group of 'lads' to stop messing around in group work one got annoyed... from then on they would talk down to me or talk about me as I entered the room. I believe this is part of lad culture as they all identified as straight men and they ran in a 'pack'. It was the 'leader' I annoyed and thus the other guys followed his lead. I strongly believe if I was another man they would have not have treated me like this, especially seeing as how wen another guy told them to stop they didn't get annoyed." – Individual respondent

One respondent highlighted that 'lad culture' could extend to staff as well:

"I am one of the very few females on my course... the majority of my peers are male and ¾ of them are what I'd call 'lads' i.e. the binge drinking, bantering, quiffs, and the pack mentality. What is even more unsettling however is the fact that all of my tutors are male and are 'lads' and this has had a profound impact on my time at university." – Individual respondent

These responses demonstrate that 'lad culture' is present within learning environments, if not to the same extent as in social and extracurricular environments.

Media and social media

Responses to the call for evidence also highlighted the prevalence of 'lad culture' in forms of media and social media, an area which was not explicitly explored in the *That's what she said* research.

Two students' union responses cited the selling of 'The Sun' in on campus as evidence of 'lad

culture', presumably in reference to the many students' unions that have worked with the 'No More Page 3' campaign to decide not to sell The Sun newspaper in their venues whilst the paper continues to contain its Page 3 feature of topless women. One individual response also cited the playing of 'Blurred lines' in union venues as an example of 'lad culture', again presumably referring to recent students' union decisions not to play the song in their venues. These topics will be returned to when we discuss actions individuals and students' unions have taken to combat 'lad culture' on campus.

Five individual respondents mentioned the marketing of club nights as an example of the way that 'lad culture' was evident on their campus, although this was not mentioned by students' union respondents. Respondents identified both union and non-union venues in discussing 'lad culture'-supportive marketing. One respondent from a university in Leeds cited the recent case of an events company releasing a promotional video called 'Freshers Violation' which feature a man clubgoer describing how a woman would 'get raped.'

In addition to traditional media and advertising, both individual (n=6) and students' union (n=3) responses highlighted the internet and social media as a key site of 'lad culture'. Respondents cited the continuing popularity of UniLad and Lad Bible websites, which were also identified in *That's what she said*, as examples of the prevalence of 'lad culture' in the media. Social media trends included 'Spotted', 'Rate your Shag', and 'Confessions' pages, all of which allow students to anonymously pass judgement on other students.

Respondents associated the comments on these pages with 'lad culture'. An individual respondent gave an example of an entry on a 'Spotted' page:

"To the filthy slut in the pink top playing Frisbee with six boys on the rugby field, that's not all you are going to be catching this evening."

The responses in this section demonstrate the extent to which both print and online media

play a role in making 'lad culture' feel like a dominant culture on campus.

'Lad culture' in student democracy and representation

Further examples of the prevalence of 'lad culture' were given in the sphere of students' unions' core business: the democracy and representation of their students. This issue was identified by two students' union and three individual respondents. Respondents described democratic spaces and processes as male-dominated, both in terms of the numbers of men and the atmosphere.

"It became the norm for popular males from sports teams to run for sabbatical positions. For me it felt a bit too much like a boys' club, even being male myself." –Individual respondent

"I went to see an SU exec member. On one notice board it said XXX (name of exec officer) smells of vagina. Everyone thought it was funny." –Individual respondent

This aspect of 'lad culture' was not explicitly explored by the research in *That's what she said*, and deepens our understanding of the prevalence of 'lad culture' in many parts of campus life.

Other opinions on the prevalence of 'lad culture'

Three individual respondents and no students' union respondents fed back that they did not feel 'lad culture' to be prevalent on their campus. Although the remainder of responses indicate a broad consensus about the prevalence of 'lad culture' in universities, it is important to remember that this view is not universal.

Evidence of the effects of 'lad culture'

The atmosphere on campus

The most commonly identified effect of 'lad culture' was on the overall atmosphere on campus. For students' union respondents it was common to describe this as 'lad culture' creating an 'uncomfortable environment' (n=7). One individual response also described the effect in this way.

"Social spaces have become dominantly male, the males in these spaces often creating an atmosphere uncomfortable for females or males who they don't deem to be as masculine as themselves." –University of East London Students' Union

Some respondents specifically described the campus atmosphere as making women students feel unsafe (five students' union responses and four individual responses).

"I don't drink as much anymore and I don't go out in a dress or skirt without wearing shorts underneath." –Individual respondent

"Women are afraid to go into the library in casual dress at exam time when the library is at its busiest, because of comments made [on Spotted pages]." –Leeds Met Students' Union

Both students' unions (n=5) and individual (n=4) respondents emphasised that an effect of 'lad culture' had been to normalise the behaviours associated with it, making students feel like it was something they should just 'put up with' rather than challenge.

"Females at the university now take harassment as being part of their regular day-to-day experience at UEL." – University of East London Students' Union

"Opting out of 'lad culture' frequently does not seem like an option for students, and this both intensifies the problem around the university (more misogyny, sexism, homophobia etc) and affects the students themselves." – Cardiff University Students' Union

Some individuals (n=2) identified that 'lad culture' had led to confrontation between groups of students (namely those who were participating in 'lad culture' and those who were opposed to it) and that this could further contribute to a negative campus atmosphere.

"I know of lad-bashing—an attempt to cut them down to size due to sheer hatred of their culture." –Individual response

As a group, these responses are similar to the findings of *That's what she said*, in which women students articulated that 'lad culture' was seen as closely connected to 'campus culture'.

Exclusion and self-exclusion

A second, highly common impact of 'lad culture' identified by respondents is that of students' exclusion and/or self-exclusion from a variety of aspects of student life. Women students were most commonly mentioned as the ones being excluded, but occasionally men students were also identified as being excluded because of reluctance to participate in 'lad culture'.

Four students' union responses and six individual responses identified exclusion and self-exclusion from sports teams, extra-curricular activities, and the social sphere of university.

"I have felt discouraged to attend events at the students' union out of fear of receiving further 'jokes' at my expense." – Individual response

Three individual responses (and no students' union responses) mentioned exclusion in academic settings.

"Girls tend to stick to their own during groupwork projects and don't get the chance to work with the class as a whole." – Individual response

One individual and one students' union response also identified that 'lad culture' had led to women's exclusion from representative and democratic aspects of student life.

"Women find it difficult talking at democratic forums such as Student Council because of the aggressive masculine nature of such forums." – University of Bristol Union

These responses are consistent with the findings of *That's what she said*, which found that 'the operation of 'lad culture' in social settings had caused many participants to alter or limit their activity' (pg 9). However, as with the effects of 'lad culture', the responses demonstrate a wider range of spheres in which

this exclusion and/or self-exclusion has taken place than previously identified.

Peer pressure

A significant minority of responses wrote that 'lad culture' had had an effect on peer pressure within the university; this was seen as affecting both women and men students. Two students' union and three individual respondents highlighted this issue.

"Although attending events is not compulsory, students are made out to be antisocial, boring and not a fun person to be around. Females, when refusing to take part in activities, are verbally abused in a "it's only a joke" kind of way until they feel obliged to get involved." – Individual respondent

"The effect of lad culture upon young men is certainly something that needs to be highlighted. The pressure applied...seems to 'trap' them into a vicious cycle of joining in with the 'banter' to be accepted or don't join in and be on the receiving end of 'banter'." – Individual respondent

That women can participate in 'lad culture' has already been highlighted by *That's what she said*. However, the report necessarily did not cover the effects of peer pressure on men students, because it only looked at women students' experiences. It is important to keep in mind that 'lad culture' can have negative impacts on students of all genders, whilst still understanding the culture and its effects as highly gendered.

Personal impacts

A smaller number of respondents (one students' union and two individuals) reported that 'lad culture' had made personal impacts on students at their institution, such as causing or exacerbating mental health problems.

"From personal experience with regards to lad culture, I have been left feeling very negatively towards guys, untrusting, and depressed." – Individual respondent

This is consistent with the findings of *That's what she said* which found that 'lad culture' had significant effects on the personal lives of many participants.

Other opinions on the effects of 'lad culture'

Four individual respondents (and no students' union respondents) said that they felt 'lad culture' had little to no effect. Three of these respondents were those who did not believe 'lad culture' to be prevalent; therefore there would be no expectation that they would have identified effects. For one respondent, who did feel that 'lad culture' was prevalent, explained:

"University experience is generally centred around drinking and going out anyway at the moment, so besides the rugby players, I don't see many direct effects." –Individual respondent

This echoes the finding of *That's what she said* that campus culture and 'lad culture' we seen as closely connected and overlapping.

Examples of the effects on other equality areas

That's what she said looked at the experiences of women students and therefore the findings were focussed on gender. However, the report noted that "as well as gender, participants' accounts of university life were shaped by other aspects of their identities such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, social class, disability, and age" (pg 11).

The most common equality areas to be mentioned were sexual orientation and gender identity, with seven students' unions and six individual respondents highlighting the challenges that 'lad culture' posted for lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) students. This included LGBT students feeling unable to come out, openly LGBT students being targeted for abuse, and LGBT social events being 'crashed' by people who wish to ridicule the attendees.

One students' union and three individual respondents also emphasised that 'lad culture' could impact students differently depending on their race. This was most often in the forms of racist humour or 'banter'.

Four individual respondents (and no students' unions) discussed that 'lad culture' had an impact on 'lads themselves' or alternatively on

'white working class men'. This was mainly in the form of peer pressure to participate in 'lad culture' and the way that 'lad culture' could negatively impact on participants.

Other aspects of students' identity that were raised less often included: students who do not drink, international students, vegetarians and vegans, disability, physical prowess, and age. The broad point that was made is in regards to these areas that any student who falls outside of what 'lad culture' identifies as normal or acceptable could be made to feel demeaned or excluded because of this difference.

Responses to the consultation

Responses to the consultation

The consultation portion of the document invited individuals and students' unions to submit thoughts on the future direction of NUS' work in three areas: actions taken to challenge 'lad culture', the effectiveness of these actions, and recommendations for further work to challenge 'lad culture'.

Examples of actions taken to challenge 'lad culture'

Students' unions have reported undertaking a broad array of activities and programmes of work to challenge 'lad culture' at their institution. These included:

- **Zero tolerance policy:** Eight students' unions respondents mentioned the union adopting a policy of zero tolerance to sexual harassment. This was a main recommendation from NUS' report into women students' sexual harassment and violence, *Hidden marks*. A zero tolerance policy sets out the union's approach to sexual harassment, and identifies it as a behaviour that is not tolerated in students' union spaces or at students' union events.
- **Advertising campaign:** Eight students' unions described a type of advertising campaign using posters or other media to evoke reflection or start a conversation around behaviours and attitudes on campus.
- **Regulation of activities:** Eight student unions introduced increased regulation of clubs, societies, and events. This often included asking clubs and societies to commit to certain standards of behaviour in order to continue to operate in affiliation with the union, and including considerations of the issue of objectification of women in procedures for approving events.
- **Training:** Seven students' unions implemented training either for all students or for particular groups of students such as clubs, societies, halls reps, or others. Training topics included zero tolerance, consent, and inclusivity.
- **Changing democratic structures:** Four students' unions said they had introduced a women's officer position or created a women's campaign within the students' union as a form of challenging 'lad culture'.
- **Policy against certain media:** Four students' unions had passed policy outlining specific media that the union would not sell or promote. This included 'lads mags' (seen as promoting 'lad culture'), The Sun (because of its Page 3 feature), and the song Blurred Lines (seen as trivialising issues of consent).
- **Cultural change programmes:** Three students' unions had more explicitly attempted to influence the culture of their student body through a programme of work that combined some of the activities above. Other activities included in cultural change programmes were open forums to discuss the issue, and encouraging students to speak up when they witness 'laddish' behaviour.
- **Lobbying the university:** Three students' unions were involved in lobbying their university to take action on the issue. Two of these students' unions indicated that their university had not been receptive to this lobbying (the other had not yet started).
- **Engagement with local nightclubs:** Two students' unions described attempts to engage with local nightclubs around their marketing practices. This could be either positive or negative engagement.
- **Alternative social media:** Two students' unions described creating alternative forms of social media where students could discuss experiences of sexism, sexual harassment, and other forms of 'lad culture'.
- **Women in leadership:** Two students' unions specifically mentioned they were engaged in

NUS' work on women in leadership² and that they hoped this would help to change the campus culture.

Other initiatives mentioned by one students' union each included making improvements to the system for reporting sexual harassment, undertaking further research into the issue, engaging with other retail outlets frequented by students, creating a women's-only space on campus, and instituting a 'no platform' policy for individuals described as 'rape apologists.'

Individual respondents cited many of the initiatives above, albeit in smaller numbers than those of students' unions. However, the most common response from individuals (n=6) was that they were unaware of any actions being taken in response. This raises two issues: first, that although all of the students' unions that responded to the call for evidence were working on the issue, this does not represent the entirety of the student movement and many students who find 'lad culture' troubling or problematic are members of students' unions who are not yet working to challenge 'lad culture. Second, that students' unions need to ensure they are communicating with their student body about the work they are doing to confront the issue.

The effectiveness of these actions

There was a broad consensus amongst both individual (n=11) and students' union (n=8) respondents that it was difficult to judge the effectiveness of the activities that had been undertaken to challenge 'lad culture'. There were two main reasons for this:

1. Many activities were only very recently developed, in response to NUS' recent work on 'lad culture', and in many cases respondents felt it was too soon to judge the outcomes of this work.
2. The issue that 'lad culture' dominates so much of university life is seen as a large and nebulous problem, and cultural change

so hard to achieve, that it is difficult to measure 'effectiveness' in this context.

These observations highlight the challenges of working to combat 'lad culture', when cultural change is necessarily incremental, hard to measure, and long-term.

Nevertheless, some students' union and individual respondents felt their actions had been effective in some ways.

- **Starting a conversation on campus:** Five students' unions and three individual respondents felt that work to challenge 'lad culture' had raised awareness and started a conversation about the acceptability of this kind of behaviour. This included causing individuals to reflect on their behaviours.
- **Improving responses to incidents:** Three students' unions noted that they were able to respond to incidents of sexism and sexual harassment more effectively because of work they had undertaken on 'lad culture.'
- **More women speaking out:** Two students' unions noted that the work the union had done had enabled women to feel more comfortable speaking out about their experiences.

One students' union respondent felt that their work had been ineffective because the mechanisms by which a stance against 'lad culture' could be enforced were not strong enough. Similarly, one individual respondent felt that although 'lad culture' and associated behaviours had become less visible on campus, the attitudes underpinning it still remained.

Recommendations for combatting 'lad culture'

Recommendations for students' unions

The recommendations for students' unions broadly mirrored the types of actions that some students' unions are already undertaking.

The most popular response from students' unions (n=4) in terms of what they recommended other students' unions to do to combat 'lad culture' was to implement zero

² More information at:

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/blogs/blog/tonip earce/2013/09/17/Women-in-Leadership/>

tolerance policies. This was also recommended by one individual respondent.

Similarly, three students' unions and four individual respondents recommended that students' unions should take a clear, public stance against 'lad culture' and the same numbers stated that students' unions should undertake activities to raise awareness and open up a conversation on the issue.

Three students' unions and two individual respondents recommended holding training for students on issues such as sexual harassment and consent.

Smaller numbers recommended: improved regulation of clubs and societies; creating a women's officer position; improving complaints procedures and response mechanisms for incidents of sexual harassment; training for union staff; and more research to understand the situation locally.

Although many of the same types of activities were recommended by both individual and students' union responses, one area in which individual responses differed sharply was in terms of advertisements and promotional materials. Five individual respondents recommended that students' unions not permit sexist advertisements and promotions in the union.

Recommendations for universities

The most common recommendation for universities and other HE institutions was that institutions themselves should have zero tolerance policies. This addresses the concern that many of the effects of 'lad culture' are felt outside of students' union-controlled spaces. This was recommended by five students' unions and two individual respondents.

Four students' union and two individual respondents recommended that universities improve the way they deal with complaints and incidents of harassment, bullying, and other problems associated with 'lad culture'. Two students' unions and one individual stressed that reporting mechanisms should be easier for students to access and use.

Three students' unions and four individuals respondents recommended that institutions educate students about the issues surrounding 'lad culture' and/or seek to incorporate these issues into course content.

Two students' unions and two individuals said that institutions should take a clear, public stance against 'lad culture'. Three students' unions and two individuals recommended that institutions should develop close working relationships with students' unions in order to best combat 'lad culture'.

Other recommendations that were made less frequently included: training university staff; banning sports initiations; improving university security and safety; placing great emphasis on equality and diversity generally; and improving support services such as counselling.

Recommendations for NUS

The most common recommendation for NUS was to continue leading the national effort to confront 'lad culture', given by seven individual respondents and two students' union respondents. The remainder of recommendations for NUS were varied, with only one or two respondents per recommendation.

Other recommendations for NUS from students' unions included creating tools and guidance to help students' unions, including model policies on 'lad culture', materials about consent, template letters universities to lobby on the issue, train-the-trainer events, and a model code of conduct for students' unions to use.

Students' unions were also interested in national work from NUS including further research, sharing best practice, and looking at the national picture with regards to sexual violence provision.

Individual students were interested in more research from NUS as well, and also were looking for NUS to help ensure that students' unions actively working against 'lad culture.'

Recommendations for higher education policy makers

The most common recommendation (n=1 students' union and n=3 individuals) for higher education policy makers was that their acknowledgement and buy-in on the issue would be a valuable signal of the importance of this work.

Other suggestions from students' unions included positioning 'lad culture' as an access issue for women students; including transparency of policies around sexual harassment in sector standards such as the Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code; incorporating action to challenge 'lad culture' into the Athena SWAN charter mark for gender in science and technology subjects; seeking more women's involvement in setting policies in the higher education sector; and including a question on service provision regarding student welfare on the National Student Survey.

Individual students recommended that higher education policy makers use their influence to encourage institutions to take stronger action on the issue, and increase support available to women students.

Recommendations for others

Students' unions and individual respondents were keen to encourage as many people as possible to continue engaging in conversations about 'lad culture' and its effects, and to confront 'lad culture' when they see it. They also saw this work as fitting in with broader work towards women's liberation and ending patriarchy.

There were also specific recommendations for men with influence to recognise their privilege and work to involve women more in decision-making, as well as for police to respond effectively to incidents or accusations.

Additional observations

In addition to specific answers to the questions of the consultation and call for evidence, several themes emerged when looking at the body of responses as a whole.

Defining 'Lad culture'

Although many responses to the consultation and call for evidence referenced our report *That's what she said* directly and had a firm understanding of what NUS means when it uses the term 'lad culture', there were others who used the term in slightly different ways.

Some respondents felt that the term 'lad culture' evoked a concept of a 'lad' that was not necessarily negative, just referring to a young man. Others felt that 'lad culture' referenced white working class culture, despite the fact that *That's what she said* identified 'lad culture' as associated with people from privileged backgrounds rather than the working class. It was also felt that the term a belief that men were the primary perpetrators of these behaviours, again despite evidence from *That's what she said* that both men and women could participate in 'lad culture'.

'Lad culture' and rape culture

Perhaps for some of the reasons above, as well as because the term 'rape culture' is gaining in popularity, some respondents used 'lad culture' and 'rape culture' interchangeably or stated a

preference for the term 'rape culture' over 'lad culture'.

Rape culture is a concept that describes a culture that normalises, trivialises, or tolerates rape. There is a certain degree of overlap in the values and behaviours associated with 'lad culture' and rape culture, and in some senses a cycle of reinforcement between the two. Nevertheless, the wide range of issues discussed in the responses demonstrates that 'lad culture' extends to issues outside of sexual violence.

Gender and opposition to 'lad culture'

Although the consultation and call for evidence did not collect respondents' demographic details such as gender, it is clear from the context of the responses that people of all genders are concerned about 'lad culture' in higher education. This is in keeping with what NUS has observed in all of the work about 'lad culture' that NUS has undertaken since the launch of *That's what she said*.

This finding confirms that, although rooted in concepts of gender and masculinity, 'lad culture' is not a 'women's issue' but in fact is an issue for all students. NUS' approach to our work on 'lad culture' reflects this.

Appendix A:

Students' union respondents

Cardiff University Students' Union
Chester Students' Union
Leeds Met Students' Union
Leeds University Union
Newcastle University Students' Union
Oxford University Students' Union
Teesside University Students' Union
University of Bristol Union
Union of UEA Students
University of East London Students' Union
University of London Union
University of Nottingham Students' Union
University of Plymouth Students' Union
University of Sussex Students' Union
Warwick Students' Union

Appendix B:

Individual respondents

Beth Astley-Serougi, University of Essex
Katy Brown, Reading University
Chantel Le Carpentier, University of Essex
Tara Fitzpatrick, Glasgow University
Stephanie G, University of Sunderland
Rachel Holland, University of Leicester
Lauren, University of Reading
Shannon McNamee, Queen's University Belfast
Lee Mitchell, University of Sunderland
Sophie Peters, University of East Anglia
Megan Potter, Staffordshire University
Shelley Roche-Jacques, Sheffield Hallam University
Lydia Sawyer, Nottingham Trent University
Manuela Schwarz, SOAS, University of London
Rachael Scott, Northumbria University
Helen Seeger, SOAS, University of London
Adam Shepherd, Leeds Trinity University
David John Smith, University of the West of Scotland
Jack Valeri, Royal Holloway University of London
Emily Weir, University of Durham
R Woodhead, University of Leeds

Macadam House
275 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8QB
t 0845 5210 262
f 020 7380 0794
e nusuk@nus.org.uk
www.nus.org.uk