

Workshop: Tackling Lad Culture

NUS Women's Campaign has created this guide to enable activists to deliver workshops on campus and empower students to take action in tackling Lad Culture on their campuses. This workshop outline can be altered to suit different institutions, audiences and timescales, and includes campaign ideas that you can use to extend the message throughout the year.

This guide contains the agenda and content for a two-hour Tackling Lad Culture Workshop. This workshop also comes with a pre-made presentation which can be found [here](#).

Agenda

1. Introductions (5 minutes)
2. Ground Rules (5 minutes)
3. What is Lad Culture? (20 minutes)
4. That's What She Said report (15 minutes)
5. Student Staff Misconduct / Lad Culture in Academia (25 minutes)
6. How can we tackle Lad Culture? (15 minutes)
7. Take action (25 minutes)
8. Wrap up & Question (5 minutes)

Feel free to edit sessions and time scales to what you think will work best for the group that you are working with.

Aims and Objectives

In this session, participants will:

- Develop an understanding of Lad Culture
- Learn about Student Staff Misconduct and its relationship with Lad Culture
- Understand the work that undertaken so far to tackle Lad Culture
- Consider strategies for tackling Lad Culture within unions and institution
- Be confident to take action and tackle Lad Culture on their campus

Introductions (5 minutes)

- Welcome everyone to the session
- Introduce yourself and your pronouns
- Explain the session aims and objectives

TACKLING LAD CULTURE

- Go through the agenda for the session.

Explain that we know this is a big topic, one which many of us have experience of – and some may have more experience than others of tackling Lad Culture. Nonetheless, wherever somebody is coming in to this we hope it is a safe space, where we can share and respect our different ideas and learn from each other.

Ground Rules (5 minutes)

- 1) Create a list of ground rules for the workshop with the class. Write all of the rules on a large sheet of paper and display them in a visible space in the room.

Examples ground rules:

- This is a safe space - don't be afraid to ask questions
- Don't assume other people genders and use and respect and use people's pronouns
- No offensive language
- Use trigger warnings
- Raise your hand when you want to talk
- Don't judge people on their opinions
- Don't make assumptions about other people's' past experiences
- Don't discuss bad personal experiences or role play bad experiences

Having ground rules or safer spaces policy is useful for making sure the discussions are as accessible as possible. Creating them as a group gives a sense of shared responsibility and agency, gives you opportunity to sense the room and understand what may be in triggering, and reiterates the values of NUS.

Make sure you stick to the rules and ensure that there is clarity about what will happen if someone breaches a rule. If someone is really disrupting the space, unapologetically upsetting people and/or showing a complete disregard for the ground rules you should be prepared to ask them to leave the space in order for the rest of the workshop to take place in a safer environment.

It's possible someone will want to debate certain issues and challenge particular points. Whilst group discussion and reflection is important and helpful, you should ensure no one person dominates the session or prevents you from moving on to other aspects of the workshop.

What is Lad Culture? (20 minutes)

- 1) Ask participants for what comes to mind when we talk about Lad Culture – phrases or images, not necessarily a dictionary definition.
- 2) Take feedback and share the definition from the 'That's what she said report'.

Definition:

"A group or pack mentality residing in activities such as sport and heavy alcohol consumption, and 'banter' which was often sexist, misogynist and homophobic. It was also thought to be a sexualized culture which involves the objectification of women and rape-supportive attitudes, and occasionally spilled over into sexual harassment and violence."

This description has since had racism added to it.

3) Go through the below further points of interest:

- This is about 'Lad Culture' is not about 'lads'. Lad Culture is a set of values and behaviours that individuals may dip in and out of participating in at some point and not others.
- Lad Culture is fundamentally about (toxic or hyper) masculinities and gender but has broader implications.
- Tackling Lad Culture isn't about being anti-men. We know that it's not just men who participate in it and it's not just women who are affected by it. Black, Disabled and LGBT+ students are all effected by Lad Culture. We are all affected by it – and so we all need to be part of finding solutions.
- Lad Culture will only be overcome by a cultural shift in higher education, not by demonising certain groups of students.

4) In pairs, get the group to discuss the following questions (10 minutes, 5 minutes per question)

- What does Lad Culture look like at your union?
- What are the difficulties with tackling Lad Culture?

5) Ask the group to feedback and flip up some of their answers – 5 minutes

That's What She Said report (15 minutes)

'That's What She Said Report' was launched in 2014, after NUS commissioned University of Sussex to undertake a literature review and research on women students' experiences of Lad Culture in higher education.

If you haven't already seen the report, recommend having a read of it. It provides a really useful snapshot of what Lad Culture is and what it looks like. You can find the [summary](#) and [full report](#) in our [resource hub](#).

1) Give a a brief overview of some of the key findings

- Participants talked about what campus cultures is and felt it was mainly within the social side of university life, being led by undergraduates and significantly shaped by alcohol consumption. They talked about campus being a real bubble where behaviours and gossip can be magnified.
- They also saw campus cultures as gendered and saw strong connections between 'Lad Culture' and the values, attitudes and behaviours on their campuses.
- Many described university education as 'gendered' and talked about issues like the status of particular subjects, classroom interactions, and negative attitudes towards feminism.
- And several of these issues could be indirectly linked to elements of 'Lad Culture', things like being part of a group or pack making it easier to speak in class or publicly ridicule another student.
- Lad Culture was thought to be particularly influential in the social side of university life particularly in extra-curricular activities and sports. Women talked about sexism from these

environments spilling over into sexual harassment and humiliation. And in some settings, although initiations in clubs and societies were restricted or banned in theory they were still taking place in practice.

- University 'Nightlife' was talked about in similar ways. And almost a sense that commercial club and event promoters exploit aspects of Lad Culture to appeal to students. Participants talked about experiences of sexual molestation and pressures to engage in sexual activity. 'Lad Culture' in these social settings had caused many participants to change their behaviour – not going out, not joining societies or teams.
- Participants reported that 'Lad Culture' had also been significant in their personal life. Many reported misogynist jokes and 'banter' in their friendship groups which made them feel uncomfortable. And which were particularly difficult to challenge because concerns were dismissed, or they were accused of not taking the compliment or not having a sense of humour.
- There were accounts of sexual violence and overall a sense that students experiencing these behaviours felt unable to challenge them and were unsure of where to report this or where to get help. Or where incidents had been reported, action from institutions was viewed as rare.
- Some participants pointed out that women often participate in or become complicit with 'Lad Culture' and talked about some of the pressures that there are for men to take part in the pack mentality.
- The findings don't suggest that all men engage in 'laddish' behaviours all the time.
- But that its affects can be felt right across experiences of education and campuses.

What is the impact of Lad Culture?

- 2) Go through 4 categories and talk about ways Lad Culture can and the report shows it as impacted on students. Below are further explanations on examples given but you can talk about other examples that the group may want to discuss.

Social Life

- Not feeling safe on a night out, either to be by yourself or not in a large group with people who protect you, go to certain venues, or being worried of harassment at venues or on the street
- Not feeling able to challenge friends or friendship groups when Lad Culture, banter, and misogynistic and racist jokes are prevalent and make you feel uncomfortable
- Being accused of having no sense of humour and being dismissed

Personal life

- Can be isolating and result in loss or end of relationships
- Romantic relationships can be strained if partner engages or supports Lad Culture behaviour
- Lad Culture and increased rates of sexual assault seem to be linked, and

Extra-curriculars

- Feeling like you can't participate or are not welcome in activities, especially sports
- Feeling or being victimised for who you are and any voicing out against Lad Culture and laddish behaviour

Academics

- Feeling silenced, by your peers or staff, and unable to voice your discomfort or opinions (especially if feminist or questioning prevailing culture)
- Women's issues feel as if they are devalued, as areas to study or as perspectives to discuss

(We will talk more about academics in the next section)

Student Staff Misconduct / Lad Culture in Academia (25 minutes)

Our That's What She Said report in 2014 on lad culture found that 37% of women and 12% of men surveyed had faced unwanted sexual advances at university.

In 2018 NUS Women's Campaign launched its [Power in the Academy: staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education](#) report, from research into students who experience sexual misconduct from staff members at their institution.

We will discuss what misconduct is and how it is linked to Lad Culture.

- a) Ask the group: Why do we use the term misconduct?

5 minutes to talk about what they think it means and why use the term instead of others, e.g. sexual harassment or assault.

- b) Share the definition with the group and ask how people feel about it.

Definition:

- We use 'sexual misconduct' to define a continuum of sexualised, predatory behaviours from staff to students.
- We're concerned with behaviours that are broader than harassment – which implies 'unwanted behaviour'
- In the context of HE, this means that power imbalance between staff and students complicates notions of consent
- In our research, we asked about a whole range of behaviours ranging from everyday forms of sexual misconduct to sexual assault and rape.
- Although some of these behaviours may not be sinister in intent, it's important to look at the whole picture.
- These behaviours should not be seen in isolation – they form part of a continuum of sexual misconduct.
- Low-key or everyday forms of sexual misconduct normalise a sexualised environment which makes more serious abuses more likely to occur
- They may exclude students who don't feel comfortable learning in this kind of space. This is more likely to be women and LGBT+ students – reinforcing already existing inequalities.

10 minutes: 5 minutes to read through the definition slides and 5 minutes to discuss what this means, perhaps asking the following questions.

1. How does the power imbalance complicate the notion of consent?
2. Why do you think this issue is perhaps less visible than student-student sexual harassment?
3. How do you think this links with Lad Culture?

Student Staff Misconduct: the facts

- We surveyed 1839 respondents and held focus groups with 15 students

- 41% of all respondents had experienced some form of sexualised behaviour from staff
- 1 in 8 of current students reported being touched by a staff member in a way that made them uncomfortable
- 35 (2.3%) current students reported non-consensual sexual contact by a staff member (sexual assault), while 9 reported a case of sexual assault or rape.

Like Lad Culture, there are clearly gendered experiences and inequities with other demographic groups. This is due to the power structures and patriarchal rape culture.

- 15.6% of women reported being touched by a staff member in a way that made them uncomfortable, compared to 7% of men.
 - 22.9% of gay, queer and bisexual women had experienced being touched in a way that made them uncomfortable.
 - Around 20% of postgraduate women experienced this
 - Almost 8% of gay, queer and bisexual women and 7% of postgrad women had a staff member ask for sex
 - 76 of perpetrators were mrn
- c) 5 minutes: Read the facts. These are some headline numbers which show a snapshot of experiences. Like in Lad Culture, women and LGBT+ students are more likely to experience negative behaviours and instances than men.

Experiences

"I've been silenced in a classroom environment by someone who is one of the lads if you like, because I didn't agree with something he said. He essentially did a repeat of what David Cameron did, the whole 'calm down dear' thing. Even the teacher who was female didn't challenge it..."
(Participant Q)

"I don't really welcome uninvited sexual innuendo in my Facebook messages, not from academics, let alone from academics with power over my career" – Women students' focus group participant

"I had to change my theme of study to avoid him, fear of campus for bumping into him, unable to participate in academic or social events within the department for fear of contact with him" – survey open text box

- d) Read through the student experiences (1 from Lad Culture, 2 from Student Staff Misconduct) and discuss how they may be different but are similar. What is behind these experiences?
- Everyday forms of misconduct to serious incidents of assault share the same basis as Lad Culture: sexism, misogyny, abuse of power and rape culture
 - The two are manifestations of how patriarchy interacts with different masculinities

Lad Culture in Academia

- Perhaps not traditional Lad Culture or laddish behaviour, but there is a pervasive sense of an exclusive 'old boys club' that is not welcome or safe for women
- Misconduct is predominantly by academic staff, who are gatekeepers of knowledge, pastoral support, and academic or career progression. This creates a structural position of trust in staff, and power imbalance that can be abused

- There is an added pressure beyond academic performance, making students and women vulnerable
- More subtle forms of sexual misconduct play a role in contributing to the sexualisation of learning spaces that are shared by students and staff. Precisely in their everyday nature, such sexualised behaviours create a culture which opens these spaces to sexual relationships, blurred boundaries, controlling behaviours, and the exploitation of academics' positions of power for sexual access to students - as well as enabling more extreme forms of sexual violence and abuse.
- The impact of staff sexual misconduct is as vast as the impact of all sexual assault and harassment, but had noted effect on academic engagement, progression and careers, affecting relationships with supervisors, choice of modules, or even leading to some participants changing their course, university and careers.
- These are like the impacts of experiencing Lad Culture – social, emotional, engagement with academia, feeling safe, avoidance and even leaving the education space

How can we tackle Lad Culture? (15 minutes)

There are multiple examples of previous and current campaigns that tackle sexual harassment and assault, Lad Culture, and sexism on campus. NUS has its own campaigns and resources for you to use to tackle these issues.

- 1) Detail each example campaign from NUS Women's Campaign (this will feed into next part of the workshop)

I Heart Consent

The I Heart Consent campaign aims to:

- Educate students about consent in order to help create educational and social environments which are happier, safer and more inclusive.
- Combat rape culture and victim blaming by tackling myths, rectifying problematic perspectives of consent and helping students understand that sexual activity without consent is a crime where only the perpetrator can be blamed.
- Empower students to create a positive consent culture by taking part in advocating for access to inclusive sex and relationship education in universities, colleges and in schools.

We have many resources, including workshops and facilitator training guides for you to use.

Lad Culture Audit

- As part of the campaign in 2014, NUS launched an online survey students' unions to audit themselves and what policies, training and victim support programmes they had in place to tackle Lad Culture.
- 35 Students' Unions replied to the survey and 20 completed the audit in full by providing supporting documents
- Ranked on a scale of 1 (worst) and five (best) according to how well they met our five criteria: clarity, accessibility, attribution of responsibility, development of programme and outcome.
- Survey is anonymized –SUs received the results and we created an average out of those that completed the survey

- 9 Students' Unions then became part of a pilot scheme, where we supported them in tackling Lad Culture

Key findings from the audit:

Policy

- High proportion of SUs and institutions had E&D policy and bullying and harassment policies
- Just over half of institutions (51%) had policy on sexual harassment. 65% of SUs this policy.
- 48% of SUs had a policy on the display of sexist/ discriminatory material. Only 1 in 10 HEIs had a policy on this.
- Twice as many SUs had a zero tolerance policy than HEIs.
- Less than half of SUs had a safe space policy (42%) dignity at work (39%) or alcohol abuse programme (35%)
- Lack of clarity and appropriateness of complaints and disciplinary procedures
- Lack of promotion of policy

Training and education

- 1 in 10 SUs provide training on Lad Culture (11%) and only a third run (sexual) consent workshops (32%).
- Only 6% of institutions have included consent in curriculum.

Victim Support Programmes

- 100% SUs and 94% of institutions provided counselling services
- 11% of SUs provide support meeting groups
- 3% of institutions provide support meeting groups

Rankings

- SUs 2.75
- Institutions 2.65

Audit Tool

You can access the full online tool online, but the key areas that it looks at are;

- Training – what is provided and to who
- Policies – what policies are in place, how people are made aware of them and how these link to disciplinary procedures and external providers
- Education – around sexual harassment and consent – is this included in the curriculum in some way, are workshops arranged on this
- Support services – what support services are available
- Campaigns – what campaigns you are running

Audit Guidance

We also have guidance on how to go about the audit, so some of our top tips for going about an audit:

- Print the questionnaire and the guidance form, cross items as you find the relevant documents.
- Check your institution website. There must be an ethics or an 'about' section with general information on the university's values.
- Talk to staff. Here are some key member of staff at your university who should be able to help:

- Department/school secretary or administrative assistant
- Equality and Diversity Officer
- Human Resources
- Staff union (UCU, Unison...)

All this information should be public or easily available; they are not confidential data about the institution and therefore there is no reason why staff wouldn't help you in accessing them.

Talk to staff representatives before starting, they might be interested in taking part in the audit and supporting you with filling out the survey. If you don't know how to contact them, ask UCU who their local branch representatives are

Other Campaigns and recommendations

- Clear policies on sexual harassment, assault, and appropriate behaviours (including staff)
- Review of reporting and disciplinary procedures for sexual misconduct
- Workshops on consent, gender and power.
- Better support systems for students, whether in-house or third party
- Consultation with groups who may be affected
- Zero Tolerance campaign information available on and offline

It's important to understand that there needs to be a culture shift, which involves education and multiple levels, supporting survivors, challenging behaviours and institutions, and pushing for change. Not one campaign can or will solve the issue but can make great steps.

Take action (30 minutes)

For this activity, split the group into three smaller groups. Each group will try a different form of action.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Audit Tool	Pledge Promise / Poster	Cohesive campaigning
Task: Plan how you could use the audit tool. So, think about: • Who needs to be involved? • Who do you need to speak to? • What are some of the current responses to tackling Lad Culture in your union and institution? • What challenges do you think you might face or have you faced?	Task: Make pledge poster. We've spoken a few times already about the need to make sure that everyone is part of the solution. Now think about how you get others on board. A good starter is to use the phrase "we need to tackle Lad Culture because..." Identify who needs to be brought on board and how you might do that.	Task: Design a wider strategy, including other campaigns and training that could be provided as part of a wider tackling Lad Culture campaign. You should consider other groups to involve and what methods you would like to use, for example: • Poster campaign • Training • Panel discussions • Direct action You may want to think about other campaigns like: • Student staff Misconduct

• What are your first steps?		• I Heart Consent • Tackling Islamophobia (Muslim Students research) • Anti-bullying • LGBT+ inclusivity
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Once divided, go to each group and explain briefly what their task is. Each group will have 10 minutes to plan their action and 5 minutes to present their plan to the rest of the workshop. Use the remaining 5 minutes left for group reflection.

Questions for group reflection:

- What task or activity did you like the most?
- Which did you think is the most effective and why?

The aims of this task are:

- To understand the different ways, you can tackle Lad Culture
- To build confidence that they could take this back to their campus
- To understand that not just one way will tackle the issue, but instead a varied, cohesive, multi-faceted campaign will have more reach and impact

Wrap up & Questions

Thank everyone for attending the workshop and ask if there are any final thoughts or questions that people would like to share.

We hope that has been a useful, if short opportunity to look at what Lad Culture is, the work on this so far and how you can get involved as this develops.

Explain that if you would like more information or would like to keep in touch with the Lad Culture work you can [find out more on NUS Connect](#) or by contacting women@nus.org.uk