



St Mary's
University
Students'
Union

simmie SAFETY



Simmie Safety
Report November 2022

Overview

In November 2022 SMSU undertook research to provide data on student views of safety on campus. This consultation was linked to the manifestos of the 2022-23 sabbatical officers. Our research included a survey and engagement exercises where students reviewed maps of campus and indicated areas where they felt unsafe and where more lighting, CCTV, security patrols would be beneficial.

There were 404 responses to the survey which ran from 21st November – 10th December.

37% of respondents lived in halls of residence, 40% commuted from home, 22% lived in the local area and 1% had no fixed abode. 37% of respondents identified as male, 61% as female and 1% as non-binary. Students from all levels of study were represented, including postgraduate research. 79% of respondents identified as heterosexual/straight, 10% as bisexual, 3% as gay/lesbian and 2% as "other sexual orientation". 59% of respondents described themselves as white, 18% as Asian/Asian British, 10% as Black/Black British, 9% as Mixed/Multiple ethnicities and 2% as "other". 67% of respondents were 18-21, with a further 23% between 22 and 29.

For some questions, students were asked to give their answer on a scale between 0 (Not at all) and 5 (Yes, Absolutely). The weighted average for these responses has been given as a number out of 5.

The survey asked students a series of questions related to prevalence of bullying, harassment and sexual assault, confidence in reporting mechanisms, feelings of safety on campus, and student and staff training.

Prevalence

Around 1 in 7 students (14.85%) stated that they personally experienced harassment, bullying or sexual assault whilst studying at St Mary's University. This increased to 17.74% for female respondents and to 20% for non-binary respondents.

Confidence in reporting mechanisms

Students were asked which services they would feel “comfortable and confident” reporting an incident of harassment, bullying or sexual assault to. Their responses are listed below

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|
| None of the above | 5.94% | 24 |
| Report and Support | 26.73% | 108 |
| Students' Union (SMSU) | 47.77% | 193 |
| Security | 51.24% | 207 |
| Student Services | 57.18% | 231 |
| Student Support Officers | 41.83% | 169 |
| Police | 48.76% | 197 |
| Other (please specify) | 6.19% | 25 |
| Total Respondents: 404 | | |

Student senior residents (SSRs) were frequently listed within the “other” box as a service students would feel comfortable and confident reporting to.

Positively, our survey showed no significant difference between comfort and confidence in support services between white and ethnic minority students nor between heterosexual and LGBTQ+ students.

Our survey findings show that student’s awareness of and confidence in the “report and support” platform is low. Only half of all students said they knew what support the University has available to those who experience harassment, bullying or sexual assault (2.55/5 rating). A clear majority of students (73.3%) did not select report and support as somewhere they would feel “comfortable and confident” reporting an incident of bullying, harassment, or sexual misconduct.

Feeling safe on campus

Students responding to our survey overwhelmingly stated that they felt safe on campus during the day (93%), but this dropped to just 61% at night.

Female students felt significantly less safe on campus at night than male students. Just over half of female respondents (53.63%) felt safe on campus at night compared to 76.51% of male respondents and 60% of non-binary respondents.

LGBTQ+ students feel significantly less safe on campus at night than their heterosexual peers. 64.8% of heterosexual students felt safe on campus at night compared to 46.15% of gay/lesbian students and 51.28% of bisexual students.

We also ran a consultation exercise, where we asked students to place coloured stickers on a map of the university, to show areas they felt needed more attention. These maps can be found at the end of this report.

Students overwhelmingly believe that it is important for them to have a 24/7 contact point with security staff on campus (4.62/5 rating).

Male students (61.74%) were significantly more comfortable and confident in reporting to security than their female peers (45.56%).

Staff and Student Training

Our survey found that a clear majority of students believe that consent and bystander awareness training should be compulsory for all staff and students (4.41/5 rating).

Recommendations for SMSU and the University

- Ensure that student senior residents are able to appropriately respond to reports of bullying, harassment and sexual assault by reviewing their responsibilities and providing them with a “take-home” resource which supports appropriate signposting. Additionally, ensure Senior Residents are aware of and able to directly contact the duty RM.
- Conduct a Simmie Safety Survey on an annual basis, tracking changes and developments
- The ‘Report and Support’ platform could be developed to provide a single form for reporting. Students could be given the choice to submit either anonymously or with contact details. We believe students would find this system more accessible and that it would bring the university in line with the sector. Publicity given to the “Report and Support” system should be improved, including language designed to build confidence among students.
- Improve the number of students completing the mandatory induction modules - in the academic year 22/23, just 415 students (14.4% of new students) completed the online “Induction” module (which contains content on consent) and 317 (11% of new students) completed the online “Bystander Awareness” module.
- Consider the implementation of Sexual Violence Liaison Officer (SLVO) training for staff handling disclosures and supporting students who have experienced sexual misconduct
- Review the training given to Resident Mentors and security staff to ensure they are properly equipped to respond to incidents of bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct
- Seek to recruit female security staff to reduce the disparity between confidence and comfort in the service between male and female students. In the longer-term, the university should seek to ensure a female member of staff is available to speak to students at all times.
- Consider the implementation of a minimum-security staffing level of three staff to ensure that students have 24/7 points of contact with them.
- Conduct lighting surveys more regularly, on alternating months as opposed to the annual approach that is currently being used.
- Collect anonymous feedback from all students who have reported incidents to the university and SMSU
- Collect data on timeliness of response and outcomes when dealing with incidents of bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct

Action Tracker

Updated: June 2023

| Recommendation | Owner | Date | RAG | Comments |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------|-----|---|
| Ensure that student senior residents are able to appropriately respond to reports of bullying, harassment and sexual assault by reviewing their responsibilities and providing them with a "take-home" resource which supports appropriate signposting. | Student Services | Sep. 2023 | | Agreed - to be actioned. |
| Ensure Senior Residents are aware of and able to directly contact the duty RM. | Student Services | Sep. 2023 | | Agreed - to be actioned. |
| Conduct a Simmie Safety Survey on an annual basis, tracking changes and developments | SMSU | Nov. 2023 | | Scheduled into our annual plan for delivery in November 2023. |
| The 'Report and Support' platform could be developed to provide a single form for reporting. Students could be given the choice to submit either anonymously or with contact details. We believe students would find this system more accessible and that it would bring the university in line with the sector. Publicity given to the "Report and Support" system should be improved, including language designed to build confidence among students. | Statement of Expectations Group | Sep. 2023 | | Form has been developed to include anonymous reporting. Communication of reporting tool to be improved, but direction has been agreed. |
| Improve the number of students completing the mandatory induction modules - in the academic year 22/23, just 415 students (14.4% of new students) completed the online "Induction" module (which contains content on consent) and 317 (11% of new students) completed the online "Bystander Awareness" module. | Statement of Expectations Group | Nov. 2023 | | Agreed - SMSU and the University are considering how to improve uptake. |

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| Consider the implementation of Sexual Violence Liaison Officer (SVLO) training for staff handling disclosures and supporting students who have experienced sexual misconduct | Statement of Expectations Group | Dec. 2023 | | The University is meeting with HR to discuss how to roll-out more effective training. |
| Review the training given to Resident Mentors and security staff to ensure they are properly equipped to respond to incidents of bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct | Student Services & Estates | Sep. 2023 | | Agreed - to be actioned. |
| Seek to recruit female security staff to reduce the disparity between confidence and comfort in the service between male and female students. In the longer-term, the university should seek to ensure a female member of staff is available to speak to students at all times. | Estates | Ongoing | | Agreed - the University is keen to attract more female staff in this area, but the unsociable hours remain a barrier. |
| Conduct lighting surveys more regularly, on alternating months as opposed to the annual approach that is currently being used. | Estates | Sep. 2023 | | Agreed - to be actioned. |
| Collect anonymous feedback from all students who have reported incidents to the university and SMSU | Statement of Expectations Group / SMSU | Ongoing | | Agreed - to be actioned. |
| Collect data on timeliness of response and outcomes when dealing with incidents of bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct | Student Services | Ongoing | | Agreed - to be actioned. |

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| <p>Consider the implementation of a minimum-security staffing level of three staff to ensure that students have 24/7 points of contact with them.</p> | <p>Estates</p> | <p>TBC</p> | <p>Security already operate 24*7 with two staff available all evening/morning and an SSO based in De Marillac from 10pm until 1am. Security staffing has been something which the University has had previous issues with and as a service has been challenging to ensure that it is operating effectively. We have increased the technology available to address this including further CCTV coverage, RingGo doorbell so that even if staff are away from the lodge dealing with another issues they can support students etc. The University will be implementing further training to ensure the security respond appropriately to any safety concern.</p> |
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