

CRISIS ON CAMPUS:

LET'S
QUESTION
IT



Hello!

We are sex? on campus, a new, Edinburgh-based campaign focusing on consent, sex education and keeping each other safe.

Our aim is to improve sex and consent education. and to pressure on people in power to take cases of sexual violence and assault more seriously.

We have had Enough.

As all of our current members are students at Edinburgh University, we are hoping to work with various societies to make a larger impact as well as calling for senior staff members to stop ignoring the voices of survivors, to make campus a safer space

We have lots of ideas and we're all very excited to bring this to life.

This is just the beginning.

~~Edinburgh~~ X

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Introduction

Sexual violence is a growing plague to our communities. We might only look to the sheer size of the internationally renowned “#MeToo” movement, or perhaps the parallel “#YesAllWomen”, to identify that wherever you are, there will be victims of sexual abuse. Unfortunately, where there are victims, there must also be predators. This seemingly runs contrary to the opinion of many defining UK institutions. Data from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in 2018 found only 4,000 cases were referred to police, despite almost 200,000 cases being recorded by police that same year. Worse still, there were less than 2,000 convictions for rape (Crown Prosecution Service, 2021/2022)

These statistics, however, are not just evidence of institutional mishandling by the police. In actual fact, they run parallel to a consistent mistreatment of victims at *every level of support*.

Institutional mishandlings of Sexual Violence on Campus

This year, several The Times articles reported that several undergraduates (most namely Aarti Mukhedkar) had allegedly been instructed by the University of Edinburgh *not* to report abuse cases to the police because it would “derail the university’s investigations.” (Koronka, 2023)

Similar allegations included the permittance of partiality at a disciplinary committee level, significant disregard for student wellbeing after sexual abuse instances or investigations, and the inability for victims to access the full investigation reports, even though this is provided to abusers.

Whether under the guise of hazing, spiking, coercion, physical violence, or another means, University students are undoubtably amongst some of the most immediately vulnerable to sexual abuse. In 2018, Revolt Sexual Assault identified the following:

- 62% of all students surveyed had experienced sexual violence before graduation.
- 39% of students who had been assaulted or harassed were made to feel responsible for these incidents.
- Only 6% of those affected reported these incidents to the University or the police.
- With just 2% being satisfied with the outcome.

The atrocity of these figures (Revolt Sexual Assault, 2018), particularly when accompanied by such little action cannot be overstated; we are in crisis on campus.

Who are we?

In truth, Sex? On Campus! exists as a placeholder for many things. Day-to-day, we're just students. On our days off, we're learning to cope. At times, we've become victims. Perhaps most significant in our definition, then, is that we are ongoing. Unfortunately, this is also the case for sexual abuse.

Of course, on the surface level, we're an "Edinburgh based campaign for improved consent education to tackle rape culture on university campuses.", but the reality is that we're two things:

- 1) The change we want to make
- 2) What others need us to be

For this reason, pinning down a definition for *who* we are on a deeper level is much more difficult. At times, we're a vessel for any of the other vast range of feelings survivors of sexual abuse might feel. Sometimes, we're the creators and/or distributors of resources. Very often, we're just a shoulder to cry on.

Unfortunately, previous approaches have been more linear in their tackling of sexual violence (namely at an institutional level), and thus have treated the symptoms rather than the cause. It's for this reason that Sex? On Campus! was founded.

Roles and Responsibilities

As we are toward the beginning of our campaign, our roles and responsibilities are centred on the minimum needed for us to function. As the campaign grows bigger, we will undoubtedly look to recruit further for a variety of roles.

Campaign Leader(s)

The Campaign Leads are responsible for deciding the direction of the campaign: its goals, methods, and the general roadmap. Sex? On Campus! Is guided by two Campaign Leads.

Communications Officer

The Communications Officer is responsible for the publicity and public facing communications of the campaign. This includes managing the campaign's social media presence, writing public statements, producing publicity materials, and organising media appearances.

Outreach Officer

The Outreach Officer is responsible for reaching out to external organisations, such as charitable bodies, to organise collaborations and partnerships. The outreach officer also pursues funding and sponsorships.

Events Manager

The Events Manager is responsible for overseeing the wide array of events organised by the campaign, including socials, workshops, and protests. This involves liaising with venues, vendors, and attendees to ensure events go smoothly.

Graphic Designer

The Graphic Designer produces custom graphics for the society to be used in publicity materials and social media content.

Branding

As with any organisation, branding plays such a significant role in how our campaign is understood. As such, we were extremely careful in the selection of our name, logo and colour scheme, particularly a weapon in drawing attention to us and our aims.

The name Sex? On Campus! is specifically designed to invoke curiosity; we're aware how it sounds without context! Additionally, the use of the Question mark in our name and branding helps to further link our name to the focus of the campaign: Consent.

Our logo features the silhouettes of two people from the shoulder up, one with a red question mark over their face, the other with an exclamation mark. Firstly, our use of silhouettes represents our commitment to inclusivity and diversity under the umbrella of sexual assault. The silhouettes can be *anyone*, regardless of their background, identity, or presentation.

Further, the use of the question and exclamation mark has multiple interpretations, symbolising the importance of understanding that experiences of sexual assault and rape are not one-size-fits-all, but are instead varied. Another way of interpreting their use is that one person is asking for consent, and the other is responding enthusiastically and giving it willingly. Similarly, it may also be the different sides to abuse survivors; one is sure in their experiences, while the other experiences significant self-doubt or self-blame. Ultimately, it is open ended, though all drawing attention to significant areas of abuse survival, and an opportunity for people to think about sex and consent in many different situations.

Our colour scheme also plays an important role in our branding. We wanted to have a strict and simple colour scheme, using bold colours like white, red and black to make an impact. They work cohesively as representation of the often (though not always!) violent nature of sexual assault.

Aims and Achievements

Mission Statements

Kate Wilson

Within my first three months at the University of Edinburgh, a society president assaulted me. Within six months, as per University policy, I chose to report him. Within nine months, as per University policy, he had been found innocent. As per University policy, I was not allowed to know why. When Kirsten approached me about creating Sex? On Campus!, then, I knew it was something I just had to do. This, accompanied by my knowing an unfortunately significant number of non-consensual experiences in clubs, societies and relationships, sparked a very specific kind of anger in me that I knew so badly needed an outlet. I'd tried many things, but after speaking at the Edinburgh University Protects Rapists protest in 2023, I knew then that it was best channelled through impassioned activism.

It would be an understatement, then, to say I live and breathe tackling sexual assault. I am driven not just by blatant instances of harassment and assault, but the very clear, ever present, accompanying misogyny I have witnessed and experienced in campus spaces. It is violently woven into every element of campus life, and represents a fundamental disregard of women, not just as individuals with thoughts and feelings, but as victims.

It's further important for me to note, though, that Sex? On Campus! is not only targeted at female survivors. There exist many other institutional issues that facilitate the abuse of Queer, POC, and Disabled folks. It's for this reason I want to reinforce that we welcome everyone: survivors of sexual assault, those looking to learn more, or those just looking to be allies to survivors. Whatever your background, we want to hear you, and will therefore always seek out ways to be more intersectional in our approaches to tackling abuse.

Kirsten Hay

I wanted to start Sex? On Campus! For many reasons. After having spoken to many people about their experiences with sexual assault and consent issues, I decided that the most effective way to make a difference would be through preventions. The best way to prevent, is to educate. I want to share accessible and inclusive resources to improve education on all things sex and consent. I would also love to create safe spaces both on and off campus, where people can feel comfortable. Let's make the world a safer place.

Five Pillars of Success

Alongside a personal approach, Sex? On Campus! is working toward (and under) five main pillars to ensure the success of the campaign. These highlight further not only our goals, but the manner in which we are seeking to tackle sexual abuse.

- The firm establishment of consent culture

The creation and maintenance of a consent culture is an idea that, quite frankly, should already be in practice. Unfortunately, institutional misrepresentations of consent have manipulated the ways in which consent is discussed and understood. We want to strip this back in its entirety, and work from the ground up. This includes holding parties accountable at all levels, acknowledging

the continuous nature of consent, and ingrain an overarching respect for autonomy.

- The creation of an extensive “Survivor’s Network”

Sexual abuse can be lonely. Already difficult to navigate, the strain abuse can put on personal and extended relationships can be even more isolating. As such, the creation of a survivor’s network is central to all our events, whether explicit or otherwise. We would love to create a culture in which all of our attendees and allies have someone to talk to, should they need to. Put simply, we want to help in the orchestration of understanding friendships that prioritise victims.

- The championing of diversity and inclusivity

As reinforced throughout this manifesto, no victim of abuse is the same. We champion inclusivity and diversity on every level and welcome all victims from all backgrounds to attend and participate in this campaign. Though we are also fully committed to removing the responsibility for education from all those who experience oppression, we will always encourage all attendees to contact us if they have any concerns, or ideas as to how we can improve our campaign to be more inclusive.

- Creating and promoting support and resources.

We are committed to the creation and distribution of accurate, helpful and accessible resources. Education should be free from prejudice and judgment, and this extends into our personal resources and those we otherwise distribute.

- Empowerment

Empowerment is intimately and intrinsically linked to the rest of our aims. Though often taking many forms, we want everyone involved in our campaign to recognise their self-agency as an unstoppable force. Whether this is through speaking out on their own experiences, or just turning up, empowerment underpins so much of what we do.

The Roadmap

The roadmap below is an indicator of our plans for this academic year (2023/24), illustrating both our in-person events and intentions as a broader campaign.

Our plans for the campaign are detailed in rough chronological order in the roadmap below. Throughout the academic year, we will be working towards our main goals; improving consent education, building a community for survivors and badgering the University, demanding that they do better. We will create a stronger online presence by expanding to other social media platforms as well as starting up a blog and potentially even a podcast. We will host regular community events to create a supportive and safe environment for survivors. We will also be holding the 3rd annual #metooedinburghuni protest on February 9th 2024. This is just a portion of the plans we have in place for the academic year.



Sex? On Campus

Roadmap 23/24



Tuesday, September 05, 2023 3:44 PM



Final Thoughts

Ultimately, the foundation of our campaign is one rooted in both the prevalence of sexual violence on campus, but also its realisation as an institutional issue that exists as a threat to students and staff alike. It is one that cannot thoroughly be tackled without acknowledging the protection University's provide to abuser's, an idea running all the way from the situations under which the abuse happens all the way to their allowance of abusive staff and students to remain on campus.

Similarly, adequate resources are simply, and unfortunately, unavailable. Students feel unprotected and unsafe, and are often left to deal with the aftermath of sexual abuse alone.

As we move forward in to the 2023/24 academic year, Sex? On Campus! hopes to begin holding institutions accountable for their neglect and blatant dismissal of survivor's accounts. Our five pillars of success- consent culture, the building of a survivor's network, the championing of diversity, support and resources, and empowerment – remain central to the execution of this accountability.

Our roadmap, though ambitious, remains representative of actions we feel are much needed on campus from both a protest and resource-based perspective. It is also reflective of our core values and commitments, namely as a means of rallying support for survivors, preventing further abuse, and ensuring that nobody has to suffer alone.

Sex? On Campus! invites everyone to participate in our campaign, in one way or another, and this manifesto should be considered no less than a call to action than as a means of spreading information on the campaign.

We sincerely hope you will join us in that journey.



References

Crown Prosecution Service, 2021/2022. *CPS data summary Quarter 4 2021-2023*, s.l.: Crown Prosecution Service.

Koronka, P., 2023. Edinburgh University "Told Students Not To Report Sex Attacks". *The Times*, 19 March.

Revolt Sexual Assault, 2018. *Students Experience of Sexual Violence*, s.l.: Revolt Sexual Assault.