

# Top drama schools face sexual harassment allegations

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*Guildford School of Acting, one of several top drama schools facing harassment claims*

Three of the UK's top drama schools are facing allegations of sexual harassment, including claims that students were pressured into removing their clothes on stage and were subjected to sexual and offensive comments.

Former students at Guildford School of Acting, the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts and East 15, in addition to the now-closed Poor School, have claimed they were harassed and bullied, in a series of accusations stretching back 20 years and as recent as 2018.

In [an investigation published by the Telegraph](#), students said they were subjected to a range of "inappropriate behaviour" by teachers, including an allegation that a member of staff "grabbed" female students' breasts.

Other allegations reported to the Telegraph include a claim that a visiting teacher at GSA sexually assaulted a female student at her home in 2018. A second student alleges to have witnessed this.

The visiting teacher was later dismissed. However, he denies that the allegation took place and that it was related to him leaving.

Other students at the drama school, which is part of the University of Surrey, said they felt pressured into appearing naked during performances and rehearsals, even though they had previously said they were unwilling to do so. These allegations cover the late 1990s as well as 2015.

In a response sent to the Telegraph, GSA said it was "concerned" about the claims and promised to investigate.

The allegations come as harassment in the performing arts is thrown under the spotlight again, following a recent series of sexual misconduct accusations against actor and producer Noel Clarke.

[A report published by The Stage in 2018 exposed the scale of harassment and bullying in theatre](#), with one in three respondents reporting to have experienced sexual harassment at work and one in five students also reporting sexual harassment.

A student at East 15, in Essex, also told The Telegraph they felt it was required of them to perform naked, while other students reported being subjected to sexual comments. A spokesman for the drama school told the newspaper that it was "sorry for any distress experienced by students in the

past", and that its consent and behaviour policies had been updated last year.

ALRA is also facing accusations of sexual harassment towards students by a former teacher. However, no further details were reported.

The school said it was "heartbroken" to learn of the allegations, and has now opened an internal investigation into the claims, calling for reports of misconduct to be submitted to an anonymous complaints portal.

ALRA added that it was going through a period of "radical change", with a restructure and external investigation centred around racism.

"We have acknowledged historic failings over racism and we take sexual harassment just as seriously," it said.

Elsewhere, allegations were made by former students of the Poor School in London, which closed down permanently in 2018. Several students claimed they were bullied and harassed by the school's former head, Paul Caister, with one alleging that he "grabbed" her breasts and others saying they "lived in fear" of him.

Caister told the Telegraph that the allegations of grabbing were "invented" and denied bullying.