

THE STAGE

Drama schools issue joint response condemning harassment

[NEWS](#) JUN 9, 2021 [BY GEORGIA SNOW](#)



Clockwise from top left: East 15, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, LIPA and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School

Twenty of the UK's leading drama schools – including those facing allegations of sexual harassment and bullying – have issued a joint statement declaring a zero-tolerance approach to misconduct and promising to continually review their policies.

The Federation of Drama Schools, whose partner colleges include the country's largest and most prestigious training institutions, said its members were "shocked and saddened by these historic alleged historical

incidents", in its first public statement since the accusations emerged last week.

In an investigation first published by the Telegraph, former students of East 15, Guildford School of Acting and the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts – all FDS members – [made a series of sexual harassment, bullying and assault allegations](#) relating to their time at drama school.

They included being pressured into appearing naked on stage and during rehearsals, being subjected to sexual and offensive comments and, in some cases, unwanted physical contact.

The FDS' statement is in response to these claims, however further allegations of historic misconduct have since emerged at ArtsEd, prompting the school to launch an external investigation and for [its principal Chris Hocking to temporarily step down](#).

The FDS' statement does not criticise any schools' handling of events historically, but said the federation "proactively advocates action to eradicate any and all inappropriate practice within our training".

"The safety and well-being of our students is a priority and we operate with a zero-tolerance policy in respect of sexual harassment and assault with clear and transparent reporting procedures where the students can be fully supported," it said.

Members include GSA, ALRA, East 15 and ArtsEd, as well as RADA, LAMDA, the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

[In 2018, FDS members agreed to a series of ethical guidelines](#) in a "commitment to activate and sustain a cultural change in drama schools".

In its statement published on June 8, the group said: "Partner-school measures include the specific inclusion of sexual harassment within their dignity-at-work policies, bullying and harassment policies and safeguarding guidelines that are highlighted to all visiting staff and external directors. Workshops on consent and the widespread inclusion of intimacy coordination (led by trained intimacy coordinators) as integral to the training have had a major impact in empowering students.

"FDS schools is constantly reviewing these policies and practices, and always seeking honest feedback from the students as it believes that this is vital to fostering an inclusive, secure and nurturing culture and atmosphere for all."

The statement in full

We are shocked and saddened by these alleged historical incidents of harassment and bullying, and the Federation of Drama Schools proactively advocates action to eradicate any and all inappropriate practice within our training. The safety and well-being of our students is a priority and we operate with a zero tolerance policy in respect of sexual harassment and assault with clear and transparent reporting procedures where the students can be fully supported.

In 2018 the FDS published a mutually agreed statement of ethical practice and a commitment to activate and sustain a cultural change in drama schools.

Partner school measures include the specific inclusion of sexual harassment within their Dignity at Work policies, Bullying and Harassment policies and Safe Guarding guidelines that are highlighted to all visiting staff and

external directors. Workshops on consent and the widespread inclusion of intimacy coordination (led by trained intimacy coordinators) as integral to the training have had a major impact in empowering students.

FDS schools are constantly reviewing these policies and practices, and always seeking honest feedback from the students as they believe that this is vital to fostering an inclusive, secure and nurturing culture and atmosphere for all.