

Idea for Change: Urgent Action for Women's Safety on Campus

What is the issue you would like to discuss?

We want to address the lack of adequate safety measures for students on campus and university transport services. The current infrastructure and policies are failing to protect students from harassment and gender-based violence.

Key issues include:

- **Poorly lit and unsafe bus stops, increasing the risk of harassment.**
- **Spiking, sexual harassment, and violence against women in on-campus venues.**
- **Lack of preventative education, such as consent and anti-harassment training for students and staff.**
- **Barriers to reporting sexual assault and harassment, making it difficult for survivors to seek justice and support.**

Why is this of interest to students at the University of Hertfordshire?

We are demanding urgent improvements in these areas to ensure all students can study, socialise, and commute without fear of harassment or violence.

Every student deserves to feel safe on campus, whether attending lectures, participating in society events, or travelling to and from university. The current systems are failing to guarantee this basic right for all students. However, women and marginalised students are disproportionately impacted by unsafe conditions, including:

- **Feeling vulnerable walking alone at night due to poor lighting and unsafe spaces.**
- **Facing harassment on public transport and university buses, with no proper preventative measures.**

- **Being unable to report incidents easily due to ineffective reporting processes and signposting.**
- **Feeling vulnerable and unable to participate in the SU nightlife due to fear of spiking and sexual harassment.**
- **Experiencing neglect from university and SU leadership, which prioritises profits over student welfare.**

What would you like Herts SU to do moving forward?

We call on Herts SU to take a leadership role in pressuring the University of Hertfordshire to take real action on student safety by:

Campaigning for the interests of students and demanding that the University of Hertfordshire:

- **Recognise gender-based violence and sexual harassment as a crisis on our campus and allocate significant resources to tackle it.**
- **Improve lighting and security at bus stops and isolated areas, as well as assess and address poorly lit areas, ensuring the University's Estates team prioritises safe lighting in repairs and maintenance.**
- **Simplify and improve the reporting process for harassment and sexual violence.**
- **Relaunch the Brave Voices campaign with proper funding and visibility.**
- **Immediate investment in producing anti-harassment and consent training that is mandatory for all new students and staff.**

Leading a Research & Advocacy Effort by:

- **A dedicated research project by the SU is required to fully understand the experience of violence against women on campus. The Herts Unfiltered survey does not capture data on sexual harassment and assault. Further research is required beyond understanding the generalised feeling of safety on campus.**
- **This research should focus on areas such as high-risk locations on campus, experiences of harassment on Uno buses, in SU nightlife, and how safety perceptions differ by gender identity, lighting, and time of**

day. This research will inform future interventions by the SU and apply pressure on the university to allocate funding where it is most needed.

Spiking & Safety in SU Nightlife:

- While no formal reports of spiking have been made, this does not mean incidents have not occurred. It suggests that reporting and support systems are failing students. Multiple allegations of spiking and harassment at SU venues have appeared on social media. Unfortunately, these individuals either did not receive adequate support from SU staff or security, were unaware of the reporting process, or felt that formal reporting would lead nowhere. The responsibility for addressing these issues lies with the SU, event organisers, and security. The SU must recognise that these incidents do still occur, and this might not be accurately reflected in the reporting figures due to victims' lost confidence in the SU to act on their report.**
- Students may share their experiences of spiking on social media but avoid formal reporting due to unclear guidance on how to access official reporting channels. The 'Safe Club' page on the Herts SU website lacks detailed instructions for victims on how to report incidents after leaving the venue. It does not explain the process for reporting to the Students' Union, the University, or external authorities such as the police. Additionally, there is no information on how to follow up, collect evidence (such as drink testing or medical exams), or what actions the University will take against perpetrators. This lack of clarity and support may discourage victims from coming forward, leaving them uncertain about the next steps.**
- Herts SU must recognise that education and promotion of support and reporting surrounding spiking have room for improvement.**
- The responsibility of this issue should not solely be on the victim to formally report, but on the venue to actively enforce a zero-tolerance policy on sexual harassment and spiking and to put further preventative systems in place.**

Reporting Harassment & Sexual Violence:

- While we recognise the existence of the Report and Support system, it is not actively promoted in spaces where harassment is common, such as on university-owned buses, at bus stops, in the LRC, or in teaching areas. Furthermore, even within the system, the initial questions focus on staff rather than students and are written in terms more applicable to the workplace. The scope of sexual misconduct should be more clearly defined.
- We call for a system that explicitly recognises different forms of harassment and violence in the initial reporting stages to prevent students from being deterred due to their incident not matching a narrow description.
- Currently, the SU does not have its own reporting system, and students are directed to the University's portal. This motion mandates the SU elected officers to push for a system tailored to the needs of students, not just staff.
- We also note that reporting processes vary across departments some require students to report through the official Report and Support system, while others ask students to speak directly to lecturers. This inconsistency highlights the need for further training for staff to ensure all reports are properly documented. The SU should urge the University to standardise this process and improve staff training.

Education & Prevention Initiative:

- **Mandatory sexual violence and consent training for all new students and staff**
 - We ask that Herts SU recognise this training is long overdue. Leading universities have been conducting mandatory consent training for several years now. We ask that the SU actively track the progress of this project and apply pressure to ensure the university delivers this training in 2025.
- We ask that Herts SU work with the university to call for immediate investment in producing an anti-harassment and consent education campaign on campus, within campus accommodation, at university bus stops, and on Uno buses. We are calling for an evidence-based prevention campaign. This campaign must receive adequate investment

and resources to ensure it is not just a performative gesture to victims but properly tackles the issues outlined in this motion and promotes reporting.

By taking these steps, Herts SU can amplify student voices and apply sustained pressure on the university to prioritise safety over profits.