



10 June 2019

Dear Students, Staff, and Alumni,

The NUS Review Committee was convened by the Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees on 30 April 2019 to undertake a comprehensive review of the University's disciplinary framework on sexual misconduct, support system for victims, and approach to safety on campus.

Over the past weeks, the Committee studied global best practices at leading universities and consulted with subject matter experts. The Committee also consulted extensively with the NUS community through 15 in-person engagement sessions and an online survey of students conducted by an independent research consultancy. The University will share the results of the survey with you in the coming days.

Since the preliminary recommendations shared with you on 15 May 2019, the Committee has concluded our review. We now submit our final recommendations, summarised below, to the NUS Board of Trustees in accordance with our terms of reference.

The Committee believes that these recommendations set a new benchmark for disciplinary sanctions for sexual misconduct. The higher benchmark will send a strong message that the University does not tolerate sexual misconduct and serve as a strong deterrent.

Sanctions Framework Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Tougher penalties for sexual misconduct

The Committee is of the view that NUS must implement a tougher sanctions framework for sexual misconduct, and recommends:

- a. Minimum sanctions for serious offences – A minimum one-year suspension be instituted, that the Board of Discipline (BOD) and/or the Disciplinary Appeals Board (DAB) cannot override or remove. The framework provides guidance and illustrations of serious offences that are subject to a BOD hearing.
- b. Recommended expulsion at the first BOD hearing – For severe instances or aggravated forms of offences of sexual misconduct to lead to immediate expulsion.
- c. Notation of disciplinary action on transcript – All academic transcripts (interim and final) of sexual misconduct offenders to bear a notation of the length of suspension. At the request of the offender, the notation can be expunged from the offender's transcript three years from the offender's date of degree conferment.

- d. Guard against recidivism – All offenders must be certified fit by a counsellor and/or medical professional before they are allowed to return to campus after suspension. Suspensions may be extended until the student is certified fit to return.
- e. No-contact protocol between victim and offender – A no-contact protocol to ensure that the victim and offender do not come into contact with each other. For example, ensuring that they do not take the same classes or non-academic programmes.

In addition to the above measures, the BOD can impose any or all of the existing sanctions, which include mandatory counselling and rehabilitation, community service, a ban from housing premises or campus, suspension from academic and non-academic privileges, and a letter of reprimand.

In ensuring that all sanctions are adhered to, the Committee recommends that a case officer be assigned to the offender.

Disciplinary Framework Recommendations

Recommendation 2:

Giving victims a greater voice in the disciplinary process

The Committee recommends that NUS grants victims more rights and that victims should be more involved in the disciplinary process. These would include:

- a. Being kept up-to-date on the disciplinary proceedings;
- b. Filing a statement of facts before the BOD hearing;
- c. Filing an impact statement;
- d. Appearing before BOD to provide clarifications on the victim's statement;
- e. Being accompanied by a care officer at the BOD hearing; and
- f. Having an avenue for victims to request for a review of BOD and/or DAB outcomes in exceptional circumstances as spelt out in the full Report.

The Committee recommends that the University reviews the composition of the BOD to ensure adequate gender balance among the members.

Recommendation 3:

Provide greater empathy and support to victims

The Committee found that a single point-of-contact for victims is lacking, requiring victims to reach out to the various support units at the University on their own, and therefore risking a lack of continuity in victim care.

NUS must provide better advice, information, support and resources to victims, from when an incident is reported to when support is no longer required. The Committee recommends that a care officer be appointed to each victim at the point an incident is reported, who will accompany the victim in dealing with law enforcement, support the victim through the disciplinary process and interface with other support units across the University.

The Committee notes the University's proposal to establish a Victim Care Unit (see Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 4:

Set a clear timeline for disciplinary process and streamline number of entities involved

The Committee recommends streamlining the number of different NUS units involved in the disciplinary process to better support victims.

The Committee also suggests that a timeline for the disciplinary processes be established. Although such a timeline should be left flexible, there should be an indicative timeline outlining when each stage of the process should be completed.

Review of ongoing university measures to enhance victim support, culture of respect, and campus safety

The Committee notes that the University is already in the process of implementing its own measures to enhance support for victims and safety across campus. The Committee has reviewed the University's plans in this regard, and has the following recommendations:

Recommendation 5:

Enhancing the victim support framework and network

The Committee recognises that there is a clear need to enhance the University's victim support framework and network, and notes that the University will establish a Victim Care Unit (VCU). The VCU will provide personalised continuity of care to victims of sexual misconduct, be the central point of contact, and act as the interface between victims and NUS' disciplinary and care units.

The Committee supports the establishment of the VCU and recommends:

- a. The University ensures care officers have relevant experience in counselling, social work, psychology or a related field;
- b. The VCU works closely with other support networks at the University. While care officers from the VCU will be the central point of contact and first layer of support, they should work closely with the masters, resident fellows, resident advisors and student support managers, amongst others, who will continue to provide pastoral care at hostels, faculties and schools as the second layer of support, with peer groups forming the third layer of support. This will ensure a holistic support network is provided for victims; and
- c. A dedicated website be set up to provide information and advice for victims of sexual misconduct, and to house NUS' codes of conduct as well as policy statements and documents. The website should include clear reporting and support mechanisms such as essential contact numbers, helplines and whistleblowing channels.

*Recommendation 6:
Rehabilitation of offenders*

The Committee supports the University's move for its Office of Student Affairs (OSA) to have dedicated staff to advise offenders, who may need support in areas such as mental health.

OSA will work with the Office of Student Conduct to ensure that offenders serve out their sanctions, undergo rehabilitation, and are certified fit to return by counsellors and/or medical professionals – before they are allowed back on campus after suspension.

*Recommendation 7:
Education on respect and consent*

The Committee supports the University's plan to launch a new module on "Respect and Consent Culture" starting in the 2019/2020 academic year, which will be compulsory for all NUS students and staff.

The Committee notes that the University will conduct first responder training commencing in June 2019 to ensure that all first responders know how to communicate and help victims. This would involve campus security officers, masters, resident fellows and residential advisors.

The Committee concurs with the University's view that education remains an important and sustainable way to build an enduring culture of respect on campus which will complement safety measures being enhanced by the University.

*Recommendation 8:
Adequacy of campus security and infrastructure*

The Committee recommends better security infrastructure at hostels, where the majority of sexual misconduct incidents in recent years have occurred.

The University announced it will significantly increase the number of security guards present at hostels and introduce roving security patrols across campus. Secure shower cubicles and restroom locks are also being installed in hostels. Together with better CCTV coverage, the Committee agrees that these tools should significantly enhance campus safety and security.

Beyond infrastructure and security, the Committee would like to reiterate the importance of imbuing a culture of safety and mutual care among NUS staff and students, particularly as to the issue of non-resident's ability to gain unauthorised access to hostels. Safety cannot be compromised and everyone must be mindful to uphold and observe safety measures.

*Recommendation 9:
Review of past disciplinary cases*

The Committee has also consulted with external legal advisors and determined that past cases on which the BOD had formally ruled, and for which sanctions have been meted out, cannot be reopened.

Our recommended changes will form the basis of the University's tougher stance on sexual misconduct and discipline going forward.

*Recommendation 10:
Commitment to ongoing review*

The Committee recognises that these recommendations form a starting point and that this is ongoing work. We recommend that the University revisits these frameworks on a regular basis to ensure they remain aligned with global best practices, reflect the sentiments of the NUS community, and adequately support and protect the community. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the sanctions and victim support framework be reviewed every two years, and that the University continues to engage its stakeholders on this very important matter.

Building a safer community

The Committee would like to thank all students, staff, alumni and other stakeholders who have contributed to this review. The Committee believes that the recommendations made in this report reflect the NUS community's common desire for justice and empathy for victims of sexual misconduct, and for an enduring culture of respect and support on campus.

Sincerely

Mdm Kay Kuok
Chair, NUS Review Committee on Sexual Misconduct