

Gender Taskforce Statement on the Warwick Group Chat incident

4th February 2019

As the members of the Gender Taskforce, we wish to confirm our support for the victims of the Group Chat case at Warwick. We believe that it is essential for the University to ensure that the victims are fully supported so that they feel able to return and complete their studies at the University without fear of further difficulties.

The Gender Taskforce members recognise that the casual misogyny, ableism and racism in the comments from the young men concerned is shocking. The gratuitous nature of these comments smacks of boastful, arrogant and toxic attitudes.

We know that this problem is not unique to University of Warwick – it is part of our society, and our society has a track-record of tolerating this kind of behaviour, including obscenely sexist comments from those in leadership roles, so long as it is in secret. We are not an equal society with the same opportunities for all. Barriers arise from many factors – from protected characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and disability, but also from other factors such as poverty, and access to education.

The university sector has a responsibility to identify and, where possible, diminish these barriers. Through a variety of ongoing initiatives, work is undertaken by staff and students at all levels to promote and embed a culture of respect, dignity, and inclusion for everyone in our university communities. Incidents such as the ‘Group Chat’ at Warwick serve as a powerful reminder of the need for these initiatives, of the importance of being able to provide timely and effective support to all those who are affected, and of the need for perpetrators to genuinely understand the impact of their behaviour.

The Gender Taskforce membership welcomes the statement from the Vice Chancellor about the disciplinary hearings https://warwick.ac.uk/insite/news/intnews2/vc_open_letter , while acknowledging that the information in the public domain leaves open questions about the processes we have available to us as an institution to address such challenges now and in the future.

The Gender Taskforce is keen to support a review of policies and processes regarding student disciplinary proceedings, to ensure the confidence of the individuals involved, and of the wider community, when such incidents arise in future.