



RUGBY UNION CULTURE AND CONDUCT

THE HIGHER EDUCATION BEHAVIOURS CHARTER - PROTECT OUR GAME

Dear Higher Education Colleagues,

With the 2023-24 academic season fast approaching and students returning to university rugby union, we write to communicate our shared expectations of standards of behaviour across the game, both on and off the pitch. We also want to update you on our position in ensuring all higher education (HE) rugby union environments continue to contribute to making rugby union a safe and inclusive sport for all, and that each of us is responsible for protecting our game.

Several unacceptable incidents and reports in university rugby union last season have now created a catalyst for change, and we want to communicate with all clubs, players, staff and volunteers about your role in those changes and how to help our game continue to flourish in HE and beyond. We acknowledge that this is not just a rugby union problem or always easy to control, but we are determined not to stand by and ignore it. Everyone in rugby union has a responsibility to make our sport inclusive, modern, friendly and enjoyable. No player should be questioning whether they play because of what they may fear or experience in university rugby union.

Partnership Development

BUCS rugby union boasts over 400 teams and 12,500 players in its programmes deriving from across England, Scotland and Wales. Given there are many non-BUCS, intra-mural and social university teams, we recognise the importance of a collaborated approach to the behaviour and cultural challenges we are facing. Therefore, from this season onward, the RFU, WRU, SRU, SRFU and BUCS will strategically oversee the compliance and disciplinary processes related to the university sector as a joint venture.

The Higher Education Behaviours Charter - Protect Our Game

In the 2023-24 season, you will see the launch of **The Higher Education Behaviours Charter - Protect Our Game**. The charter will aim to not only highlight the unacceptable nature of the likes of bullying and coercion in the name of initiations, anti-social activity by higher education rugby union clubs and abuse of match officials, spectators and opponents, but also give those affected means in which to confidently report such incidents resulting in swift and resolute action. The charter will also aim to further educate and support university clubs in how to take preventative steps within their own environment, and lead with authority to mitigate against any and all behaviours that have a negative impact on the game.

Webinars and Campaigns

Your club and their associates will be invited to attend a pre-season webinar to help you understand exactly what the expectations should be when hosting and visiting opposition in relation to behaviours. You'll also be guided through the **Higher Education Behaviours Charter - Protect Our Game**, its significance in creating change and ultimately the sanctions applied if breaches occur. Regardless of where your game is played within the UK, all will be accountable to the same standards. Your attendance will be recorded each club must distribute the charter to all club members for them to read and understand.

While these initiatives provided by BUCS are entirely voluntary, in the event of a charge being raised, non-engagement could be viewed as an aggravating factor in disciplinary proceedings should a charge be given.



BRITISH UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES SPORT
20-24 KING'S BENCH STREET
LONDON SE1 0QX

University rugby union is both unique and special. It is an entry point for many students as their first experience in our game, or for others a vital transition between age grade and adult rugby union and an extension of the further education, community and academy systems. In each instance, it is our collective responsibility to not only ensure we are creating lifelong participants in rugby union, but that we challenge and hold to account those institutions that do not join us on this journey.

There are hundreds of thousands of people across the rugby union community who give their time to grow and safeguard the future our sport in an increasingly challenging landscape. The hours and energy they are putting into it now are more than at any other time. We owe it to them to take a stand. We will be relying on your proactive support. If you would like to discuss, please get in touch with any of the partners listed.

Yours sincerely, RFU | WRU | SRU | SRFU | BUCS

Sam Bell-Minogue
 Director of Delivery
 BUCS

Steve Grainger
 Development Director
 Rugby Football Union

Gavin Scott
 Director of Rugby
 Development
 Scottish Rugby Union

Mark Hyndman
 Chair
 Student's Rugby Football Union

Jeremy Rogers
 Head of Policy and Integrity
 Welsh Rugby Union

