University of East Anglia | NORWICH MEDICAL SCHOOL

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences



Norwich Medical School

‘Speaking Up Speaking Out’

Process for reporting concerns made by a student about inappropriate or offensive behaviour in their programme learning environment on campus, on placement, or in the workplace

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Introduction

The Speaking Up Speaking Out (SUSO) policy has been developed to guide students* in Norwich Medical School (NMS) who want to raise a concern about inappropriate, or offensive behaviour in their programme learning environment on campus, or on placement. It aims to provide a safe and supportive route for students to report their concerns. It creates a shared understanding about what happened, and a process that outlines how that information should be used and actions that should be taken in a supportive non-judgmental environment where the identity of the person reporting is protected. It also provides guidance for staff members who support students in these circumstances.

Concerns raised by students linked to this process may relate to areas linked to:

- Discrimination and harassment
- Patient/client/service user safety
- Expression that a safe learning environment as part of their course was not being offered.

Concerns can also be raised by students with their student representatives, module leads, or course directors. This policy is supported by the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) principles on raising concerns, speaking up, and whistleblowing. It complements the independent University of East Anglia (UEA) 'Report and Support' process linked to concern with the campus experience and ensures that our learners can report concerns in all areas of their course, be it on or off campus.

Please note that this policy and process is not aimed at concerns about course curriculum, timetables, room quality etc. Concerns around these areas should be carried out through the usual routes and if you need more information contact the student representative, course director, or year/module lead.

For the purposes of this guidance, the senior staff member acting on behalf of NMS is referred to as 'the School'.

Background

Norwich Medical School (NMS) introduced a policy to support students to raise concerns about patient safety in 2014. In 2017, the School collected information from MB BS students regarding what type of concerns they would report, and where, and students also provided feedback that they needed a safe route in which to raise concerns about the learning environment. From this information a 'Speaking Up' policy was revised to include guidance on raising concerns about attitudes, language and behaviors in the learning environment that may be unprofessional, offensive and/or are potentially threatening, discriminatory, or unlawful. In response to work around differential attainment and research with students around racism, in 2022-23, NMS worked together with staff and students to create a 'Speaking Up Speaking Out' (SUSO) policy, form and process. The aim of this policy is to allow us to not only respond quickly and effectively, but also understand more fully the type of concerns students raise and how we deal with them as a School.

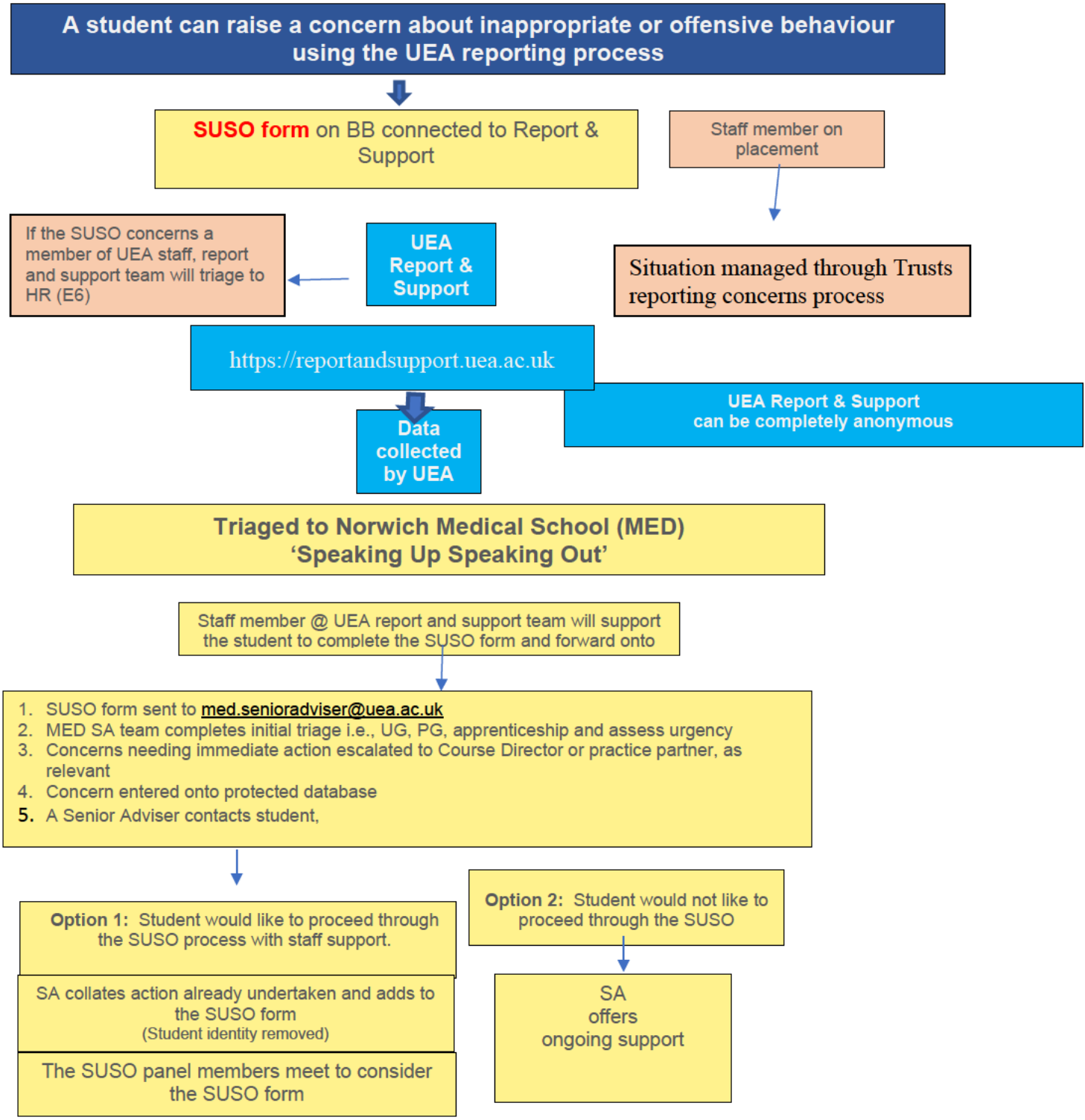
From August 2025, all registered providers must implement comprehensive policies addressing harassment and sexual misconduct, consolidating them into a single, accessible source, referred to as a 'Single point of disclosure'. They are required to define incidents clearly, establish reporting mechanisms, deliver staff and student training, and ensure appropriate support services are available. In 2025, the university and the NMS worked together to provide a single point of reporting. SUSO has always aimed to complement the UEA 'Report and Support' reporting process, and students will now be encouraged to make their initial report through the university level reporting system within Report & Support and receive support. The report and support team will triage SUSOs and forward them onto the NMS. The school, through SUSO, will be responding to issues raised at individual student level, consider the care to other students who may also be impacted and include consideration of school actions within a wider context. The NMS will have staff who can access the single point of reporting database to allow school level of monitoring.

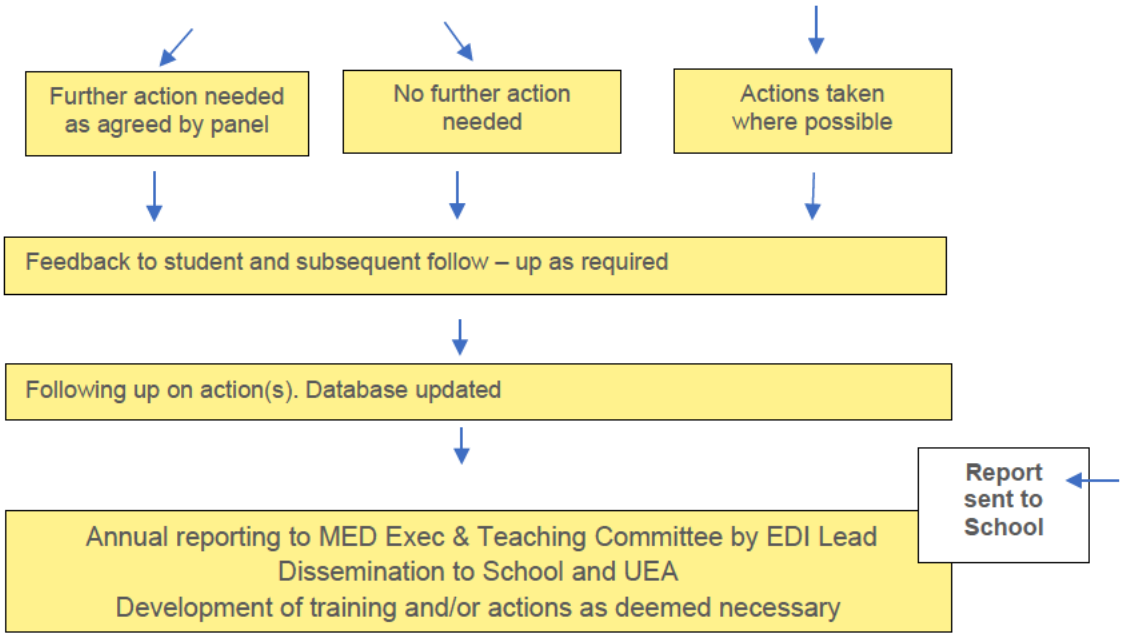
Flowchart outlining the process

Recognizing that raising a concern can be difficult and sensitive, a flowchart has been developed for transparency and clarity, as shown below. Students are directed to report concerns using the UEA 'Report and Support' process with the report and support team triaging to the School 'Speaking Up Speaking Out' (SUSO) process, outlined here. Students can express a concern via:

- Clicking the 'Speaking Up Speaking Out' link on Blackboard, which directs them to the Report and Support single point of reporting
- staff member on placement, which can be anyone, but there is a named person on each placement.

* This policy is aimed at all students completing a course at Norwich Medical School: under-graduates, post-graduates, apprentices, and trainees at all levels





The Form

When the form is completed the report and support team will forward onto the MED senior adviser mailbox, med.senioradviser@uea.ac.uk. This team involves staff who support both undergraduate, postgraduate and apprenticeship students. This mailbox is monitored every weekday to ensure a timely response.

Once the email is received, the senior adviser team will triage accordingly to assess the urgency, and whether it relates to an under- or post-graduate student and if it concerns campus, placement, or the workplace, as applicable. If the concern requires immediate action e.g., a safeguarding issue, or where students may need to be moved from the environment, it will immediately be referred to the Course Director or relevant staff member to ensure a rapid response and appropriate action.

Regular reminders of the SUSO process are provided throughout the year/course, and posters in the Medical School have a QR code taking students or staff straight to the report and support site.

Speaking Up Speaking Out (SUSO) form

Once the senior adviser team has received and triaged the concern, they will contact the student, or approach their chosen advocate to contact the student, to ask if they wish to complete the formalised Speaking Up Speaking Out (SUSO) process. A student raising a concern can opt to complete the SUSO process or not. If they would like to complete the process, the senior adviser will anonymise the information provided within the SUSO form and provide an opportunity for the student to make any edits to their wording, remove identifiable information, or add further detail to their concern. It is the norm for the student's ID to be removed from the form from this point onwards in the process. Their identity will hence be protected and further contact with the student will always be via the senior adviser. The SUSO form is available in Appendix 2.

Panel

The panel will meet on a regular monthly schedule. The panel will be chaired by the Lead Senior Adviser (MED), and the panel usually consist of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion representative for the school, Head of School (HoS) or their representative, Senior Adviser Lead (PG or UG) or their representative, Course Director (CD) and School Manager. The HoS

representative may be the HoS, Deputy HoS, or another senior member of staff relevant to the concern e.g., Teaching Director, yet somewhat removed from the specific course. Panel quorate is 3.

The panel will review the concern and consider whether there is a need for further action and if so, what further action is required.

Database

The School has a responsibility to collect intelligence about concerns that are reported to allow an oversight of numbers and types of incidents of harassment or discrimination that our students are experiencing. Under the Equality Act (2010) public sector duty, the School has a collective duty to ensure that a safe learning environment is created for all students. The Act protects students from harassment and discrimination based on protected characteristics.

Each concern reported will be collated into a 'Concerns' database. This database is kept in a secure online format and can only be accessed by staff deemed directly relevant to this process. The information kept and individual names are protected according to the General Data Protection Act (2018)[1] regulations.

Cross reference to the single point of reporting database will be made by the Senior Adviser. Where possible, data collated by UEA, through Report and Support, will be merged with School data to enable wider understanding of concerns raised and how we deal with them, be it in relation to any form of harassment experienced, patient safety or the learning environment.

The database anonymized data are reviewed annually by the EDI lead on behalf of the Teaching Committee to consider possible themes and patterns, which may require additional action. This is to ensure NMS concerns are collated, that appropriate actions are taken to address to mitigate future risk.

Feedback and follow-up

The person who raised a concern will receive feedback and subsequent follow-up will be agreed as applicable. If a student did not proceed to complete a SUSO form, a senior adviser will continue to send a follow-up email to enquire how the student is doing.

The database will be appropriately updated with action items, ongoing follow-up, and any future steps or improvement as appropriate. The Lead Senior Adviser will have responsibility to keep the database updated.

Dissemination and learning

The relevant Senior Adviser will collate data reported in the database and present to relevant Teaching Committee who will report to MED Executive on a quarterly basis. Data will be disseminated within the School and UEA so that we can develop training and critically inform how we deal with concerns.

Individuals who raised concerns will not be named beyond the SUSO form.

Guidance for students and staff will be provided for each of these areas of concern.

Raising concerns about patient/client/service user safety

Prevention of harm, or abuse, to patients/clients/service users is a primary goal for all healthcare professionals and from time-to-time students may experience, or witness incidents in practice that cause them some concern that will require them to act in a way that ensures they meet their professional responsibilities. Equally, when taking a history/examining/consulting with patients/clients/service users,

or talking to relatives etc., they may identify potential abuse. If a student considers there has been inadequate delivery of care and consequent perceived harm and/or abuse of patients, there is a professional duty for to give careful consideration to acting on their concerns, even if this raises concerns about negative consequences for those involved.

Harm, or abuse, to patients/clients/service users can be psychological, physical, financial, discriminatory, sexual, or neglectful and could involve a single incident, or be part of widespread organizational behavior. Abuse or harm can take place in any setting, such as the home, or a more traditional practice setting. The cause can be intentional, or unintentional.

Guidance for students on raising concerns about patient/client/service user safety

If a student is concerned about patient/client/service user safety, or need support with anything they have witnessed or experienced directly, we recommend that they escalate to their supervisor or the clinical team within the placement and contact someone in the clinical team who can help the person in question. Students will be specifically advised at induction to placement of a named person who they can contact to raise concerns. A direct approach with their placement/workplace provider is likely to lead to more immediate action. The placement/workplace provider will also inform NMS so that appropriate contact and support can be made with the student, as well as agreed actions with the provider.

A student can also raise their concern about patient/client/service user safety through the SUSO process. If a student needs immediate support, they should contact a member of the Medical School staff who they trust and who can assist them with their concern, for example their personal adviser, or someone in the senior advising team.

Raising Concerns about the learning environment on campus/placement/workplace

NMS and the UEA have a zero tolerance of language, or behavior in any setting that cause offence, harm, or distress to any student. NHS placement providers also have their own zero tolerance policies. We are a diverse community and within that, every individual has the right to a positive and safe experience, both educationally and socially. To the same end, therefore, we expect all students and staff to take responsibility for their actions and ensure nothing they say, or do, causes any concerns such as those regarding harassment, sexual harassment, discriminative behavior, bullying, assault, hate, or racial abuse.

We need students to come forward if they witness, or experience, unacceptable language, or behavior from a patient, a fellow student, a tutor, or any staff. It is not always easy to come forward, or challenge others, but students need to feel confident that, if they do come forward, that they will be supported. We will investigate concerns that are raised, and we will ensure that the confidentiality of those raising a concern is appropriately protected.

Guidance for Students

A student can raise their concern about the learning environment, or inappropriate behaviours through the process described on pages 3-5.

If a student needs immediate support, they can contact a member of the Medical School staff who they trust and who can assist them with their concern, for example their personal adviser, or the senior advising team. Where a student reports to a student representative (rep), then the student rep can appropriately signpost to the best route e.g., Report & Support.

Guidance for staff

The role of staff in dealing with concerns is crucial to ensuring that we create a transparent, open, safe and professional culture, which encourages students to learn to express concerns freely and objectively. This is a key issue in relation to the quality assurance of the learning environment.

When a student comes to a member of staff to raise a concern, the staff member should allow the student an opportunity to talk informally through the situation and their concerns. All concerns raised by the student should be taken seriously, even if the student has no plans to take the matter any further. Once the student has explored the situation, we recommend that the staff member, or the student report the concern via the Report & Support link.

All concerns should be reported as soon as reasonably possible so that this can be escalated in a timely fashion to the Course Director and/or Placement Director/site manager, if immediate action is required, for example, if there is a patient/service user safeguarding issue.

Staff who support students or who are mentioned as part of the concern raised may also need support. The panel will make recommendations, as appropriate.

On submission of the SUSO form, the process detailed above will be followed. If required, the panel review may lead to further informal, or formal, processes being followed with the University or placement/workplace provider. The panel will receive a student ID redacted form unless the student has given explicit consent for their ID to be disclosed beyond reporting and completing the initial SUSO form. The student will be advised that the school will protect their identity.

Raising Concerns: follow-up and investigation

On submission of the SUSO form, the process detailed above will be followed. If required, the panel review may lead to further informal, or formal, processes being followed with the University or placement/workplace provider. The student's identity will not be disclosed without their consent, and the student will be advised that the School will protect their identity by keeping their confidence where possible.

If the student does not like to provide the identity of person/people involved (if known) then this prevents the medical school from involving specific individual(s) within any action items. However, we still encourage students to come forward so we can help prevent similar incidents from happening again

If a situation arises, however, where the school was not able to resolve the concern without revealing the student's identity (for instance because their evidence is needed in court and/or for a police investigation), a member of the panel will discuss with the student how best to proceed.

If the view of the panel is that information should be passed back to the University or a placement provider, or employer. The student concerned may be invited to put their views on paper or be interviewed as part of a formal investigation. This will be done with a choice of anonymized or 'owned' information, and the student will be offered support by the School. If this takes place at NMS/UEA, the panel will proceed to resolve as required.

If the follow-up relates to a placement/workplace provider:

1. The information passed to the placement provider will include the redacted SUSO form and a covering email by the Course Director, or their Deputy.
2. This will go to a relevant person representing the placement provider in primary, community or secondary care e.g., the Medical Director, Undergraduate/Postgraduate lead, site senior manager.
3. The name of the student will not be disclosed to the professionals concerned, as it is only needed if there is any further enquiry as deemed necessary.

4. Should further enquiry be deemed necessary, in accordance with NHS procedures, the student will again be approached to check their willingness to explore the issues of concern in a more formal setting, and the panel will ensure support is provided to the student. As these procedures are routine for the NHS, and as the Course director and Trust colleagues are taking shared responsibility for raising the issues at Trust level, no student needs to fear personal adverse consequences.
5. Where possible, in relation to any enquiry passed back to a placement, the panel will take responsibility for ensuring that appropriate information about outcomes reaches relevant students.
6. The database will be updated, as described above.

Anonymity

Students can have their identity removed at any point within the process. They will be allocated a code to allow the student to stay connected to the complaint with their identity protected. The code will be provided by the MED Senior Adviser team.

Should a student wish to report a complaint, but not engage with this process, then they can report anonymously using the UEA Report and Support process. This will mean that we cannot offer support to the individual within the School, but we recognize the importance to offer different routes to individuals.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Definitions and key principles

Definition of Unsafe Practice
Practice that is reasonably expected to result in physical or psychological harm to a patient; may not be of benefit to a patient; is not in accordance with evidence-based practice or is not in accordance with recognized practice by the employer. This may be as a result of an action, or an omission by the practitioner. It may also comprise all categories of abuse of patients, or clients; abuse of relatives, visitors, carers, be it physical, sexual, mental, emotional, or misappropriation of effects.

Safeguarding of vulnerable people
Where abusive behavior, as categorized above, is suspected on children or for adults at risk (whereby their mental or physical health means they are unable to protect themselves) all relevant Safeguarding Legislation and Regulations must be invoked. The School is able to seek guidance and advice from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who deals with safeguarding allegations against staff, including students on professional training courses.

Bullying or Harassment
Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Non-verbal conduct includes postings on social media platforms. Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which may (intentionally or unintentionally) violate a person's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, which interferes with an individual's learning, working or social environment.

The Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
We are responsible to our PSRBs and our PSRBs are invaluable support for discussion regarding the seriousness of unsafe practice and the nature of the actions that should be followed. On occasion, it may be considered to be serious enough that the individual case should be brought to their attention, ideally jointly with the relevant NHS Trust or practice placement. In addition, NMS should consider carefully whether it would ignore the express wishes of a Trust, or employer if it considers that the seriousness of the unsafe practice deems such a course of action to be appropriate.

Regulation E6
From August 2025, all registered providers must implement comprehensive policies addressing harassment and sexual misconduct, consolidating them into a single, accessible source, referred to as a 'Single point of disclosure'. They are required to define incidents clearly, establish reporting mechanisms, deliver staff and student training, and ensure appropriate support services are available.

Appendix 2. The Speaking Up Speaking Out Form template that is presented to the SUSO panel

The Speaking Up Speaking Out (SUSO) form

Norwich Medical School is committed to providing a safe and positive learning experience for all students.

When students raise a concern via Report and Support, this may be triaged to the MED Senior Advising Team.

This form is designed to capture that information in an anonymised nature and inform the Schools Concern Database.

Information extracted from Report and Support Platform

Which of the following best describes the incident(s)

1: Potential incident types reported via selection on R&S platform: Abuse of power, Antisemitism, Bullying / harassment, Club / society initiation, Criminal offence, Domestic / relationship abuse, Drug or alcohol related, Forced marriage, General concern, Homophobic or transphobic abuse, Honour based abuse, Islamophobia, Mental health concern, Other, Other discrimination or hate incident, Other religion based hate or discrimination, Physical assault / abuse, Racism, Risk of radicalisation, Sexual assault, Sexual harassment, Spiking, Stalking, Threatening / intimidating or abusive behaviour . For learning environment concerns when on placement you may want to describe this as a Speaking Up Speaking Out Issues for the Norwich Medical School, if the above categories do not fit.

When did the incident occur

2: Timescales: In the last 24 hours, In the last 7 days, In the last month, In the last 12 months, More than a year ago

How long has this been happening

3: Duration: Over the last 24 hours, Over the last 7 days, Over the last month, Over the last 12 months, More than a year ago, Other

Where did the incident occur

4: Location: Within an academic setting, Library / social study space, SU nighttime venue, Sports venue, On campus catering outlet, Public outdoor space, In another non-academic setting, On campus accommodation, Off campus accommodation, On a field trip, placement, year abroad, or year in industry, At a staff social function, Online / social media, Other, Prefer not to say

This incident happened to

5: On behalf of: this incident happened to: Me, Someone else, Prefer not to say

What is the person who experienced this incident's connection to the University?

6. Connection: what is the person who experience this incident's connection to the university: Student, UEA staff, Other

What do you/they identify as:

What is your/their ethnicity?

Date Assigned:

Assigned to:

Please note, if there is a named person on this form, the completed form could be considered for release by the Strategy, Policy and Compliance team of the University if requested by that person under a Subject Access Request.

Has the student been asked if they wish to amend any wording or add any further information? If so, detail here

Speaking Up Speaking Out

Panel Date

Feedback to Reporter

Action by the SUSO panel informed of this incident:

This report should be filed by the Senior Adviser appropriate for the professional course.

It should not be filed in the student's record unless they have given permission for a copy to be filed in their records.

Key Information Table (*please complete all fields*)

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Author:	Dr Maggie Bunting				
Administrator:			**Approval Committee:**		MED Exec
Please indicate if any element of this document should not be released under the Freedom of Information Act without a prior discussion between the Author and the Freedom of Information office, by checking this box: ☐ If checked contact the School Manager for further guidance prior to publication					

Version Control Record *(expand table as required)*

Version	Date	Revision Description
1.0	26/11/2019	
2.0	April 2024	Revision of red help button to blue button
3.0	12/01/2026	Review of process to support a single point of reporting at UEA and then triage to SUSO process. Also to ensure E6 compliance.
4.0	03/08/2026	Review, minor edits to feedback and follow up information

Disclaimer

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