



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

RUGBY UNION CULTURE AND CONDUCT

THE HIGHER EDUCATION BEHAVIOURS CHARTER - PROTECT OUR GAME

Dear Higher Education Colleagues,

As we approach the 2026-27 academic season, and with students returning to university rugby union, we are once again writing to communicate our shared expectations for standards of behaviour across the game, both on and off the pitch. Significantly, we are now entering the fourth year of embedding our Higher Education Behaviours Charter throughout our communities to ensure we 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.

Thank you to our members for your ongoing support and engagement with the Charter over the past three years. We recognise the progress being made across our sport, and particularly within the university game, as a result of institutions engaging with the processes and taking proactive steps to address issues within their own environments. We greatly appreciate your continued efforts and commitment to the collective work we are undertaking to create positive change across the game.

Across the sector there is still much work to do. The Higher Education Behaviours Charter has and continues to be at the forefront of this work. As our community feels more comfortable in identifying and reporting behavioural challenges they may face, we must stay vigilant in our approach and continue to reinforce the responsibility of our members to challenge and eradicate unacceptable behaviour.

At the BUCS Club Culture Summit in June 2026, moving testimony was provided by a student whose initial university experiences was ruined by the bullying behaviours of older Rugby Union club members relating to alcohol and wider physical and emotional abuse. This led to this student leaving the sport entirely. In parallel, BUCS research conducted in Spring 2026 highlighted that some students choose not to play university sport at all due to the reputation for initiations and social activities year-round. We, as a community, must respond to this and demonstrate our commitment to creating a different space.

We again acknowledge, that this is not a problem unique to rugby union, nor are they always easy to control, but we are determined to act rather than stand by and ignore it. We all have a shared 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 and we will continue to work both collaboratively and with swift resolution when such incidents are reported.

Development of The Higher Education Rugby Union Disciplinary Group (HERUDG)

Due to the volume of participation and competition within various programmes across the HE sector, we recognised the need for the RFU, WRU, SRU, SRFU and BUCS to strategically oversee the compliance and disciplinary processes related to the university sector as a joint venture. The Higher Education Rugby Union Disciplinary Group was formed in the 2025-26 season, and continues to operate for the coming season accounting not only for the 420 teams, 2000 fixtures and 12,700 players that sit within BUCS competitions, but also capture our intra-mural and social university teams.

The Higher Education Behaviours Charter - Protect Our Game

In the 2026-27 season, you will see the fourth year launch of **The Higher Education Behaviours Charter - Protect Our Game**. The charter will continue to 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, whilst also giving 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



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environment, and lead with authority to mitigate against any and all behaviours that have a negative impact on the game. Work across the sector will rightly evolve in this space, however the Rugby Union Behaviour Charter remains the same for the 2026-27 season.

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 continuing to create 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. It is highly recommended that each member of each club committee attend this webinar. 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.

The Behaviours Charter Toolkit, released during the 2025-26 season, continues to provide support and resources to clubs and universities to manage behaviour effectively and ensure adherence to the Behaviours Charter. This includes sections on running an internal investigation, how to create a good club ethos, examples of good practice and a checklist to ensure your institution is prepared for the season.

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. As we reach year four of delivery, we must now recognise that 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.

Now is the time for us to stand up to any and all behaviour that mitigates against the enjoyment of our community when experiencing all forms of rugby union. We all play a part in this process and we would encourage all stakeholders to support our mission of creating a game where everyone is welcome, where everyone can flourish. If you would like to discuss further, please get in touch with any of the partners listed, or visit [BUCS Behaviours Charter](#) for further information and resources.

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

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