



## RUGBY UNION CULTURE AND CONDUCT

### THE HIGHER EDUCATION BEHAVIOURS CHARTER - PROTECT OUR GAME

Dear Higher Education Colleagues,

As we approach the 2024-25 academic season, and with students returning to university rugby union, we are once again writing to communicate our shared expectations of standards of behaviour across the game, both on and off the pitch. Significantly, we are now entering year two 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.

Although the Higher Education Behaviours Charter has had a positive impact across the sector since the campaigns inception, there is still much work to do. As our community have felt more comfortable in identifying and reporting behavioural challenges they may face, the variety and frequency of those challenges have notably increased, meaning we must stay vigilant in our approach alongside reinforcing our members roles in eradicating such behaviour.

We again acknowledge, that this is not a problem unique to rugby union and or always easy to control, but we are determined not to stand by and ignore it. We all have a united 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. As we began the 2023-24 season the Higher Education Rugby Union Disciplinary Group was formed and will continue 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 2024-25 season, you will see the year two 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 environment, and lead with authority to mitigate against any and all behaviours that have a negative impact on the game. Due to the positive response the first iteration of content received, the charter will remain relatively similar, however we know we have work to do to ensure the resource is visible and understand we have to be more effective in communicating with our audience.

#### 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. As per 2023-24, your attendance will be recorded and each club must distribute the charter to all club members for them to read and understand. 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.

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 two 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.

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

Will Roberts  
Chief Executive Officer  
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

