

HIGHER EDUCATION BEHAVIOURS CHARTER

PROTECT OUR GAME
BUCS Rugby Union 2025-26



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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Following the conclusion of the 2022-23 season, BUCS, in collaboration with the RFU, SRFU, SRU, the WRU and several of our members sought to create a behaviours charter which outlined expectations for institutions, staff, players and spectators to not only address any recurring incidents but rather to prevent them in the first instance. A number of the charter principles or similar requirements already existed within respective institution compliance frameworks in addition to excellent behavioural management mitigation strategies, club training modules and codes of conduct put in place for players and staff alike. It was however recognised, that BUCS and the Home Nation Union's collective responsibility is to ensure we support our universities in their endeavours to create truly inclusive, safe and positive game day and club environments, moreover, ensuring we promote the robust reporting, and sanctioning of incidences of poor behaviour when necessary. This led to The Higher Education Behaviours Charter and Protect our Game campaign being sanctioned and published in September 2023.

As we enter year two of the charter, we know that higher education rugby union still continues to be faced with the growing challenge of poor behaviour across our game day environments. Whilst the vast majority of players, coaches and spectators conduct themselves appropriately and uphold the values of rugby union, we have also seen a significant increase in the number of behaviour related incidents being reported to the BUCS office in comparison to that of the 2022-23 season. In part, we believe due to the establishment of the Higher Education Rugby Union Disciplinary Group, the publication of the charter and with clarity around reporting, our members have felt both more vigilant in approaching poor behaviour and confident in their reporting ability. We also know our institutions are working diligently to provide safe and inclusive environments for their students and community, making the campaign more visible and accessible to all those involved in the game.

We are making progress, yet our focus must remain in reducing the incidences of poor behaviour whilst harnessing exceptional environments for our rugby union community to engage. To do this, we will be taking the following steps across the 2025-26 season:

- Distributing the Rugby Union Culture and Conduct letter to all associated members
- Inviting all members to the Rugby Union Higher Education Behaviours Charter webinar in September 2025
- Publishing all relevant documentation and updates to the BUCS Rugby Union website page
- The Higher Education Rugby Union Disciplinary Group will now be meeting quarterly to assess the impact of the charter
- BUCS will be writing adherence of the charter in to the 2025-26 BUCS season regulations

It must be noted that the charter will form just one part of the overall approach to discipline. A number of other resources are already in place including those stated within the BUCS Rules and regulations, the discipline processes sanctioned by each home nation and the aforementioned strategies and protocols which many institutions employ.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The purpose of the *Higher Education Behaviours Charter - Protect our Game* encompasses four core principles:

1. To ensure our higher education rugby union environments, and standards of behaviour, both on and off the field, are as safe and inclusive as possible for all
2. To raise awareness of how to identify examples of poor behaviour when they occur
3. To create a safe and confidential reporting mechanism for all, to ensure we proactively investigate, and where necessary sanction, such incidents resulting in swift and resolute action
4. To follow the [World Rugby values](#)

For these principles to be effectively executed, this charter will target four key stakeholders within the higher education game, namely, our **institutions, staff, players** and **spectators**. As detailed below, each stakeholder has an associated and accountable subset of principles to adhere to in order to maximise the success and impact of the charter.

These principles and actions are drawn from several sources across the home nations, the SRFU, BUCS and other sporting organisations. They exemplify the expectations of how the HE game should be able to flourish in accordance with the charter. Staff, students, players, volunteers, supporters and spectators alike should now be able to identify behaviours that run contrary to the outlined ambition of the charter and should be confident in reporting these.

INSTITUTION EXPECTATIONS

As a BUCS-affiliated institution, we understand the importance of making rugby union a positive and inclusive environment and that we are responsible for the behaviours and actions of our students and spectators. To support this, we aspire to;

- Make our culture as open and inclusive as possible
- Abide by the spirit and values of the game of rugby union
- Hold ourselves accountable for our actions and of those representing our club
- Call out instances of our own spectators', staff and players' poor behaviour
- Actively and in good time, report instances of poor behaviour at matches through the appropriate channels with honesty and transparency
- Not engage in disrespectful or negative activity nor display signs or banners which use inflammatory, discriminatory or inappropriate language
- Ensure our social media channels and posts reflect positive rugby values and content will refrain from being disrespectful, negative or inflammatory

STAFF EXPECTATIONS

As a member of staff at a BUCS affiliated institution who cares deeply about the sport and who wants to uphold the values of rugby union, I aspire to;

- Be an exemplar of the principles of fair play and the values and laws of the game
- Show courtesy, consideration, kindness and respect to players, the opposition, match officials and spectators when playing home and away

- Be mindful of creating and maintaining an inclusive environment
- Be an active listener
- Challenge all instances of negative behaviour
- To treat all colleagues, partners and external staff of our stakeholders with empathy and respect whilst in our rugby union environments

PLAYER EXPECTATIONS

As a player who loves the game, I aspire to;

- Show courtesy, consideration, kindness and respect for my teammates, the opposition, match officials and visitors when playing home and away
- Treat all my teammates equally and respect other teammates' rights
- Uphold the principles of fair play and the Laws of the Game
- Be open to talk to others about what makes them different and unique
- Be positive in every contribution I make in the club
- Make sure that all team members are included in club activities
- Recognise that banter (teasing/joking talk) can become bullying behaviour. If a teammate asks me to stop, I will
- Challenge negative language and behaviours (e.g., racist, disablist, homophobic)
- Intervene safely, not confrontationally
- Report any anti-social behaviour to the club officials
- Accept victory and defeat, success and failure with dignity
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SPECTATOR EXPECTATIONS

Crowds play a huge role creating an atmosphere which motivates and inspires the players on the pitch and a positive crowd, behaving appropriately, can make a match truly memorable.

As a spectator who wants to contribute positively to this vision and experience, I aspire to;

- Always be respectful towards all players and coaching staff
- Be respectful towards my fellow supporters, both from my team and the opposition
- Remain outside the field of play and to not confront players or a match official at any time
- Never engage in, or tolerate, offensive, insulting, or abusive language or behaviour
- Report any anti-social behaviour to the stewards on duty, associated institutions and relevant governing body where necessary
- Be mindful of the image and reputation of rugby and support its values and inclusivity
- Be an active listener
- Hold myself and my peers to account

WORLD RUGBY CHARTER

The World Rugby charter encapsulates the values of the game and these values and principles underpin both the ideologies of the Higher Education Behaviours Charter and the expectations we have laid out. We are confident that everyone involved in our game agrees with the vision presented below.

Rugby owes much of its appeal to the fact that it is played both to the letter and within the spirit of the laws. The responsibility for ensuring that this happens lies not with one individual - it involves coaches, captains, players, match officials and spectators.

It is through discipline, control and mutual respect that the spirit of the game flourishes and, in the context of a game as physically challenging as rugby, these are the qualities which forge the fellowship and sense of fair play so essential to the game's ongoing success and survival.

Old-fashioned traditions and virtues they may be, but they have stood the test of time and, at all levels at which the game is played, they remain as important to rugby's future as they have been throughout its long and distinguished past. The principles of rugby are the fundamental elements upon which the game is based and they enable participants to immediately identify the game's character and what makes it distinctive as a sport.

Rugby is valued as a sport for all. It builds teamwork, understanding, co-operation and respect for fellow participants. Its cornerstones are, as they always have been:

- The pleasure of participating
- The courage and skill which the game demands
- The love of a team sport that enriches the lives of all involved
- The lifelong friendships forged through a shared interest in the game.

For further information on the World Rugby Charter, its importance to us all in this space and how the fibre of the messaging interlinks with our own, please click [HERE](#).

CREATING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

If, in the instance any of our community of member institutions, their students, clubs, officials, players and spectators alike recognise behaviours that are contrary to any of the above, BUCS alongside the SRFU and the home nations would encourage all incidents to be reported via our catalogue of resources and processes as referenced below.

RESOURCES

We have created and housed a number of resources on the [BUCS website](#) which will be for anyone to use/refer to. We will continue to add to and adapt these through the season(s) as the initiative develops and based on feedback. Through the season, you will have access to:

- A dedicated behaviours page on the BUCS website
- A visual version of the charter available for download
- An efficient and clear mechanism for discipline.
- Our behaviours webinars available for download
- Our webinar presentation available for download
- A toolkit of additional materials and resources available for use (this resource should be expected during the season and will be adapted as good practice is highlighted)

REPORTING AND DISCIPLINE PROCESSES

We want everyone to report any instances they witness which contravene the values laid out in this charter. BUCS, the RFU, SRFU, Scottish Rugby, and the WRU have worked extensively on developing a more joined up approach to managing discipline processes and will work collaboratively to take action. The below icons, email addresses and links will direct you toward each respective website and reporting mechanism.

The RFU, SRFU, Scottish Rugby, and the WRU along with BUCS are all committed to working to improve behaviour across the game. Home Nation Union discipline processes and procedures are in place along with BUCS regulations to administer sanctions where appropriate. We encourage all institutions, club members and spectators to familiarise themselves with these and to understand the potential consequences of their actions whether on or off the pitch.



British Universities and Colleges Sport: [HERE](#)

Anonymous reporting to BUCS: [HERE](#).

Alternatively, when safe to do so, you can email discipline@bucs.org.uk



Rugby Football Union: [HERE](#)

Student Rugby Football Union: [HERE](#)

RFU Speak Up: [HERE](#)



Scottish Rugby: [HERE](#)

You can find contact details of your relevant regional managers [HERE](#) and you can raise your concerns to them, alternatively, you can make any relevant reports to Tellus@sru.org.uk



Welsh Rugby Union: [HERE](#)

All relevant contact details, including the WRU's integrity mailbox and hotline can be found [HERE](#)

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION AND REFERENCES

Below you may find some useful additional information that can be distributed and referenced throughout your club and community:

- [Scottish Rugby Inclusion and Diversity strategy](#)
- [Scottish Rugby Equality and Inclusion handbook](#)
- [RFU Diversity and inclusion resources](#)
- [RFU Core Values](#)
- [WRU Wellbeing Centre](#)