

NUS STATEMENT

1 DECEMBER 2020 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dismissal of academic staff for sexual misconduct

The National University of Singapore (NUS) has dismissed an academic staff on 1 December 2020 for sexual misconduct.

An anonymous complaint was sent to the University in August 2020. It alleged that Professor Theodore G. Hopf from the Department of Political Science in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) had sexually harassed a student.

The University immediately commenced investigations. After interviews with the student and Prof Hopf, a No-Contact Order was issued to Prof Hopf on 15 September 2020, prohibiting him from contacting any NUS student. Prof Hopf was later suspended and told to stay off-campus while investigations were ongoing.

A Committee of Inquiry (COI) was appointed on 7 October 2020. The COI interviewed the student, accompanied by a Care Officer from the NUS Victim Care Unit (VCU), on 21 October 2020. As Prof Hopf needed to seek treatment for a serious medical condition, the COI interviewed him on 13 November 2020 after his medical leave.

The COI concluded its inquiry and submitted its report to the University on 18 November 2020. The COI determined that Prof Hopf had failed to act with propriety, respect, and decorum expected of a staff of the University. He had sexually harassed the student in physical, verbal and written forms. His conduct was a serious breach of the NUS Staff Code of Conduct.

Given the serious nature of the offences, NUS dismissed Prof Hopf on 1 December 2020. NUS has also made a Police report on 27 November 2020, after informing the student that the University would be proceeding to do so in line with its legal obligations.

The VCU and FASS have been providing care and support to the student since the allegations were first brought to the University's attention, and will continue to do so.

High standards of conduct expected of staff members

All NUS staff must adhere to the University's [Code of Conduct for Staff](#). There are strict guidelines pertaining to personal and professional conduct. In particular, the University has zero-tolerance for sexual misconduct by staff. Disciplinary sanctions are imposed for every infraction, including dismissal for a staff offender for serious breaches.

We will continue to hold ourselves up to high standards of professional and personal conduct. As a community, we – staff, students and stakeholders – will work together to build a culture of respect.

Please refer to the [Annex](#) for the fact sheet on the allegations and the COI's findings.

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Annex - Fact Sheet: NUS' inquiry into the complaint against Professor Theodore G. Hopf for allegations of inappropriate behaviour and sexual misconduct

The University received a complaint alleging that Professor Theodore G. Hopf, who was an academic staff from the Department of Political Science of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) at NUS, had sexually harassed a student.

NUS appointed a Committee of Inquiry (COI) to look into the allegations. The findings of the COI are summarised below:

	Allegations	Findings by COI
1	In August 2020, during a meeting between the student and Prof Hopf on campus, he offered and drank alcohol with the student, and also made an offensive remark about certain parts of the student's anatomy.	Prof Hopf admitted to making the remark. The COI found that the consumption of alcohol in the workplace and the act of making an offensive remark contravened provisions in the NUS Code of Conduct for Staff relating to expectations of professional behaviour.
2	In August 2020, in the same meeting mentioned in (1), Prof Hopf pulled the student forcefully towards him twice, during which the student resisted, moved back and told him to stop.	Prof Hopf admitted to placing his hands on the shoulders of the student while facing the student, but denied pulling the student towards him. The COI found the student's account of the unwelcome physical contact to be credible and that the acts contravened provisions in the NUS Code of Conduct for Staff relating to expectations of professional behaviour.
3	In October 2018, Prof Hopf sent a sex-text message to the student.	Prof Hopf admitted to sending the sex-text message to the student but explained to the COI that the sex-text message was meant for someone else. As Prof Hopf did not clearly inform the student that the message was meant for someone else, and he also did not apologise for sending the message by mistake, the COI established that this was a serious professional misconduct.

Note: To protect the privacy and wellbeing of the student, some details of the allegations and findings have been withheld to prevent the identification of the student.

COI's conclusion

The COI determined that Prof Hopf had failed to act with propriety, respect, and decorum in relation to the student. The COI also found that Prof Hopf, who was in a position of authority, had sexually harassed the student in physical, verbal and written forms. The COI concluded that his conduct was a serious breach of the NUS Staff Code of Conduct.

Disciplinary Sanction

Prof Hopf was found to have sexually harassed the student, and this behaviour falls short of the standards of professionalism expected of a teaching staff of the University. Given the serious nature of the offences, the University decided to dismiss him on 1 December 2020 with immediate effect.