Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy reflects the University's legislative obligations and sets out the principles that the University follows to Safeguard children, young people and adults at risk.

(2) This Policy and the [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure](#) include guidance for staff and students that aims to build their awareness and accountability.

(3) This Policy highlights the University's commitment to protecting children, young people and adults at risk.

Section 2 - Scope

(4) This Policy applies to all University Members.

(5) This Policy applies to all University related conduct and University related activities.

(6) The application of this Policy is not limited to only the Australian jurisdiction. This policy is to apply in all Australian states and territories within Australia, as well as all other locations in which University related conduct and University related activities take place (subject to the laws in those jurisdictions).

(7) This Policy is at all times subject to law and does not supersede or take precedence over any criminal investigation or mandatory reporting requirements prescribed by child safety legislation or criminal law.

(8) The University expects all activities operating on its premises, using its services, or receiving its support, to comply with this Policy.

(9) Disciplinary action will be taken against individuals who breach this Policy, in accordance with the [Student Conduct Policy](#) and [Managing Student Misconduct Procedure](#), for students. In the case of staff, action can be taken using the relevant instruments within the [ACU Staff Enterprise Agreement 2022-2025](#), the [Misconduct and Serious Misconduct Policy](#) or the [Misconduct and Serious Misconduct Policy - Senior Management, Executive and Senior Executive Policy](#). Where a breach (or alleged breach) of this Policy also constitutes a breach of law, ACU may be obligated to notify relevant authorities such as the police or a government agency.

Section 3 - Policy Statement and Principles

(10) The University has zero-tolerance for abuse, harm and exploitation of a child, young person or adult at risk.

(11) The University is committed to providing a safe environment for all children, young people and adults at risk.

(12) The University is committed to upholding and promoting the best interests of all children, young people and adults at risk. In particular, the University recognises the unique need to uphold the cultural safety of children, young people and adults at risk from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. In

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the ACU Policy Portal for the latest version.

Page 1 of 11

particular, the University also recognises the unique need to uphold the emotional safety of children, young people and adults at risk who have psychological disorders, intellectual disabilities and / or have low socioeconomic status.

(13) The University is committed to promoting the participation and empowerment of children, young people and adults at risk who are students at the University and with whom the University otherwise engages, and recognises that children, young people and adults at risk are part of the University community as students, visitors or through community engagements, outreach, research and placement activities. Children, young people and adults at risk may also be involved in research projects.

(14) Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk is a shared responsibility.

(15) The University will ensure that images and other communications used will portray children, young people and adults at risk in a dignified, respectful and culturally appropriate way and with the required consent of the parent or guardian and the child where possible and appropriate. Communications will be consistent with ACU branding guidelines.

Education and Research

(16) The University is committed to creating awareness of our role in safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk and will employ regular communication, informal and formal training.

(17) The University is committed to informal and formal training to educate staff and students:

a. of the signs and indicators of Abuse;
b. to understand their responsibilities and duty in the protection of children, young people and adults at risk from harm; and
c. instil them with the confidence to know where and how to report if something does not feel right.

(18) The University is committed to equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to assist in the prevention of child abuse, harm and exploitation and to build their confidence to become a Child Safeguarding champion before they enter child-related occupations.

(19) Consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk is incorporated and promoted in course curriculum, as set out in the ACU Safeguarding Children Capability Framework and Course Accreditation, Amendment and Review Policy.

(20) Prior to undertaking research that involves collection of data from children or young people, researchers must document explicitly the way they intend to interact and support the participation of, and protection of children and young people. Such proposals will be reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

(21) All University staff and students or University Members representing ACU who are involved in overseas activities must complete a tailored pre-departure training session as directed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) or ACU which includes education on consent and prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

(22) All fixed-term and continuing staff and casual or sessional staff in a child-related role or involved in ministry will be required to complete the online modules about protecting children and adults at risk normally following commencement of their employment or as a refresher.

(23) Every ACU undergraduate student and postgraduate student will be required to complete an online module about protecting children and adults at risk regardless of whether they have direct contact with children and/or vulnerable adults during their studies.

(24) All other University Members (i.e. not covered by clauses (21) or (22)) who are engaged in University related activities involving children or adults at risk will be required to complete an online module about protecting children and adults at risk.

Recruitment Screening and Supervision

(25) The University will take all reasonable steps to engage suitably qualified individuals to work and or volunteer with children, young people or adults at risk in the delivery of educational, research, community engagement, or other university-related activities, (see Sections 6 and 7 of the [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure](#)).

(26) Individuals whose roles have been identified as working and or volunteering directly with children, young people or adults at risk and were residing outside of Australia prior to employment with the University, are required to provide a current and satisfactory Working with Children Check (if available) or a police clearance from their home country or country of previous employment, or where not possible, a statutory declaration stating that they have no pending charges or criminal convictions; as well as a reference from a previous employer within the country where they resided or previously worked.

(27) Where a Working with Children Check is not permitted under the relevant state-based regulator, the University may use reference checks and police checks as a means of screening staff, students and volunteers to verify the suitability of the individual to work or volunteer with children, young people or adults at risk.

(28) The University will not knowingly engage – directly or indirectly – any person or organisation who poses an unacceptable risk to children, young people or adults at risk.

(29) University Members who are engaged in University related activities involving children or adults at risk will be subject to regular supervision and performance monitoring whilst engaging with children, or adults at risk.

(30) All University Members whilst supervising, engaging, or interacting with children or adults at risk must adhere to the Code of Behaviour outlined in the Appendix B of the Procedure.

Risk Mitigation

(31) While it is not possible to entirely eliminate risks of harm, risk assessments and careful risk management can identify, mitigate, manage and / or reduce the risks to children, young people and adults at risk. Risk assessments are managed in accordance with the [Risk Management Policy](#).

(32) The University expects the active support and cooperation of the entire University community to manage risk and create safe environments, whether they are working directly or indirectly with children, young people or adults at risk.

(33) The University recognises that unequal power dynamics can create a risk of people exploiting a position of power for personal gain. The University recognises that whilst women and children are particularly at risk of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment, all peoples, irrespective of personal characteristics, maybe at risk.

(34) Where contact through an activity with children, young people or adults at risk is identified, University members must undertake an assessment of risk. If it is determined that the activity poses an unacceptable risk to children, young people or adults at risk and the risk cannot be mitigated, the activity should not proceed. Refer to Section 3 of the [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure](#).

(35) A risk assessment will be conducted before entering into a partnership with an external organisation, commencing a program or new event. The risk assessment will be repeated if any significant change occurs.

(36) The University recognises the heightened risk of harm through online platforms. As such, all staff and students

must act in accordance with the [Computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policy](#).

(37) The University seeks to empower children, young people and adults at risk to be active participants in decisions that directly impact them.

(38) Where an activity involves a child or young person under the age of 18 years, consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian. The preparation of a consent form should be arranged in collaboration with the Office of General Counsel.

(39) Any University Member who participates in any activity with a child, young person or adult at risk on behalf of the University, regardless of whether they are on or off-campus, are in a position of trust, and must uphold this Policy and [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure](#) and where relevant, ensure that they are familiar with the safeguarding policy and procedure of any participating or engaged organisation.

(40) Any University Member that undertakes any research that involves contact with children, young people or adults at risk whether directly or indirectly must not collect any personal information that is not necessary for the project.

Reporting and Responding

(41) It is mandatory for all University Members to immediately report witnessed, suspected, disclosed, or alleged cases of child exploitation, harm, abuse, or breach of this Policy in accordance with Section 6 of the [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure](#).

(42) In emergency situations, that is where there is imminent risk or threat to personal safety of an individual, staff must respond in accordance with the [Critical Incident Management Policy](#) and contact Emergency Services (000, if in Australia) and ACU National Security Centre(1300 729 452, if on campus).

(43) Where an incident occurs overseas involving a [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#) (DFAT) funded project, all suspected child exploitation, abuse or policy non-compliance will be reported to the University and DFAT Child Protection Compliance section in accordance with Appendix G of the [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure](#) and the [DFAT Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy.](#)

(44) Where an incident occurs at the Rome Campus or whilst overseas on a non-DFAT funded project, all suspected child exploitation, abuse or policy non-compliance will be reported to the University and to [International SOS](#) on +61 2 9372 2468 or via the [International SOS website](#), in accordance to Appendix F of the [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure](#).

(45) All reports of witnessed, suspected, disclosed or alleged cases of harm, abuse, exploitation or breach of this Policy will be handled confidentially and in a timely manner consistent with the [Privacy Policy](#) and [Protected Disclosures Procedure](#). Reports will be kept confidential in a secure location, accessible to appropriately authorised staff and will comply with [Records and Archive Management Policy](#).

(46) The University recognises the unique needs of adult complainants. Reports of historical harm, abuse or exploitation by an adult complainant will be taken seriously and support offered to the parties. The University will determine a course of action on an individual basis, by consulting all relevant materials and authorities.

Support Services

(47) Support services including through referral will be made available by the Counselling Service to a child, young person or adult at risk who has experienced or is alleging harm, abuse or exploitation. ACU students can access counselling services and staff can access the [Employee Assistance Program](#) at no cost to the individual.

Section 4 - Safeguarding Guidelines of Behaviour

(48) All University members should adhere to ACU's Safeguarding Code of Behaviour in Appendix B of the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure and should familiarise themselves with the appropriate behaviours and approach for working and engaging with children, young people and adults at risk. University members should remember that they have an obligation to care and protect all children, young people and adults at risk and should ensure that they work toward the creation of a safe environment.

Section 5 - Responsibilities

(49) For the purposes of the implementation and operation of this Policy and Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure, certain matters and responsibilities are delegated to various University Members. The responsibilities of each is summarised below.

Entity	Role/responsibility
Vice-Chancellor and President and Senior Executive	• Overall accountability and strategic responsibility for safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk within the University. • Actively promote ACU's commitment to the protection of all children within the University. • Cooperate with any internal or external investigation regarding the safety, wellbeing and dignity of a child, young person or adult at risk.
Respect. Now. Always (RNA) Advisory Committee	• Ensure that this Policy and Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure is implemented across all areas of the University. • Ensure safeguarding is integrated into all operations, teaching, research and consulting functions and work environment. • Ensure ACU operates in a way that is consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations as set out by the Australian Human Rights Commission and to the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards as set out by the Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd. • Ensure Safeguarding children, young people and adult at risk is incorporated and promoted in course curriculum.
Nominated Supervisors	• Ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities under this Policy and that there is effective delegation, training and promotion of this Policy and Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure. • Ensure safer recruitment procedures are adhered to in accordance with this Policy and Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure. • Ensure all staff understand and adhere to their responsibilities as outlined in this Policy and Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure. • Ensure risk management assessments are conducted on all University related activities involving children, young people and adults at risk. • Where appropriate, engage children, young people and adults at risk in decisions affecting them. • Ensure staff are appropriately trained and supervised when engaging or interacting with children, young people and adults at risk. • Report all concerns or incidents.
National Manager, Safeguarding and Student Safety	• Ensure any changes to relevant legislation, policies and regulations are promptly brought to the attention of the RNA Advisory Committee and incorporated into this Policy where applicable. • Oversee the implementation of ACU's Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Action Plan. • Develop and implement educational resources to support University Members.
University Members	• Ensure the safety, well-being and dignity of children, young people and adults at risk. • Be caring and respectful towards children, young people and adults at risk. • Report all concerns or incidents. • Comply with this Policy and Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the ACU Policy Portal for the latest version.

Page 5 of 11

Section 6 - Further Assistance

(50) Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this Policy should first consult their nominated supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of these arrangements in their work area. Should further information or advice be required staff or students should contact the National Manager, Safeguarding and Student Safety.

Section 7 - Definitions

Term	Definition
Abuse	Generally defined as an act or failure to act that endangers a child or adults at risk physical or emotional health, development or dignity. Abuse includes (but is not limited to) the following types: • Physical abuse: The use of physical force that results in harm. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, pinching, kicking, biting, burning and strangling. • Neglect: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child or adult at risk (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing • Emotional abuse: A continuing pattern of inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or adult at risk. Emotionally abusive behaviour includes; threats, persistent shaming, name calling, isolation, rejection, and belittling. • Sexual abuse: When a child, young person or adult at risk is used, forced, or enticed into taking part in sexual activities. When a child, young person or adult at risk is used by another child, young person or adult at risk for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexually abusive behaviours can include; touching genitals or breasts, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration, exposing a child to or involving them in pornography. • Relationship violence and abuse is a pattern of behaviours generally used by someone to maintain power and control over another person. This includes behaviours that physically harm, intimidate, manipulate or control a person or otherwise force them to behave in ways they do not want to, including through emotional abuse or educational control or manipulation.
ACU or the University	Australian Catholic University.
Adult at Risk	Refers to an adult who is experiencing disadvantage and accesses a regulated activity or service in relation to the disadvantage. "Disadvantage" refers to but is not limited to physical or mental disability; social or financial hardship; and difficulty communicating in English and; therefore, includes but is not limited to homeless people, victims of crime, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and people with addictions. The "regulated activity or service" would relate to a specific service associated with the person's disadvantage and be offered by or in conjunction with ACU and/or University Members.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the ACU Policy Portal for the latest version.

Page 6 of 11

Term	Definition
Affiliate	Non University staff or students that include: • religious members • members of affiliates institutions performing work for ACU • volunteers • contractors and consultants performing work for ACU • a contractor engaged by the University or an individual employed by a contractor engaged by the University • agency staff, e.g. temporary staff • committee members who are not ACU employees • honorary members • visiting members • guests of University Members
Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (formally Catholic Professional Standards Limited)	Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL) was formed in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. ACSL was established by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia. It operates independently of the Church. Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL) has developed the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. ACSL will audit compliance with these Standards, holding the leaders and members of Catholic organisations accountable for the safety of children and adults at risk. ACSL will publicly report audit findings and provide education and training in respect of the Safeguarding Standards.
Child/ren	Any person below the age of eighteen (18) years.
Child exploitation	Child exploitation is the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that is unacceptable because it deprives them of their childhood, education, development, or dignity. It includes unacceptable child labour, child prostitution or trafficking, and child pornography.
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Partner	Includes all suppliers, individuals and organisations with whom DFAT directly enters into an Agreement to deliver its objectives, including but not limited to: • suppliers of goods and services • contractors and service providers including consultants, advisers and other directly contracted individuals • non-Government Organisations (NGO), Civil Society Organisations (CSO) • grant recipients • multilateral organisations • partner governments and bilateral donor partners • other Australian Government entities The University receives funding through the New Colombo Plan (NCP). The NCP is an initiative of the Australian Government which aims to lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific in Australia by supporting Australian undergraduates to study and undertake internships in the region.
Grooming	Behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to use a child or young person for sexual activity. It is a process in which an adult builds a relationship with a child or the child's caretaker to gain their trust for the purposes of sexually abusing and/or exploiting the child. This can occur in person or through electronic communications.
Harm	Any detrimental impact on the physical, psychological, emotional or social safety, wellbeing and development of a child, young person or adult at risk.

Term	Definition
Informed Consent	Ensuring that children, and their parents or guardians understand the implications, purpose and potential uses of photographs, videos or other personal information.
Member	Of the University includes: • a member of the governing body of the University (Senate) or of any committee of Senate; or • a member of Australian Catholic University Limited.
Safeguarding	The policies, procedures and practices put in place to create and maintain protective environments for all children, young people and adults at risk with whom University Members come into direct and indirect contact.
Sexual exploitation	Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. It includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from sexual exploitation of another.
Unacceptable risk	The portion of identified risk that cannot be tolerated, and that must be either eliminated or controlled. For people deemed an unacceptable risk, control mechanisms are not considered appropriate.
University Members	Are the students, staff and affiliates of the Australian Catholic University including: • students (i.e. a person who is enrolled in any program, unit of study or research or non-award study offered by or at the University); • employee who has a current contract of employment with the University; • affiliates including: ◦ religious members ◦ members of affiliates institutions performing work for ACU ◦ volunteers ◦ contractors and consultants performing work for ACU ◦ agency staff, e.g. temporary staff ◦ committee members who are not ACU employees ◦ honorary members ◦ visiting members ◦ guests of University Members
University related activity	Any activity that is connected to the University, including activity that: • refers or relates to the University, its activities, or its Staff members, students, volunteers and contractors engaged to perform University activities; • occurs on, or in connection with University land; • occurs using, or is facilitated by, University information technology resources or other University equipment; • occurs during, or relates to, the performance of duties for the University; • occurs during, or in connection to, any University related function or event (whether sanctioned or organised by the University or not) or when representing the University in any capacity.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the ACU Policy Portal for the latest version.

Page 8 of 11

Term	Definition
University related conduct	Any conduct that is connected to the University, including conduct that: • refers or relates to the University, its activities, or its staff, Members, Affiliates or students in their status as staff, Members, Affiliates or students of the University; • occurs on, or in connection with, University land; • occurs using, or is facilitated by, University information technology resources or other University equipment; • occurs during, or relates to, the performance of duties for the University; • occurs during, or in connection to, any University-related function or event (whether sanctioned or organised by the University or not) or when representing the University in any capacity; • occurs during any event run by or affiliated with Campus Student Associations or other Student Associations or organisations (whether sanctioned or organised by the University or not); • occurs during Student clinical, practicum, internship or work experience placements; or • occurs while a University student is participating in an overseas exchange, study abroad or another approved program.
Vulnerable Populations	As defined by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Vulnerable Populations are people who: • experience homelessness • are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander • are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds • are in contact with criminal justice systems • identify as LGBTIQ • experience mental health conditions • inject drugs • are older or younger • are of low socio-economic status • have an intellectual disability • are diagnosed with a mental disorder
Working with children	Being engaged in an activity with a child where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and the contact is not incidental to the activity, Working includes volunteering or other unpaid works.

Term	Definition
Working with Children Check	All jurisdictions in Australia have some form of child-related employment pre-screening legislation. These laws make it mandatory for certain individuals to meet screening requirements. There are differences across the states and territories about who is required to undergo screen and how different occupations are identified, this pre-screening is often referred to as a 'Working with Children Check'. The Working with Children Check includes a check for any: • relevant national criminal records; • relevant apprehended violence orders, and; • relevant disciplinary proceedings. The following are terms used to refer Working with Children Check in the states or territory in which ACU operates: | State/Territory	Working with Children Check Scheme
Australian Capital Territory	Working with Vulnerable People Check
New South Wales	Working with Children Check
Queensland	Blue Card
South Australia	Working with Children Check
Victoria	Working with Children Check	
Young people	For the purpose of this Policy and the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure a young person or young people is defined as a person aged 16 years to under 18 years.

Section 8 - Associated Information

(51) For related legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines and any supporting resources please refer to the Associated Information tab.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	19th December 2023
Review Date	28th February 2027
Approval Authority	
Approval Date	19th December 2023
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	John Burdick Director, Student Experience and Enhancement
Responsible Manager	Taleah Neowhouse National Manager, Safeguarding and Student Safety
Enquiries Contact	Taleah Neowhouse National Manager, Safeguarding and Student Safety Student Experience