

Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The purpose of this policy is to outline the University's principles for preventing and responding to Gender-based Violence.

(2) This Policy gives effect to the University's legislative and regulatory obligations under the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence.

Section 2 - Scope

(3) This Policy applies to all:

- a. University Members (including students, staff, affiliates and University leadership) across all campuses and online spaces, and affiliated organisations;
- b. disclosures and formal reports of gender-based violence by or about University Members; and
- c. University related conduct and University related activities.

(4) This Policy applies in all Australian states and territories, as well as all other locations in which University related conduct and University related activities take place (subject to the laws in those jurisdictions).

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

(6) This Policy was developed with input from staff, students, subject matter experts, and individuals and groups with lived experience of, or who have been impacted by, gender-based violence.

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

(8) This Policy and its related procedures should be read in conjunction with the University's policies regarding behavioural standards and conduct listed in Section 7 below.

Section 3 - Policy Statements and Principles

(9) Guided by our mission, identity, and values, ACU is committed to fostering a community built on respect, care for others and a strong focus on the dignity of the human person and the common good. In this culture of respect, gender-based violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

(10) Gender-based violence has profound and lasting effects on individuals, families, workplaces, and communities. These impacts can be physical, psychological, and financial, and they underscore the importance of our shared responsibility to prevent harm and support those affected.

(11) ACU is committed to:

- a. providing a safe and respectful working, and learning and living environment;
- b. fostering an inclusive culture that values the diverse contributions of all University Members;
- c. undertaking a range of prevention initiatives that are aimed at preventing gender-based violence;
- d. providing support services to help University Members who have experienced gender-based violence; and
- e. having clear processes in place to respond to any disclosures or formal reports of alleged gender-based violence in a manner which:
 - i. is trauma-informed and people-centred;
 - ii. is procedurally fair;
 - iii. reflects the needs, experience and agency of all University Members, informed by consultation with students and staff members;
 - iv. considers the ways in which diverse identity aspects (such as, including but not limited to gender, race, culture, disability, and sexual orientation) can influence the supports which University Members may need to address gender-based violence; and
 - v. recognises that gender-based violence disproportionately affects women, First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, and that an intersectional approach is essential to understanding and responding to these impacts.

(12) The drivers of gender-based violence sit within the broader social structures, norms and practices that normalise inequality and shape behaviour across settings, as well as universities, which include:

- a. the condoning of violence;
- b. concentrations of decision-making power and limits on others' autonomy;
- c. rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity; and
- d. peer cultures that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.

Effective prevention requires addressing these drivers and their social context by:

- a. challenging the condoning of violence;
- b. promoting equal participation and decision-making;
- c. fostering norms beyond rigid gender roles;
- d. supporting healthy expressions of identity and positive peer relations;
- e. advancing gender equality;
- f. addressing intersecting forms of oppression (such as racism, ableism, and transphobia);
- g. creating safe and equitable institutions; and
- h. strengthening respectful relationships.

Section 4 - Management of disclosures and formal reports

(13) A person may report gender-based violence that they have experienced, witnessed or otherwise become aware of by making a disclosure or formal report in accordance with:

- a. the Staff Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Procedures (for staff, affiliates and University leadership); or

b. the Student Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Procedures (for students).
(collectively the Prevention and Response to GBV Procedures).

(14) The University takes disclosures and formal reports seriously. The processes which the University will take in response to any disclosures and formal reports are set out in the Prevention and Response to GBV Procedures. Without limitation, these Procedures include guidance regarding:

- a. how to make disclosures and formal reports;
- b. how disclosures and formal reports will be addressed including outlining the relevant investigation and appeal processes as well as support services available to University Members throughout that process; and
- c. use of de-identified data to analyse trends and inform improvements to the University's approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

Section 5 - Review

(15) This Policy is scheduled for review at least every three years.

Section 6 - Further Information

(16) Any staff member, affiliate or University leader who requires assistance in understanding this Policy and the Staff Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Procedures should first consult with their supervisor. If further information or advice is needed, they should visit [Service Central](#)

(17) Any student who requires further information should contact the Safeguarding and Student Safety team:

- a. by email to the Respect and Safety Inbox at Staffrespectandsafety@acu.edu.au ; or
- b. by telephone – by calling Safeguarding and Student Safety on 0476 852 735.

Section 7 - Other Relevant Policies

(18) ACU policies regarding behavioural standards and conduct that are relevant to this policy include:

- [Staff Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Procedure](#);
- [Student Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Procedure](#);
- [Staff Sexual Misconduct Policy](#);
- [Student Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy](#);
- [Student Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Procedure](#);
- [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy](#);
- [Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Procedure](#);
- Family and Domestic Violence Leave Policy;
- [Staff Complaints Management Policy](#);
- [Misconduct and Serious Misconduct Policy](#);
- [Managing Student Misconduct Procedure](#);
- [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#);
- [Code of Conduct for Staff](#);
- [Student Conduct Policy](#);

- [Student Appeals Procedure](#); and
- [Work, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#).

(19) If a disclosure or formal report of gender-based violence also falls under the policies and procedures outlined in clause (17):

- It will be managed in accordance with the Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Procedures; and
- If the disclosure or formal report involves a student under 18 years of age, it will instead be managed under the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy and its associated procedures, to ensure the highest level of care and protection.

Section 8 - Definitions

(20) The following words and expression have the meanings listed below:

Term	Definition
ACU or the University	Australian Catholic University.
Affiliate	Non-University staff or students that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • religious members; • members of affiliate 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; or • guests of University Members.
Affiliated organisation	means an organisation that uses the Provider's intellectual property in its name, marketing, recruitment, or governance documents including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student representative organisations; • student clubs and societies; and • student accommodation providers.
Affiliated Student Accommodation Provider	means a provider of accommodation to Students that is not directly owned, managed, operated or controlled by the University but is nevertheless affiliated with the University.
Code	means the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence.
Discloser	means a person who has shared information about their experience of gender-based violence.

Term	Definition
Disclosure	Where a student, staff member, affiliate or member of the public tells another student, or a staff member, that they have experienced gender-based violence. The person making a disclosure may simply wish to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tell someone about the experience; or • seek information about resources, academic adjustments, support services or reporting options.
Formal report	Where a student, staff member, affiliate or member of the public makes a disclosure of gender-based violence with an intention that some form of action will be taken beyond the offer and provision of support services, including (without limitation) the commencement of an investigation or a disciplinary process in appropriate circumstances.
Gender-based Violence	means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats; • based on gender; • that results in, or is likely to result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ harm; ◦ coercion; ◦ control, ◦ fear; ◦ deprivation of liberty; or ◦ deprivation of autonomy.
Person-centred	means ensuring that the Discloser's needs and preferences are at the centre of decisions made in response to the Disclosure. In particular, the response systems, policies and procedures affirm the Discloser's dignity and support their healing by genuinely considering their wishes and the impact that decisions may have on them, while at all times ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the Discloser and other University Members.
Staff	An employee who has a current contract of employment with the University
Student	A person who is enrolled in any program, unit of study or research or non-award study offered by or at the University
Student Accommodation	means accommodation offered or provided to a Student by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the University directly; • a Student Accommodation Provider; or • an Affiliated Student Accommodation Provider.
Student Accommodation Provider	means a provider of Student Accommodation that is not itself directly owned, managed and/or operated by the University but is nevertheless under the Control of the University.
Student Accommodation Staff	means pastoral care leader, residential student advisers and equivalents employed or engaged by the University, a Student Accommodation Provider or an Affiliated Student Accommodation Provider, including in a non-paid capacity.
Trauma informed	means an approach that applies the core principles of safety (physical, psychological and emotional), trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment. This approach aims to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation and promote recovery and healing to the greatest extent possible.
University leadership	includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a member of the governing body of the University (Senate) or of any committee of Senate; or • a member of Australian Catholic University Limited.
University Members	Are the students, staff and affiliates of the Australian Catholic University.

Term	Definition
University related activity	<p>Any activity that is connected to the University, including activity that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
University related conduct	<p>Any conduct that is connected to the University, including conduct that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	22nd December 2025
Review Date	22nd December 2030
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor and President
Approval Date	22nd December 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Angelle Laurence Chief People Officer
Responsible Manager	Angelle Laurence Chief People Officer
Enquiries Contact	Safety & Wellbeing