

Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy

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Table of Contents

Notes on language	1
Purpose	2
Scope	2
Policy Statement	2
Principles	2
Drivers and impacts	3
Reporting or disclosing an incident	3
Support	3
Whole-of-university approach	4
Responsibilities	4
Supporting documents	5
Legislative context	5
Responsibility	6
Modification history	6
Policy governance responsibility and communications	6

Notes on language

Please be aware that this policy references sexual assault, sexual harassment, family violence and gender-based violence, which may be distressing for some readers. If anything in this policy has affected or distressed you, you are encouraged to seek support, through our [Safer Communities Service](#) or, after hours, [Emergency and Crisis Support Service](#).

Throughout this policy, the term [gender-based violence](#) means any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender, that results in, or is likely to result in, harm, coercion, control, fear or deprivation of liberty or autonomy. This policy uses the terms 'discloser' or 'person who has experienced gender-based violence' rather than the term 'victim-survivor'. While the University does not wish to diminish the experiences of victim-survivors, neutral language has been chosen consistently with the [National Higher-Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence](#). Definitions for key terms are detailed in Federation's [Policy Glossary](#).

Purpose

This policy establishes Federation University Australia's (Federation) commitment to preventing and responding to gender-based violence, with a person-centred, trauma-informed, culturally safe and fair approach. It sets out the principles that guide Federation's prevention and response activities and outlines the responsibilities of all members of the Federation community for conduct occurring at, or in connection with the university.

The Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy (Policy), sits alongside a suite of Federation's approved governance documents, that:

1. define the University's values and expectations for behaviour and conduct, including but not limited to the University's Living Values, Staff Code of Conduct, Student Code of Conduct and Child Safe Procedure;
2. promotes safe, respectful and inclusive learning and working environments; and
3. sets out the University's processes for responding to disclosures and reports of gender-based violence, including the Gender-based Violence Response Procedure.

Scope

Federation is committed to preventing and responding to gender-based violence wherever it occurs, including on university and TAFE campuses; during university activities and placements on and off campus; in residential settings; and online environments. This policy may have limitations in correctional education settings due to the nature of compliance and regulation in this environment.

This policy applies to:

- current and former students;
- staff members;
- contractors, volunteers and visitors; and
- any person participating in university-related activities.

Where a report or disclosure of gender-based violence relating to children under 18 years is received, the [Child Safe Procedure](#) will take precedence.

Policy Statement

Principles

Federation is committed to creating and sustaining a safe, respectful and inclusive environment free from gender-based violence. This commitment extends to all University and TAFE campuses, residential settings, online environments, and all activities, placements and events undertaken at, or in connection with, the University. To uphold this commitment, Federation will:

- a. adopt and apply the definition of gender-based violence in the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2025 (National Code);
- b. take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent gender-based violence through evidence-informed strategies that promote safe, respectful and inclusive learning and working environments;
- c. build the capability of staff and students through education, training and resources that support the prevention, identification and appropriate response to gender-based violence;
- d. respond to disclosures and reports of gender-based violence in a timely, person-centred, trauma-informed, culturally responsive and procedurally fair manner that prioritises safety, dignity, wellbeing and informed decision-making;

- e. provide accessible, coordinated support and appropriate safety measures for people affected by gender-based violence, recognising their diverse needs and circumstances;
- f. protect privacy and confidentiality, consistent with legislative requirements, while balancing the University's obligations to manage risk, respond appropriately and uphold procedural fairness;
- g. provide clear and accessible information about rights, responsibilities, choice of reporting options, available support services and response processes;
- h. treat all disclosures and reports of gender-based violence seriously, including recent and historical matters, and respond in accordance with this Policy, associated procedures and applicable legislative and regulatory requirements; and
- i. monitor, review and continuously improve our prevention and response framework through governance, data analysis, consultation and evaluation to strengthen institutional safety and meet our obligations under the National Code.

Drivers and impacts

Federation acknowledges that:

- a. gender-based violence is any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender, that results in, or is likely to result in, harm, coercion, control, fear or deprivation of liberty or autonomy;
- b. gender-based violence arises from unequal power dynamics, discriminatory attitudes and rigid gender expectations. While it can affect people from all backgrounds and identities, some groups face a greater likelihood of experiencing harm, including women, First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The interaction of multiple aspects of a person's identity can further influence both their vulnerability to violence and their experience of its impacts;
- c. the impact of gender-based violence extends beyond private life and can affect a person's work or study environment, even if the experience occurred outside of the University or where the experience is historic; and
- d. it is further recognised that the risk of gender-based violence is increased where a power imbalance exists, noting that while overwhelmingly perpetrated against women, female-identifying individuals and LGBTQIA+ people, it is not solely confined to these groups and may be experienced and perpetrated by any person of any gender or sexual orientation against any other person.

Reporting or disclosing an incident

If you want to find out how to make a gender-based violence disclosure, please review the Gender-based Violence Response Procedure, or you can go directly to the portal (available at: [insert Advocate link here](#)) to make a disclosure.

Support

Federation provides accessible support to those affected by sexual assault, sexual harassment, family violence and any form of gender-based violence, regardless of where the incident occurred, whether it is reported to the university, police, or another authority, or when it occurred, as there are no time limits on seeking support. Support may include measures to promote safety, wellbeing, and for students - academic progress including reasonable adjustments to study.

Accessing support

The [Student Equity and Safer Communities](#) team (for students), and the [People and Culture](#) team (for staff) can provide information, advice, and support including:

- accessing University and external support services;
- understanding reporting options, including reporting to police or the University;
- navigating the University's reporting process; and
- responding to incidents of gender-based violence, whether experienced directly or witnessed.

Available support may include:

- wellbeing support and referrals;
- academic or workplace adjustments;
- safety planning;
- accommodation support;
- assistance accessing specialist external services; and
- information about reporting options.

Separate support staff will be assigned to disclosers and respondents to ensure independent and appropriate support.

Additional support is available to help address language, cultural, accessibility, or other barriers to seeking assistance. Students and staff may also be referred to, or access, specialist university and external support services that meet their individual needs. For students, this may include Indigenous student support, student advocacy, residential wellbeing, accessibility services, and other relevant support services.

Whole-of-university approach

Federation's Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan (plan) outlines the prevention and response initiatives that implement the whole-of-university approach.

Responsibilities

All members of Federation's community are required to:

- a. role model accountable and appropriate behaviour in line with the standards outlined in the [Staff Code of Conduct](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), the [Managing Conflict of Interest procedure](#), [Equal Opportunity and Valuing Diversity Guidelines](#), and our [Living Values](#);
- b. promote respectful culture and practice within their sphere of influence or control;
- c. ensure compliance with relevant policies and procedures;
- d. undertake and complete all mandatory training and awareness raising to develop skills necessary to support a respectful, safe, and inclusive community; and
- e. comply with reporting and record keeping obligations, as required.

The [Vice-Chancellors' Senior Team](#) (VCST) is accountable for providing a safe, non-violent, gender equal and inclusive environment for all members of the Federation community.

For Federation University Australia, the [Chief Learner Experience Officer](#) is the central authority for the implementation of this policy and ensuring there is a clear reporting line through governance bodies, and effective management and oversight by senior management.

As the University's governing body, [Council](#) is responsible for organisational oversight of gender-based violence at Federation University. The [Respect at Fed Committee](#) which reports into the [Inclusion Committee](#) (a standing committee of Council), was established to:

- provide leadership and oversight of the University's approach to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive culture for staff and students;
- support an aligned institutional response to relevant national standards, codes and expectations relating to safety, equity and inclusion; and
- to monitor the effectiveness of the University's initiatives to strengthen cultural safety, respectful behaviour and inclusion.

The Respect at Fed Committee has the delegated responsibility to:

- oversee the development, implementation and review of the University's whole-of-institution cultural and behavioural change framework;
- oversee the development and delivery of the University's gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response plan;
- oversee the refresh and implementation of the Respect and Inclusion Culture Action Plan (RICAP);
- ensure alignment of key strategies and plans relating to gender equity, inclusion, diversity and cultural safety;
- monitor the effectiveness of major cultural change initiatives and recommend improvements to VCST; and
- provide advice to VCST on emerging priorities and areas requiring strategic intervention.

Federation People Leaders are responsible for providing opportunities for all staff within their teams to be educated and trained on the principles contained within this policy to enable them to take prompt action where needed in accordance with the procedures under this policy.

The [Health, Safety and Wellbeing team](#) are responsible for providing advice and information on all people matters related to risk management and workplace health and safety.

The Student Equity and [Safer Communities team](#) work across the university to make our campuses equitable and safe from discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence.

Supporting documents

- [Corporate Governance Policy](#)
- [Students and Support for Students Policy](#)
- [People and Culture Policy](#)
- Gender-based Violence Response Procedure
- [Visual Diagram for Receiving a Disclosure](#)
- [Staff Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [University Living Values](#)
- [Child Safe Procedure](#)

Legislative context

This policy supports Federation's compliance with:

- [Australia Human Rights Commission Act 1986 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)

- [Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Equal Opportunity Act 2010 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Fair Work Act 2009 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Federation University Australia Act 2010](#)
- [Gender Equality Act 2020 \(Vic\)](#)
- [National Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)
- [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 \(ESOS National Code\)](#)
- [National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Act 2025](#)
- [National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Respect@Work amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 \(TEQSA Act\)](#)

Responsibility

- Vice-Chancellor and President (as the Approval Authority) is responsible for monitoring the implementation, outcomes and scheduled review of this procedure.
- Chief Learner Experience Officer (as the Document Owner) is responsible for maintaining the content of this procedure as delegated by the Approval Authority.

Modification history

Original issue	Current version	Review date	Details
		[Insert 3 years from original issue]	Initial version of the policy approved and published as the first formal iteration of this new policy.

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years following engagement and collaboration with:

1. Employees;
2. Students;
3. Residents of Student Accommodation;
4. Student Accommodation Staff;
5. Groups who have experienced and are disproportionately affected by Gender-based Violence; and
6. Subject matter experts on Gender-based Violence.

Policy governance responsibility and communications

All documentation within the Governance Framework will be communicated throughout the University including, but not limited to, internal communications such as FedNews, VC Comms, staff emails, staff inductions and documentation distribution.

Policy document owners are responsible for identifying and managing information-related risks and issues for their assigned information entities and for escalating these to Approval Authorities accordingly. Owners of policy

documents are accountable for their respective procedures, manuals and work instructions in alignment with their position descriptions and Your Growth Matters (YGM) cycles.

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