

Gender-based Violence Response Procedure

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Notes on language

Please be aware that this procedure references sexual assault, sexual harassment, family violence and gender-based violence, which may be distressing for some readers. If anything in this procedure 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 procedure, 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 procedure 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](#).

Procedure statement

Federation University 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.

Federation takes trauma-informed, person-centred approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Any person may seek support, make a disclosure, or submit a report under this procedure (including anonymously), regardless of the nature or seriousness of their concern.

The University will respond to all disclosures and reports with empathy, respect and without judgment, while meeting its legal obligations, protecting privacy and confidentiality where possible, upholding procedural fairness, prioritising safety and wellbeing, providing information about available options for support and/or reporting, to assist informed decision-making.

Students, staff and others covered by this procedure who have experienced, witnessed, been involved in or become aware of incidents of gender-based violence including sexual assault or sexual harassment can make a disclosure to the University to seek advice and or support.

Purpose

This procedure supports the Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy and related University policies and procedures.

This procedure outlines the choices, supports and steps available to students, staff and visitors in disclosing or reporting gender-based violence. It details:

- how students, staff and visitors can disclose or report gender-based violence;
- the support available following a disclosure or report;
- how Federation University responds to disclosures and reports of gender-based violence;
- processes for risk assessment, safety planning and support; and
- pathways for resolution.

Scope

This procedure 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.

This procedure may have limitations in correctional education settings due to the nature of compliance and regulation in that environment.

Legislative context

- [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 \(TEQSA Act\)](#)

Procedure

Accessing support

The University provides accessible support to students and staff affected by sexual assault, sexual harassment, family violence and relationship 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 student academic progress including reasonable adjustments to study; or a staff member's working hours or work location.

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

- responding to incidents of gender-based violence, whether experienced directly or witnessed;
- understanding reporting options, including reporting to police or the University;
- navigating the University's reporting process;
- assistance in understanding options related to informed decision making regarding procedural options and outcomes sought; and
- accessing University and external support services.

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.

Understanding disclosures

A disclosure is information shared with the University about an experience, concern or incident of gender-based violence. A disclosure does not automatically initiate an investigation or disciplinary process. The purpose of a disclosure is to access support, discuss available options, undertake safety planning and receive information about navigating available processes.

Those making a disclosure have the choice to progress the matter into a report. In some circumstances, there may be a serious risk or a legal duty for the university to act. The person who has experienced gender-based violence will be kept informed and be included in decision making, wherever possible.

Please refer to our [supporting resource](#) on receiving a disclosure.

Understanding reports

A report refers to a discloser providing a detailed account of an alleged experience of gender-based violence to the university and providing informed consent to the university to take steps beyond the provision of support services to include the commencement of a university investigation and/or discipline process.

Reports can be made anonymously. Any anonymous report will be taken seriously, however there may be limitations on the actions that can be taken by the university.

There are no time limits on making a report of gender-based violence to the University, however, there may be limits to how the University can investigate and respond to a formal report if a significant period of time has passed since the incident(s) occurred.

Every report will be investigated and will be guided by the circumstances of the incident and the views of the discloser.

A formal resolution process may be appropriate where the seriousness of the matter, the level of risk, or the preferences of the discloser require a structured investigation and outcome. A discloser has the right to pause or withdraw their consent to a formal report at any time, and this will not affect the provision of supports by the university.

The University will ensure procedural fairness and provide regular communication regarding process and outcomes where appropriate.

Where the discloser is a student and the respondent is a staff member; Safer Communities will provide ongoing support to the student discloser and refer the matter to People and Culture to initiate a workplace investigation. People and Culture will liaise with Safer Communities to coordinate student participation in the investigation, as well as outcomes.

Where both the discloser and respondent are students, Safer Communities will allocate separate staff to work individually with each party to provide ongoing support throughout the process.

Where both the discloser and respondent are staff, People and Culture will allocate separate staff to work individually with each party to provide ongoing support throughout the process.

Where a resolution is sought by a discloser:

- an investigator will be appointed, and the discloser and respondent will be informed;
- a respondent will have opportunity to have a support person and to seek advice and support from a support service, for example Student Advocacy for students;
- the investigation will be conducted in accordance with university procedures and the principles of procedural fairness;
- a hearing or other decision-making process will be undertaken where required;
- an investigation may result in local resolution in some circumstances, which may include agreed outcomes between the discloser and respondent;
- written outcomes will be provided to the discloser and respondent;
- the university will provide ongoing support, implement safety measures where required; monitor risks, and ensure any outcomes are implemented throughout the process.

Ways to make a disclosure or report

A person may make a disclosure or report of gender-based violence by:

- using the [University's confidential reporting portal](#);
- contacting [Safer Communities](#) (students);
- contacting [People and Culture \(staff\)](#)
- contacting [campus security](#) where immediate assistance is required;
- speaking with a staff member or colleague who can connect you with Safer Communities or People and Culture;
- referral from another university support service or external service.

Risk assessment, safety and support plans

The University will undertake risk assessment and safety planning where disclosures or reports of gender-based violence have been received. The risk assessment considers the needs and wishes of the persons involved and is informed by the following factors:

- immediate safety concerns;
- ongoing risk to individuals or the broader community;
- student accommodation arrangements;
- educational or workplace impacts;
- wellbeing supports; and
- protective measures.

Safety and support plans are developed and tailored with each individual and their circumstances and will be updated or reviewed as required.

Residential contexts

Where a disclosure or report relates to university-managed or affiliated accommodation, additional risk assessment, safety planning and support measures will be implemented to support safety and wellbeing within 48 hours.

These may include:

- accommodation adjustments;
- temporary relocation arrangements;

- access restrictions;
- wellbeing checks; and
- coordination with residential staff.

When a disclosure concerns a student, interim safety responses within the residential environment will be initiated by residential staff. Ongoing support will be coordinated by the Safer Communities team.

Reports or notifications to police

If a person who has experienced gender-based violence wants to make a report to the Police, the Safer Communities team (for students); and the People and Culture team (for employees) can support a person to make a police report but cannot make a police report on that person's behalf.

In certain circumstances, the University may have a duty to notify the police, in its own name. This includes where the incident involves a serious risk to students, or staff; or where the person who is the subject of the disclosure or report presents a risk to themselves. The person who has experienced gender-based violence will be kept informed and be included in decision making wherever possible.

Persons will continue to be supported by the University with safety measures and supports, however University actions will not interfere with a police investigation.

Unsatisfactory response process

The University is committed to resolving complaints, reports and concerns in a transparent, consistent, fair, and timely manner. If a person believes their disclosure or report has not been handled appropriately the following actions are available:

- Student respondents can review grounds for appeal in the Student Appeal Procedure.
- If a student is dissatisfied with how a disclosure or report has been addressed, feedback may be provided to clxo@federation.edu.au. Additionally, the National Student Ombudsman can be contacted at no cost by completing the form at www.nso.gov.au
- If a staff member is dissatisfied with how a disclosure or report has been addressed, they are encouraged to provide feedback to director.pc@federation.edu.au.

Privacy, confidentiality and record keeping

Safer Communities (students) and/or People and Culture (staff) will keep records of each disclosure or report, including:

- the names of all parties involved;
- a summary of the issue/s raised, including the remedy or outcome sought; and
- accurate and up-to-date file notes of any action, investigation and resolution initiated under this Procedure.

Such records are to remain confidential and held in a restricted area. In the case of informal resolution, records are to be retained in a restricted area for 7 years. In the case of a formal resolution, records are to be retained in a restricted area for 15 years.

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.

Promulgation

The Gender-based Violence Response Procedure will be communicated throughout the University via:

1. an Announcement Notice under 'FedNews' website and through the University Policy - 'Recently Approved Documents' webpage to alert the University-wide community of the approved Policy;
2. inclusion on the University Policy, Procedure and Forms website; and/or
3. distribution of e-mails to Head of School / Head of Department / University staff; and/or
4. documentation distribution, eg. posters, brochures.
5. Other - please describe

Implementation

The Gender-based Violence Response Procedure will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. Information Sessions; and/or
2. Training Sessions; and/or
3. Other - please describe

Definitions

Term	Definition
Discloser	means a person who has shared information about their experience of Gender-based Violence.
Disclosure	means the provision of information about a person's experience of Gender-based Violence to a Provider by the Discloser or another person.
Formal Report	Information shared with the university about an experience, concern or incident of gender-based violence which requires the university to consider taking steps beyond the provision of support services, and may include the commencement of a university investigation and/or disciplinary process. A person making a disclosure may later decide to take further steps as a formal report.
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.
Person-centred	Ensuring that the Discloser's needs and preferences are at the centre of decisions made in response to the Disclosure. 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 Students and Staff.
Procedural Fairness	In a decision-making context, means the decision is made without bias and a respondent is given an opportunity to present their case with knowledge

	of any prejudicial material that may be taken into account by the decision-maker.
Respondent	A person responding to allegations of Gender-based violence, including the person who is the subject of the complaint.
Safety and Support Plan	Measures developed to address identified risks and support a person's safety and wellbeing.
Sexual assault	is a broad term that captures any sexual act or attempt to engage in a sexual act where consent (defined below) is not obtained or freely and voluntarily given. This includes unwanted sexual touching. Sexual assault includes acts defined in the Crimes Act 1958.
Sexual consent	or affirmative consent puts the responsibility on each person to actively seek consent from the other people involved in any kind of sexual act. Their response can be in the form of saying "yes", or nodding. Consent cannot be assumed. This includes situations where a person has consented to the same or different sexual act with the same or different person before. All parties must fully agree to a sexual act for there to be consent. Consent can be withdrawn at any time, and it is important to keep checking in.
Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual behaviour that could make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. It can be a symptom of gender inequality and most often, but not always, affects women. Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written, it can be a single incident or repeated behaviour. Sexual harassment may include a suggestive comment; offensive joke; unwelcome or inappropriate touching, hugging, cornering or kissing; inappropriate staring or leering that makes you feel intimidated; sexual gestures; or repeated requests for dates or sex.
Trauma-informed	An approach that applies the core principles of safety (physical, psychological and emotional), trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment. It should minimise the risk of re-traumatisation and promote recovery and healing to the greatest extent possible.