



Respect and Gender-based Violence

2025 Action Plan



Acknowledgement of Country

Deakin University acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all the unceded lands, skies and waterways on which Deakin students, staff and communities come together.

As we learn and teach through virtual and physical spaces constructed across time, we pay our deep respect to the Ancestors and Elders of Wadawurrung Country, Eastern Maar Country and Wurundjeri Country, where our campuses are located.

We also acknowledge the many First Nations from where students join us online and make vital contributions to our learning communities.

Acknowledgement of those affected by gender-based violence

Deakin would like to acknowledge all of those in our community and beyond who have been affected by gender-based and other forms of interpersonal violence. We appreciate the strength and bravery of those who have sought support and who continue to share their voices and experiences to enhance our understanding and inform our prevention and response practices.

Overview

Deakin remains committed to fostering a connected, safe, inclusive and respectful work and study environment free from gender-based violence, including sexual harm. The 2025 Respect and Gender-Based Violence Annual Action Plan outlines our whole of organisation approach to creating a respectful Deakin community, and to preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

For the purposes of this document, we are using the UN definition of gender-based violence as ‘any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between women and men’. This plan builds upon the program of work and activities undertaken in previous years, and is informed by state and federal legislation, evidence-based prevention and health promotion frameworks, research and best practice and recent sector developments.

Governance

Currently, Deakin’s Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Policy and Sexual Harm Response Procedure provide the framework within which all sexual harm prevention and response activities are undertaken. Through this framework Deakin defines sexual harm under three broad categories: sexual assault (including rape), sexual harassment, and any other behaviour of a sexual nature that may constitute student or staff misconduct. This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed in 2025 to ensure compliance with the National Higher Education Code Addressing Gender-based Violence.

In addition to policies and procedures addressing sexual harm, Deakin has a suite of policies and procedures which provide a framework for addressing other forms of gender-based violence. These include the Family

Violence (staff and student support) Policy, the Family Violence (Staff Support) Procedure, Family Violence (Student Support) Procedure and the Investment Management Procedure (modern slavery including sexual servitude).

Priority areas

Six priority areas guide actions at Deakin:

1. Leadership and Governance
2. Respectful Communities
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Research
5. Partnerships and Collaboration
6. Response and Support

A monitoring and evaluation framework will allow progress and effectiveness of initiatives to be measured collectively and across priority areas.



Key outcomes

Successful implementation of this action plan will contribute the following key outcomes:



Students and staff will be aware of support options and processes and feel confident to seek support if they are experiencing, or have experienced, gender-based violence.



Policies, procedures and programs will align with National Code requirements, and programs to ensure compliance will be in place.



Students and staff will be supported to develop their knowledge and capacity to contribute to a safe and respectful university community and contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence.

Deakin's success will be measured by the reach of our education and awareness-raising initiatives, the quality of initiatives delivered and responses to those who disclose, alignment with the National Code, and the impacts on student and staff experiences of safety and support within the Deakin community.



Student and staff support and report services

To report a behaviour of concern or to make a disclosure of sexual harm (recent or historical, on or off campus) contact Deakin's [Safer Community](#) services.

Safer Community can be contacted via phone on 03 9244 3734 (9am-4pm, Monday to Friday) or via email safercommunity@deakin.edu.au. All assistance is confidential.

If you are a staff member and wish to inquire about the complaints process or to make a complaint of sexual harassment against another staff member contact eeo@deakin.edu.au. You may also raise your concern or complaint through [Raising a complaint or concern | Deakin University](#).

For advice or support relating to student conduct, please contact: studentconduct@deakin.edu.au. For any reports of student conduct or student complaints, please complete the relevant online reporting form via the Student Conduct webpage [Student conduct](#) or the Student Complaints webpage [Student complaints](#).

For support external to Deakin contact 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732). This is a 24/7 phone and online counselling service.

2025 context

Prevalence of gender-based violence: A 2022 [ANROWS report](#) indicated that women, especially young women, experience sexual violence at a higher prevalence than previously understood or reported. This research indicates that the lifetime prevalence of experiencing sexual violence was 51% of women in their twenties (one in two); 34% (one in three) of women in their forties, and 26% (one in four) of women aged 68 to 73. Rates of intimate partner violence among young people are also high, with [one study](#) indicating that three in ten, 18-19 year olds had experienced intimate partner violence in the past year. Research also highlights how diverse groups of women, including those with disabilities, from ethnic minorities, First Nations communities and those who identify as LGBTIQ+ and intersex, may experience higher levels of sexual and interpersonal violence. In addition, [a recent study from Monash University](#) outlined the prevalence and persistence of sexual harassment in workplaces with 60% of those who experienced sexual harassment, experiencing sexual harassment at least weekly.

Gender-based violence prevention in universities: In university settings, the need to prevent and respond to sexual harm and other forms of gender-based violence continues to be a key focus. Amidst calls for increased transparency and ongoing improvements in areas such as data collection and incident response, universities remain committed to fostering safe and respectful environments for students and staff, and to delivering effective prevention and response measures. This work is guided by the [Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency's Higher Education Standards Framework](#).

National plan to end violence against women and children 2022–2032: In October 2022, the Federal Government launched the Second National Plan for joint implementation by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. In 2023, two action plans were released: the [First Action Plan 2023–2027](#) which outlines ten actions over the coming years to progress the National Plan objectives; and the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025](#) which recognises the unique and ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, and systemic racism on family and sexual violence.

National Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education: In February 2024, Education Ministers released the [Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education](#) (the National Action Plan). The Action Plan highlighted seven actions relating to the establishment of a National Student Ombudsman, whole-of-organisation approaches to prevention and response, introduction of a National Code, oversight of student accommodation

providers, legislation and policy, data transparency and monitoring progress; and outlined core principles for implementation.

National Student Ombudsman: As identified in the National Action Plan, in September 2024, legislation passed to establish a [National Student Ombudsman](#). The establishment of the Ombudsman aims to provide an effective, trauma-informed complaints mechanism for higher education students to use when they are not satisfied by their higher education provider's response. Their remit will include student safety and welfare, including gender-based violence; and disciplinary processes, such as procedures to address misconduct.

National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence: The Code, expected to be released in 2025, will aim to enhance accountability for higher education providers in relation to gender-based violence. The Code will require a whole-of-organisation approach to prevention and response, incorporating rules and standards regarding governance and leadership, policies and practice, trauma informed procedures, education and training, support services, data and reporting, and specific requirements for student accommodation.

National Student Safety Survey (NSSS): The 2024 NSSS was postponed and is now due to be undertaken by Universities Australia in the second half of 2025. The survey collects data on university student experiences of sexual harassment, sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence, and seeks to inform university responses and prevention strategies.

Positive Duty: We continue to progress work to ensure our alignment with the Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) guidelines for complying with the [Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#). These guidelines detail what organisations can do to ensure a proactive approach to eliminating sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation.

Gender equality: Our approach to creating gender equality within Deakin is guided by [Our Equal State: Victoria's Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027](#). This plan recognises the drivers of gendered violence and highlights the impact of gender equality in preventing violence against women and improving broader life outcomes. At a national level, in March 2024 the Minister for Women launched [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#), which aims to guide whole-of-community approaches to improving gender equality across a range of domains.

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The National Code, expected to be released in 2025, will determine the prioritisation of deliverables outlined in this Action Plan. Aligning our practice to ensure compliance with the National Code will be a priority focus, noting anticipated requirements related to training, response, data and reporting.

Leadership and Governance

Leadership and governance are pivotal in addressing gender-based violence and sexual harm, fostering a safe and inclusive environment for all members of our community. Proactive, effective and accountable leadership sets the tone by prioritising policies and practices that promote respect, consent, and which address behaviours of concern. Activities within this focus area will include work undertaken by the Vice-Chancellor's Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Advisory Committee¹ and working group, engagement with executive, policies and procedure review, and transparent reporting.

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| Actions | 1.1 Review relevant policies and procedures to ensure alignment with emerging legislation and National Code requirements.
1.2 Raise awareness and ensure compliance with Deakin's programs, policies and procedures as they related to gender-based violence.
1.3 Deliver annual public reports on Deakin's respect and gender-based violence programs, and data relating to gender-based violence incidents at Deakin. |
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Respectful Communities

Prevention activities, including comprehensive, sustained and iterative education and capacity-building, empower our community to act as active bystanders and challenge views that condone violence, disrespect, power imbalances and inequality. By embedding these principles into campus culture, policies, teaching and learning, we intend to foster a community where every individual feels valued and secure, laying the foundation for academic, personal and professional success. Activities will include ongoing and evolving education and capacity-building, awareness-raising activities, culture, attitudinal and behavioural change initiatives.

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| Actions | 2.1 Coordinate and deliver tailored campaigns (e.g. Respect at Uni Week) and communications that support gender-based violence prevention.
2.2 Review and refine training, education and capacity-building offerings, ensuring alignment with National Code requirements.
2.3 Increase initiatives for priority cohorts and enhance recognition of intersectional experiences in delivery of prevention initiatives. |
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Teaching and Learning

Deakin is committed to maintaining teaching and learning environments that promote respect and are free from gender-based violence. We aim to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to foster respect, demonstrate appropriate behaviour, and meet professional expectations, preparing them for success in their future careers. By embedding these values into their education, we contribute to building future-ready graduates who can positively impact their communities and workplaces. Activities will include initiatives to embed respect within teaching and learning and as part of experiences such as placements and internships.

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| Actions | 3.1 Explore opportunities to embed respect and gender-based violence related content within the curriculum, including through the Equity and Inclusion Guest Lecture Program.
3.2 Explore partnerships and awareness-raising initiatives with Teaching and Learning staff to enhance prevention and response capacity. |
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¹ The Vice-Chancellor's Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Advisory Group oversees Deakin's sexual harm prevention and response programs of work, meeting three times per year. This Group takes direct responsibility for shaping Deakin's prevention and response initiatives and for monitoring and evaluating actions taken.

Research

Deakin's research staff play a crucial role in advancing knowledge on respect and gender-based violence, contributing to a deeper understanding of the factors that drive harmful behaviours and effective prevention strategies. By exploring intersectional influences, power dynamics, and patterns of violence, our researchers develop evidence-based insights that inform policy and practice and influence social change. Through their expertise, we aim to bridge the gap between research and real-world application, driving progress toward safer, more respectful communities. Activities will include ensuring safety and respect within HDR supervision practices, engagement in research and data collection, and enhancement of research and professional partnerships.

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| | 4.1 Collaborate with Higher Degree by Research (HDR) areas and the Researcher Development Academy to enhance skills and capacity for respectful supervisory relationships. |
| Actions | 4.2 Enhance research and professional partnerships through Deakin's Network Against Gender-based Violence (a university-wide practice network of researchers and practitioners). |
| | 4.3 Design, deliver, coordinate and/or incorporate findings from relevant surveys and service data, including the National Student Safety Survey anticipated in late 2025. |

Partnerships and Collaboration

Partnerships, collaboration and co-design with government, specialist agencies, other tertiary institutions, community groups, students and staff, are crucial in enhancing Deakin's respect program of work. Engagement at every level enables Deakin to leverage diverse expertise, perspectives and lived experience to foster creative and innovative approaches. Collaboration enriches learning and development while ensuring initiatives are relevant and responsive to the university community's needs, driving meaningful change in this space. Activities will include co-design with all members of our community, collaboration with specialist support services, community engagement and education.

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| | 5.1 Enhance student co-design and partnerships in the development of campaigns and educational initiatives. |
| Actions | 5.2 Engage with, contribute to, and lead collaborative projects across the sector, partnering with relevant external stakeholders and organisations. |
| | 5.3 Work with students and staff to monitor emerging issues, gaps or needs, and design appropriate responses. |

Response and Support

Responses to gender-based violence will continue to be trauma informed and guided by those with lived experience. Awareness-raising of report and support options will be undertaken both internally and with external stakeholders such as the police. As part of a whole-of-institution approach, transparent and fair processes will be maintained to respond to allegations of student or staff misconduct. Activities include awareness-raising, training and capacity building of specialist staff, and continued enhancement of data collection via our specialist confidential case management system.

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| | 6.1 Coordinate and deliver awareness-raising campaigns about support and reporting options and build university capacity to respond appropriately (e.g. ongoing training for Sexual Harm Student Misconduct Panels). |
| Actions | 6.2 Continue to support and improve the Harassment and Discrimination Contact Officer (HDCO) Network to provide support to staff. |
| | 6.3 Explore options to enhance the emergency support fund to ensure students who have experienced, or are experiencing, gender-based violence have access to short term financial support where appropriate. |



Enquiries:

For information about Deakin's Respect and Gender-based Violence program of work, or for questions relating to this action plan, please email respect@deakin.edu.au

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