The University of Queensland Union College
Child and Young Person Protection Policy and Procedure

Statement of Commitment

We are responsible for keeping everyone at Union College safe and for promoting health and wellbeing in our community. This includes a special responsibility to protect children and young people (those under 18) who live at Union College, visit our campus, or take part in our activities.

We support the Australian Universities Accord's vision for safe, inclusive higher education and the national expectation that student accommodation providers adopt a whole-of-organisation approach to safety and the prevention of gender-based violence.

We also commit to meeting Queensland's Child Safe Standards and, where required, the Reportable Conduct Scheme for accommodation and education services that engage with children and young people.

We commit that:

- Your safety and wellbeing, and that of any child or young person on our campus, are embedded in our leadership, governance and daily practice
- Children and young people are informed of their rights, can participate in decisions that affect them, and are taken seriously
- Families and communities are informed and, where appropriate, involved in promoting safety
- Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are considered part of our routine business, including those of First Nations children, children with disabilities, LGBTIQA+ children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children from regional or remote communities
- Everyone who works, lives, or volunteers here understands their child-safety responsibilities and demonstrates our safeguarding values in practice
- Our processes for raising concerns and complaints are accessible, understandable, trauma-informed, and child- and young-person-focused
- We provide regular education and training so that workers and resident mentors have the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe
- Our physical, digital and social environments include appropriate safeguards to reduce the risk of harm, including online harm
- We continually review and improve our policies, procedures and practices to keep children and young people safe.

Introduction

Union College is open to residents attending tertiary education. This includes residents who are 17 years old at the time of their enrolment. We are committed to providing a safe and welcoming

environment for all residents, while ensuring the law is upheld and vulnerable residents, including those under the age of 18, are protected.

Purpose

This policy explains:

- How we prevent and respond to harm, suspected harm and sexual abuse involving anyone under 18 who lives at, visits or participates in Union College activities
- How you, our workers, and other residents must behave around children and young people
- How to recognise and report harm or suspected harm
- How we cooperate with external authorities and comply with Queensland and national child protection laws, the Child Safe Standards, and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All workers (employees, resident mentors, tutors, contractors and volunteers over 18)
- All residents (including under-18 residents)
- Anyone else involved in Union College activities where children or young people are present.

It operates alongside:

- All of our policies,
- Our Resident Handbook and Resident Mentor Handbook
- Relevant Queensland and Commonwealth child protection, education and criminal legislation.

Relevant legislation, standards and documents

We comply with all relevant Queensland and Commonwealth laws and standards, including:

- *Child Protection Act 1999* (Qld) and *Child Protection Regulation 2023* (Qld)
- *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld), including the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme as they apply to accommodation and education services.
- Working with *Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act* 2000 (Qld) and Regulation 2020 (blue card requirements)
- *Criminal Code Act 1899* (Qld), including offences related to child sexual offences and online exploitation
- National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031, Commonwealth Child Safe Framework and the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030

- The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 and the Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education.

Definitions (plain language summary)

For this policy:

- "Child", "young person" or "child or young person" means anyone under 18 years of age.
- "Worker" includes employees, resident mentors, tutors, residents aged 18 or over, contractors and volunteers.
- "Abuse" includes neglect, physical, psychological and sexual abuse, grooming, and any behaviour that harms or risks harm to a child's physical, emotional or psychological wellbeing, including online and image-based abuse.
- "Harm" means any significant adverse effect on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing, whether from a single incident or a pattern of incidents.
- "Sexual abuse" includes any sexual activity or behaviour involving a child or young person that requires power, force or authority, or that is beyond their understanding and ability to consent to, or contrary to community standards.
- "Suspicion of harm" arises when you reasonably believe that a child or young person has been, is being, or is at risk of being harmed, based on what you see, hear, or are told.

You do not need proof. If you are unsure, you must seek advice and report your concerns.

Guiding principles

Everyone at Union College must:

- Comply with this policy and demonstrate the highest standard of care in their behaviour towards children and young people
- Never abuse, harm or groom a child or young person under any circumstances, including online
- Understand that, because of the power imbalance between adults and children, a child or young person cannot consent to abuse, regardless of their age or what parents or carers say
- Recognise that protecting children and young people from harm is fundamental to their personal and academic development and attendance at college.

We will:

- Respond diligently and promptly to all reports or suspicions of harm or risk of harm, whether the alleged person is on or off Union College grounds
- Not tolerate reprisals or victimisation of anyone who reports harm or participates in an investigation
- Treat all children, young people, residents and workers with respect and dignity, including those who are the subject of allegations

- Apply natural justice (procedural fairness) when making decisions about people who are the subject of allegations, while prioritising safety as far as reasonably practicable
- Cooperate fully with the police, child protection agencies, the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC), and other relevant bodies.

Online abuse, grooming, and image-based abuse involving children and young people may also breach our Acceptable Use of ICT and Social Media Policy. These policies should be read together with this Child and Young Person Protection Policy when online conduct is involved.

Risk management

We take a proactive approach to identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.

We will:

- Conduct regular risk assessments and implement risk-minimisation strategies for situations involving children and young people, including on campus, at events, and online
- Avoid situations in which a worker is alone with a child or young person in a closed room without visibility and appropriate oversight
- Consider additional safeguards for high-risk activities.

Any person facing credible allegations of harm may be stood down from their role or asked to leave Union College temporarily or permanently, as necessary, to protect the safety and interests of children, young people, and others.

In assessing and managing risks to children and young people, we consider environmental and situational factors, including the presence of alcohol or other drugs. Our Responsible Consumption of Alcohol Policy and Drugs Other Than Alcohol Policy provide further detail on how we manage substance-related risks in our community.

Natural justice, confidentiality and promptness

We will:

- Ensure decisions are made by people free from bias and that anyone accused of breaching this policy is informed of the allegations and given a fair opportunity to respond, consistent with natural justice
- Keep information as confidential as possible while meeting our legal and safety obligations. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, as we may be required to disclose information internally or to external authorities
- Act promptly on all concerns and, as appropriate, keep the child or young person, their family (where it is safe to do so), and the alleged person informed of progress, subject to legal and safety constraints.

Record keeping, defamation and media

We will:

- Keep accurate, secure records of concerns, reports and actions

- Remind people that, if they provide information about harm in good faith and on reasonable grounds, they are generally protected from defamation liability
- Limit public statements to the Head of College and/or the Board Chair, with legal and insurance advice, to protect all parties and the integrity of any investigation.

Recruitment, screening and training

To reduce the risk of harm to children and young people, we will:

- Use safe recruitment processes, including thorough reference checks, role-relevant screening, and confirmation of current blue cards where required under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld)
- Ensure all relevant workers and Resident Mentors complete induction and ongoing training in child and youth protection, reporting obligations and safe conduct
- Regularly review staff performance, including adherence to this policy and the Employee Code of Conduct.

Reporting harm or suspected harm

If you are a resident:

- You must report immediately to the Resident Wellbeing Lead and/or Deputy Head of College if you become aware of, or reasonably suspect, that harm has been caused by anyone to a fellow resident under 18 or to any child or young person present at Union College.

If you are a worker:

- You must immediately report to the Deputy Head of College if you become aware of, or reasonably suspect, that anyone has caused harm to a resident under 18 or to any child or young person at Union College.
- You must keep a written record of the concern and the actions you take.

When the Deputy Head of College/Deputy CEO receives a report about harm or suspected harm to a child or young person, they will:

1. Offer support to the person who reported the concern.
2. If the reporter is not the child or young person, decide how to approach and support the affected child or young person safely.
3. Conduct a preliminary risk assessment, considering risks to the child or young person, the reporter, the alleged person, others in the College, and the College as an organisation.
4. In consultation with the Head of College/CEO and, if appropriate, the affected person's next of kin, decide what external reports must be made and what advice is needed, including whether to contact the police, the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, the QFCC (for systemic failures or reportable conduct), and insurers.

5. Decide whether the alleged person should remain on campus, be temporarily suspended, or be excluded, and whether they should be advised to seek legal advice.
6. Determine what evidence needs to be preserved and whether an internal or external investigation is required.

When an internal investigation or behaviour management response is required, we will handle the matter in accordance with our Addressing Concerns and Complaints Policy (RES0102) and the Resident Code of Conduct (RES0101). If the alleged conduct also constitutes sexual misconduct or gender-based violence, our Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy (RES0202) and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy (RES0201) will also apply.

Mandatory reports and external notifications

Some people have specific legal reporting duties. For example:

- Certain professionals (such as doctors, registered nurses, counsellors and teachers) must report significant harm caused by physical or sexual abuse, as well as situations in which a parent may be unable or unwilling to protect the child, to the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.
- Where we investigate allegations involving a staff member registered with the Queensland College of Teachers or dismiss such a staff member for unsuitability, the Head of College must notify the Queensland College of Teachers.
- We must also comply with the Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements under the Child Safe Organisations Act 2024 (Qld) that apply to residential colleges, including notifying the QFCC of specific allegations, investigations, and outcomes.

Reporting sexual abuse or suspected sexual abuse

If you are a worker or resident over 18 and, during your involvement with Union College, you become aware of or reasonably suspect that a resident under 18 has been or is likely to be sexually abused by any other person, you must:

- Immediately submit a written report to the police and the Deputy Head of College
- Include in your report: your name; the young person's name, gender, and, if known, age; the basis for your concern; what you know about the alleged abuse; and any information you have about the alleged offender or other witnesses.

The Deputy Head of College must:

- Immediately provide a copy of any written report received to the police and the Head of College, or prepare a report themselves if they become aware of suspected sexual abuse without receiving a written report
- Inform the appropriate insurer of any report or claim.

All adults at Union College must also comply with any broader criminal law obligations to report child sexual offences and to reduce or remove known significant risks of such offences, where they have the power or responsibility to do so.

Support for children, young people and others

After receiving a report or allegation:

- We will prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person by adjusting living arrangements, restricting contact, and providing access to internal pastoral care and external counselling or specialist services
- We will typically contact parents or guardians to inform them of the concerns and explain our intended response, unless the alleged harm involves a family member and the young person does not want them contacted, or we are advised by statutory authorities not to
- We may suspend a resident's enrolment or stand down a worker where there is an unacceptable risk in allowing them to remain at Union College while enquiries are underway
- We will provide appropriate support to workers or residents who are the subject of false, unsubstantiated or withdrawn allegations, while maintaining a clear focus on safety and due process.

Dissemination and awareness

We will:

- Publish this policy on our website and ensure it is easy to find and read
- Explain key aspects of the policy and your rights and responsibilities during O-Week, P-Week and other induction activities
- Ensure resident mentors and workers read the policy and acknowledge in writing that they will comply with it
- Include information about this policy and how to access it in the Resident Handbook and the Resident Mentor Handbook.

Information about this policy is also provided as part of our admission and enrolment processes. It sits alongside your obligations under the Resident Code of Conduct (RES 0101) and related safety policies.

Review and continuous improvement

We will:

- Review this policy regularly and sooner if laws, national standards or sector expectations change, particularly in relation to the Queensland Child Safe Standards, the Reportable Conduct Scheme, the Universities Accord and the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence.
- Monitor data on concerns, reports and outcomes (in a way that protects privacy) to identify patterns, improve our practices and meet accountability expectations
- Report on implementation and improvements to our Board and, as appropriate, to regulators and partner universities

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Audience: Current and future residents, parents and carers, Union College workers and Board, key stakeholders and regulators

Disclaimer: Union College's policies and procedures for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, including sexual misconduct, are designed to be consistent with and aligned with The University of Queensland's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and associated procedures, as well as UQ's broader frameworks and commitments relating to gender equality, respect, and safe, inclusive campus communities.