

The University of Queensland Union College Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy

Statement of commitment

We are committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for everyone in the Union College community, free from gender-based violence, discrimination and harassment. Gender-based violence harms physical and mental health, undermines learning and participation, and directly conflicts with the goals of the Australian Universities Accord on student safety, wellbeing and success.

Our policy centres the voices and needs of victim-survivors. It recognises that people are affected differently by intersecting factors, including gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, cultural background, disability, age, religion, and other attributes.

We acknowledge that First Nations people, LGBTIQA+ communities, people with disabilities, international students, and others experience gender-based violence at higher rates and in different ways.

What we mean by gender-based violence

For this policy, “gender-based violence” means violence that is used against someone because of their gender, gender identity, gender expression, sex or sexuality, or that disproportionately affects people of a particular gender.

It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, financial, and technology-facilitated abuse (including image-based abuse and online harassment), and stalking.

Gender-based violence includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual assault and rape
- Sexual harassment (unwanted sexual comments, touching, advances or messages)
- Intimate partner or dating violence
- Drink-spiking
- Stalking (online or offline)
- Image-based abuse (sharing or threatening to share intimate images without consent)
- Bullying, vilification or threats based on gender, sexuality or gender identity
- Coercive control and patterns of controlling behaviour in relationships.

Sexual misconduct, including sexual assault and sexual harassment, is a form of gender-based violence and is addressed in detail in our Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy (RES0202).

Technology-facilitated abuse, including image-based abuse, can occur via social media (see Acceptable Use of Social Media Policy RES0402) or other IT resources (see Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy

RES0401). For the protection of children and young people, please see the Child & Young Person Protection Policy (RES0203).

Principles

This policy is guided by the following principles, consistent with the National Plan and the Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education:

- Zero tolerance: Gender-based violence in any form is strictly prohibited. We maintain a zero-tolerance approach to such behaviours in our community.
- Trauma-informed practice: All responses prioritise physical and emotional safety, trustworthiness, empowerment, choice and respect for diversity. We aim to minimise re-traumatisation, promote healing and support victim-survivors' self-determination.
- Procedural fairness: Investigations and outcomes are conducted impartially, with sensitivity, confidentiality and procedural fairness for all parties.
- Whole-of-community responsibility: Prevention and response are shared responsibilities of leaders, staff and residents. Everyone has a role to play in creating a culture where gender-based violence is unacceptable and gender equality is promoted.

This policy works alongside our Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy (RES0202), Responsible Consumption of Alcohol Policy and Procedure (RES0301), Drugs Other Than Alcohol Policy and Procedure (RES0302), Acceptable Use of Social Media Policy (RES0402), Resident Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy (RES0401), Child and Young Person Protection Policy (RES0203), Resident Code of Conduct (RES0101), and Addressing Complaints and Concerns Policy (RES0102) as part of a whole-of-organisation approach to safety, wellbeing and equality.

Prevention, education and co-design

We focus on prevention and response. In line with national expectations and our values:

- All residents and staff receive regular training in gender-based violence prevention, trauma-informed practice, intersectionality, cultural competency, anti-discrimination, and respectful relationships
- We co-design policy, prevention initiatives and communication materials with diverse students and staff, including First Nations and LGBTIQ+ residents, people with disabilities, international students and other groups
- We embed prevention into orientation, leadership programs, social events, online conduct expectations, and everyday college life.

Accessible reporting, support and safety

If you experience, witness or become aware of gender-based violence, you can:

- Disclose (tell us what happened to seek support and information)

- Make a formal report (ask us to act)
- Do both, at the same or different times.

You can speak to the Resident Wellbeing Lead, the Deputy Head of College/Deputy CEO, or, where advised, designated external conciliation advisors.

We design reporting pathways to be:

- Accessible (multiple options, including in-person, online or by phone)
- Confidential (information shared only with those who need to know to provide support, manage risk or meet legal obligations)
- Responsive to diverse needs (including cultural, disability and language access).

We provide trauma-informed, culturally appropriate and language-accessible support to victim-survivors, including referrals to external therapeutic, legal and advocacy services. We also offer proper support and referrals to respondents.

To ensure safety while investigations or external processes are underway, we may implement interim measures such as:

- Changes to rooms or living arrangements
- Restrictions on contact, activities or areas
- Temporary exclusion from certain activities or from the premises.

Allegations of gender-based violence will be:

- Taken seriously and acknowledged promptly
- Investigated as appropriate in a timely, impartial and trauma-informed way
- Managed in a way that minimises repeated retelling of traumatic experiences and prioritises safety and wellbeing, while upholding procedural fairness for all parties.

Consequences for breaches may include:

- Education, reflective work or counselling requirements
- Conditions on continued residence or participation in activities
- Formal apologies and agreements about future behaviour
- Restitution or compensation where appropriate
- Suspension or expulsion from Union College
- Bans from attending Union College grounds or events for non-residents.

Decisions may be reviewed internally by college leadership and may also be subject to external review by our Board or the National Student Ombudsman, in line with national arrangements. Our actions do not replace or limit those of the police, universities, or other authorities.

We collect and report de-identified data on disclosures, reports, outcomes and prevention activities in line with national standards, contributing to sector-wide transparency and improvement.

Examples of gender-based violence scenarios

The following examples illustrate situations that may constitute gender-based violence in a college setting. They are not exhaustive.

Examples:

- A group of residents repeatedly taunt and isolate a non-binary resident, using slurs and mocking their pronouns in the dining room and in online group chats.
- A resident shares, without consent, a private or intimate photo of their partner in a group chat, encouraging others to comment on their partner's body.
- A person repeatedly follows a resident between campus and college, waits outside their room or study areas, and sends unwanted messages despite being told to stop, focusing on their gender or sexuality.
- During a college event, a resident pressures another resident to drink heavily, then touches them while they are clearly intoxicated and unable to consent.
- A resident repeatedly makes “jokes” about women not belonging in certain courses or about queer residents being dangerous in shared bathrooms, creating a hostile and unsafe environment.
- A student in a casual relationship threatens to “out” their partner’s sexuality or gender identity to their family and community if they try to end the relationship.

Depending on the circumstances, these behaviours may also be covered by our Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy (RES0202), Acceptable Use of Social Media Policy (RES0402), Acceptable Use of IT Policy (RES0401), Child and Young Person Protection Policy (RES0203), Resident Code of Conduct (RES0101), and relevant laws.

Investigations will follow the procedures outlined in our Addressing Concerns and Complaints Policy (RES0102), adapted as necessary to ensure trauma-informed, victim-survivor-centred practice in line with the Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education.

Our role in national reforms and continuous improvement

As a standalone student accommodation provider, we understand that we will be individually accountable under the new National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence and any associated regulatory framework.

We will:

- Align our policies, processes and practices with the Code and the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children
- Collaborate with universities and regulators to reduce duplication and minimise the need for victim-survivors to retell their experiences multiple times
- Monitor, evaluate, and publicly report on our progress, including prevention initiatives and response data.

We review this policy regularly and sooner if:

- Laws, regulations or national codes change
- New expectations arise from the Australian Universities Accord or the Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education
- Feedback and data indicate that changes are needed.

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Topic: Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in the Union College community

Approval Authority: Head of College/CEO

Approval Date: January 2026

Review Date: December 2026 (or earlier if legislation or sector expectations change)

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.