

Union College Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan to the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence

2025-2026

Introduction

This Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan outlines the University of Queensland Union College's commitments to meeting the requirements of the National Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education (National Code). It establishes a coordinated framework to prevent gender-based violence, support those affected, and ensure effective, accountable responses across the whole organisation.

Union College is a residential college that provides students with an optimal home-away-from-home study experience. Set within beautiful grounds at St Lucia, immediately adjacent to The University of Queensland (UQ), the College welcomes approximately 350 residents each year, comprising domestic and international students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and personal backgrounds. Our residents benefit from professional networking opportunities, evidence-based academic support, and a carefully curated living and learning community with cultural, social and sporting events that foster belonging and connection.

As a residential college, Union College operates within a unique context. Our residents live, study, and socialise together in shared spaces, creating both significant opportunities for community building and specific vulnerabilities to gender-based violence.

This Plan recognises that the residential environment requires particular attention to prevention, response systems, and support for all members of our community. This Plan has been informed by a Whole-of-Organisation assessment of the enablers, systemic risks and barriers to preventing gender-based violence at Union College. The assessment findings are provided in Attachment A and inform all actions described in this Plan.

Union College is deeply committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for every member of our residential community. Our approach places the voices and needs of residents and staff at the centre—especially those from diverse backgrounds, including First Nations peoples, LGBTIQ+ communities, people with disabilities, international students, and culturally and linguistically diverse cohorts. We recognise that gender-based violence is deeply rooted in gender-based power inequalities and rigid gender norms, and that prevention requires institution-wide commitment to addressing these drivers.

This Plan is structured around six key operational areas aligned with the National Code:

1. Accountable Leadership and Governance
2. Safe Environments and Systems
3. Knowledge and Capability
4. Safety and Support
5. Data, Evidence and Impact
6. Community Engagement and Partnerships

This is a Plan that reflects with the expectation of residents, staff, legislators and other key stakeholders. The Plan will continue to be developed through ongoing engagement and collaboration with students and staff, including those who have experienced gender-based violence.

Accountable Leadership and Governance Mandatory Requirements

National Code Standard	Action	Evidence of Compliance
7.2: Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan	<p>Union College will prepare, implement and publish this Plan on its website to guide the College's comprehensive whole-of-organisation approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. The Plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) record the College's whole-of-organisation approach that prioritises the safety and support of residents and staff. b) address factors that drive and contribute to gender-based violence, including gender-based power inequalities, rigid gender norms, and factors specific to the residential context. c) record how the College will implement all mandatory requirements of the National Code; and d) reflect the needs, experiences and agency of all community members, particularly those disproportionately affected by gender-based violence. 	<p>Published Plan on the College website under the Governance and Policies section.</p> <p>Endorsement of Plan by College Board with documented Board minutes.</p> <p>Evidence of consultation with residents, staff, and relevant external stakeholders in Plan development, including consultation with LGBTIQ+ groups, accessibility services, and international student support.</p> <p>Formal communication to all residents and staff about the Plan publication and key provisions.</p>
7.3: Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>Union College will establish a systematic approach to monitor and measure, on an ongoing basis, the impact of prevention and response activities. The Plan will be updated and reviewed at least every four years, or sooner in response to significant incidents or emerging evidence.</p>	<p>Annual reporting to the Board on gender-based violence prevalence, incidents, responses, and outcomes.</p> <p>Key performance indicators established for prevention activities, support service access, and staff/resident awareness.</p> <p>Next scheduled review: December 2026</p> <p>Annual Board reporting.</p>

Additional Actions from Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

Action	Lead Responsibility	Measurement
Establish a Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Advisory Committee comprising senior leadership, and external experts—the committee to meet quarterly to oversee implementation and provide governance oversight.	Head of College or designated Executive Member	The Advisory Committee has been established with documented terms of reference, and the first meeting has been held.
Develop and publish the College's commitment statement on gender-based violence prevention, integrated into strategic planning and all key communication channels.	Head of College and Marketing	Commitment statement published on website, included in resident handbook, communicated to all staff, and integrated into Board governance materials.
Conduct annual cultural audit to assess campus environment, attitudes, and implementation effectiveness, and use findings to inform continuous improvement.	Board with external support	Audit report completed; findings presented to Board and incorporated into subsequent action planning.
Establish clear reporting lines for accountability on gender-based violence prevention to the Head of College and the Board.	Head of College	Governance structure documented and communicated. Position descriptions updated to include specific accountability for gender-based violence prevention.

Safe Environments and Systems Mandatory Requirements

National Code Standard	Action	Evidence of Compliance
<p>7.4(a): Staff Declaration and Risk Management</p>	<p>Union College requires all staff, including casual and contracted staff, to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. declare any previous investigations or substantiated allegations of gender-based violence in similar roles during employment screening. 2. provide full disclosure in employment/engagement decision-making processes. 3. have substantiated allegations considered in promotion and recognition decisions; and 4. declare any existing or previous intimate personal relationships with residents, with risk management plans implemented as required. 	<p>Updated employment and contractor screening forms with mandatory declaration of gender-based violence allegations (effective from 1 January 2026).</p> <p>Risk assessment process documented for evaluating declarations.</p> <p>Conflict of interest and risk management plan template developed and applied to all staff declarations.</p> <p>Enhanced procedures for monitoring staff-resident relationships as part of annual performance review processes.</p>
<p>7.4(b): Non-Disclosure and Non-Disparagement Clauses</p>	<p>Union College prohibits the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) unless specifically requested by a discloser. Any NDA agreed to must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. not prevent the discloser from sharing information for purposes of seeking support. 2. not contain non-disparagement clauses in settlement agreements. 	<p>Updated NDA template that complies with National Code requirements.</p> <p>Documented policy stating the prohibition of NDAs except where the discloser initiates.</p> <p>Settlement agreement template reviewed and updated to remove non-disparagement clauses.</p>

National Code Standard	Action	Evidence of Compliance
7.4(c): Policies and Procedures	<p>Union College aligns its policies with The University of Qld's policies and procedures on preventing and responding to gender-based violence, tailored to the residential college context where necessary.</p> <p>These policies will be reviewed at least every three years in consultation with residents, staff, and relevant external stakeholders.</p>	<p>Confirmation and evidence of alignment with The UQ of Queensland policies.</p> <p>Policy documents are publicly available on the website and provided to all residents at induction.</p> <p>Evidence of recent consultation with stakeholder groups on policy adequacy.</p>

Additional Actions from Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

Action	Lead Responsibility	Measurement
Conduct physical and environmental safety audit of college facilities, including lighting, access points, emergency response procedures, and isolation risks in residential spaces; implement recommendations.	Business Manager / Facilities & Systems Lead	Audit report completed; action plan with timelines developed and tracked; physical improvements implemented on schedule.
Establish secure, confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms available 24/7, including an anonymous reporting mechanism, trained advisors, and digital reporting options appropriate for diverse cohorts (including those with language or accessibility needs).	Deputy Head of College	Reporting mechanisms tested and documented; promotional materials in accessible formats; resident awareness surveys confirm knowledge of options.
Develop Resident Mentor Code of Conduct addressing professional boundaries, duty of care, and mandatory reporting responsibilities; provide enhanced training to all Resident Mentors on gender-based violence dynamics.	Deputy Head of College/Resident Wellbeing Lead	Code of Conduct document finalised and signed by all RMs; training completion records maintained; evaluation forms completed.
Establish clear protocols for managing power imbalances in the residential environment (e.g., RM-resident and senior-junior relationships) with transparent conflict-resolution processes.	Deputy Head of College	Protocol document published; training provided to staff on implementation; accessible complaint pathways established and communicated.
Create and maintain an updated list of all external support services available to residents and staff, including crisis services, counselling, legal advice, and support organisations; ensure 24/7 accessibility and proactive promotion.	Resident Wellbeing Lead	Services list published in multiple formats; included in all resident communications; reviewed quarterly for accessibility and current contact details.

Knowledge and Capability Mandatory Requirements

National Code Standard	Action	Evidence of Compliance
7.5: Prevention Education and Training	<p>Union College requires all residents and staff to complete prevention education and training on gender-based violence and responding to disclosures. Training will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. meet the requirements of the National Code. ii. be tailored to the student accommodation environment; and iii. be approved by The UQ of Queensland. The College will also promote evidence-based prevention messaging tailored to residential settings and evaluate all initiatives. 	<p>Mandatory prevention education program for all residents delivered at induction (semester 1 and 2) with documented attendance records.</p> <p>Annual mandatory training for all staff and student leaders on prevention and trauma-informed response</p> <p>Training delivered by qualified external providers (e.g., subject matter experts in gender-based violence).</p> <p>Evaluation surveys administered post-training to measure knowledge, attitudes, and intended behaviour change.</p> <p>Prevention messaging is integrated into college communications, events, and community-building activities.</p> <p>Annual report to the Board on training compliance rates and evaluation findings.</p>
7.6: Risk Assessments	<p>Union College ensures that risk assessments following disclosures or formal reports are undertaken only by appropriately qualified personnel.</p>	<p>Risk assessment policy and procedure documented.</p> <p>Identified staff trained in trauma-informed risk assessment and safety planning (or trained by external providers).</p> <p>Risk assessment templates and decision-making frameworks are developed.</p> <p>Schedule for external expertise engagement and associated budgeting is confirmed.</p>

Additional Actions from Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

Action	Lead Responsibility	Measurement
Establish internal capability through targeted professional development for key College staff to build expertise in trauma-informed response, risk assessment, and support provision; supplement with external expert engagement.	Head of College	Training completion certificates maintained; competency assessments completed; external expert engagement schedule confirmed
Develop targeted prevention education materials and messaging for diverse resident cohorts, recognising that gender-based violence risk factors vary by identity, culture, and context.	Resident Wellbeing Lead / External Expert	Materials reviewed for accessibility and cultural appropriateness; multiple language versions available; resident feedback incorporated; annual review and updating
Implement a peer education model using trained resident leaders to deliver prevention messaging and model respectful behaviours; provide structured training and ongoing supervision.	Resident Wellbeing Lead	Resident leaders trained and supervised; peer education events documented; attendance and feedback tracked
Create College-specific online resources and micro-learning modules on gender-based violence prevention, reporting options, and support services, accessible to residents and staff 24/7.	Deputy Head of College	Online platform operational; resources tested for accessibility; usage analytics tracked; content reviewed and updated annually
Establish partnerships with external subject-matter experts and research organisations to support evidence-based design and evaluation of prevention programs.	Head of College / Deputy Head of College/	Formal partnership agreements established; research collaboration plan documented; joint evaluation protocols developed

Safety and Support Mandatory Requirements

National Code Standard	Action	Evidence of Compliance
7.7(a)-(c): Person-Centred and Trauma-Informed Responses	<p>Union College ensures that responses to disclosures and reports are safe, person-centred, and trauma-informed. The College will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. implement checks and balances to ensure trauma-informed practice (e.g., staff training, external oversight). ii. provide or facilitate access to support services for disclosers and respondents. iii. promote and disseminate information on policies, procedures, and support services. 	<p>Trauma-informed practice policy and implementation guide developed and published.</p> <p>Staff training records documenting trauma-informed response competency.</p> <p>Partnerships established with UQ and external support services (counselling, legal advice, and accommodation adjustments).</p> <p>Referral protocols and service level agreements documented.</p> <p>Regular communication campaigns promoting support service access (e.g., newsletters, posters, website, resident handbook, induction).</p> <p>Support services contact information is provided in multiple formats and languages.</p>
7.7(d): Risk Assessment Following Disclosures	<p>Union College conducts a comprehensive risk assessment following each disclosure and formal report to determine the necessary safety measures.</p>	<p>Risk assessment procedure documented and communicated to staff.</p> <p>Risk assessment template developed.</p> <p>Timeframe for completion documented (recommend within 48 hours of disclosure).</p> <p>Safety measures (e.g., residential relocation, support arrangements) were identified and implemented immediately.</p> <p>Risk management plans updated as required.</p>

National Code Standard	Action	Evidence of Compliance
7.7(e)(i): Safety Measures and Relocation	Where a disclosure relates to behaviour occurring in residence or at a college event, the College takes all necessary action to immediately manage risk, including relocation of the respondent (where required) and facilitating urgent access to support services.	<p>A critical incident protocol was developed addressing relocation procedures and emergency response.</p> <p>Arrangements with UQ and external accommodation services for emergency relocation.</p> <p>Process for immediate access to counselling and crisis support services.</p> <p>Documentation of all safety measures taken in each incident.</p> <p>Review and approval by Head of College for all relocation decisions.</p> <p>Decisions that do not require relocation remain with the Deputy Head of College.</p>
7.7(e)(ii)-(iii): Discloser Choice of Response Leader	<p>The College has arrangements in place enabling disclosers to choose whether the UQ or the College leads the response to a disclosure.</p> <p>If the College leads, it undertakes risk assessment within 48 hours, implements necessary safety measures (including relocation of respondent), manages and monitors risk, shares essential information with the University, and implements support and response plans for both disclosers and respondents within 48 hours.</p>	<p>Formal coordination agreement with UQ detailing response options and lead organisation procedures.</p> <p>Information provided to disclosers about response options at the point of disclosure.</p> <p>Risk assessment template and 48-hour response protocols are documented and implemented.</p> <p>Information-sharing protocols with UQ are documented and agreed upon.</p> <p>Support plan template addressing the needs of both disclosers and respondents.</p> <p>Relocation procedures are documented, including the approval authority and timeframes.</p>

Additional Actions from Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

Action	Lead Responsibility	Timeline	Measurement
Develop a comprehensive critical incident response protocol, tested through scenario planning and staff training, ensuring rapid and appropriate response to disclosures in the residential environment.	Head of College	Protocol completed and tested by 31 May 2026	Protocol document published; scenario training completed; staff competency confirmed; annual review scheduled.
Establish an integrated 24/7 support system for residents in crisis, including immediate access to counselling, safe accommodation, practical support (e.g., meal provision), and ongoing case management.	Deputy Head of College	System operational by 1 January 2026	Service delivery agreements signed; on-call rosters established; emergency resources identified and budgeted; resident information materials distributed
Create individualised safety and support plans for both disclosers and respondents (where appropriate), developed collaboratively and reviewed regularly.	Deputy Head of College/Resident Wellbeing Lead	Framework and template developed by 19 December 2025; implementation commencing 1 January 2026	Plans documented in individual files; review schedule established; evidence of resident input in plan development; outcomes tracked
Establish clear documentation and information-sharing protocols between the College and UQ, ensuring seamless support while maintaining confidentiality and respecting the discloser's agency.	Head of College / <i>Safeguarding Officer</i> / UQ Liaison	Protocols agreed and documented by 31 March 2026	MOUs signed with UQ; staff trained on information-sharing protocols; all staff are aware of the confidentiality framework
Provide trauma-informed training for all executive staff, Board, Resident Wellbeing Lead, Resident Mentors, and relevant staff on recognising signs of distress, appropriate responses, and limitations of their role; ensure clear referral pathways to expert support	Deputy Head of College / External Expert	Annual training requirement by 1 January 2026	Training records maintained; competency assessments completed; evaluation forms analysed; annual training plan confirmed
Establish regular check-in processes and peer support mechanisms for residents, with particular attention to those known to be experiencing difficulties or from cohorts at higher risk	Resident Wellbeing Lead	Processes implemented from 9 February 2026	Check-in protocols documented; staff guidance provided; records of interactions maintained; outcomes of support offered tracked

Data, Evidence, and Impact Mandatory Requirements

National Code Standard	Action	Evidence of Compliance
7.8: Data Collection and Reporting	Union College has arrangements in place to collect and report data on gender-based violence in accordance with National Code requirements. The College will collect data on disclosures, formal reports, outcomes of response processes, and support services.	<p>Data collection system implemented and operational.</p> <p>Data fields align with the National Code-prescribed definitions and categories.</p> <p>Privacy and confidentiality protections are embedded in the data collection process.</p> <p>Annual reporting to UQ in an agreed format and timeframe.</p> <p>Data analysis identifying trends, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>Thresholds for escalation to external regulators and UQ are identified and documented.</p> <p>Secure data storage with restricted access.</p> <p>Regular audit of data accuracy and completeness.</p>

Additional Actions from Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

Action	Lead Responsibility	Timeline	Measurement
Deploy a comprehensive data collection system capturing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number and nature of disclosures and formal reports. • demographics of disclosers and respondents; timeframes for response. • outcomes of formal processes. • support services accessed. • resident and staff awareness and satisfaction with reporting options. • barriers to reporting identified through confidential surveys. 	Resident Wellbeing Lead	System operational by 1 January 2026	Data collection templates and procedures documented; staff trained in data capture; system tested and validated; baseline data collected; reporting dashboard established
Conduct an annual College-wide survey of residents and staff, measuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awareness of policies and support services. • confidence in reporting systems; sense of safety and respect. • satisfaction with the College's prevention and response approach 	External Evaluator (in partnership with UQ)	Annual survey commencing March 2026	Survey instrument designed; approval obtained; baseline data collected; results analysed and reported to Board; findings used to inform improvement planning
Establish an annual reporting schedule including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board reports (quarterly). • UQ partner reports (annual). • public-facing report on the College website. • contribution to sector-wide data collection and research. 	Head of College	First report by 30 June 2026	Reporting schedule documented; report templates established; audience-appropriate summaries prepared; publication schedule confirmed.

Action	Lead Responsibility	Timeline	Measurement
Participate in national research initiatives and sectoral data collection to contribute to evidence-based gender-based violence prevention in residential college settings.	Head of College	Ongoing	Research partnerships established; data shared in de-identified format; research findings integrated into college planning.
Use data findings to inform continuous improvement, with quarterly review and adjustment of prevention and response strategies in response to emerging trends	Steering Committee	Quarterly reviews commencing April 2026	Data analysis reports prepared; Steering Committee meeting minutes reviewed and decisions made; action plans updated.

Community Engagement and Partnerships Mandatory Requirements

Recognition that sustainable prevention requires authentic engagement with the College community, including residents, staff, and relevant external organisations.

Key Actions

Action	Lead Responsibility	Timeline	Measurement
Establish Resident Advisor Group (RAG) comprising residents from diverse backgrounds to provide ongoing input into gender-based violence prevention and response planning.	Resident Wellbeing Lead	Group established and first meeting by 31 March 2026	RAG terms of reference documented; diverse representation achieved; meeting schedule confirmed; resident feedback mechanisms established.
Conduct confidential focus groups with residents and staff to identify barriers to reporting and support, as well as opportunities to improve College systems and culture.	External Facilitator	Focus groups conducted by 31 May 2026	Facilitation notes completed; themes identified; recommendations documented; findings presented to the Steering Committee and incorporated into planning.
Develop partnership agreements with UQ, local support services (crisis services, counselling, legal services), and subject-matter experts to ensure seamless referrals and a coordinated response.	Head of College	Agreements finalised by 31 March 2026	MOUs signed; service level agreements established; contact protocols agreed; regular relationship management meetings scheduled.
Establish an external advisory group comprising representatives from Accredited Specialist services, research experts, community organisations, and resident advocates to guide the College's approach and monitor effectiveness	Head of College	Advisory group established by 30 June 2026	Advisory group charter documented; inaugural meeting held; meeting schedule confirmed; advice incorporated into implementation planning.

Action	Lead Responsibility	Timeline	Measurement
Integrate gender-based violence prevention into all resident development programs, including orientation, leadership training, social events, and academic support.	Resident Wellbeing Lead	Integration plan documented by 31 March 2026	Prevention messaging embedded in all activities; trained facilitators in place; resident participant feedback collected; annual review of integration effectiveness.
Create opportunities for residents to contribute to prevention messaging and peer education, recognising residents as partners in creating a respectful community.	Resident Wellbeing Lead / Events Team	Resident participation opportunities identified and promoted from 1 January 2026	Residents leading awareness campaigns; peer educator involvement documented; resident satisfaction with involvement measured
Establish quarterly communication updates to all residents and staff on the College's progress on gender-based violence prevention, including incidents and responses (where appropriate to share), new resources, and opportunities for involvement.	Head of College	First update by 30 April 2026	Communication plan developed; quarterly updates scheduled; resident and staff feedback on communication effectiveness measured.

Implementation Governance and Timeline

The College's approach to implementing this Plan is guided by transparent governance, accountability, and staged implementation to enable comprehensive embedding across all organisational areas.

Governance Structure

- Board– Ultimate accountability for college-wide gender-based violence prevention and response; quarterly reporting on progress, incidents, and outcomes; annual review of Plan.
- Head of College and Executive Team – Day-to-day leadership and resource allocation; monthly oversight of implementation; decision-making on critical incidents and significant safety matters.
- Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Steering Committee – Quarterly strategic oversight and coordination across all operational areas; consultation with residents and staff; linking College initiatives to UQ and sector-wide frameworks.
- Resident Advisor Group – Ongoing resident voice in planning and implementation; feedback on emerging issues and barriers.
- External Advisory Group – Expert guidance and independent review of college approaches; connection to research evidence and best practice

Implementation Phases

Phase 1 (January–March 2026): Establish governance structures; finalise policies and procedures; launch staff training programs; secure external partnerships and expert support.

Phase 2 (April–June 2026): Implement data collection systems; conduct resident and staff surveys; launch prevention education programs; establish support service pathways.

Phase 3 (July–December 2026): Embed systems and culture; ongoing monitoring and evaluation; refine approaches in response to early feedback; prepare for publication of Plan on 1 January 2026.

Ongoing: Continuous monitoring, data collection, and improvement; annual review and planning cycle; participation in sector-wide initiatives and research.

Resource Allocation

The College commits to appropriately resourcing gender-based violence prevention and response activities, including:

- Resident Wellbeing Officer
- Staff professional development and training
- External expert consultation and partnership fees
- Resident support services and counselling contracts
- ICT systems for data collection and reporting
- Communication and promotional materials

Annual evaluation and review

Resource requirements have been identified in partnership with finance and administrative teams and will be reflected in the College's operational budget.

Conclusion

Union College recognises that preventing gender-based violence and supporting all members of our community is a shared responsibility requiring sustained commitment across all levels of the organisation. This Plan articulates clear actions, accountability, and timelines for creating and maintaining a residential environment where all residents and staff feel safe, respected, and supported.

The College is committed to using evidence and data to continuously improve our approach, to listening to the voices and experiences of our community members, and to embedding prevention into everything we do. We will work in close partnership with The UQ of Queensland, external experts, and our broader community to achieve our vision of a college free from gender-based violence.

This Plan will be published on the College website and updated at least every four years, informed by ongoing data collection, evaluation, community feedback, and emerging evidence.