

# Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Policy

## Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Policy outlines Victoria University's (VU) commitment to promoting and protecting the wellbeing and safety of Children and Young People connected with the University community.

(2) People under 18 years of age (Young People) are part of the Victoria University community. VU's higher education and vocational education and training (VET), VCE, VCAL and Foundations program all involve students under 18 years of age. Further, VU operates several community programs for Children and Young People.

(3) VU recognises and reinforces that it is a shared responsibility of all members of the University Community to create a child safe environment.

(4) VU is committed to the protection, welfare, engagement and support of Children and Young People under 18 years of age in accordance with:

- a. the [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#) and the [Child Safe Standards](#);
- b. the [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#);
- c. the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 \(Cth\)](#) and the [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 \(Cth\)](#).

## Section 2 - HESF/ ASQA/ ESOS Alignment

(5) HESF: Standards 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety (2.3.3 & 2.3.4)

(6) [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 \(Cth\)](#), Standard 5 (Younger Overseas Students).

(7) VRQA Minimum Standards for registration as a non-school senior secondary provider (VCE and VCAL programs) Standard 3 - Student Welfare

## Section 3 - Scope

(8) This Policy applies to Adults and Young People involved in any Activity, and includes the children of staff and students visiting any campus or engaged in any VU activity.

(9) This Policy applies to all activities undertaken as part of study, research, work, living and socialising which is organised, or auspiced by, or reasonably associated with VU, whether that Activity occurs on a VU campus, at a different site, or online.

(10) This Policy also applies to all learning and teaching and other activities undertaken by VU Online.

(11) This Policy does not apply to children accessing services provided by the VU Children's Centres: Refer [Children's Centre Child Protection and Child Safe Policy](#).

## Section 4 - Definitions

(12) Activity: Any VU activity including educational, research, recreational or other programs which take place on VU campuses, are organised or auspiced by VU at any site, or occur online.

(13) Adult: Any person aged 18 years and over (whether staff, students, researchers, visitors, parents, carers or guardians).

(14) Young Person/Young People: A person/people who is currently under 18 years of age, whether or not enrolled as a student.

(15) Child Abuse or Harm

(16) Child-Safe Environment

(17) Staff

(18) Student

## Section 5 - Policy Statement

### Legislative Context

(19) VU is committed to the protection, welfare, engagement and support of Children and Young People in accordance with the:

- a. [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- b. [Child Safe Standards](#);
- c. [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#);
- d. [Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic\)](#)
- e. [Wrongs Act 1958 \(Vic\)](#)
- f. [Worker Screening Act 2020 \(Vic\)](#)
- g. Victorian [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- h. [Criminal Code Act 1995 \(Cth\)](#)
- i. [Crimes Act 1914 \(Cth\)](#)
- j. [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 \(Cth\)](#)
- k. [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 \(Cth\)](#).
- l. [AHRC National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)
- m. [DFAT Child Protection Policy 2017](#)
- n. [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 \(Updated 2018\)](#), Chapter 4.2: Children and Young People

### Commitment to Child Safety

(20) VU values Young People and is committed to their safety and wellbeing. VU wants Young People to be safe, respected, engaged and happy within the University community.

(21) VU is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all Young People. This includes:

- a. A commitment to the cultural safety of Young People with Aboriginal heritage and Young People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- b. A commitment to the social and psychological safety of Young People of all sexualities and gender identities, including intersex Young People;
- c. A commitment to enabling the full participation of Young People with disabilities.

(22) VU has zero tolerance of Child Abuse or Harm, and all allegations and safety concerns made to VU will be treated very seriously and consistently in line with VU's [policies and procedures](#).

(23) VU is committed to preventing Child Abuse or Harm by or through the early identification of risks in the University environment and the removal and reduction of those risks.

(24) VU has robust human resources and recruitment practices for all Staff, which explicitly consider child safety and wellbeing. VU is also committed to regularly training and educating its Staff on the risks of Child Abuse or Harm.

(25) VU has policies and procedures to guide and support its leadership team and Staff to achieve these commitments to provide a Child-Safe Environment.

(26) VU aims to manage all allegations of child abuse, neglect and exploitation sensitively and expeditiously, and in accordance with principles of natural justice and procedural fairness;

(27) VU aims to meet all research ethics and compliance requirements, including the Child Safe Standards;

(28) VU is committed to maintaining confidentiality when dealing with and reporting on all allegations of child abuse / harm and exploitation, except as required by law.

## **Safety and Participation of Children**

(29) VU encourages all Children and Young People who participate in its Activities to express their views about matters that directly affect them or are of importance to them.

(30) VU will ensure that Children and Young People are provided appropriate information as to their rights and the standards of care to which they are entitled, and are provided culturally appropriate guidance and support with regard to raising concerns, making complaints or letting someone know if they feel unsafe.

(31) VU will listen to and appropriately act on any concerns raised by a Young Person or any Adult concerning the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person.

## **Supporting Staff**

(32) All Staff must abide by the [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy](#) and the associated [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People - Staff Code of Conduct](#) when interacting with Young People.

(33) VU will ensure that all Staff understand their roles in supporting a Child-Safe Environment at VU. Staff will receive induction and ongoing training, education and support relating to this Policy, the [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People - Staff Code of Conduct](#), and the [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Procedure](#).

## **Reporting Child Abuse and Child Safety Concerns**

(34) VU has processes in place for responding to and reporting on suspected Child Abuse or Harm and concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person. These are specified in [Appendix 1 - Child Safety Reporting Process](#).

(35) VU has legal obligations to report child abuse to relevant authorities including to the Commission for Children and Young People and/or Child Protection Services

(36) VU will work to ensure that all Children, Young People and Adults involved in Activities know what to do or who to tell if they observe actual or potential Child Abuse or Harm.

## **Risk Management**

(37) VU recognises the importance of a risk management approach to prioritise actions which have the greatest potential for reducing Child Abuse or Harm. VU uses this approach to inform the planning and monitoring of Activities.

(38) Risk mitigation actions to address risks of Child Abuse or Harm may be additional to those required to deal with occupational health and safety related risks or other risks.

## **Younger Students on International Visas**

(39) VU will ensure that it fulfils its obligations under Standard 5 of the [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 \(Cth\)](#). The [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People - International Student Welfare Procedure](#) details the steps VU will take to ensure compliance with these obligations.

# **Section 6 - Procedures**

(40) [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Procedure](#)

(41) [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People - International Student Welfare Procedure](#)

(42) [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People - Staff Code of Conduct](#)

# **Section 7 - Supporting Documents and Information**

(43) [Appendix 2 - Child Safety Reporting Guidelines](#)

(44) [Work Integrated Learning Policy](#)

(45) [Work Integrated Learning Procedure \(HE\)](#)

(46) [Work Integrated Learning - Practical Placement Procedure \(VET\)](#)

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
<b>Effective Date</b>	12th October 2021
<b>Review Date</b>	12th October 2024
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Vice-Chancellor
<b>Approval Date</b>	7th October 2021
<b>Expiry Date</b>	9th January 2023
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Lisa Line Deputy Vice-Chancellor Enterprise and Digital Lisa.Line@vu.edu.au
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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Student"** - - a person enrolled at the University in a course leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, licence or other award; or - a person whose study performance is being or is to be assessed by the University, notwithstanding that such a person is not enrolled at the University in a course leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, licence or other award. (The above definition of student is from section 3 of the Victoria University Act 2010 and Council Resolution C2010 - 070).

**"Staff"** - Staff means: - all employees of the University, on all domestic and offshore locations, including student residences, and while engaged in all work-related activities such as conferences and work-sponsored social occasions; - all contractors and consultants performing work on University sites or on behalf of the University; - visiting academics, honorary, adjunct and exchange staff; - the Council and its committees; and - any volunteer in the workplace and study environment.

**"Child Abuse or Harm"** - Any act committed against a child involving: A sexual offence; or An offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 ; and The infliction, on a child, of: Physical violence; or Serious emotional or psychological harm; and The serious neglect of a child.

**"Child-Safe Environment"** - An environment that is created to reduce opportunities for harm or abuse to children. A child safe organisation is one that: Empowers and values children Engages with families and the broader community Adopts suitable strategies Takes appropriate action to promote child safety and wellbeing at all levels of the organisation.