

Sexual Assault Response Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Policy affirms Victoria University's (VU) commitment to:

- a. Providing a safe and respectful environment for work and study for all members of the VU community.
- b. Proactively addressing any environmental factors within the University's control which may contribute to sexual assaults involving members of the VU community.
- c. Responding compassionately, appropriately and quickly to disclosures made by victims of sexual assault.

Section 2 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS ALIGNMENT

(2) HESF: Standard 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety; 6.1.4 Corporate Governance

(3) ESOS: Standard 5 Younger overseas students; Standard 6 Overseas student support services

(4) Outcome Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2025; Standard 2.6 Wellbeing; 2.7, 2.8 Feedback, Complaints and Appeals. Compliance Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations and FPP Requirements 2025: Standard 20 Compliance with Laws.

Section 3 - Scope

(5) This Policy applies to:

- a. all staff across the University, in all domestic and offshore locations, including but not limited to student residences, and while engaged in all work-related activities including but not limited to conferences and work-sponsored social occasions;
- b. all contractors and consultants performing work on University sites or on behalf of the University;
- c. all onshore and offshore students enrolled or registered in any University program, whether Award or Non-Award, including:
 - i. students with provisional enrolment status;
 - ii. people whose studies were completed or terminated within the six months prior to the making of their allegation or disclosure under this Policy, provided that the matter to which the allegation/disclosure relates occurred during the course of their enrolment;
 - iii. students undertaking work integrated learning activities outside of the University;
 - iv. while engaged in all student related activities, including but not limited to representing VU at study related functions or events; and,
 - v. students from other academic institutions undertaking work integrated learning activities at VU.
- d. visiting academics, honorary, adjunct and exchange staff;
- e. the Council and its committees;
- f. any volunteer in the workplace and study environment.

(6) This Policy only applies to disclosures by a person who is a staff member, contractor, student, or former student (as defined under section 5(c) of this Policy) of the University. Persons who are not a staff member, contractor, student or former student (as defined under section 5(c) of this Policy) are encouraged to refer their allegation to the Police.

(7) In all cases where a child is involved, the matter will be dealt with under the mandatory reporting obligations under section 327 of the [Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic\)](#), the [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#) and Part 4.4 of the [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#), and those of other legislative schema such as the National Law under the [Health Practitioners Regulation National Law Act 2009](#).

Section 4 - Definitions

(8) Consent: Free agreement, made without coercion or as the result of deceit, by a person who is legally capable to give such agreement. Consent to sexual contact cannot be given by children, by people with an impairment which prevents them from providing legal consent (eg. Relevant medical condition). Consent can be withdrawn at any time during the act(s) in question, and only applies to each specific act and must be obtained in each instance.

(9) Discloser: A person making a disclosure.

(10) Disclosure: A statement that a person has been sexually assaulted on university premises or otherwise in connection to the university, however communicated.

(11) Report: A report to police of behaviour which may constitute a criminal offence.

(12) Respondent: The person whose behaviour is the subject of a disclosure or report.

(13) Sexual Assault

(14) Victimization: To subject or threaten to subject a discloser or someone supporting a discloser to any detriment for making a disclosure or supporting someone who has made a disclosure as the case may be.

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(15) Sexual assault is a crime and is not tolerated at VU.

(16) VU will work to create an environment free of sexual assault as reasonably practicable. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. providing training and awareness raising programs for both staff and students;
- b. addressing identified safety issues associated with particular locations on campuses;
- c. seeking to establish, and disrupt, common patterns in these crimes on campus or otherwise associated with VU.

(17) All member's of the VU community have the right:

- a. To be treated with respect, compassion and dignity by all other VU community members if you have been sexually assaulted.
- b. To be provided with any support services that you need to help you with the aftermath of the sexual assault.
- c. To make your own decision about how you wish to progress the matter (ie if you wish to proceed to a police report, or not) except in very unusual circumstances where VU is required to notify the appropriate authorities, and as set out in Clause 26 below.
- d. To expect that VU will take action with regard to your Disclosure in a timely and appropriate manner.

- e. To participate in a process that minimises further disruption to you.
- f. To not be victimised by any person, because you have made a disclosure or police report of sexual assault or supported a person who has made a disclosure or police report of sexual assault.

(18) As a member of the VU community, you have the responsibility:

- a. To never sexually assault another person.
- b. To respond respectfully, compassionately and appropriately if a disclosure of sexual assault is made to you by any person.
- c. If the disclosure is made by a person aged under 18 years, report the matter using the [Child Safety Reporting Process](#) in the [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Procedure](#) (this is mandatory).
- d. To not retaliate in any way against a person who has made a disclosure of sexual assault.

(19) The University acknowledges the experiences, needs and perspectives of distinct population groups, including, but not limited to:

- a. those who identify as transgender or gender diverse;
- b. those who identify as LGBTIQ+;
- c. Aboriginal staff and students;
- d. staff and students with a disability;
- e. culturally and linguistically diverse staff and students; and,
- f. international students.

Part A - What is Sexual Assault?

(20) Sexual assault is a crime which carries serious penalties if proven. It covers a range of sexual behaviours which take place without a person's consent, or where their consent has been obtained through deception or coercion, or where consent is withdrawn. This includes:

- a. Rape;
- b. Indecent assault (sexual acts that involve touching but not penetration);
- c. Any sexual contact with a child;
- d. Sexual servitude;
- e. Forcing someone to witness a sex act.

Part B - When Sexual Assault Occurs

(21) VU treats all disclosures of sexual assault seriously.

(22) In addressing disclosures of sexual assault:

- a. VU will exercise procedural fairness. Those involved in the process will not be biased or affected by conflict of interest, and will act fairly and impartially.
- b. Confidentiality will be maintained wherever possible in the handling of disclosures.

(23) People making disclosures should not suffer adverse consequences or reprisals from VU or any of its staff as the result of making a disclosure. If victimisation occurs, VU will take steps to address it.

Disclosures

(24) If someone makes a disclosure of sexual assault to you, you must, to the best of your ability:

- a. assist the discloser to contact security and/or police if they choose to do so;
- b. assist the discloser to access and understand University [policies and procedures](#);
- c. advise the discloser of counselling and support services available;
- d. refer the discloser to the relevant area for help and advice:
 - i. People & Culture (staff); and,
 - ii. Safer Community Unit (students).

(25) A disclosure is not a complaint and is not investigated as one. A person who makes a disclosure may or may not proceed to make a police report.

Disclosures by witnesses or people who have heard of assaults

(26) If you have witnessed a sexual assault or possible sexual assault, or have heard credible reports from others that a sexual assault may have taken place, you should discuss your concern with the relevant area as detailed in Clause 21(d).

(27) Your discussion will be treated with the same degree of appropriate confidentiality as a disclosure from an individual who has been sexually harassed would be.

If you have been sexually assaulted

(28) If you are sexually assaulted at VU, you are strongly encouraged to disclose the matter. You may choose to:

- a. Make a police report immediately.
- b. Disclose the matter to a member of staff or fellow student whom you trust.
- c. Disclose the matter with the relevant area as detailed in Clause 21(d).
- d. Make a police report subsequent to making a disclosure.

(29) In rare cases, in the event that you do not wish to make a police report but there is a strong concern that a report is required in order to prevent a further crime from occurring or to prevent harm to you or to others, VU may still proceed to make a police report.

- a. If VU determines that it is necessary to report an alleged crime to police against your wishes, this action and the reasons for it will be explained to you. Such action will only be taken where there is an unacceptable level of risk.

If an allegation is made that you have sexually assaulted someone

(30) Where a matter is referred to Victoria Police, VU will cooperate fully with the police inquiry.

(31) If VU determines it necessary to protect the safety and wellbeing of the person who has made an allegation against you, you may be subject to measures while a police investigation is ongoing, and/or upon advice from a CASA (Centre Against Sexual Assault) including:

- a. Suspension or exclusion from the University in accordance with section 41 of the [Governance, Academic and Student Affairs Statute 2013](#).
- b. Imposing restrictions on your presence on University premises in accordance with section 51 of the

(32) Disciplinary action will also be taken against anyone who retaliates against or victimises a person who has made a disclosure or police report.

After a matter is completed

(33) After finalisation of any police action or advice from CASA, VU will continue to provide assistance and support measures as required to:

- a. protect the safety and welfare of all parties, and
- b. facilitate the recovery of any person who has been sexually assaulted.

(34) If you are charged and found guilty of committing a sexual assault and VU determines there is a continuing risk to the person who has made a disclosure or police report, you may be subject to disciplinary action under the relevant University Policy.

Section 6 - Procedures

(35) [Sexual Assault Response Procedure.](#)

Section 7 - Guidelines

(36) Nil.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	3rd April 2019
Review Date	23rd February 2023
Approval Authority	Vice-President, People and Culture
Approval Date	27th March 2019
Expiry Date	30th December 2025
Accountable Officer	Lisa Line Deputy Vice-Chancellor Enterprise and Digital Lisa.Line@vu.edu.au
Responsible Officer	Simone Wright Chief Human Resources Officer +61 3 9919 5447
Enquiries Contact	Marian Cronin Associate Director, Inclusion and Belonging +61 3 9919 9507

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Sexual Assault" - A range of unwanted sexual behaviors, which constitute a crime, whereby a person is forced, coerced or tricked into sexual acts without their consent, including when they have withdrawn their consent. This includes: Rape Indecent assault (sexual acts that involve touching but not penetration) Any sexual contact with a child Sexual servitude unwanted sexual behaviour not involving touching, eg. forcing someone to witness a sex act

"Aboriginal" - The use of the word Aboriginal throughout VU Policy and Procedure refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people connected to and/or residing in South East Australia.