Gender-based Violence Policy

Available Support
If you have experienced Gender-based Violence, Victoria University (VU or University) will support you. a) If you are in immediate danger, call 000. b) On-campus Security can be contacted 24/7 by calling +61 3 9919 6666. c) For confidential support and advice: (i) All Students, both onshore and overseas through DFAT funded programs, can contact Safer Community Online at https://www.vu.edu.au/safety-respect, by emailing safer.community@vu.edu.au, or by calling +61 3 9919 5707. (ii) Staff can email confidential.support@vu.edu.au. d) Free, confidential counselling is available for Students and Staff. e) Support services available to Students are outlined in the Support for Students Policy and include: Safer Community Student Counselling Student Advocacy
Reporting contacts under the DFAT Program Requirements are as follows: (a) Australia Awards Scholarships (AAS): Email ausawards@vu.edu.au Phone +61 3 9919 1159 (b) New Colombo Plan (NCP): Email educationabroad@vu.edu.au Phone +61 3 9919 1352
You can talk to us about what happened if you would like to receive support. You can also make a Formal Report if you would like VU to consider taking steps about your experience of Gender-based Violence, such as commencing an investigation.
When you speak to us: a) You will be listened to, treated with respect, and supported. b) You can bring a support person with you. c) You will not face penalties or Victimisation.

Section 1 - Summary

(1) Gender-based Violence means any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender, that results in, or is likely to result in, harm, coercion, control, fear or deprivation of liberty or autonomy.

(2) Gender-based Violence is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Victoria University (VU). VU recognises that Gender-based Violence is prevalent and causes serious harm. The University will take every possible step to prevent Gender-based Violence and will treat all disclosures with sensitivity.

(3) This Policy affirms VU's commitment to preventing, responding to, reducing and eliminating all forms of Gender-based Violence whilst providing safe, respectful, and inclusive study, work, social and living environments for all members of the VU community.

(4) VU recognises that certain individuals in its community, including women, First Nations people, transgender and gender diverse individuals, LGBTIQ+ communities, people with disabilities, culturally and racially marginalised individuals are disproportionately affected by Gender-based Violence and experience it in unique and compounding ways.

(5) Responsibilities for preventing and responding to Gender-based Violence are outlined here.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.

Section 2 - Scope

(6) This Policy applies to:

a. All Students (onshore and offshore) enrolled or registered in any University program, in relation to alleged conduct during their enrolment.
b. All Staff.
c. Contractors and subcontractors, including:
    i. Employees of contractors and subcontractors; and
    ii. Employees of labour hire companies who have been assigned to perform work for or on behalf of VU.
d. Council and committee members.
e. Visiting academics, honorary, adjunct and exchange appointees.
f. Volunteers.
g. Affiliated organisations.
h. Entities that conduct activities on behalf of VU, including but not limited to businesses and organisations that operate on, use or lease the VU's land and facilities.

(7) This Policy and supporting Procedures apply to:

a. conduct or behaviour occurring at all VU domestic and offshore locations, including at non-VU locations at which VU activities are being conducted (either by VU or its businesses or partners); and
b. conduct or behaviour that occurs in all University activities, including remote learning/work environments and off-campus activities such as conferences, work-integrated learning, work-sponsored social occasions, VU study-related functions or events and activities undertaken where there is a connection to VU work and/or study. This extends to conduct involving digital communications such as email, SMS, messaging platforms, and social media.

(8) Support and options are available regardless of when or where the conduct occurred. Formal investigations or disciplinary processes will proceed where there is a material connection to VU and the University has jurisdiction.

(9) 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 (Vic).

(10) Where an incident, disclosure or concern involves a Child or Young Person under 18, VU will act in accordance with its Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Policy and Procedure and comply with all mandatory reporting obligations under Victorian and Commonwealth law. The Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Policy and Procedure take precedence over this Policy to the extent of any inconsistency regarding harm to children.

(11) Confidentiality will be respected wherever possible; however, it may be limited where there is an imminent risk to safety or a legal obligation to disclose.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

Prevention of Gender-based Violence

(12) VU understands that gender inequality sets the social conditions that allow gender-based violence to occur. VU acknowledges and aims to address the four gendered drivers of violence against women:

a. condoning violence against women (attitudes that excuse, minimise or trivialise violence)
b. men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
c. rigid gender stereotypes (that is, stereotypes of what it means to be an 'ideal' man or woman)
d. male peer behaviours that promote aggression and disrespect towards women.

(13) VU recognises that other forms of inequality and discrimination – including but not limited to racism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism – intersect to shape people's experiences of gender-based violence. VU also recognises there are shared drivers of violence against women and violence against LGBTIQA+ people.

(14) Women, First Nations women, transgender and gender-diverse people, LGBTIQA+ people, women from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds, and women with disabilities are more likely to experience gender-based violence than others. VU recognises that evidence shows the majority of people who perpetrate gender-based violence are men.

(15) To prevent and mitigate the risk of Gender-based Violence, VU will:

a. Promote gender equality, respect, diversity and inclusion across the University.
b. Ensure that respectful and inclusive behaviour is modelled at all levels of the University.
c. Promote positive, respectful behaviours and challenge harmful attitudes or practices.
d. Require mandatory training for Staff, Students in leadership roles, and others in positions of responsibility.
e. Monitor and report on prevention initiatives, risks and outcomes through governance structures.
f. Engage with internal and external advisers to strengthen prevention and response strategies.

(16) VU will deliver evidence-based prevention and education initiatives that:

a. Raise awareness about Gender-based Violence and factors that drive and contribute to it.
b. Are inclusive of intersectional and identity-specific experiences.
c. Are tailored for Students, Staff, and leadership.
d. Include induction, refresher, and event-based awareness campaigns.
e. Provide information on University policies, procedures, and available support services.
f. Assist VU Staff and leadership to address conditions within their control that may give rise to, or perpetuate, Gender-based Violence.

(17) All members of the VU community have the right:

a. To be safe and treated with respect, compassion and dignity.
b. To be offered access to compassionate and culturally safe support services, either provided by VU or in the community.
c. To expect timely and appropriate responses to disclosures.
d. To be protected from retaliation, discrimination or mistreatment for disclosing or reporting, or for supporting someone who has done so.
e. To have confidentiality maintained wherever possible when Disclosures and Formal Reports are managed, subject to safety considerations and legal obligations.

Disclosures of Gender-based Violence

(18) A Disclosure involves a person sharing information about experiencing or witnessing Gender-based Violence.

(19) Disclosures can be made as follows:

a. Students can contact Safer Community Online at https://www.vu.edu.au/safety-respect, at safer.community@vu.edu.au or by calling +61 3 9919 5707 and can also request an in-person appointment.
b. Staff can email confidential.support@vu.edu.au.
c. Individuals who are not Staff members or Students can make a disclosure under the Complaints Procedure (Student and Public).

(20) Staff who receive a disclosure must respond with empathy and refer the person to the appropriate area:

a. Safer Community (students)
b. People & Culture (staff).

(21) VU acknowledges that responses to Disclosures will be guided by the Discloser's wishes. If a Discloser chooses not to make a Formal Report, VU will respect that decision and provide appropriate support, while also considering its legal obligations. Please refer to section below 'Formal Reports of Gender-based Violence'.

(22) Disclosures may or may not result in formal investigation or disciplinary action. In all cases, the University will provide appropriate education, protective measures and support services to all parties involved.

(23) Disclosures may also be made by witnesses or others who become aware of alleged incidents, and will be managed with the same confidentiality and care.

(24) VU will respect an individual's decision not to make a report to external agencies such as Victoria Police. However, VU will:

a. report to Victoria Police or another regulatory body where it is legally obliged to do so; and/or
b. consider notifying Victoria Police or another regulatory body with relevant non-identifiable information if the University has information that indicates a decision not to report may pose a serious and imminent risk to members of the University or general community.

(25) Where VU determines that it is necessary to report an alleged crime to Victoria Police against an individual's wishes, this action and the reasons for it will be explained to the Discloser.

(26) VU will provide Disclosers with information about relevant external agencies including the Australian Human Rights Commission, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, and Victoria Police for allegations of criminal offences.

(27) VU will use a range of resolution options, including confidential advice, informal resolution processes, formal investigations and access to external agencies where appropriate. VU's approach will be person-centered and trauma-informed, prioritising the safety, wellbeing and wishes of the Discloser.

(28) Where a Disclosure or Formal Report is made, VU will take appropriate action, including protective measures to ensure safety, privacy and wellbeing of all involved. There may be times when protective measures necessarily involve a breach of someone's privacy due to risks to their safety or the safety of those around them.

(29) Both Disclosures and Formal Reports may be made anonymously. In such cases, VU will take action where possible, noting that anonymity may limit the University's ability to respond.

Formal Reports of Gender-based Violence

(30) A Formal Report involves a person providing information and raising a formal complaint to VU about their experience of Gender-based Violence through formal channels, which requires VU to consider taking steps beyond the offer and provision of support services, including (without limitation) the commencement of an investigation and/or a

disciplinary process in appropriate circumstances.

(31) Formal Reports made about Students will be managed under the Student Misconduct Procedure.

(32) Formal Reports made about Staff will be managed under the Complaints Procedure (Staff).

(33) VU may assist an individual to report the incident to Victoria Police. However, VU cannot make a report to Victoria Police on behalf of an individual other than as detailed above in clause (24).

(34) Any person who knowingly makes a false, vexatious or frivolous allegation may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the relevant University regulations, policies and procedures.

Support

(35) Students who have experienced Gender-based Violence may be eligible for special consideration under the Assessment for Learning - Adjustments to Assessment Procedure (HE), Assessment for Learning - Assessment Procedure (VET) or Assessment for Learning - Resulting Procedure (VET). Students do not need to make a Formal Report of their experience to apply for special consideration.

(36) A Staff member who has experienced Gender-based Violence may require access to workplace adjustments and/or the University's domestic and family violence or special leave provisions. At the time of Disclosure, the Staff member will be provided with details of the relevant procedures to support such adjustments leave.

DFAT Program Requirements

(37) In addition to University processes, Staff, Students, contractors, and affiliates participating in DFAT-funded business must comply with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) requirements under the Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy and Child Protection Policy.

(38) When an alleged incident occurs in an education abroad program, VU will apply this Policy, and where relevant, the Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Procedure. The University recognises that laws and regulations in other jurisdictions, as well as policies and procedures at host institutions, may differ from Australian law and/or VU policy or procedure and may also need to be taken into account. Support and reporting options remain available through VU channels (e.g. Safer Community, People & Culture, VU Safe App). Where a Formal Report arises from DFAT-funded activities, VU will manage the matter under the relevant Complaints Procedure (Student and Public) or Complaints Procedure (Staff).

(39) The International Scholarships Team and Victoria Abroad will ensure that Staff and Students travelling overseas on DFAT funded business receive information pre-departure which specifies disclosure requirements and arrangements in an overseas context, taking into consideration cultural sensitivities. This will include support services available overseas.

(40) Additional requirements for reporting incidents that occur in DFAT-funded programs or with DFAT-funded personnel are outlined in the Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy.

Compliance and reporting

(41) All records or information obtained by the University in managing a Disclosure or Formal Report will be managed and retained in accordance with the University's Privacy Policy and Records Management Policy and will be kept confidential to the extent possible.

(42) VU's Academic Board and Council will receive a report on an annual basis including de-identified data on incidents of Gender-based Violence enabling trend analysis and systemic responses, de-identified demographic and engagement characteristics of Disclosers and Respondents.

(43) VU will comply with applicable information-sharing obligations (e.g. the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and the Child Information Sharing Scheme) where appropriate.

Section 4 - Procedures

(44) Nil.

Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(45) HESF: Standards 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety; 6.1.4 Corporate Governance; 6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability; 7.3 Information Management.

(46) ESOS National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students: Standards 5 Younger overseas Students; 6 Overseas Student Support Services.

(47) Outcome Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2025: Standards 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 6 - Definitions

(48) Discloser: A person who has shared information about their experience of Gender-based Violence.

(49) Disclosure: The provision of information about a person's experience of Gender-based Violence to the University by the Discloser or another person, however communicated. Disclosures may be made to access support, initiate protective measures, or request formal action. A disclosure may lead to a formal report if the person wishes.

(50) False allegation: Includes statements that deliberately omit a material fact, as well as statements that the speaker/writer knows to be untrue.

(51) Frivolous allegation: Allegations that have no proper purpose and are otherwise groundless, and an investigation would not be warranted.

(52) Formal report: The provision, through formal reporting channels, of information about a person’s experience of Gender-based Violence by a Discloser to the University, which requires the University to consider taking steps beyond the offer and provision of support services. These steps may include investigation, risk mitigation, or disciplinary proceedings under misconduct processes. Formal reports are made with the Discloser’s informed consent.

(53) Gender-based Violence

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

(55) Support person: An independent person (excluding a legal practitioner) that provides assistance and support to the Staff or Student.

(56) Vexatious allegations: means allegations that are without merit and intended to cause inconvenience, annoyance, harassment or financial cost to the University and/or the person who is the subject of the allegations.

(57) Victimisation: 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.

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	1st January 2026
Review Date	1st January 2029
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	19th December 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Accountable Officer	Lisa Line Deputy Vice-Chancellor Enterprise and Digital Lisa.Line@vu.edu.au
Responsible Officer	Carol Corzo Chief Wellbeing Officer +61 3 9919 5100
Enquiries Contact	April Vocale Student Complaints and Integrity Manager april.vocale@vu.edu.au

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Gender-based Violence" - means any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender, that results in, or is likely to result in, harm, coercion, control, fear or deprivation of liberty or autonomy. VU recognises that this includes sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sex-based harassment, conduct that creates a hostile work or study environment on the ground of sex, and victimisation, all of which are unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth).

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or part thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of the individual reading this document to always refer to Victoria University's Policy Library for the latest version.