

Sexual Misconduct and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy (MPF1359)

1. Objectives

Notes on language: Please be aware that this policy describes sexual misconduct including descriptions of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment, which may be distressing for some readers. If anything in this policy has affected or distressed you, you are encouraged to seek support. Throughout this policy, the term sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape and other gender-based violence. This policy uses the terms 'discloser' or 'person who has experienced sexual misconduct' rather than the term 'victim-survivor'. While the University does not wish to diminish the experiences of victim-survivors, neutral language has been chosen consistently with the National Higher-Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence. Definitions for key terms are given in section 7.

1.1. The University acknowledges that sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape and other gender based violence) occurs in our workplace and educational settings and is both under-reported and preventable. It causes harm to those individuals directly affected, to the University community, and to society broadly.

1.2. The objectives of this policy are to:

- a) make clear that sexual misconduct, including gender based violence, is unacceptable, and has no place in our University community;
- b) commit the University to taking positive action to prevent sexual misconduct in all its forms, and to take timely and appropriate action in response to sexual misconduct;
- c) prioritise the safety and wellbeing of individuals making disclosures or formal reports about sexual misconduct, while adhering to principles of procedural fairness and striving to ensure a timely, sensitive and respectful process;
- d) provide clarity regarding what constitutes sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape and other gender-based violence;
- e) describe how disclosures to the University can be made and formal reports will be managed, protecting the rights of the participants;
- f) provide a framework for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct, which is capable of being applied by affiliated organisations;
- g) ensure that our actions in sexual misconduct matters are guided by trauma-informed and person-centred care and concern for the safety of all in the University community, informed by our values and safety commitments, and support a safe and respectful culture of the University community;
- h) respect the right of people who have experienced sexual misconduct to speak about their experiences, subject to legal or other obligations;

- i) confirm that the University will not compensate respondents as a default position in order to finalise or resolve sexual misconduct matters;
- j) encourage safe bystander intervention; and
- k) set out record keeping, data collection and reporting requirements for the University.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to the following people and entities (defined in 7. Definitions below):

- a) officers, employees, leadership, other workers (such as volunteers, honoraries and independent contractors), and students of the University and its controlled entities;
- b) University employees, other workers and students working or living in residential colleges and halls of residence that are owned by the University;
- c) students of the University in the University's affiliated residential colleges, student clubs and societies (defined below); and
- d) other individuals, organisations or entities that conduct activities on the University's behalf (including but not limited to businesses and organisations that operate on, use or lease the University's land and facilities) or who have otherwise consented to apply and comply with all or part of this policy (including in a contract), such as affiliated organisations.

2.2. People to whom this policy applies may seek support and/or advice about sexual misconduct they experience, however the University may be unable to investigate or take action against respondents who are not covered by this policy.

2.3. All individuals to whom this policy applies are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this policy.

2.4. Any person, whether they are a member of the University community or not, can make a disclosure or formal report about sexual misconduct.

2.5. A disclosure or formal report can be made about a current incident or one that has occurred at any time in the past.

3. Authority

3.1. This policy is made under the [University of Melbourne Act 2009 \(Vic\)](#), the [Vice-Chancellor Regulation](#) and the [Academic Board Regulation](#) and supports compliance with the:

- a) *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)
- b) *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic)
- c) *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- d) *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- e) *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* (Cth)
- f) *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- g) *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth)
- h) *Gender Equality Act 2020* (Vic)
- i) *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* (Cth)
- j) *Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2011* (Vic)

- k) *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)
- l) *Protected Disclosure Act 2012* (Vic)
- m) *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- n) *Universities Accord (National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence) Act 2025* (Cth) and *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2025*
- o) *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013* (Vic)
- p) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Policy and Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy

4. Policy

4.1. The University takes action to eliminate and prevent sexual misconduct, recognising that:

- a) strong and accountable leadership across all areas of the University is required;
- b) a power imbalance between individuals increases the risk of sexual misconduct and may result in reluctance to report or address it (and this reluctance can be particularly severe because of a person's age, disability, cultural background or position);
- c) sexual misconduct can be experienced by people of all ages, genders and sexualities, within or outside a relationship, and people's experiences of sexual misconduct can be intensified or more severe as a result of overlapping social identities like race, disability, age and gender;
- d) our University community is a unique environment where people from a broad range of backgrounds come together to work, study and live; and
- e) sexual misconduct can cause significant harm. Responses must be trauma-informed and timely.

4.2. This policy is underpinned by the guiding principles at 4.3 which establish the basis for expected behaviour and decision-making at the University regarding sexual misconduct.

4.3. The guiding principles are:

- a) **Respecting people who have experienced sexual misconduct:** Prioritising the safety and wellbeing of people who have experienced sexual misconduct by providing a person-centred and trauma-informed approach that supports, listens to, and acknowledges the impact of sexual misconduct.
- b) **Focusing on prevention:** Proactively fostering a safe, equitable and respectful University environment for all members of the University community to prevent sexual misconduct.
- c) **Implementing a respectful, safe and consistent process:** Implementing a process that is informed by our values and commitments, safe, transparent, timely and consistent for all members of the University community, assisted by accurate record-keeping and reporting to ensure the University identifies trends and responds with best practice.
- d) **Empowering accountable leadership:** Leaders are accountable to the University for the prevention of sexual misconduct (including gender-based violence) and must empower all members of the University community to be informed, active bystanders who uphold and visibly champion these principles through their actions, words and decisions.

- e) **Building community knowledge and understanding:** Taking proactive steps to educate and inform the University community to support a shared understanding of what constitutes sexual misconduct and reinforcing the message that sexual misconduct will not be tolerated.
- f) **Ensuring integrity of policy and process:** Transparently reviewing, updating and communicating accessible and culturally sensitive, evidence-based policies and processes.
- g) **Supporting the right of people who have experienced sexual misconduct to speak:** The University supports the right of people who have experienced sexual misconduct to seek support and advice. The University and its processes will not limit or constrain a person's right to speak about their lived experience.
- h) **Enacting fair decision-making:** Enacting decisions that are based on procedural fairness and are unhindered by the status, power or influence of the parties involved, and protecting and supporting those who come forward from victimisation.
- i) **Supporting cultural sensitivity and safety:** Ensuring safety for all members of the University community by being aware of cultural differences, and by recognising and addressing cultural and linguistic barriers, including through engagement with community elders, interpreters and through other means to ensure culturally sensitive support.
- j) **Respecting intersectionality:** Understanding, respecting, and embracing the many aspects of a person's identity in preventing and responding to sexual misconduct. These may include Indigeneity, race, ethnicity, socio-economic background, migration status, age, disability, religion, sex, gender, gender identity and sexuality as well as a range of individual unique characteristics and experiences.

Right to make a disclosure or formal report

4.4. Any individual, whether they are a member of the University community or not, can make a disclosure (in accordance with 5.5) and/or a formal report (in accordance with 5.6) about a current or past experience of sexual misconduct.

4.5. The following principles apply to disclosures and formal reports:

- a) The University recognises that individuals will have different preferences in terms of how and to whom they wish to make disclosures and/or formal reports;
- b) A disclosure and/or a formal report may be made anonymously. However, if a disclosure and / or formal report is made anonymously, this may impact the action the University is able to take in response to the disclosure and / or formal report;
- c) A disclosure does not automatically lead to an investigation or action, except as provided in 5.11.

4.6. Sexual misconduct may constitute criminal activity. The University supports the right of individuals covered by this policy who have experienced sexual misconduct or sexual harassment to decide whether or not they want to report the incident to Victoria Police, and/or equal opportunity, employment, and health and safety authorities (although the University may be required to report the matter to police in the limited circumstances identified in 5.56).

Support relating to disclosure and formal reports of sexual misconduct

- 4.7. The University will provide assistance and support to people who have experienced sexual misconduct, who wish to make a disclosure or formal report, or are considering whether to do so.
- 4.8. Any member of the University community, including a discloser or respondent, is encouraged to seek assistance and support in relation to matters arising from sexual misconduct.

5. Procedural principles

Support and advice

- 5.1. Any person, whether they are a member of the University community or not, may contact the [Safer Community Program](#) (Safer Communities) for support and/or advice on matters relating to sexual misconduct. When appropriate, Safer Communities may:
- a) refer individuals to internal and external specialist agencies for wellbeing and other types of assistance (including as set out in sections 5.35 and 5.36 below);
 - b) provide advice on reporting to Victoria Police and equal opportunity, employment, and health and safety authorities; and
 - c) provide advice on the appropriate channel for making a formal report (see also section 5.5 below).
- 5.2. A list of on-campus and off-campus support services including counselling and psychological services, health services, after-hours mental health crisis support, family violence and men's behaviour change support and sexual violence crisis lines can be found on the University [website](#).
- 5.3. [Campus Security](#) is available to all people accessing University campuses.
- 5.4. Emergency support is available to students and employees who experience sexual misconduct while travelling. Students should refer to the Responding to Student Traumatic Event Policy ([MPF1357](#)) and employees should refer to the UniTravel portal for further information.

Making a disclosure

- 5.5. Any individual may make a disclosure to the University (including an anonymous disclosure) about their experiences of sexual misconduct, by contacting the following person or team, depending on their circumstances:
- a) For employees and students, or any individual, whether they are a member of the University community or not, the University's [Safer Community Program](#) (SCP); or
 - b) For employees, Human Resources (HR) staff and/or their own line manager; or
 - c) For employees, the [Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour line](#): this line is managed by an independent service provider and can be used to disclose or report inappropriate behaviour – including sexual misconduct – by University employees; or
 - d) For employees and students the [Speak Safely Portal](#).

5.6. If a disclosure is made to an employee of the University outside these channels, the employee will take appropriate action to bring the disclosure to the attention of the relevant person or team described in section 5.5.

Making a formal report

5.7. Any individual may make a formal report, including an anonymous formal report, to the University about their experiences of sexual misconduct.

5.8. Formal reports by or about students or former students can be made to the [Academic Registrar](#), who will consider the formal report in accordance with the Student Conduct Policy (MPF1324) and applicable provisions of the Vice-Chancellor Regulation.

5.9. Formal reports about all other people, including the Vice-Chancellor, Council members, employees, emerita staff, honorary appointees, casual academic personnel who are contractors and not employees (staff), and all other individuals engaged in activities reasonably connected with the University, can be made by:

- a) employees by contacting their line manager or senior staff in their division, divisional HR staff, Workplace Integrity, the [Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour Line](#); or
- b) employees and students through the [Speak Safely Portal](#);
- a) others via the [Speak Safely Portal](#) or the [Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour Line](#).

Managing disclosures

5.10. The University will take all reasonable steps to support the individual making a disclosure, recognising that the first disclosure may be the most important and how it is received may influence a decision to proceed to a formal report.

5.11. The University will have regard to the wishes of the discloser when determining how to manage the disclosure.

5.12. A disclosure will not automatically lead to an investigation. However, the University may investigate a disclosure even when a formal report has not been made, for example, if:

- a) if the University considers there is sufficient basis to warrant an investigation on its own motion, including where:
 - i. the University has a legal duty to investigate; or
 - ii. there appears to be a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of students, employees or other workers; or
- b) the University is required to report the matter to police in the circumstances identified in section 5.57 below; or
- c) two or more individuals name the same person in separate disclosures or the University is concerned the disclosure may suggest a pattern of behaviour by the person about whom the disclosures are made; or
- d) the individual making the disclosure is under the age of 18 (child) or persons affected or involved in the disclosure are likely to include or involve a child; or

e) the disclosure involves allegations of conduct which could amount to criminal conduct including rape, sexual assault, physical assault, stalking and child abuse and unlawfully dealing with a child.

5.13. Prior to investigating a disclosure, the University will seek and consider the views of the discloser. Where the University determines to proceed to investigation, the University will provide the individual who made the disclosure with:

- a) an explanation for why the matter is being investigated;
- b) information relating to support for the individual who made the disclosure;
- c) the opportunity to be involved in the investigation process if they wish to do so; and
- d) an explanation of the record keeping and confidentiality provisions in this policy.

5.14. Other avenues for managing the disclosure include:

- a) a facilitated discussion or mediation between the discloser and respondent (where safe to do so and provided all parties agree to participate);
- b) an agreed resolution between the discloser and respondent about how they will interact with each other in the future (where safe to do so);
- c) the implementation of safety support measures without progressing to an investigation, including those support measures identified in sections 5.34 and 5.35 below; or
- d) training, coaching or counselling.

Managing formal reports

5.15. The University will manage formal reports made about employees and other workers in accordance with this policy and other relevant policies, legislation and agreements, including the Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy ([MPF1328](#)).

5.16. The University will manage formal reports made about students in accordance with the Student Conduct Policy ([MPF1324](#)) and applicable provisions of the [Vice-Chancellor Regulation](#).

5.17. A disclosure or a formal report about a Council member or the Vice-Chancellor must be referred at once to the Chancellor, and an investigation will be undertaken as directed by Council.

5.18. Where an allegation is made against the Chancellor, this disclosure and/or formal report must be referred to the Deputy Chancellor and an investigation will be undertaken as directed by Council.

5.19. The University will investigate all formal reports where the respondent is a student, employee, or other worker, regardless of the context in which the sexual misconduct occurs. If the formal report has no connection to the University other than the status of the respondent, the University will consider the safety and wellbeing of students, employees, and other workers when determining the scope of the investigation.

5.20. Where a student or employee of the University makes a formal report about a person who is not a student, employee, or other worker of the University:

- a) the University will pursue the matter if practicable for example in accordance with existing participation or affiliation agreements;

- b) if a formal report about conduct occurring at an affiliated college, club or society where the person complained of is not a member of the University, the University will assist the discloser to make a formal report to the appropriate governing body, which may conduct an investigation or formal report resolution process independently of the University;
- c) where possible, the University will seek to facilitate the sharing of relevant information with the other body about the conduct and outcomes of any investigation and protect the wellbeing of its own students or employees who are involved in that body's investigation.

Preliminary assessment and investigation of disclosures and formal reports

- 5.21. Any individuals who have responsibilities for investigating, making decisions or supporting investigations must exercise their responsibilities in accordance with the Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy ([MPF1366](#)).
- 5.22. In the investigation and resolution of a disclosure or formal report, making findings of fact and determining any disciplinary outcome, all parties are afforded procedural fairness and natural justice.
- 5.23. The University is normally unable to investigate disclosures or formal reports where the respondent cannot be identified. However, the University will take reasonable and proportionate action in respect of those disclosures and / or formal reports including to explore other viable options to address the concerns raised in the disclosure or formal report, and will use those disclosures and / or formal reports to identify any trends and risks to inform future action to prevent sexual misconduct.
- 5.24. If a respondent is both a student and an employee or other worker, the University will determine whether the disclosure or formal report should be considered under the policies and procedures applying to students, and/or those applying to employees. Where possible, the University will identify the single most appropriate avenue for addressing and/or investigating a disclosure or formal report. However, processes applicable to employees and students may proceed concurrently where the alleged behaviour occurred in the respondent's role as both a student and employee.
- 5.25. Where a disclosure or formal report concerns misconduct affecting individuals within the University community who are under the age of 18, mandatory reporting requirements and the Child Safety Policy ([MPF1337](#)) apply.
- 5.26. The University will make initial contact with the discloser in relation to their disclosure or formal report as soon as possible, but no later than two working days after receiving a disclosure or formal report.
- 5.27. All disclosures and formal reports will be managed and completed as expeditiously as possible. The University's processes are designed to allow finalisation of formal reports (including any disciplinary processes) within 45 days, but conduct or a decision of the University is not invalid merely because it occurs outside this timeframe. The time for finalisation can be extended (either prospectively or retrospectively) where required, including for one of the following reasons:

- a) the conduct the subject of the disclosure or formal report is also the subject of a court process;
- b) to afford the respondent procedural fairness;
- c) to allow the University sufficient time to investigate, consider the relevant material and make a decision, or obtain legal advice;
- d) where necessary for the health, safety or wellbeing of participants, including where required to ensure the process is trauma-informed; or
- e) to comply with an industrial instrument such as the Enterprise Agreement.

5.28. Disclosers and respondents will be kept informed of the progress of the disclosure or formal report where possible, including being advised of any delays that may arise.

5.29. Once a disclosure or formal report is received, actions may be taken to address any immediate concerns regarding any person's health, wellbeing and safety and participation in work or study, including that of the discloser or any student, staff or other workers of the University. Actions that may be taken in relation to:

- a) employees and other workers are provided in the Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy ([MPF1328](#));
- b) students are provided in the Student Conduct Policy ([MPF1324](#)).

5.30. The University will undertake a risk assessment in response to all disclosures and formal reports of sexual misconduct, and will manage and monitor any identified risks on an ongoing basis. The relevant authorised person (see section 6) will make an initial assessment of a disclosure or formal report to determine risk and next steps, taking account of:

- a) the discloser's needs and wishes;
- b) any wider obligations and duties including obligations relating to occupational health and safety, duty of care and any other legal obligations;
- c) whether there is a risk to the health or safety of the individual who made the disclosure or formal report or another person;
- d) whether the disclosure or formal report relates to a child;
- e) what investigative or other actions, if any, are available to the University;
- f) whether two or more people name the same respondent in separate disclosures or formal reports, or the University is concerned the disclosure or formal report may suggest a pattern of behaviour by the respondent;
- g) whether the University is required to communicate the nature of the disclosure or formal report to other authorities; or
- h) any relevant processes or sanctions that are available to the University under the terms of any contract between the individual (or their employer) and the University.

5.31. Where an investigation is required, it will be undertaken either internally or by engaging an external expert, and a report prepared. The University will ensure that investigations are undertaken by persons with relevant expertise and experience. If an investigation does not proceed, the University will advise the discloser of the decision and reasons for this immediately and ensure appropriate support is available to them.

5.32. The standard of proof applied to the University's findings of sexual misconduct is on the balance of probabilities. This means that the alleged sexual misconduct is found to be more likely to have occurred than not, based on the available evidence.

5.33. For the avoidance of doubt, the University cannot require any person to provide physical evidence relating to a disclosure or formal report.

Support for those involved in a disclosure or formal report

5.34. After a disclosure or formal report is made, actions will be taken to monitor the health, wellbeing and safety of the discloser, respondent and others involved (including witnesses), including their participation in work or study.

5.35. The University is committed to supporting individuals who disclose or make a formal report about sexual misconduct and those to whom a disclosure or formal report is made. The University will ensure that staff with relevant expertise and experience work collaboratively with the discloser to develop a tailored support plan. Support may include:

- a) access to both internal and external counselling services including after-hours, urgent and immediate services, or support and referrals for longer term assistance as required and appropriate, taking into account whether or not a discloser is a member of the University community;
- b) re-crediting any leave taken as a result of the sexual misconduct;
- c) changes to work/study timetable and environment;
- d) changes to supervision or candidature arrangements for graduate researchers;
- e) providing additional or alternative academic support including special consideration;
- f) facilitating mediation to restore relationships in the workplace, where this is appropriate and can be done in a psychologically safe way;
- g) allowing time to attend support services;
- h) assistance to overcome any cultural or linguistic barriers that may exist; and
- i) any other support that the individual requests and that the University considers appropriate in the circumstances.

5.36. The University is also committed to supporting the welfare of respondents and will ensure that staff with relevant expertise and experience work collaboratively with the respondent to develop a tailored support plan. This support may include:

- a) access to both internal and external counselling services including after-hours, urgent and immediate services, or support and referrals for longer term assistance as required and appropriate;
- b) allowing time to attend support services;
- c) assistance to overcome any cultural or linguistic barriers that may exist; and
- d) any other support that the individual requests and that the University considers appropriate in the circumstances.

5.37. All parties, including the discloser and respondent, are entitled to be accompanied by a support person when they are asked about the matters the subject of a disclosure or formal report.

Transparency, Limited Confidentiality and Use of Non-Disclosure Agreements

5.38. Notwithstanding the importance of confidentiality during an investigation, the University recognises an individual's right to speak about what they have experienced or witnessed and to seek support.

5.39. Individuals may disclose confidential information related to the investigation either during the investigation or disciplinary decision-making process after an investigation, for the purposes of:

- a) obtaining support throughout the investigation from family members and others including but not restricted to other University colleagues, close friends, legal advisers, medical practitioners, mentors, counsellors or psychologists, spiritual guides, student and union representatives, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elder or trusted Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community member; or
- b) reporting or pursuing any matter with police or other government or regulatory authorities, including the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, WorkSafe, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, the Australian Human Rights Commission or the Fair Work Commission; or
- c) for an employee, seeking consideration for Performance Relative to Opportunity in a confirmation/promotion submission; or
- d) for an employee, engaging in performance development discussions; or
- e) for a student, seeking Special Consideration as contemplated in the Assessment and Results Policy ([MPF1326](#)), or seeking to vary their enrolment status.

5.40. The University will keep information provided to it relating to a disclosure or formal report confidential during the investigation and disciplinary decision-making process after an investigation, as consistent with all relevant privacy laws and principles, except disclosure that is necessary for the University to:

- a) comply with any law, legal obligations or duties or obtain legal advice; or
- b) report a matter to police, regulatory body or external agency; or
- c) facilitate access to support services; or
- d) investigate a disclosure or a formal report; or
- e) respond to a reasonable request of the discloser; or
- f) ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and the broader University community, and to provide appropriate support to those involved in the investigation process; or
- g) support the University's efforts to build a respectful and accountable community that is free from sexual misconduct; or
- h) comply with mandatory reporting obligations, contractual obligations, other obligations to advise funding agencies, professional registration bodies or other authorities, or to discharge its obligations under this or other policies.

5.41. The University will decide on a case-by-case basis how to communicate the outcomes of investigations and any disciplinary, employment or other operational decisions that are made as a result, taking a trauma-informed approach and considering the discloser's preferences. If they

wish, to the extent possible having regard to the need to afford procedural fairness to the respondent, the discloser will be entitled to receive written notification of:

- a) the commencement of an investigation (prior to any notification to the respondent);
- b) the outcome of the investigation, including whether a disciplinary process will be commenced (on the same day the respondent is notified);
- c) the outcome of the disciplinary process, including the decision, any relevant sanctions, reasons for the outcome, and the right to make an internal and / or external appeal or complaint, including to the National Student Ombudsman (on the same day the respondent is notified); and
- d) the lodgement of any appeal (within two business days of lodgement); and
- e) the outcome of any appeal, including the decision, any relevant sanctions, reasons for the outcome, and the right to make an internal and / or external complaint, including to the National Student Ombudsman.

5.42. The University may share information about findings of facts arising out of an investigation and any disciplinary or employment decisions that are made as a result, with potential future employers or other third parties who seek references or information about a person's conduct while an officer, employee or student of the University or of its controlled entities.

5.43. The University does not, nor will it, ask or require a person who has experienced sexual misconduct to sign non-disclosure agreements. However, a person who has experienced sexual misconduct is entitled to request a non-disclosure agreement if they wish to do so. If a non-disclosure agreement is entered with a person who has experienced sexual misconduct:

- a) the non-disclosure agreement must not prevent the person who has experienced sexual misconduct from sharing their experience of sexual misconduct; and
- b) in limited circumstances, the University may be required by law to disclose specific information about the existence of the agreement or its content (for example, to a regulator).

5.44. On the rare occasion where the University considers that it is appropriate to reach an agreement regarding a person's exit from the organisation to protect the person who has experienced sexual misconduct (or another person's) health and wellbeing, such an agreement will not restrict the right of the person who has experienced sexual misconduct to speak about their experiences, and will not restrict the University from communicating about the case, the outcomes of any investigation, and the disciplinary, employment or other operational decisions that were made as a result. The University will not impose any non-disparagement clause on the discloser that could have the effect of requiring the discloser to keep their experience of sexual misconduct confidential.

Decisions made under this policy

5.45. Decisions relating to any sanctions that the University will impose on a respondent following a finding that sexual misconduct has occurred will:

- a) be proportionate to the nature and impact of the misconduct that has occurred;
- b) consider the University's duties of care;
- c) hold the respondent accountable for their behaviour; and

d) be consistent with the guiding principles outlined at section 4.3 of this policy.

5.46. Sexual misconduct for employees constitutes serious misconduct. The process for determining an outcome of serious misconduct for employees and subsequent sanctions that can be imposed are outlined in either the Enterprise Agreement, or for employees not covered by the Enterprise Agreement, their contractual terms of employment or any applicable modern award, and *the Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

5.47. Disciplinary action for employees, as determined by the University, may include but are not restricted to:

- a) termination of employment with or without notice;
- b) demotion or restricting promotion;
- c) removal from positions of responsibility;
- d) requirement not to attend campus;
- e) formal or final written warnings;
- f) formal requirement to undertake educative counselling, training or development;
- g) written undertakings that inappropriate behaviour has ceased; and
- h) preventing further contact with students or employees.

Raising a grievance

5.48. Students may submit a grievance, appeal or complaint about how their disclosure of formal report was handled under the Student Complaints and Grievances Policy, or to the National Student Ombudsman.

5.49. Except where there has been termination of employment on the basis of serious misconduct resulting from sexual harassment/misconduct (under clauses 1.39.4 and 1.39.9 of the Enterprise Agreement), employees can raise a grievance about how the process in this policy has been followed, and the decisions subsequently made, under the Grievance and Dispute Settlement Procedure provided in section 1.42 of the Enterprise Agreement, or for Senior Managers and Executives under the dispute resolution provisions of their contract of employment.

Reports to the police and other external regulatory bodies

5.50. Many forms of sexual misconduct constitute criminal conduct and breach equal opportunity, employment, and workplace health and safety laws.

5.51. The University will support individuals who have experienced sexual or other offences, or breaches of equal opportunity, employment, and workplace health and safety laws, in deciding whether they want to report the incident to police or other regulatory bodies. Guidance about reporting allegations to police can also be found on the Victoria Police [website](#) or by seeking legal advice.

5.52. If an individual wishes to make a report to police, they should report to the relevant authority in the place where the incident occurred:

- a) in Victoria, the report should be made to [Victoria Police](#);

- b) in an Australian state or territory outside Victoria, to the report should be made to the relevant State or Territory police authority;
- c) outside Australia, the report should be made to the relevant country's police authority.

5.53. Reports about incidents that have occurred online can be made to the [Australian CyberSecurity Centre](#), the Australian [eSafety Commissioner](#), and/or equal opportunity, employment, and health and safety authorities depending on the nature of the alleged conduct.

5.54. An individual's decision to make a report to police will not necessarily preclude the University from investigating or acting in response to sexual misconduct, but any internal University process may have to be suspended pending completion of a criminal process.

5.55. If there are delays to the University's investigation because of a report made to police or a regulator, the respondent and the discloser will be notified of these delays and supported appropriately.

5.56. The University will respect and prioritise the wishes of individuals making disclosures or formal reports but may need to report an incident of sexual misconduct to police against the wishes of the individual, for example to ensure their safety or the safety or wellbeing of other members of the University community, or to meet the University's legal obligations. In any such case the discloser will be informed and supported.

5.57. Sexual misconduct against a child under 18 may constitute child sexual abuse and mandatory reporting requirements and the Child Safety Policy ([MPF1337](#)) apply.

Bystander intervention

5.58. The University values and encourages reasonable and safe actions by those who witness or are told about an incident of sexual misconduct after it occurs (bystanders) to prevent or stop sexual misconduct from occurring or continuing, and to support those impacted by sexual misconduct.

5.59. The University will equip its students and employees to be active bystanders through education, training, information and support, recognising that some are personally affected by witnessing sexual misconduct.

5.60. The University encourages those who observe incidents of sexual misconduct to disclose them to the University and to make use of the support services listed in section 5.1–5.4 if they require assistance and support.

No victimisation

5.61. Members of the University community must not treat someone unfairly or harshly or otherwise subject another person to reprisal action or detrimental action as a consequence of that person:

- a) making a disclosure or a formal report of sexual misconduct;
- b) providing information about a disclosure or a formal report of sexual misconduct;
- c) supporting a person who has made a disclosure or formal report of sexual misconduct;
- d) being the subject of a disclosure or formal report of alleged sexual misconduct; or

e) engaging in reasonable, safe bystander intervention.

5.62. If an employee believes they have been victimised, they can report it via the mechanisms set out in section 5.5.

5.63. A breach of section 5.61 may result in disciplinary action for employees and students.

Information, Data Collection, Reports and Record-keeping

5.64. To inform the University's prevention and response plan, the University is required to, and will, collect and analyse data on sexual misconduct, including de-identified data on incidents of sexual misconduct enabling trend analysis and systemic responses.

5.65. The Chief People Officer and Academic Registrar will provide regular reports on current matters relating to sexual misconduct to the Vice-Chancellor and the University Council.

5.66. The Academic Registrar and Chief Human Resources Officer will:

- a) keep appropriate records of all disclosures and formal reports of sexual misconduct centrally and securely;
- b) keep all records and provide access to those records only in accordance with the Privacy Policy ([MPF1104](#)), any applicable laws, the Records Management Policy ([MPF1106](#)) and the University Records Retention and Disposal Authority;
- c) collect, store and use fully de-identified and anonymised information about disclosures and formal reports made to the University to identify trends and to develop tailored responses to sexual misconduct in the University community; and
- d) ensure access to information relating to disclosures or formal reports of sexual misconduct is restricted to University Employees who have a need to access and use the information to carry out or support responsibilities under this policy.
- e) ensure that pre-employment declarations about prior employment and professional conduct enable the University to assess the risk of gender based violence when assessing suitability for employment at the University.

5.67. Each year, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Community) will publish a de-identified report on the records kept in accordance with section 5.66. The reports will also include information about actions taken by the University in response to systemic issues.

6. Roles and responsibilities

<i>Role/Decision/Action</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Conditions and limitations</i>
DISCLOSURES AND FORMAL REPORTS CONCERNING EMPLOYEES OR OTHER WORKERS¹		
Decisions about whether a case should be referred for formal investigation, addressed through alternative means (e.g. mediation),	Chief People Officer and Occupational, Health & Safety or delegate.	Decision will be in consultation with the relevant Dean or Executive and will consider all relevant material available, advice from Workplace Relations and, where required, legal advice.

or not proceed.		
Decisions about the nomination of an Investigator.		
DISCLOSURES AND FORMAL REPORTS CONCERNING VICE-CHANCELLOR OR MEMBER OF COUNCIL		
Decisions whether a case should be referred for formal investigation, addressed through alternative means (e.g. mediation), or not proceed.	University Council, excluding the accused person/s	Decision will take account of all relevant material available.
Decisions about the nomination of an Investigator.		
DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST EMPLOYEES COVERED BY THE ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT		
<i>Provided as information only – process governed by the University of Melbourne Enterprise Agreement 2024 (as amended) and delegations of responsibilities may change from time to time at the absolute discretion of the University.</i>		
Determine preliminary view on whether the findings of the investigation constitute serious misconduct (at clause 1.39.3 of the EA).	Chief People Officer and Occupational, Health & Safety or delegate.	Must take account of all relevant material (such as, but not limited to, the investigation report, advice from Workplace Relations and, where required legal advice).
Following the University establishing a preliminary view, final decisions that serious misconduct has taken place and subsequent determination of proportionate disciplinary action (at clauses 1.39.6 and 1.39.7 of the EA). NOTE: A Review is not available to an employee where the University's preliminary view is of serious misconduct (see clause 1.39.4 of the EA).	Provost (or delegate) for serious misconduct (Academic Division) Provost and Chief Operating Officer ² for serious misconduct	Must take account of all relevant material (such as the investigation report, independent review report, Workplace Relations advice, legal advice – if any – and the like) and guided but not bound by the recommendation of the relevant Dean (or delegate) and the Executive Director, Human Resources and Occupational, Health & Safety (or delegate). Must take account of all relevant material (such as but not limited to, the investigation report, independent review report, Workplace Relations advice, legal advice) and guided but not bound by the

	(Chancellery and Chief Operating Officer portfolio).	recommendation of the relevant Manager (or delegate) and the Chief Human Resources Officer and Occupational, Health & Safety (or delegate).
DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST EMPLOYEES COVERED BY COMMON LAW CONTRACTS Provided as information only – process governed by the employee’s contractual terms of employment and delegations of responsibilities may change from time to time at the absolute discretion of the University.		
Decisions that serious misconduct has taken place and subsequent determination of proportionate disciplinary action (excluding members of the University Executive).	Provost or Chief Operating Officer ³	Must take account of all relevant material (such as but not limited to, the investigation report, independent review report, Workplace Relations advice, legal advice) and guided but not bound by the recommendation of the relevant Executive line manager (or delegate) and the Chief Human Resources Officer and Occupational, Health & Safety (or delegate).
Decisions that serious misconduct has taken place and subsequent determination of proportionate disciplinary action where the employee is a member of University Executive.	Vice-Chancellor	Must take account of all relevant material (such as but not limited to, the investigation report, independent review report, legal advice) and the recommendation of Executive Director, Human Resources and Occupational, Health & Safety (or delegate)
Decisions that serious misconduct has taken place and subsequent determination of proportionate disciplinary action where the employee is the Vice-Chancellor or a member of University Council or its committees	University Council, excluding the accused person/s	Must take account of all relevant material (such as but not limited to, the investigation report, independent review report, legal advice) and the recommendation of Chief Human Resources Officer and Occupational, Health & Safety (or delegate)
DISCLOSURES AND FORMAL REPORTS CONCERNING 'OTHER WORKERS' Provided as information only – process governed by the relevant contractual terms and delegations of responsibilities may change from time to time at the absolute discretion of the University.		

Decisions that serious misconduct has taken place and subsequent determination of proportionate action.	Relevant Executive manager (or delegate) with input from Workplace Relations.	Must take account of all relevant material (such as but not limited to, any investigation report, Workplace Relations advice, legal advice) and guided but not bound by the recommendation of the Chief Human Resources Officer and Occupational, Health & Safety (or delegate).
NOTE: ¹ The Vice-Chancellor will be informed of all decisions. ^{2,3} Where disciplinary action is to be taken against an employee of the Chancellery (Office of the Provost) the Vice-President (Administration & Finance) and Chief Operating Officer will make the decision. Where disciplinary action is to be taken against an employee of the Chief Operating Officer Portfolio, the decision will be made by the Provost. In the case of other Chancellery portfolios either of these officers may be charged with determining disciplinary action in consultation with the relevant portfolio Executive.		
DISCLOSURES AND FORMAL REPORTS CONCERNING STUDENTS		
Decisions relating to next step responses to allegations of student general misconduct. May involve the appointment of an external investigator with experience in sexual misconduct investigations.	Principal Adviser, Student Conduct and the Academic Registrar.	Must be in accordance with the provisions of the Student Conduct Policy (MPF1324) and the Vice-Chancellor Regulation .
In cases where suspension or expulsion is the penalty outcome for students found to have breached the behavioural expectations of the Student Conduct Policy (MPF1324). Informed of all cases under management.	Vice-Chancellor	Must take account of all relevant material (such as any investigation report, student discipline committee decisions, legal advice and any recommendation of the Academic Registrar or Dean.

7. Definitions

Academic Board Regulation means the University of Melbourne [Academic Board Regulation](#) as may be amended or replaced from time to time.

Affiliated residential colleges, student clubs and societies means:

- a) Residential colleges that are affiliated with the University by University Council in accordance with governing legislation, and
- b) Student clubs and societies that are affiliated either by the University (through the actions of a faculty, school or department) or by the student representative organisations UMSU and GSA.

Affiliated organisation means an organisation that uses the University's intellectual property in its name, marketing, recruitment, or governance documents.

Bystander means someone who witnesses an incident of sexual misconduct or is told about an incident after it occurred.

Consent refers to free and voluntary agreement to a sexual act). A person does not consent to an act just because they do not resist the act verbally or physically. A person does not consent to an act just because they consented to—

- a) a different act with the same person; or
- b) the same act with the same person at a different time or place; or
- c) the same act with a different person; or
- d) a different act with a different person.

Circumstances in which a person cannot consent to an act includes circumstances in which the person:

- a) does not say or do anything to indicate consent to the act;
- b) submits to the act because of force, a fear of force, harm of any type or a fear of harm of any type, whether to that person or someone else or to an animal, regardless of—
 - i. when the force, harm or conduct giving rise to the fear occurs; and
 - ii. whether it is, or is a result of, a single incident or is part of an ongoing pattern;
- c) submits to the act because of coercion or intimidation—
 - i. regardless of when the coercion or intimidation occurs; and
 - ii. whether it is, or is a result of, a single incident or is part of an ongoing pattern;
- d) submits to the act because the person is overborne by the abuse of a relationship of authority or trust;
- e) is so affected by drugs or alcohol or any other substance as to be incapable of consenting to the act, or incapable of withdrawing consent to the act;
- f) is asleep or unconscious;
- g) is unable to understand or is mistaken about the sexual nature of what is happening or the identity of any other person involved;
- h) submits because of force or fear of force or harm of any type (including to someone else or to an animal);
- i) is unlawfully detained or held against their will;
- j) is a child under the age of lawful consent;
- k) is mistaken about the identity of the other person;
- l) mistakenly believes that the act is for medical or hygienic purposes;

- m) in acts involving animals, mistakenly believes that the act is for veterinary or agricultural purposes or scientific research purposes;
- n) engages in the act because of a false or misleading representation that the person will be paid and the act occurs in the provision of commercial sexual services;
- o) is not doing or saying anything to indicate consent;
- p) gives consent and later withdraws consent to the act taking place or continuing;
- q) engages in the act on the basis that a condom is used and another person intentionally removes, tampers with or does not use the condom; or
- r) having given consent to the act, later withdraws consent to the act taking place or continuing.

Controlled entities means all entities that are subject to the control of the University in terms of section 50AA of the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth).

Discloser means any person who makes a disclosure or formal report of their experiences of sexual misconduct to the University.

Disclosure means an individual telling anyone who is part of the University about a person's experience of sexual misconduct. Unlike a formal report, a disclosure does not trigger an investigation or action unless the University has a duty of care to do so. It may also be the first step prior to a formal report being made.

Employee means an individual employed by the University, or a wholly owned subsidiary of the University and who is a national system employee within the meaning of the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth). Employee is also commonly referred to as staff member, academic staff member or professional staff member.

Enterprise Agreement means the [University of Melbourne Enterprise Agreement 2024](#) and in respect of the Melbourne Theatre Company Production and Theatre Service Employees Agreement 2018-2020 and includes any replacements (if any) of those agreements.

Formal report means the provision to the University through formal reporting channels of information about an experience of sexual misconduct, which requires the University 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.

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.

Guiding principles are the principles outlined at section 4.3 which inform this policy and establish the basis for expected behaviour and decision-making at the University with regards to sexual misconduct.

Inappropriate Workplace Behaviour Line is the University's independent, confidential reporting service for employees and students to report inappropriate employee behaviour; unlawful discrimination; sexual harassment; harassment; rape and sexual assault; bullying; stalking; victimisation; or vilification.

Includes and including means where the context permits or requires ‘including but not limited to’.

Leadership means the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, and all members of the University Council.

Non-Disclosure Agreement means any agreement, or any clause in any agreement, that prohibits a person who has experienced sexual misconduct from being about to speak freely about their lived experience of the matters disclosed or complained of.

Non-disparagement clause means a clause in an agreement that requires the parties not to say things about each other that are critical, dismissive or disrespectful.

Other worker means any person who carries out work in any capacity for the University (other than as an employee), including as a contractor or subcontractor; an employee of a contractor or subcontractor, an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the University, an outworker, an apprentice or trainee, a student gaining work experience, or a volunteer.

Respondent means a person about whom a disclosure or formal report is made.

Sexual assault is defined in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (section 40) and means a person intentionally touching another person who does not consent to the touching; and the touching is sexual; and the person touching does not reasonably believe that the other person consents to the touching. Touching can be ‘sexual’ because of:

- a) the area of the body that is touched or used in the touching, including (but not limited to) the genital or anal region, the buttocks or the breasts;
- b) the fact that the person doing the touching seeks or gets sexual arousal or sexual gratification from the touching; or
- c) any other aspect of the touching, including the circumstances in which it is done.

Sexual harassment – as defined in the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) – occurs if a person:

- a) makes an unwelcome sexual advance, or an unwelcome request for sexual favours, to another person; or
- b) engages in any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the other person, in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated the possibility that the other person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Examples of sexually harassing behaviour include:

- i. subjecting a person to any act of physical intimacy or touching;
- ii. staring or leering;
- iii. making, orally or in writing, any remark or statement with sexual connotations to a person or about a person in his or her presence, including suggestive comments or jokes;
- iv. making any gesture, action or comment of a sexual nature in a person's presence;
- v. sexually explicit pictures or posters;
- vi. unwanted invitations to go out on dates;
- vii. requests for sex;
- viii. intrusive questions about a person's private life or body;

- ix. unnecessary familiarity, such as deliberately brushing up against a person;
- x. insults or taunts based on sex;
- xi. sexually explicit physical contact; and
- xii. sexually explicit emails or SMS text messages.

Sexual misconduct in this policy includes gender-based violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape. Some forms of sexual misconduct can occur online including through email, websites, online meetings, social media, games or other forums. Some sexual misconduct may also amount to criminal conduct under state and federal legislation, including the following:

- a) rape which is the penetration of the vagina or anus of any person with any part of the body of another person (including their fingers), or with any object, without the first person's consent;
- b) unwanted oral sex which includes insertion of the penis into the mouth of another person, or use of the tongue or lips on the vagina, penis, scrotum or anus of another person, without their consent;
- c) sexual touching which includes kissing or touching a person's body in a sexual manner, without their consent. This includes unwanted touching of a person's breast, buttocks or genitals;
- d) sexual acts which include doing an act of a sexual nature with or towards another person without their consent or making another person do an unwanted act of a sexual nature;
- e) requests for sexual intercourse, or other sexual acts;
- f) exposing genitals (including flashing) or sexual gestures;
- g) making promises or threats in return for sexual favours;
- h) sexually suggestive behaviour, such as leering or staring;
- i) unwelcome touching, hugging, kissing, fondling or brushing up against someone;
- j) smutty or sexually suggestive comments or jokes;
- k) repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out on dates or to 'hook up';
- l) following, watching or loitering nearby someone;
- m) displaying offensive images, objects or sexually graphic material including posters, pinups, cartoons, graffiti or messages left on notice boards, desks, common areas or electronic devices/ computer screens;
- n) sexually explicit or indecent emails, text messages or posts on social media or via any other digital or electronic communication;
- o) making a person show another person their breasts, buttocks or genitals;
- p) masturbating or pretending to masturbate in front of another person;
- q) name-calling of a sexual nature;
- r) unwelcome physical contact including massaging a person without invitation;
- s) forcing a person to watch sexual acts/pornography;
- t) making, displaying, sending, distributing, threatening to distribute or requesting sexually explicit pictures or posters, audio recordings or photo-shopped images of another person;
- u) giving sexually explicit gifts;
- v) intrusive questions about a person's private life or physical appearance; or
- w) grooming and predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

Student means a student of the University and has the meaning given to it in Part 1 of the [Vice-Chancellor Regulation](#). Without limitation, it includes students undertaking higher degrees by research, non-award study, enabling or bridging courses, foundation programs and vocational education and training courses, and higher education coursework.

Trauma-informed means an approach that recognises that an unsafe response can escalate and compound trauma and that is focused on maximising the safety, wellbeing and support provided to individuals who make disclosures or formal reports by upholding their agency, safety, dignity and wellbeing.

University means the University of Melbourne, and in this policy references to ‘the University’ also includes its controlled entities, and in respect of student sexual misconduct, affiliated residential colleges, clubs and societies.

University community means all employees, past employees, students, former students, leadership, other workers, student organisations, alumni organisations and networks, volunteers, partners with whom the university works and campus tenants, Visitors, Emerita staff, employees with honorary appointments, affiliates, contractors and consultants, employees of research institutes, employees of wholly owned subsidiaries, employees with dual or joint appointments with the University and employees of independent colleges that are associated or aligned with the University.

University Executive is the University’s principal management committee. Its membership includes members of the Chancellery Executive, President of the Academic Board and Deans.

Vice-Chancellor Regulation means the University of Melbourne [Vice-Chancellor Regulation](#) as may be amended or replaced from time to time.

Victimisation has the meaning defined in the Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy ([MPF1328](#)).

Visitor means a person who is appointed as a University visitor in accordance with the Honorary Appointments and University Visitors Procedure ([MPF1156](#)) and may be an academic visitor or non-academic visitor.

POLICY APPROVER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Community)

POLICY STEWARD

Chief People Officer (for employees)

Academic Registrar (for students)

REVIEW

This policy is due to be reviewed by DD MM YYYY.

The University is committed to implementing any recommendations made by the National Student Ombudsman to the University relating to amendments to this policy.