

Respect Action Plan 2025-26



Introduction

The Respect Action Plan 2025-26 builds on the successes and learnings of the University's first Respect Action Plan implemented in 2023 and 2024. The plan is informed by recommendations from victim-survivors, University subject matter experts, and student and staff representatives. It includes several new action areas that respond to an evolving environment.

The Plan advances the University's readiness for the forthcoming *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence*, which will set rules for higher education providers to embed a whole-of-organisation approach to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The University also recognises Australian Government legislation establishing a *National Student Ombudsman* which will provide a forum for students to raise complaints about higher education providers' responses to sexual misconduct. The Respect Action Plan 2025-26 will continue to improve the University's handling of sexual misconduct, by further embedding accountability, support and reporting mechanisms.

In addition to new action areas, the plan also sets out process improvements or refinements to strengthen the effectiveness or reach of existing work. Some actions from the 2023-2024 plan will require ongoing monitoring as they transition into the University's standard ways of working.

The action plan aligns with the University's [Respect Theory of Change](#), and sets out how the University will contribute to the following **objectives** over the next two years:

1. **Culture:** The University has a culture that values equal, positive, and safe relationships and challenges harmful gendered attitudes, structures and practices.
2. **Community:** University community members witnessing harmful gendered attitudes and sexual harassment address these, when safe to do so.
3. **Risk Mitigation:** Risks of sexual harm are considered and mitigated in physical and virtual university spaces.
4. **Pathways:** University community members at risk of experiencing or perpetrating sexual harm are supported to seek assistance, to prevent escalation of harm.
5. **Accountability:** Perpetrators of substantiated sexual harm in the University community are held to account through a robust and procedurally fair response with proportionate consequences.
6. **Support:** University community members experiencing sexual harm are provided with the immediate and longer-term support that they seek for recovery.
7. **Reporting:** A higher proportion of sexual misconduct incidents are reported to the University and addressed.

Items marked with an asterisk within the Action Plan will be prioritised and sequenced by accountable leaders, based on funding.

Respect Action Plan on a Page

New Areas of Action Establish/commence:	Refine / Expand Advance existing work on:
<p>Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Men’s engagement and shared responsibility for a safe community at the University. ▪ Workplace-focused posters and online content on consent, boundaries and bystander action. ▪ Respect Education bridging content for staff promoted to manager, supervisor and leader. <p>Risk Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training standards, escalation and investigation processes for University-owned colleges. ▪ Online safety tools and information on technology-facilitated and image-based abuse. ▪ Clubs training & trained contacts in MU Sport. ▪ Colleges & residences Community of Practice. <p>Pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sensitive screening by health services of potential sexual harm risk factors. ▪ Online support pathways for staff & students concerned about their, or their peers’, behaviour. <p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communications to address cultural & social barriers to reporting. ▪ Accessible Safer Community Program physical location. ▪ ‘Model of care’ including a navigation contact for students going through a complaints process <p>Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cohort-specific, culturally sensitive adjustments in sexual misconduct complaints processes. 	<p>Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy and behavioural expectations in staff induction materials and guidance documents for academic staff. ▪ Respect messaging at events for new students and sexual health campaigns. ▪ Student and staff traffic to the Respect webpage. ▪ <i>Preventing Sexual Misconduct</i> module evaluation and update, refresher training and accompanying resources. ▪ Compliance target achievement for staff Respect Education, and refresher training. ▪ Respect content within existing mandatory training for graduate supervisors. ▪ Gender equity interventions for students, to complement the GEAP for staff. ▪ Meeting the needs of diverse and marginalised cohorts. <p>Community Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint University and UMSU ‘Ignore No More’ student bystander campaign and safe event packs. <p>Risk Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respect content in training guides and briefing sessions for student placements and internships. ▪ Risk management and mitigation in student and staff travel, event planning and University Design Standards. <p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for victim-survivors when a matter is not in the University’s remit to investigate. <p>Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plain language support and complaints information pack. ▪ Speak Safely platform update. ▪ Communication of processes for safe reintegration of respondents into the University community.
<p>Business as Usual Monitor and continuously improve:</p>	<p>Ongoing staff and student training delivery, sector reporting, initiative and systems evaluation, Student Conduct community of practice, policy reviews, communications on expected behaviour.</p>

1. New action areas

In 2025-26, the University commits to some new action areas, in response to the evolving environment in which we work and study. These focus on:

- Preventing online sexual harassment and abuse
- Embedding consistent approaches in University-owned colleges, student accommodation and MU Sport
- Increasing men's engagement with prevention approaches
- Establishing a welcoming physical location for the Safer Community Program on campus.

Through these new actions, we seek to contribute to the medium-term outcomes of culture, risk mitigation, pathways, accountability, support, and reporting.

1. Establish/commence	Accountable leader	Timeline to Complete
Culture		
1.1. In consultation with subject matter experts, develop and deliver approaches to increase men's engagement and shared responsibility for a safe community at the University.	DVC (P&C)	Dec 2026
1.2. Determine and deliver on minimum student and staff training standards for University-owned colleges and residences.*	ED (SASS), CPO	Jul 2025
1.3. Develop and launch Respect Education bridging content for staff who are promoted into a supervisor, manager or senior leader role.*	CPO	Oct 2026
1.4. Develop and disseminate communications materials such as posters and online content on preventing sexual misconduct in the workplace, including on topics of consent and boundaries.*	CPO	Jul 2026
Risk Mitigation		
1.5. Establish a Community of Practice for University-owned and affiliated colleges to build a shared understanding of processes to address sexual misconduct and available University and external support services.	DVC (P&C)	Jul 2025
1.6. Ensure that staff members of MU Sport and a member of each sporting club complete Sport Integrity Australia training, and that each MU Sport club has an appointed officer responsible for sexual misconduct prevention and response.	DVC (P&C)	Dec 2025
1.7. Develop and publish information to raise awareness about online and image-facilitated abuse and support available.*	DVC (P&C)	Dec 2025
1.8. Co-design and publish online safety tools for staff and research students, drawing on existing examples of social media self-defence and respectful disagreement content.*	DVC (P&C), DVC (R)	Dec 2025
Pathways		

1.9. Familiarise health services staff with potential risk factors for sexual harm and how to sensitively check in with students who present with them.*	ED (SASS)	Dec 2025
1.10. Identify and socialise online support pathways for staff and students who are concerned about their own behaviour and their peers'.*	ED (SASS)	Mar 2026
Support		
1.11. Define and communicate the University's approach to integrating culturally specific considerations into sexual misconduct complaints processes.	ED (SASS), CPO	Mar 2026
1.12. Implement a model of care with a navigation contact for students where multiple services/stakeholders are involved; for example, administrative tasks, timetabling, exams, and academic adjustment plans.	ED (SASS)	Sep 2025
1.13. Provide physical space within existing locations at Parkville campus for students to engage with the Safer Community Program (e.g. Health Hub, 757 Swanston St, existing dedicated faculty spaces).*	ED (SASS)	Dec 2026
1.14. Assess options for improving visibility and/or access to the Safer Community Program at Southbank, Burnley, Dookie, Creswick, Werribee and Shepparton locations.	ED (SASS)	Dec 2025
Reporting		
1.15. Provide sexual misconduct prevention and response training for student accommodation staff, student leaders, pastoral care leaders and residential student advisors.*	DVC (P&C)	Dec 2025
1.16. Establish and articulate clear escalation processes and alignment with UCaRL's newly introduced incident management system on investigation processes for students living in University-owned colleges and residences.	ED (SASS)	Dec 2025
1.17. Assess the option of a natural language-generated chat function on University webpage to assist staff and students in navigating available support and complaints pathways.*	DVC (P&C), ED (SASS)	Dec 2026
1.18. Work with student organisations to develop and disseminate targeted communications materials for specific cohorts, such as posters and online messaging, which address cultural and social barriers to reporting.*	ED (SASS), ED (UC&M)	Mar 2026

2. Expand & Integrate

To strengthen the effectiveness or reach of the University's existing work on preventing and responding to sexual misconduct, some process improvements or refinements are planned in 2025-26. These include:

- Tailored prevention messages for different cohorts, including graduates
- Further integration of Respect information into existing processes and resources
- Integrating information for placements, internships and alumni events
- Adjustments to education modules for students and staff to improve compliance and incorporate evaluation findings.

These actions contribute to the medium-term outcomes of culture, community action, risk mitigation, support, and reporting.

2. Expand & Integrate	Accountable leader	Timeline to Complete
Culture		
2.1. Include references to the sexual misconduct policy and behavioural expectations in induction materials for employees (under review in 2025), and in information provided to volunteers and honoraries.	CPO	Dec 2025
2.2. Evaluate the <i>Preventing Sexual Misconduct</i> student and graduate researcher module to assess impact and effectiveness, and update in line with findings and any national or local contextual changes.	ED (SASS)	Dec 2025
2.3. Design and roll out a refresher iteration of the <i>Preventing Sexual Misconduct</i> module for students at an additional and effective stage of their degrees. *	ED (SASS)	Dec 2026
2.4. Develop <i>Preventing Sexual Misconduct</i> accompanying resources for international students, to provide evidence-based guidance and clarification where needed.*	DVC (P&C)	Mar 2026
2.5. Develop and launch a Respect Education refresher module for staff, to be completed two years after a staff member's first Respect Education course.*	CPO	Dec 2026
2.6. Integrate content on the <i>Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response</i> policy and practices into existing mandatory training for graduate supervisors.	DVC (R)	Dec 2025
2.7. Increase student and staff traffic to the Respect webpage as a central hub for information about prevention and response to sexual misconduct. Develop plain language resources for these pages and translate those resources into key languages other than English.*	ED (UC&M), DVC (P&C)	Jul 2026
2.8. Include current Respect messaging and information at events for new students, including O-Week activations, welcome emails, residential induction processes, and through collaboration with student unions at their key events, and at student events and in campaigns for Health Promotions Program related to sexual health.*	DVC (P&C), ED (SASS)	Dec 2025

2.9. Collaborate with the University's Gender Equity team to develop gender equity interventions for students to complement those already delivered for staff.	DVC (P&C)	Jul 2026
Community Action		
2.10. Run events and workshops for students to identify sexual misconduct and learn techniques for bystander intervention and challenging gendered attitudes during campaigns such as Respect at Uni Week and other relevant days of significance.*	DVC (P&C), ED (UC&M)	Jul 2026
2.11. Continue the joint University and UMSU Ignore No More student bystander campaign and safe event packs, disseminating specific and targeted materials to colleges, student residences, events, faculties and MU Sport for students and engage in student consultation from target groups.*	DVC (P&C)	Dec 2025
2.12. Deliver messaging on campus and online, via videos, posters and merchandise, to encourage positive bystander action for staff and students.*	DVC (P&C), CPO	Dec 2025
Risk Mitigation		
2.13. Increase awareness of specific and increased risks of sexual misconduct associated with student travel through guidance to Faculties, MU Sport and to students through updated communications and revised Student Travel and Transport Policy (MPF1209) and pre-departure messaging.	ED (SASS), ED (BS)	Dec 2025
2.14. Ensure specific and increased risks of sexual misconduct associated with staff travel (overseas subjects, study tours, offsite student groups, competitions) are considered and mitigated.	ED (BS)	Dec 2025
2.15. Ensure specific and increased risks of sexual misconduct associated with mentoring and alumni programs are considered and mitigated.	ED (SASS)	Dec 2025
2.16. Review University-wide Design Standards for integration of sexual misconduct safety considerations, for example, via Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design processes.	ED (BS)	Dec 2026
2.17. Review Standard Operating Procedures for University-wide events to mitigate risks of sexual misconduct, including reminders about expected behaviour at ticketing/registration point and prior to events, an automated link to report and support systems after an event, preferred supplier list of contractors with appropriate training, and inclusion of sexual misconduct within event risk assessment templates.	ED (UC&M)	Dec 2026
2.18. Ensure clear information is available to University event attendees on safe spaces, places to report problem behaviours and any other information relevant to bystanders or those experiencing unacceptable conduct.	ED (UC&M)	Dec 2025

2.19. Review training guides and briefing sessions for student placements, mentoring and internships to provide a framework of appropriate guidance and escalation contacts in relation to sexual misconduct.	ED (SASS)	Dec 2025
2.20. Integrate online sexual misconduct risks and mitigation measures into psychosocial and legal risk management templates.	ED (BS)	Dec 2025
Support		
2.21. Define, and effectively communicate in a timely way, the support available to complainants where the matter is outside the University's remit to investigate.	ED (SASS), CPO	Dec 2025
Reporting		
2.22. Identify and update key guidance documents for academic staff who interact with students and ensure that information on responding to disclosures of sexual misconduct and referring to support services and complaints channels are included.	ED (SASS), DVC (A)	Jul 2026
2.23. Design and publish plain language information pack with victim-survivors.*	ED (SASS), CPO, ED (UC&M)	Dec 2025
2.24. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Speak Safely platform for both the University and the community, and update in line with findings, any national or local contextual changes, and accessibility best practices, including the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.	DVC (P&C)	Dec 2025
2.25. Review communications of existing processes for safe reintegration of a respondent into the student community. Consider additional processes and methods (e.g. voluntary undertakings).	ED (SASS)	Jul 2026

3. Monitor & Review

This action plan will involve monitoring some actions from the 2023-2024 Plan as they transition into the University's standard ways of working. This will support their embedding and ensure alignment with developments in leading practice. These include:

- Review of the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy
- Mandatory Respect training for students and staff
- Sexual Misconduct Annual Report and updates to the Respect website and brochures
- Effectiveness and engagement with the Speak Safely Portal.

These actions contribute to the medium-term outcomes of culture, risk mitigation, accountability, support, and reporting.

3. Monitor & Review	Accountable leader	Timeline to Complete
Culture		
3.1. Conduct scheduled review of the <i>Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response</i> policy.	CPO, ED (SASS)	Dec 2025
3.2. Deliver <i>Preventing Sexual Misconduct</i> module to incoming students.	ED (SASS)	Ongoing
3.3. Plan and achieve a minimum compliance target for <i>Respect Education</i> training by the end of 2025 and 2026, including delivering training to new staff and those who have yet to complete.*	CPO	Ongoing
3.4. Deliver mandatory <i>Respect Education</i> training to honoraries.*	CPO	Ongoing
3.5. Determine which affiliates of the University have existing education on sexual misconduct, and work to ensure delivery of <i>Respect Education</i> , where needed.*	DVC (P&C)	Ongoing
3.6. Develop and implement a sustainable model for embedding <i>Respect Education</i> training, knowledge, information and principles into standard ways of working at the University.*	CPO	Ongoing
3.7. Provide a forum for participants in <i>Respect Education</i> for leaders and supervisors, to understand and document challenges and provide recommendations on breaking barriers to culture change.*	CPO	Dec 2025
3.8. Ensure representation of intersectional subject-matter expertise on the <i>Respect at Melbourne Reference Group</i> and consult with intersectional subject-matter experts during the design and/or review phase of <i>Respect-related protocols, resources and guidelines</i> .	DVC (P&C)	Dec 2026
Risk Mitigation		
3.9. Ensure private accommodation providers with which the University partners have training, policies, procedures and support services in place to prevent and respond to sexual harm, as part of the regular review of agreements and/or contracts.	ED (SASS), ED (Corporate Dev.)	Ongoing
Accountability		

3.10. Publish Sexual Misconduct Annual Report including data on University-wide complaints and their handling, with case studies demonstrating the nature of complaints and outcomes.	DVC (P&C)	Apr 2025 Apr 2026
3.11. Continue to convene a Student Conduct Community of Practice, ensuring understanding of the policies and processes involved in responding to sexual misconduct, and available supports at the University and externally for students.	ED (SASS)	Ongoing
3.12. Report required data to Department of Education under the <i>National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence</i> .	DVC (P&C)	Ongoing
Support		
3.13. Confirm key contacts within each Faculty, Schools, MU Sport and University-owned colleges, who are trained in responding to disclosures and in providing information on support and report options.	ED (SASS)	Dec 2026
3.14. Consolidate the University's standards for provision of student support services, including timeframes for delivery, quality and performance of services, and transparency in how these standards are met.	ED (SASS)	Ongoing
3.15. Work with third party providers who deliver educational programs to University of Melbourne-enrolled students to ensure their application of the <i>Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response</i> policy and its associated procedures for University of Melbourne students.	CPO, ED (SASS)	Dec 2025
Reporting		
3.16. Continue to review and update website and brochures on expected behaviour to reflect relevant changes in processes or context for staff and students.	DVC (P&C)	Ongoing
3.17. Engage an independent third-party expert to audit a sample of responses to past cases to inform continual improvement processes.*	ED (SASS), CPO	Dec 2025
3.18. Collaborate with Universities Australia to ensure the University of Melbourne's effective participation in the next National Student Safety Survey.*	DVC (P&C), ED (SASS)	Dec 2025 and ongoing