University of Southern Queensland



UniSQ Gender-Based Violence: Prevention and Response Action Plan

2026 - 2030

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Version	Date	Description of changes and person responsible
v0.1	08/10/25	Initial Prevention and Response Plan created to meet National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to GBV
v0.2	27/10/25	Updated draft following stakeholder consultation in preparation for VCE
v0.3	18/11/25	Document redesigned to align to the Department of Education guide and template
v1.0	11/12/25	VCE and Council Endorsement
V1.0a	18/12/25	Endorsed version submitted to Department of Education
V1.1	31/08/26	Proposed updates to align with feedback from the Higher Education Gender-based Violence Regulator received 22 May 2026
V2.0	26/10/26	Final updated Action Plan, endorsed by Vice-Chancellor and Chancellor, following Regulator assessment of 'demonstrated sufficient compliance' received 12 October 2026

UniSQ Gender-Based Violence: Prevention and Response Action Plan

1. Statement of commitment

The University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ) is committed to fostering a connected, safe, inclusive and respectful work and learning environment, free from gender-based violence. We proactively address the drivers of gender-based violence, including the implicit and explicit attitudes and biases that contribute to harms, promote binary notions of gender and rigid gender stereotypes. UniSQ supports all members of our community to develop respectful peer relationships.

The UniSQ Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan (the Plan) outlines a whole-of-organisation approach to creating a safe and respectful UniSQ community of employees and students, and to preventing and responding to gender-based violence wherever it occurs. Building on previous UniSQ initiatives, the Plan provides a comprehensive framework to prevent sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence, while ensuring timely, supportive, and fair responses when incidents occur.

The Plan draws on state and federal legislation, evidence-based prevention frameworks, research, sector best practice, and the lived experiences of our students and employees gathered through extensive consultation. Implementation will take a continuous improvement approach, embedding ongoing consultation, data analysis, and lessons learned into UniSQ's practice.

This Plan reflects UniSQ's dedication to upholding the highest standards of safety, equity, and respect, and meets our legal and ethical responsibilities. As a higher education provider, UniSQ is uniquely positioned to drive social and cultural change through education and awareness-raising. We are committed to understanding how diverse identities intersect to create complex inequalities, and to design innovative prevention programs that improve the experience of employees and students.

Accountabilities

The University Council and Vice-Chancellor's Executive are accountable for ensuring that employees and student safety remain central to UniSQ's work and learning environment. The Plan is implemented through consultation with students and employees, utilising trauma informed practice tailored to diverse groups, including women, First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people of diverse sexual orientation, sex characteristics and gender identity. It aligns with the recommendations of the National Action Plan to Address Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education, and the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (The Code).

UniSQ will review this Plan every two years, with formal approval through Council.

Key Outcomes

Successful implementation will enable:

1. The University community to develop knowledge and capacity to contribute to a safe, inclusive and respectful university community and prevent gender-based violence.
2. The University community to understand support options, feel confident to seek assistance and follow reporting pathways.
3. The University to monitor trends, enhance practices and systems, and contribute to sector-level evidence.
4. The University to demonstrate positive trends in its broader Diversity and Inclusion Framework outcomes.

2. UniSQ Overview

UniSQ has a long-standing commitment to gender equality, pay equity, and the safety and wellbeing of students and employees. Over the past 15 years, targeted programs have fostered safer, more inclusive environments. The National Higher Education Code provides an opportunity to strengthen these efforts and drive measurable impact. Through this Code, we seek to reinforce our commitment to women and vulnerable communities and enhance the safety and respect experienced by our students and employees and the many communities we serve. We see this as an opportunity to create long-lasting cultural change.

UniSQ serves a student cohort of approximately 20,000 students across campuses in Ipswich, Springfield, Toowoomba, and online. At UniSQ, key demographic insights include a student cohort that is 58% female, and 70% of students who study partly or fully online and 92% are mature age students (or non-school leavers). UniSQ supports a diverse cohort, with 64% having one or more intersecting factors that can lead to cumulative disadvantage such as first in family status (29%), regional or remote location (45%), low socioeconomic background (30%), having a declared disability (12%), and our current students include 11% international students and 5% First Nations students.

The University of Southern Queensland operates three residential colleges at its Toowoomba campus: McGregor, Concannon, and Steele Rudd. These colleges provide single-occupancy accommodation with a combination of private and shared bathroom arrangements. Common areas include kitchens, study spaces, and recreational facilities. The colleges maintain structured safety measures, including security patrols, and offer access to wellbeing support services. The colleges are designed to support academic engagement and community living within a regulated environment.

Given UniSQ's diverse and geographically dispersed student body, many students encounter unique barriers to accessing community support services. As a result, university-provided supports are vital for students impacted by gender-based violence – whether in their homes, communities or within the University itself. In response, the Safer Communities initiative was launched at UniSQ in 2022 to provide early intervention, primary prevention, and trauma-informed support for students experiencing gender-based violence. Data indicates that since the initiative was introduced, disclosures and reports of gender-based violence has increased. This supports the ongoing benefit of early intervention, education and awareness-raising for residents and student-leaders within the UniSQ's Residential Colleges, and the continuation of efforts to prevent gender-based violence.

UniSQ's workforce reflects the diverse community it serves, with women comprising 61% of the workforce, men 39%, and a small proportion identifying as another gender (<1%). The University's average gender pay gap stands at 11% with a median pay gap of 9%. In recent years the university has seen a decline in female representation at the most senior levels of the organisation, with female representation falling from 38% in 2022-23 to 29% in 2024-25. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples represent 3% of the workforce with 32% of employees born overseas, from over 60 countries. The workforce comprises academic (54%) and professional (46%) roles, which are geographically dispersed across Toowoomba campus (81%). Springfield (11%), Ipswich (8%), and the remainder located at the Brisbane Centre, Inala Study Hub, and other locations.

In recognising the diversity and breadth of the community, UniSQ reinforces its commitment to cultivating a safe and respectful environment for all, where unacceptable attitudes and behaviours are challenged. Sexual harm, gender-based violence, and gender discrimination are unacceptable, unlawful, and contrary to both our university policies and the culture of UniSQ. Everyone in our community has a role in preventing gender-based violence. We will continue to partner with our students, employees, and the broader university community to prevent and address the drivers of gender-based violence and promote a culture of safety.

3. Planning, engagement and evidence

This Plan has been developed through a series of review, engagement and consultation activities to explore risks, barriers and opportunities across the University. Development of the Plan has been overseen by a Gender-Based Violence Prevention Working Party including the Vice-Chancellor, Senior Executives responsible for leadership of education, research, academic quality, First Nations strategies, engagement, enterprise operations, students and employees across the organisation, along with student representation.

Engagement

Engagement and consultation with students and employees has been undertaken in a co-design approach to the creation of the Plan, including those who have experienced Gender-based Violence: Student Senate; Safer Communities Reference Committee; Allyship Working Group; UniSQ Clubs and Societies; the Student Guild; the Student Wellbeing team; Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team; Workplace Relations team; employees with a lived experience of gender-based violence; and the team responsible for Diversity and Inclusion strategy. Consultation has also occurred with other universities to gain an understanding of common challenges and approaches.

Outcomes

Early engagement and consultation revealed strong support for this work but a continuous need for more opportunities to co-design with key stakeholders, including a gap in diverse student and First Nations voices. The gaps have been addressed in:

- subsequent consultation, including diversifying the expertise and lived experience of members of the initial Working Party to include the PVC (First Nations), a student with expertise in LGBTIQA+ advocacy and academic colleagues from the School of Psychology and Wellbeing.
- Actions 2.2, 3.1, 3.3, 6.1 and 7.5 of the Plan.

Review of internal data

Review of relevant internal data and reporting: Annual reports to Council on Prevention of Bullying, Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct; internal data on formal reporting from Student General Misconduct processes; internal data and quarterly reporting on disclosures and reports from Safer Communities; internal data and reporting through the Audit and Risk Committee which report; deidentified allegations of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sex based discrimination; and UniSQ specific data from the 2021 National Student Safety Survey.

Review of whole-of-organisation Employee Wellbeing Surveys and Pulse Surveys conducted in the last twelve months, which have specifically focused on equity, confidence to speak up, workplace safety, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and bullying.

Section 3 of this Plan provides further external analysis of UniSQ's processes, data and reporting of gender-based violence disclosures and formal reports.

Outcomes

Review of internal data revealed the frequency and nature of Gender-Based Violence across the university. These findings have already informed a range of proactive initiatives, including awareness-raising campaigns, safety measures, and changes to service delivery. Whilst this demonstrates significant progress and commitment to fostering a safe and respectful community, this review also identified priority areas for further improvement, including:

- Context specific and tailored training programs for students in higher-risks contexts such as HDR students, work-integrated learning, study abroad, international students and study related excursions with relevant evaluation measure to assess effectiveness

- Communication to disclosers and formal reporters throughout formal processes, and timely resolution of formal reporting processes
- Enhanced relationships with affiliated accommodation providers to ensure UniSQ students have clear reporting and support pathways
- Actions: 3.4, 4.4, 5.2 6.2, 7.1 of the Plan

Review of literature and key reports

Analysis and review of evidence around nature, extent and prevalence of Gender-based Violence, including impacts on people disproportionally affected: UniSQ actions underpinned by literature published by Heywood et al. (2022), Nisbet, et al. (2022), Our Watch (2021, 2025), and Universities Australia (2023).

Outcomes

While our actions are strongly evidence-based and aligned with key literature and reports, the review highlighted opportunities to further strengthen confidence in reporting, expand tailored support services, embed prevention into curriculum, and enhance data integration. These areas represent important opportunities to deepen our impact and ensure our strategies remain inclusive, proactive, and effective:

- Ongoing training and prevention efforts to ensure ongoing visibility, relevance, responsive and effective over time.
- Tailored support services for groups disproportionality affected by Gender-based Violence
- 3.1, 3.3, 3.5, 6.1 of the Plan

National Student Safety Survey (NSSS): In 2024, the NSSS was postponed and is now due to be undertaken by Universities Australia in the first half of 2026. The NSSS collects data on university students' experiences of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence. Data from the 2016 and 2021 surveys underscores the need for systemic change and accountability across the higher education sector, highlights that perpetrators are often fellow students, and that universities must do more to foster respectful cultures, improve reporting pathways, and provide trauma informed support.

Positive Duty: UniSQ continues to progress work to ensure alignment with the Australian Human Rights Committee's (AHRC) guidelines for complying with the *Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). A Positive Duty refers to the legal obligation to take proactive and preventative steps to eliminate unlawful conduct such as discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. Rather than relying solely on responding to complaints, universities must actively foster safe, inclusive, and respectful environments through leadership, education, policy, and culture. This includes identifying and addressing risks, embedding accountability across governance structures, and continuously improving practices to meet community expectations and legal standards.

National Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education: In February 2024, the Federal Government launched the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education, aimed at ensuring universities and other providers foster safe, respectful environments for all students and employees. Emerging from this plan are two key accountability mechanisms: the legislated National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence, which mandates institutions to implement evidence-based prevention strategies, trauma-informed support services, and transparent reporting processes; and the establishment of oversight by the National Student Ombudsman, who addresses cases where students believe their university has mishandled reports of gender-based violence

Gender Equality: UniSQ is committed to gender equality as per the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (WGEA) requiring organisations to actively promote gender equality in the workplace. This includes reporting annually on gender equality indicators such as pay equity, gender composition of employees and

leadership, flexible work arrangements, and policies to prevent discrimination and harassment. For UniSQ, compliance with WGEA standards supports broader efforts to address gender-based violence by fostering inclusive, respectful environments and ensuring accountability in leadership and employment practices. The Act reinforces an employer's positive duty to prevent unlawful conduct and contributes to systemic cultural change.

National Plan to end violence against women and children 2022 – 2032: The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 is Australia's 10-year strategy to eliminate gender-based violence through a coordinated, whole-of-society approach. It is built around four pillars - Prevention, Early Intervention, Response, and Recovery - and emphasises trauma-informed, culturally safe practices tailored to diverse communities. The Plan is supported by two key action plans: the first Action Plan (2023–2027), which outlines immediate priorities such as strengthening services, improving data, and expanding prevention programs; and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan (2023–2025), which focuses on community-led, healing-informed responses to address the disproportionate impact of violence on First Nations women and children.

Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

UniSQ, through its Safer Communities approach, has embedded a Whole-of-Organisation assessment of risks of gender-based violence and plans to address those risks, including those associated with Student Accommodation owned and operated by UniSQ. This includes robust data analysis of incident data and trends, as captured in Safer Communities' quarterly reporting to the Safer Communities Reference Committee (covering disclosures and reports, including those involving Student Accommodation since 2021). Building on this strong foundation, UniSQ developed a comprehensive whole-of-organisation audit tool and implementation tracker to map existing practice against each standard of the Code, ensuring gaps are identified and addressed.

To further strengthen UniSQ's compliance with the Code and deepen its understanding of how the broader University ecosystem can better work together to promote gender equality, the University engaged with an external agency, Equality Partners under the leadership of Dr Renee Hamilton, to undertake a whole-of-organisation assessment to assist with identifying institutional enablers, barriers and risks to preventing gender-based violence, in accordance with Standards 1.4(e) and 1.4(f) of the National Code.

The whole-of-organisation assessment included a review across 10 areas of operation including: leadership, culture and environment; structures, norms and practices; systems and infrastructure; service delivery; policies and procedures; management and governance, community engagement; business; research; and partnerships. The assessment included a mix of data and documentation review such as workforce gender composition and the gender pay gap, policy documents and risk management frameworks, prevention education and training materials and executive briefings, in addition to stakeholder consultations with 20 people across 20 areas of the University, conducted over a six-week period in June and July 2026.

The assessment identified a range of enablers to the prevention of gender-based violence, including various Prevention Plans, Actions Plans and Diversity Frameworks, along with the University's strong ranking for social equity and its strong footprint in its regional communities providing a good platform to drive positive cultural change.

A number of systemic risks and barriers were also identified, including organisational culture challenges following recent and significant structural and leadership changes across the organisation, and the lack a coordinated, strategic approach to preventing gender-based violence supported by strong governance and sustained leadership. This is coupled with a somewhat uneven knowledge of gender-based violence across the organisation, exacerbated by capacity and capability constraints. Some organisational hotspots and areas of increased risk were also identified.

The whole-of-organisation assessment has provided the University's executive with additional insights and recommendations to inform decisions on the way forward to address systemic risks and barriers and strengthen UniSQ's compliance with the National Code, with findings and recommendations being used to inform revisions to this Plan.

This ongoing, institution-wide assessment approach demonstrates UniSQ's commitment to maintaining and strengthening safe, inclusive environments across all areas of the University.

Outcomes

Key focus areas identified through the initial internal whole-of-institution audit, and included in this Plan, include timeframes for formal report resolution, increased communication to disclosers and formal reporters throughout formal processes, partnerships with affiliated accommodation providers, and alignment with state-based legislation to ensure a comprehensive alignment of practices (such as Work Health and Safety (Sexual Harassment) Amendment Regulation 2024 (Qld)).

The actions identified as a result of the external whole-of-organisation assessment have been included in revised or new Actions 1.2, 1.3, 1.5 (new), 2.1, 2.4 (new), 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3, 5.3 (new), 6.2, 6.3 (new), 7.1, and 7.4 in section 5 of this Plan, however are broadly prioritised into the following streams of work:

- **Leadership, culture and environment,** ensuring our leaders are role models and have explicit responsibilities for gender equity and preventing gender-based violence.
- **Awareness and education**, including development of a new whole of organisation Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP).
- **Data and reporting,** including an organisation wide case management system and improved strategic reporting and analysis to senior executives.
- **Policies and procedures,** with a focus on streamlining and clarifying our student conduct related procedures in support of the newly developed Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence Policy.
- **Risk management,** ensuring an ongoing focus on the prevention of harm and the appropriate management of behaviours.
- **Infrastructure,** with a focus on safety in our Residential Colleges and in the online environment.
- **Curriculum, learning and teaching** through an intersectional gender equality lens.
- **Research** activities with embedded gender equity mechanisms, and
- **Partnerships** (including Work Integrated Learning), community and business engagement processes that bring these providers into scope of the University's gender equality commitments.

Systemic Review of Responses to Disclosures and Formal Reports

In addition to the whole-of-organisation assessment, Equality Partners was also engaged to undertake a systemic review of UniSQ's previous institutional responses to disclosures and formal reports of gender-based violence in accordance with Standard 1.4(k) of the National Code.

The review drew on five years of documentation, including annual and other reports, policy materials, summary case management data of student and staff disclosures and reports, alongside insights from 20 stakeholder consultations. The review was conducted in parallel with the whole-of-organisation assessment over the same 6-week period in mid 2026.

The systemic review found that UniSQ has made visible efforts to strengthen its response to incidents of gender-based violence. However, areas have been identified for further improvement including:

- an uplift in understanding of gender-based violence,
- improved data collection, integrity and staff capability for recording and analysing data,
- systems improvements,

- targeted improvements in various incident response management, investigation and risk assessment processes and capabilities.

More specifically, key findings in each of these themes include:

Understanding of gender-based violence – an uneven knowledge of gender-based violence across the organisation, including the drivers of gender-based violence, and the full spectrum of behaviours that constitute gender-based violence.

Data and reporting - data integrity issues resulting from fragmented systems, variations in the appropriate recording of case notes, and gaps in strategic reporting and trend analysis to senior executives

Response to incidents - inconsistencies and gaps in student conduct related policies and procedures; gaps in expertise in decision-makers participating in misconduct investigations and proceedings; unclear thresholds for formal as opposed to informal management of disclosures; limited understanding of the balance between privacy and confidentiality and sharing of information to manage risk (particularly in high risk areas of HDR, clubs and societies, Residential Colleges); no clear framework for student misconduct findings and proportionate sanctions; limited support for staff complainants; and deficiencies in ongoing monitoring of risks after case closures.

Systems - fragmented and siloed intake and case management systems impacting data quality and integrity.

Outcomes

Overall, the systemic review provides a companion report to the whole-of-organisation assessment, and taken together, identifies the interconnected actions the University will consider to ensure a whole-of-organisation approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Actions in response to the systemic review have been embedded into Actions 1.2, 1.3, 1.5 (new), 2.1, 2.4 (new), 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3, 5.3 (new), 6.2, 6.3 (new), 7.1, and 7.4 in section 5 of this Plan.

Approach for implementation

Approach for implementation: initial Working Party, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor to identify key priorities and requirements; a cross-unit working group in Students Portfolio and People Portfolio to create implementation matrix against the Code; leadership within university departments for accountability against the Code.

The University's Vice-Chancellor's Executive and other senior stakeholders participated in the Our Watch face-to-face University Executive Leadership National Training Pilot. In 2025, Adair Donaldson - who works with Defence Forces, Rugby League, Schools, and other organisations - delivered a workshop for approximately 80 members of the Senior Leadership Group. The session explored topics such as the Code of Conduct, power imbalances, employee-student relationships, as well as gender and culture and social media, using real case examples. Over the past two years, employees in supervisory roles have completed face-to-face Positive Bystander training, with employees and students having access to online Positive Bystander training. In 2024, the Human Resources team undertook 'Responding to Disclosure' training, which addressed prevalence, disclosure barriers, trauma-informed care, power dynamics, referrals, prevalence, and effective response strategies.

Outcomes

Actions arising from this engagement and review are reflected in Section 5 of this Plan.

4. Approach

UniSQ acknowledges that preventing gender-based violence requires addressing the underlying drivers of violence, including:

- Condoning of violence
- Gender inequality and power imbalances
- Rigid gender roles and stereotypes
- Male peer relations and dominant forms of masculinity that reinforce aggression, control, and disrespect

The University has identified specific risks related to sexual harassment, sex or gender-based harassment, and other unlawful conduct, including unwanted or inappropriate sexual advances, comments, and behaviours, discrimination, and hostile behaviour based on sex or gender, as well as broader unlawful conduct such as bullying and discrimination. These risks have been identified through various channels, including employee complaints, incident reports, anonymous workplace surveys, internal audits, and reviews, and are addressed through risk mitigation strategies and controls in the UniSQ Sexual Harassment Prevention Plan.

UniSQ also understands that reinforcing factors that can increase the likelihood, frequency, or severity of gender-based violence within our community. UniSQ's geographically dispersed student community faces distinct challenges in accessing local support services, making university-led initiatives essential for those affected by gender-based violence- whether at home, in the community, on campus, or online. To address this, UniSQ launched the Safer Communities initiative in 2022, delivering early intervention, primary prevention, and trauma-informed care. This work has included the development of a Safer Communities Action Plan, increased training for students and leaders in Residential Colleges - this has resulted in increased reporting. The Safer Communities Reference Committee (since replaced by the Safety, Wellbeing & Harm Prevention Working Party) provides guidance on initiatives, and data on prevention efforts, disclosures, reports and support for students is communicated through to the University Safety Consultative Forum and Council. From these initiatives, the university recognises a need for continued focus on proactive education, including for residents and student leaders in Residential Colleges, as well as strategies to prevent gender-based violence in online spaces. The University also acknowledges risks which occur from power imbalances in the organisation, particularly in the HDR supervision space, and other risks in Work Integrated Learning placements particularly in remote, isolated or high-risk placement settings, which will require targeted action to identify, manage and escalate appropriately.

A full training review will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of existing employee and student training, and capability development. This will form the basis for ongoing improvements. Consultation undertaken throughout the whole-of-organisation assessment and systemic review also identified outdated attitudes, beliefs and a lack of understanding of the spectrum of behaviours that constitute gender-based violence, and particular education and awareness raising will be undertaken to address these gaps and barriers across the organisation.

Governance

UniSQ's approach to gender-based violence prevention and response is underpinned by policies and procedures including:

- *Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy,*
- *Prevention of Discrimination, Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harm Policy,*
- *Student Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Procedure,*

- *Student Discrimination, Bullying, Harassment & Sexual Harm Response Procedure*
- *Employee Complaints Policy*
- *Employee Complaints (Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, and Sex Discrimination) Procedure,*
- *Gender-based Violence (University Members) Response Procedure*
- *Employee Diversity and Inclusion Policy*
- *Student General Conduct Policy*,
- *Student General Misconduct Procedure* and
- *Code of Conduct Policy*

Additional policies and procedures address broader forms of gender-based violence, such as:

- *Employee Family and Domestic Violence Support Procedure, and*
- *Modern Slavery Prevention Procedure (including sexual servitude).*

The Plan also aligns with UniSQ's obligations under:

- Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act,
- the Workplace Gender Equality Act (WGEA),
- the Psychosocial Hazards Code of Practice 2022, Work Health and Safety Act 2011,
- Universities Australia Charter for the Prevention of Sexual Harm, and
- Work Health and Safety (Sexual Harassment) Amendment Regulation 2024 (Qld).

The Plan intersects with other relevant university initiatives, including:

- UniSQ Gender Equity Action Plan,
- UniSQ Diversity and Inclusion Framework, and
- UniSQ Sexual Harassment Prevention Plan.

Stakeholder Responsibilities

All University stakeholders have a role to play in creating an equitable University where all students and employees are valued and free from gender-based violence.

Senior Leaders and Executives

- Demonstrate clear and consistent leadership in the prevention of Gender Based Violence
- Champion Whole-of-Organisation approach
- Lead the development, endorsement and implementation of the Plan
- Establish governance structures
- Ensure regular reporting
- Engage with external regulators

Students

- Collaborate in co-designing initiatives
- Participate in mandatory training
- Engage in awareness campaigns
- Provide feedback on policies and services
- Report incidents or concerns
- Act as ethical bystanders

Employees (All)

- Promote respectful environments
- Act as ethical bystanders

- Participate in consultations
- Complete mandatory training
- Understand and follow GBV policies
- Support access to services and reporting
- Declare conflicts of interest, particularly as they relate to previous or existing personal relationships with students or other employees

Managers and Supervisors

- Nurture and monitor positive workplace and learning cultures
- Model inclusive and trauma-informed practices
- Ensure team training compliance
- Support disclosures, incident reporting and access to support
- Implement academic/work adjustments as required
- Contribute to policy reviews
- Develop conflict of interest management plans with employees

5. Whole-of-Organisation Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan

Effective governance and a whole-of-organisation approach, prioritising safety and support, in the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (Leadership and Governance)

UniSQ affirms that effective leadership and accountable governance are vital to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. The University is committed to embedding this responsibility at every level of decision-making through executive oversight, transparent reporting, and inclusive consultation with students and employees. University leaders will actively promote a culture of safety, respect, and continuous improvement, ensuring that institutional policies and practices align with the standards set by the National Higher Education Code.

	Action	Accountable	Timeframe
1.1	Prepare and publish on the UniSQ website a whole-of-organisation prevention and response plan informed by broad consultation.	Vice-Chancellor's Executive	Q1, 2026 (Jan)
1.2	Appoint a governing body or sub-committee responsible for the implementation, management, and monitoring of the Plan.	Vice-Chancellor's Executive	Q2, 2026
1.3	Follow from our initial whole of organisation assessment to identify systemic risks, enablers, and barriers to preventing gender-based violence, ensure further deep dive assessments in key areas of risk to enable continuous improvement and targeted interventions.	Chair, Governing Body	Q4, 2026
1.4	Ensure that University Leaders (from Executive level, through to Managers, Supervisors, and Student Leaders) understand what drives gender-based violence, and their own responsibilities relating to prevention and response.	Human Resources Students and Education Portfolio	Q4, 2026 and ongoing
1.5	More explicitly embed commitments to gender equality, diversity and inclusion as part of leadership recruitment, performance review and reward processes.	Human Resources Vice-Chancellor's Executive	Q4, 2027

Environments are safe, and systems continuously improved to prevent and respond to gender-based violence

UniSQ is committed to making all aspects of campus life - including student accommodation - safe, inclusive, and free from gender-based violence. This commitment extends beyond compliance to a proactive approach that prioritises prevention, early intervention, and strong support systems. Through collaboration with residents, employees, and external partners, UniSQ fosters a culture of care, accountability and respect across its campuses. UniSQ also recognises the importance of continuous improvement to strengthen trust in reporting systems, policies, and aspects relevant to student life.

2	Action	Accountable	Timeframe
2.1	Enhance, refine and implement policies that clearly communicate that gender-based violence is unacceptable and ensure that all disclosures and formal reports are managed appropriately in accordance with relevant policies and procedures, including reference to the Code requirements and National Student Ombudsman recommendations.	Policy Responsible Officers	Q4, 2026
2.2	Ensure policies on preventing and responding to gender-based violence are reviewed every three years with engagement from students, employees, groups disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, subject matter experts, and those who have experienced gender-based violence in our community.	Policy Responsible Officers	Q4, 2028
2.3	Ensure employee due diligence requirements comply with the Code in relation to conflicts of interest, disciplinary matters and at recruitment, appointment and appropriate review milestones.	Human Resources	Q4, 2026
2.4	Ensure external stakeholders who engage with the University, such as suppliers, contractors, partners, Work Integrated Learning providers, sponsors and other commercial partners are required to demonstrate a commitment to gender equality and the prevention of gender-based violence as part of their Agreements (and risk management plans as appropriate) with the University.	Contract Owners and Managers	Q4, 2027

Build knowledge and capability to safely and effectively prevent and respond to gender-based violence

UniSQ is dedicated to cultivating a university culture that actively confronts gender-based violence through inclusive awareness raising and meaningful partnerships. The University will implement ongoing, evidence-informed education campaigns that promote respectful relationships, consent, and safe reporting pathways. These initiatives will be co-designed with students, employees, and community partners to ensure they are culturally relevant and accessible. UniSQ will empower its community to engage in prevention efforts, foster open dialogue, and share collective responsibility for creating a safe and respectful learning environment.

UniSQ is committed to equipping its community with the knowledge and skills needed to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The University will provide mandatory, evidence-based training for students, employees, and leaders covering consent, respectful relationships, trauma-informed practice, and safe intervention strategies. Training will be tailored to specific roles and groups, regularly updated to reflect best practice, and evaluated for effectiveness. Through these educational initiatives, UniSQ aims to foster a shared understanding of responsibilities and empower its community to uphold a culture of safety, respect, and accountability.

3	Action	Accountable	Timeframe
3.1	Create campaigns, awareness raising and educational initiatives highlighting drivers of gender-based violence, reporting and support pathways, through co-design with students and employees with lived experience of gender-based violence and people from diverse groups.	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q4, 2026 and ongoing
3.2	Establish clear, consistent, trauma informed communications and messaging across all levels of the University about expectations of behaviours, and pathways for advice, reporting and support.	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q4, 2026
3.3	Co-design and implement targeted prevention programs and initiatives with and for groups at elevated risk of experiencing gender-based violence.	Students Unit	Q4, 2026
3.4	Conduct a training needs analysis and implement a training plan that includes: • role-specific training for leaders, employees and student representatives on prevention, response, and inclusive leadership, including targeted prevention education and interventions in work areas where culture and other gender equality indicators require uplift.	Students Unit, Graduate Research School, International, and Human Resources	Q4, 2027

3	Action	Accountable	Timeframe
	• context specific, tailored programs for students in higher-risk contexts such as HDR students, work-integrated learning, study abroad, international students and study-related excursions, and employee specialists responding to disclosures. • Evaluation measures		
3.5	Integrate strategies into curriculum that promote personal and collective wellbeing and safety across life, learning, and professional contexts through an intersectional gender equality lens. This includes building awareness of early intervention, support services and reporting pathways relevant to the discipline and stage of learning.	Heads of Schools, Learning and Teaching Futures, and Students Unit	Q4, 2027

Responses and support services are safe and person-centred

UniSQ fosters a compassionate and respectful environment where every disclosure of gender-based violence is met with safety, dignity, and care. Our response and support services are trauma-informed, culturally safe, and guided by the voices of those with lived experience. The university ensures that students and employees have access to clear, confidential pathways for reporting and support, delivered by trained professionals who prioritise the wellbeing and autonomy of victim-survivors. Response mechanisms will be regularly reviewed for effectiveness, guided by best practice, and delivered by trained professionals. UniSQ will foster a supportive environment where disclosures are met with compassion, respect, and accountability.

4	Action	Accountable	Timeframe
4.1	Review service-level feedback to inform a continuous improvement approach to best practice support processes for those experiencing Gender-based Violence.	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q4, 2028
4.2	Ensure ongoing training in trauma-informed practice for students and employees likely to receive disclosures, employees managing formal reports and investigations, relevant decision-makers, and student misconduct committees (as appropriate).	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q4, 2026 and annually
4.3	Establish clear referral pathways in collaboration with affiliated accommodation providers, other affiliated clubs and societies and the Student Guild to align policies and processes wherever possible, to reduce harm through simple processes and reducing the need for repeated recounts of traumatic experiences.	Students Unit, Student Guild	Q4, 2026

4	**Action**	**Accountable**	**Timeframe**
4.4	Ensure plain language statements to students and employees pertaining to policies and procedures for reporting and accessing support which are accessible and publicly available.	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q4, 2026
4.5	Tailored supported plans for impacted students are implemented to ensure the safety of the discloser and include information on access to services, relevant academic adjustments, risk assessment, and safety planning.	Students Unit	Q1, 2026

Gender-based violence processes are safe and timely

UniSQ places the needs of individuals at the heart of every action, ensuring empathy, clarity, fairness, and empowerment throughout the process. Every disclosure is supported by documented safety and support plans tailored to individual needs. Processes are designed to meet all compliance timeframes and are delivered by trained professionals who uphold best practice standards. The university ensures swift access to support and fair investigations, with processes designed to be impartial, drive accountability and over time contribute to a reduction in gender-based violence.

5	**Action**	**Accountable**	**Timeframe**
5.1	Share a concern reporting nomenclature updated to disclosure and formal report for alignment with the Code on Safer Communities website and processes.	Students Unit	Q1, 2026
5.2	Ensure timely resolution of processes, including appeals to align with the timeframes specified in the Code, and increased communication to disclosers and reporters during formal report processes.	Students Unit and Human Resources	From Q1, 2026
5.3	Develop and/or update risk management frameworks that extend beyond the conclusion of disclosure or misconduct processes, and include ongoing safety planning, relevant information sharing to manage risk, and regular monitoring.	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q1, 2027

Use evidence to inform approach, measure change and contribute to the national evidence-base

6	**Action**	**Accountable**	**Timeframe**
6.1	Engage in consultation with students and employees from vulnerable groups, diverse experiences and lived experience of Gender-based Violence to identify emerging issues, gaps or needs, and appropriate responses.	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q4, 2027
6.2	Implementation of Advocate Flex case management modules and taxonomy across all areas of the University responsible for disclosure and formal reports to ensure consistent and comprehensive data collection, monitoring of progress of disclosures and formal reports, and management of timeframes for resolving complaints in line with policies and processes	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q4, 2026
6.3	Improve reporting to the University Executive and management and governance bodies including developing minimum reporting requirements and standards, and comprehensive analysis on issues, risks, trends and mitigation actions.	Students Unit and Human Resources	Q2, 2027
6.4	Deliver annual public reports on data relating to gender-based violence incidents at UniSQ and use relevant data to inform continuous improvement of the activities outlined in this Plan, and in the University's whole-of-organisation Gender Equality Action Plan.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Education) and Chief People Officer	Q4, 2026

Student accommodation is safe for all students and employees

The University is committed to integrating prevention and response measures into residential policies, employee training, and student orientation programs. Accommodation services will be prepared to support disclosures, encourage respectful conduct, and create environments where all students feel secure and valued.

7	**Action**	**Accountable**	**Timeframe**
7.1	Ensure UniSQ Residential Colleges' Student Accommodation Agreement and Affiliated Accommodation providers have policies explicitly addressing respectful conduct, disclosure pathways, and trauma-informed reporting pathways and support services, along with clear penalties for substantiated allegations.	Students Unit	From Q1, 2026 and ongoing

7	**Action**	**Accountable**	**Timeframe**
7.2	Ensure risk assessments and support plans are implemented for Residential College student disclosers within 48 hours of receiving a disclosure or formal report to protect the safety of the discloser and other residents.	Students Unit	Q1, 2026
7.3	Collaborate with local private student accommodation providers, affiliated clubs and societies, and the Student Guild to strengthen prevention capabilities and develop a toolkit for preventing, safeguarding, and responding to gender-based violence.	Students Unit	Q4, 2027
7.4	Conduct regular reviews of Residential Colleges to assess safety, infrastructure, inclusivity, and compliance with the Code and other safety and crime prevention standards, with findings used to guide continuous improvement and accountability, in physical building design, maintenance and security, and psychosocial safety..	Students Unit	Q4, 2026
7.5	Collaborate to co-design and implement targeted prevention programs and initiatives for Residential Colleges students.	Students Unit	Q1, 2027

6. Outcomes Framework

The UniSQ Outcomes Framework provides a structured approach for translating national principles into clear and measurable goals for the University. This Framework sets out processes for monitoring and evaluating the Plan, strengthening accountability and ensuring UniSQ's efforts align with its obligations and commitment to fostering a safer, more inclusive learning environment. The outcomes are strongly focussed on 2026 and 2027; however, they will evolve over the life of the plan.

Under the National Code, the University is required to report against this Outcomes Framework to the University Council every 6 months.

Outcome	Sub-outcomes	Indicators	Measures (of impact or progress)
Effective governance and a whole-of-organisation approach, prioritising safety and support, in the prevention of and response to gender-based violence	Completion of a whole-of-organisation risk assessment to identify enablers and barriers to preventing gender-based violence	Risk assessment completed and endorsed	100% completion of risk assessment by end of 2026
		Recommendations integrated into planning documents	Inclusion of recommendations in the UniSQ Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Action Plan
	University leaders complete training on gender-based violence and response protocols	Percentage of university leaders who have completed training	At least 95% completion rate by end of 2026
	Public commitment to gender-based violence prevention and transparent reporting of related incidents	Annual publication of gender-based violence data and prevention commitments on UniSQ website	Data and commitments published annually on UniSQ website
	Whole-of-organisation communications plan developed and implemented	Communications plan endorsed and rolled out across UniSQ	Completed by Q4, 2026
Environments are safe, and systems continuously improved	Compliance with employee due diligence requirements under the Code	Percentage of relevant employees meeting due diligence requirements	100% compliance by Q1, 2027 for identified employee cohorts

Outcome	Sub-outcomes	Indicators	Measures (of impact or progress)
to prevent and respond to gender-based violence	Policies for managing gender-based violence reviewed and updated every three years	Policy documentation review dates	100% compliance by Q4, 2028
Build knowledge and capability to safely and effectively prevent and respond to gender-based violence	Co-designed awareness raising campaigns with students, including focus on high-risk groups	Number of campaigns co-designed with students	≥ 3 campaigns per year
	Trauma-informed, person-centred consultation schedule developed to engage diverse cohorts and lived experience voices	Inclusion of campaign focused on high-risk groups	≥1 focused on high-risk groups
		Consultation schedule developed and approved	Schedule developed and approved by Q1, 2027
	Completion of Respectful Relationships training for all UniSQ students	Percentage of all students completing training	100% completion by Q2, 2027
	Training needs analysis and training plan developed	Completion of training needs analysis and plan; delivery of recommendations to relevant areas	Analysis completed by Q2, 2026 Training plan developed by Q4, 2026
	Integration of gender-based violence prevention modules into student orientation and preparation programs	Percentage of orientation, work-integrated learning preparation, study abroad preparation, and excursion programs with integrated modules	100% integration by Q4, 2026
	Embedding gender-based violence education into targeted courses across disciplines	Percentage of courses with embedded gender-based violence education	≥20% of students by end of 2027
	Employee completion of 'Prevention of Gender-Based Violence' training	Percentage of employees completing training	≥95% completion by Q1, 2027

Outcome	Sub-outcomes	Indicators	Measures (of impact or progress)
	Student satisfaction with gender-based violence education modules	Percentage of students reporting positive feedback	≥80% positive feedback in annual end of module survey
Responses and support services are safe and person-centred	Students and employees feel heard and supported when reporting gender-based violence	Percentage of students and employees reporting satisfaction with support services	≥80% of employees and students report feeling heard and supported through feedback mechanisms
	Increased reporting confidence among student groups and accommodation providers	Number of gender-based violence reports received from the Student Guild, Clubs and Societies, and affiliated accommodation providers	Year-on-year increased confidence in reporting mechanisms
	Annual survey developed to measure awareness of support services and reporting pathways	Survey instrument developed and approved	Survey developed and approved by Q1, 2027
	Clear referral pathways are established with affiliated accommodation providers and the Guild	Referral pathways developed and agreed by all stakeholders	Referral pathways evident on websites
	Plain language statements are provided to students pertaining to policies and procedures underpinning UniSQ's approach to managing matters	Statements developed	Statements publicly available on website by Q1 2027
	Support plans are provided for impacted students to ensure safety	Number of support plans in relation to number of disclosures and formal reports	100% of disclosers requiring a support plan are provided with one
Gender-based violence responses are safe and timely	Nomenclature of share a concern is updated to disclosure and formal report	Updated nomenclature updated.	Documentation (e.g., policies, website) updates evident

Outcome	Sub-outcomes	Indicators	Measures (of impact or progress)
	Timely resolution of processes in alignment with the Code, and communication to disclosers is increased.	Timeframes built into Advocate flex data capture and management	All reports compliant with timeframes 100% of disclosers and formal reporters report adequate communication was provided throughout reporting processes
Use evidence to approach, measure change and contribute to the national evidence-base	Trauma-informed, person-centred consultation schedule developed to engage diverse cohorts, and lived experience voices, and voices used to inform activities and Plan	Consultation feedback incorporated into Plan reviews and updates	Q4, 2030
	Completion of annual report on data, analysis and trends relating to gender-based violence incidents at UniSQ	Report endorsed by Council Report housed on UniSQ website	30 June each year
	Completion of Respectful Relationships training for Residential College students	Percentage of Residential College students completing training	100% completion by Q1 each year
	Advocate flex is implemented.	Data capture occurring through Advocate flex	Q4, 2026
Student accommodation is safe for all students and employees	Affiliate accommodation providers have clear policies related to gender-based violence and referral pathways to support	Referral pathways agreed between stakeholders	Policies and referral pathways evident
	Compliance with disclosure/due diligence requirements under the Code	Percentage of relevant College employees and student leaders/volunteers meeting due diligence requirements	100% compliance by Q1, 2027 for identified cohorts

Outcome	Sub-outcomes	Indicators	Measures (of impact or progress)
	Compliance with safety and risk assessments, reporting and support pathways for student disclosers	Risk and safety assessments conducted within 48 hours Reporting and support pathways consistent with Code, and provided by qualified employees	Number of risk and safety assessments in relation to number of disclosures and reports Plain language statement to all students on reporting and support pathways
	Prevention and response toolkit distributed to Student Guild, Clubs and Societies, and affiliated accommodation providers	Toolkit distributed to UniSQ Student Guild, Clubs and Societies, and affiliated accommodation providers	100% distribution to target groups by Q4,2027

7. List of References

Heywood, W., Myers, P., Powell, A., Meikle, G., & Nguyen, D. (2022). *National Student Safety Survey: Report on the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault among university students in 2021*. Melbourne: The Social Research Centre.

Nisbet, L., Halse, G., van Esbroek, E., Heywood, W., Powell, A. & Myers, P. (2022). *National Student Safety Survey: Qualitative research on experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault among university students in 2021*. Melbourne: The Social Research Centre.

Our Watch (2025). *Preventing Violence Against Women*. Source:https://www.ourwatch.org.au/

Our Watch (2021). Educating Equality: A model to address gender-based violence at, and through, Australian universities. Source: https://www.ourwatch.org.au/universities/resources/educating-for-equality

Universities Australia. (2023). *Primary prevention of sexual harm in the university sector: Good practice guide. Source: https://universitiesaustralia.edu.au/publication/primary-prevention-of-sexual-harm-in-the-university-sector-good-practice-guide-july-2023/*

Appendix A: Key Definitions

Definitions have been included to assist with consistent understanding and application of key concepts within this document and the implementation of UniSQ's Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan.

Discloser: a person who has shared information about their experience of Gender-based Violence.

Disclosure: the provision of information about a person's experience of Gender-based Violence to a provider by the discloser or another person.

Formal report: the provision through formal reporting channels of information about their experience of Gender-based Violence by a discloser to a provider, which requires the provider to consider taking steps beyond the offer and provision of support services, including (without limitation) the commencement of an investigation and/or disciplinary process in appropriate circumstances.

Gender-based Violence: any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender that has resulted in, or is likely to result in harm, coercion, control, fear or deprivation of liberty or autonomy.

Intersectionality: A framework for understanding how various social identities (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status) intersect and contribute to unique experiences of oppression and discrimination.

Trauma-informed response: an approach that applies the core principles of safety (physical, psychological and emotional), trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation and promote recovery and healing.

8. Gender Equality Action Plans

If you have an existing Gender Equality Action Plan/s, complete the following table:

Name and tenure:	UniSQ Gender Equality Action Plan 2026-2030
Authorising agency:	Australian Human Rights Commission under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth); Workplace Gender Equality Agency under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (WGE Act), and Workplace Gender Equality (Gender Equality Targets) Instrument 2025
Revision commitments:	*Regular review*
Name and tenure:	UniSQ WHS Sexual Harassment Prevention Plan 2025
Authorising agency:	WorkSafe Queensland, under the *Work Health and Safety (Sexual Harassment) Amendment Regulation 2024 (Qld),* Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)
Revision commitments:	*Regular review, at a minimum every 3 years*
Name and tenure:	
Authorising agency:	
Revision commitments:	

(If you do not have existing Gender Equality Action Plan/s, refer to Guidance to Develop a Whole-of-Organisation Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Plan and Outcomes Framework *(hyperlink)* for support to develop one.

Actions identified through Gender Equality Action Plan/s should be embedded throughout this Plan.)

Australian Government

Higher Education
Gender-based
Violence Regulator

Endorsement Template

Whole-of-Organisation Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan and Outcomes Framework

Higher Education Provider Name: University of Southern Queensland

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Declaration by Higher Education Principal Executive Officer:

I declare that:

- I have led the preparation of the Whole-of-Organisational Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan (the Plan) as required under Standard 1.4 of the National Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (2025) (the National Code).
- I will lead the implementation and publication of this Plan as required under Standard 1.4 of the National Code.
- The information provided in the Plan is to the best of my knowledge true, complete and correct.
- The Plan and Outcomes Framework meet the requirements of the National Code.
- I have provided the Plan to the Governing Body of my organisation for its endorsement.

Full name: Professor Paul Mazerolle

Position title: Vice-Chancellor and President

Signature: Paul Mazerolle

Date: 26 October 2026

UniSQ

Endorsement by Governing Body:

We declare that:

- The information provided in the Whole-of-Organisational Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan is to the best of our knowledge true, complete and correct.
- The Plan and Outcomes Framework meet the requirements of the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (2025).
- If, at any time, details contained in the plan change, or can no longer be achieved, we will notify the Higher Education Gender-based Violence Regulator.

Full name of representative of Governing Body:	The Honourable Dr John McVeigh
Signature of representative of Governing Body:	
Position title of representative of Governing Body:	Chancellor
Date of Endorsement:	26 October 2026

Key Contact:

Please provide details of a key contact who the Higher Education Gender-based Violence Regulator can follow up with regarding specific elements of the plan as needed.

Full name and position title:	Ms Trudi Davidson, Director (Workforce Development & Diversity)
Email address and phone number(s):	trudi.davidson@unisq.edu.au; 07 4631 2981; 0436 006 031

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