The University Of Queensland
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

2024 annual report

Sexual misconduct prevention and response

Acknowledgement of victim-survivors

We acknowledge the strength and resilience of those who have experienced sexual violence, and other forms of gender-based violence.

We recognise our responsibility to shape a culture of consent, to support victim-survivors within our community, and to contribute to a growing violence prevention evidence base.

We further recognise that, in doing this work, we have a responsibility to listen to victim-survivors, and ensure their voices and knowledge are central to our response.

Content warning

This report contains content relating to sexual misconduct, including de-identified data from reports of sexual misconduct made to the University. If you would like to speak with someone for support, you can contact one of the following services:

Support services

Sexual Misconduct Support Unit

W respect.uq.edu.au/support/sexual-misconduct-support-unit-smsu

T 07 3443 1000

UQ's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

W staff.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/health-safety-wellbeing/mental-health/eap

T 1300 307 912

1800 RESPECT

T 1800 737 732

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which UQ operates.

We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.

A Guidance Through Time by Quandamooka artists Casey Coolwell and Kyra Mancktelow.

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Introduction

The University of Queensland (UQ) remains firmly committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all members of our community – including students, staff, and visitors.

Since the release of the 2017 Australian Human Rights Commission report into sexual misconduct in university settings, we have had a dedicated program of work to strengthen our prevention strategies and improve our responses, including the support we offer to those affected.

This is UQ's second annual report on sexual misconduct prevention and response. While we have published data on our website since 2019, this formal report reflects our commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in addressing sexual misconduct in our community.

Our university-wide approach to prevention is coordinated through UQ Respect, which raises awareness of the Sexual Misconduct Support Unit (SMSU) and leads our education and training programs.

As part of this work, we have implemented a range of structural and policy changes at UQ to ensure victim-survivors have timely access to dedicated, trauma-informed support.

The trauma-informed support is provided by trained staff within the SMSU and offers specialist assistance, including academic and other adjustments to help survivors continue their studies or work with confidence.

This year, we introduced mandatory training for all students and senior leaders as part of our commitment to building a respectful culture. This initiative is an important step forward – helping to build awareness, challenge stereotypes and empower more members of our community to recognise misconduct and speak up.

We also launched UQ's new Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Action Plan 2024–2027 which was informed by wide-ranging consultation across our UQ community.

The Plan builds on our progress to date and charts our path forward to promote a safe and respectful campus culture by engaging our community in the prevention of sexual misconduct and providing trauma-informed support for survivors.

We know there is still more work to do, I would like to acknowledge and thank the many teams and individuals across the University whose expertise, dedication, and compassion continue to drive this work, and whose unwavering commitment to supporting victim-survivors is central to our progress.

To our staff, students and community, we remain resolute in our efforts to reduce the prevalence and impact of sexual misconduct across our community.

Professor Deborah Terry AO

Vice-Chancellor and President
The University of Queensland

Definitions

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

Complainant A person who makes a formal report on their own behalf or the person on whom a third-party discloser has made a report. This term is used during the investigation process to refer to parties who are part of an investigation and is consistent with terminology used within the justice system. The University acknowledges that a person who has experienced sexual misconduct may refer to themselves as a complainant, discloser, victim or victim-survivor.

Disclosure A disclosure is the process of an individual providing information about their own experience or what they have witnessed experienced by someone else. 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.

First Responder Network (FRN) The FRN is comprised of members of the UQ community who have received training from UQ Respect to provide inclusive, trauma informed responses to disclosures of sexual misconduct, and to provide victim-survivors with information about their support and reporting options.

Formal report An official statement regarding Sexual Misconduct to the persons or units specified under Section 3 clauses 20 to 31 of the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Procedures.

LGBTQIA+ Abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual. The "+" stands to include other sexualities and gender identities not encompassed in the acronym.

Respect Network A network of staff and students at UQ dedicated to cultivating a university environment free from all forms of sexual misconduct, discrimination and harassment.

Respondent a person who alleged to have engaged in conduct that amounts to gender-based violence.

Sexual Assault Sexual assault encompasses any kind of unwanted or unwelcome sexual activity that occurs without consent.

Sexual Harassment An unwelcome sexual behaviour that makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. It can include both physical and verbal behaviours.

Sexual misconduct Any unwelcome sexual behaviour that occurs without consent, or that makes a person feel uncomfortable, frightened, or threatened. Sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment and sexual assault, as well as behaviours like stalking.

Third-party discloser A person who makes a formal report or disclosure on behalf of or in relation to another person.

Trauma-informed An approach that understands and recognises the impact of trauma, emphasising physical, psychological and emotional safety and the importance of choice for persons who have experienced sexual misconduct.

Victim-survivor A person who has had an experience of sexual misconduct. This term acknowledges the harm and ongoing impacts of violence, as well as honouring the resilience of people with lived experience of sexual misconduct.

Governance

The UQ governance framework for preventing and responding to sexual misconduct reflects the University's commitment to a safe, respectful environment and support for all affected community members.

Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response	The UQ 2024-2027 Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response (the Action Plan) sets out UQ's commitment and actions to provide students and staff with safe and respectful environments free from harm, including sexual misconduct. The UQ Framework draws on recommendations and guidelines from the AHRC and national and international organisations working to prevent sexual misconduct and support gender equality.
Policies and procedures	The Sexual Misconduct Policy, effective as of 20 December 2021, outlines the principles and key requirements governing UQ's approach to preventing, addressing, and responding to sexual misconduct. The policies and procedures, available for all staff and students via the University's Policy and Procedure Library, reflect UQ's commitment to promoting and fostering an environment that is safe, respectful and free from all forms of sexual misconduct. A review of all policies is underway.
Vice Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Sexual Misconduct: Prevention and Response	In 2018, the University established the *Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Sexual Misconduct: Prevention and Response* to guide and oversee the work being done in this space across UQ. Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, this group includes senior leaders from across the University and reports on a quarterly basis to the Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor's Risk and Compliance Committee and the Senate Risk and Audit Committee. It makes recommendations on strategic approaches, considers subject matter expert feedback and recommendations, and provides direction to the Working Groups.
Sexual Misconduct and Prevention Working Groups • **Students** • **Higher Degree by Research** • **Staff focus**	There are 3 working groups: Student, Higher Degree by Research, and Psychosocial Safety (staff focus) - chaired by members of the Advisory Committee. The working groups lead practically focused work for their cohorts that support the delivery of the Action Plan. Their work includes focused projects, recommendations for consideration of the Advisory Committee and active consultation with their communities in relation to sexual misconduct prevention and response.
UQ Respect	UQ Respect is a prevention and education program within Student Support and Wellbeing Services that leads the delivery and coordination of prevention initiatives and training for sexual misconduct and gender-based violence at UQ. Established in 2019, UQ Respect is a diverse multi-disciplinary team of specialists who embed collaborative, evidence-based, survivor-centric and intersectional approaches to ensure inclusive and effective prevention initiatives. The program aims to create a safer and gender equal future for all by empowering individuals and communities through workshops and training, educational resources, campaigns, advocacy and community engagement. The program addresses sexual misconduct across all 3 levels of prevention (primary, secondary and tertiary) spanning topics including consent, healthy relationships, ethical bystander interventions, power dynamics, safe event planning, responding to disclosures and trauma informed practices.
Sexual Misconduct Support Unit	Established in 2017, the Sexual Misconduct Support Unit (SMSU) comprises trained specialist staff who provide support, advice, and counselling to staff, students and members of the UQ community. The SMSU counsellors provide trauma informed support to victim-survivors of sexual misconduct regardless of where the incident occurred.

2024

Building on our work

Education and Awareness

Respect at UQ modules

In 2024, 99.9% of coursework students completed the mandatory Respect at UQ online training module.

A Higher Degree Research (HDR) version of the module, which takes into consideration the different needs and experiences of the cohorts, was introduced in Research Quarter 3 2024. Candidates have until their first/next progress review to complete the training. More than 56% have completed the training.

Any students who have concerns about the impact of completing the module on their wellbeing can request an adjustment, which may include an extension, an alternative version of the module without interactive scenarios and a format of the module compatible with their assistive technology.

Leadership and Resourcing

Trauma-informed practices training

In 2024, UQ senior leaders completed mandatory trauma-informed practices training. The 4-hour training workshop covers topics such as legislation and internal policy, trauma-informed principles and strategies to embed them into practice and case studies and scenarios on how to apply these skills and knowledge to decision making.

In 2025, the training will continue to be delivered, and refresher training will be implemented. A training review is also planned to ensure the workshop content effectively engages attendees and contains up-to-date and evidence-based information.

First Responder and Respect Networks

In the first part of 2024 a review of the First Responder Network was undertaken with staff, students and current members of the network to identify future needs and priorities of the network.

The insights and outcomes from the evaluation have been used to inform the direction of UQ's new Respect Network.

In late 2024 participation in the Respect Network was promoted to staff through the Annual Performance Development process, with promotions for students commencing during 2025 Semester 1 Orientation and a launch planned for Respect at Uni Week.

Community Engagement

UQ Sexual Misconduct Prevention forum

The fourth UQ Sexual Misconduct Prevention Forum was held in November 2024 with the theme "Advancing sexual misconduct prevention: Rethinking and reinvigorating practices and principles at university".

UQ invited colleagues from other universities to attend the Forum with the aim of increasing sector collaboration, providing an opportunity to expand knowledge, and encouraging innovative approaches to prevention and response at universities. The event had more than 100 attendees including students and staff.

Student training 2024

Training	Attendance
Residential college leaders	238
Residential college residents	1095
Pre-placement students	200
UQ Union Clubs and Societies	180
UQ Residences	33
Respect at UQ coursework module	51,831
Respect at UQ HDR module	2794
Bespoke training	521
2024 Total	**56,892**

Staff training 2024

Training	Attendance
Preventing sexual misconduct in the university context	46
Responding to sexual misconduct in the university context	36
Preventing and responding to sexual misconduct refresher training	27
Ethical bystander training	424
Trauma-informed practices	239
Bespoke training	99
Sexual harassment and sexual assault: what are the drivers and how can staff respond (online module)	1045
2024 Total	**1,916**

Respect at Uni Week

In March 2024, UQ participated in Respect at Uni Week. This week aims to raise awareness of gender-based violence at universities. UQ Respect coordinated a diverse array of educational events to increase students' knowledge and confidence about respect, safety, consent, inclusion and healthy relationships, with an additional focus on LGBTQIA+ communities. More than 400 students engaged in the initiative throughout the week.

SEXtember

2024 marked UQ's inaugural SEXtember initiative. Universities from across Australia participated with the aim to encourage conversations about sex, sexuality, healthy relationships, sexual health and reproductive health.

The event theme was *Bodies and Boundaries* in recognition of the many social pressures people can face regarding their bodies and their relationships.

Transparency and Accountability

2024-2027 Action Plan

UQ has begun implementing the 2024-2027 Action Plan for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response.

The Action Plan is evidence-informed and developed through consultation with key stakeholders. It outlines the work UQ is doing to ensure we are embedding a whole-of-university approach to the prevention and response to sexual misconduct. Implementation of the Action Plan is regularly monitored and reported on to ensure accountability and completion of action items is maintained.

Continuous Improvement

Training feedback and evaluation

Training evaluation was conducted through pre- and post-workshop surveys on participants confidence, beliefs, and knowledge relating to preventing and responding to sexual misconduct and broader disrespectful behaviour.

In 2024, more than 87% of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the trauma-informed practice session increased their confidence to respond to a disclosure and implement trauma-informed practice within their work. Survey responses are also being used to inform improvements to training.

Policy review

In 2024 UQ commenced extensive consultation with staff, students and HDR working groups, UQ Union (UQU), UQ Sport, residential colleges and other stakeholders to strengthen its policies and procedures relating to sexual misconduct.

The review included the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy, Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Procedure for staff, Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Procedure for students and the UQ Staff Code of Conduct. The updated policies and procedures will be presented to the University executive team for endorsement in 2025.

2024

Formal reports and disclosures of sexual misconduct

This Annual Report includes disclosures and formal reports received by the University in 2024.

Individuals may make formal reports or disclosures to the University.

Formal reports and disclosures may be provided for experiences that occur within the UQ or broader community.

A formal report is an official statement regarding sexual misconduct. A formal report initiates an investigation by the University into the alleged conduct of the respondent which may lead to a disciplinary process being undertaken. An overview of the complaints process is available in the appendices.

Individuals may disclose sexual misconduct. A disclosure may form the first step prior to a formal report being made. Most disclosures UQ receives come via the SMSU.

UQ maintains a trauma-informed approach in responding to all formal reports and disclosures.

Unless specified, the following data relate to formal reports and unique disclosures of sexual misconduct which may have involved multiple people and/or multiple locations.

The data reported is based on the information that the discloser has provided and, in some cases, may be incomplete.

Data obtained from various systems across the University have been reviewed to ensure no duplications.

2024

Formal reports

There were 45 formal reports of sexual misconduct reported within the UQ community in 2024 involving:

- 25 students, 17 staff and 3 others

Investigation outcomes

Of the 45 formal reports, 12 were substantiated. Six reports had insufficient evidence to substantiate a finding of misconduct.

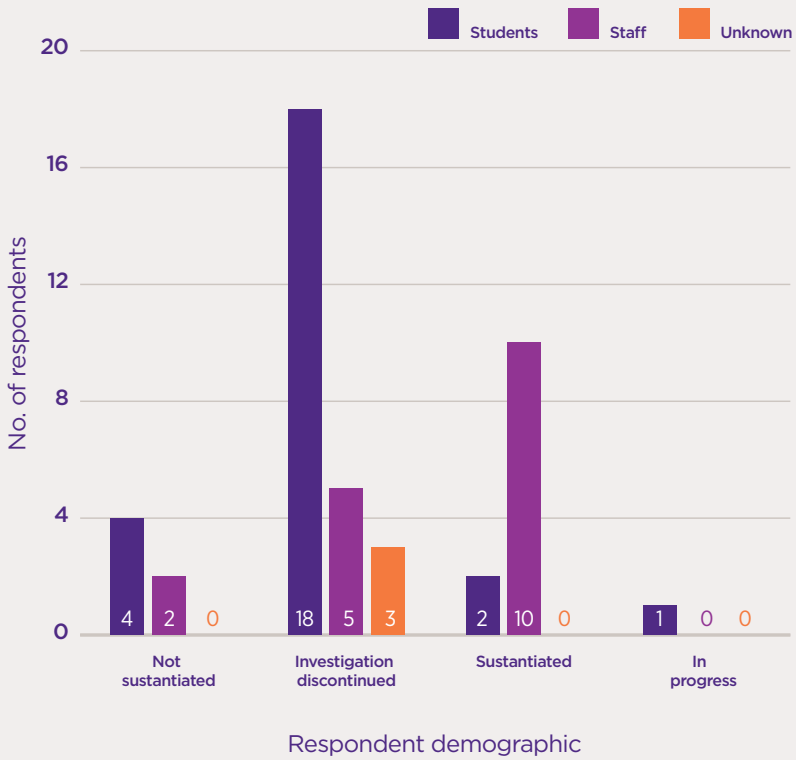
Of the 26 investigations that were discontinued:

- 18 involved students
- 14 were outside the jurisdiction of the University to investigate
- 3 had insufficient information to proceed through the full investigation process
- 1 was referred to support services.

Of the 12 substantiated formal reports:

- 2 staff were terminated and 2 staff resigned.
- One report against a student and 6 reports against staff resulted in disciplinary action
- One is an ongoing matter (as of 31 December 2024).

Investigation outcomes

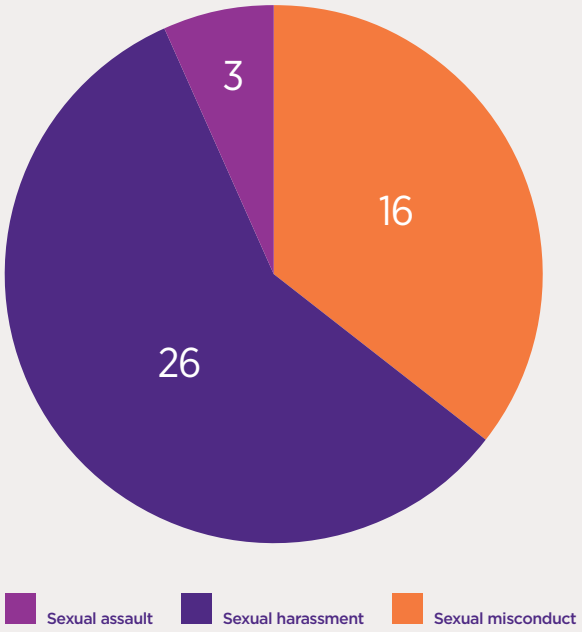


Incident type

Sexual harassment accounted for 58% of formal reports received by the University in 2024.

36% related to sexual misconduct matters, and there were 3 formal reports (6%) of sexual assault.

Formal reports by incident type

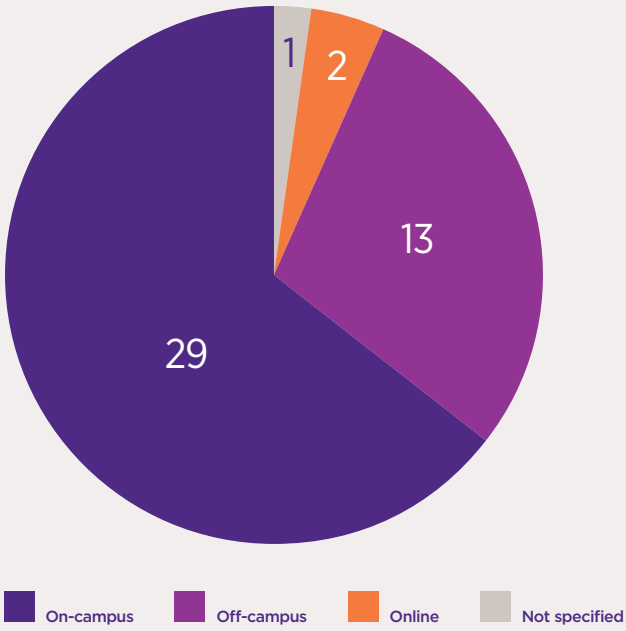


Formal report locations

64% of formal reports related to incidents on-campus, or at a university affiliated location.

33% of formal reports related to off-campus locations or were online.

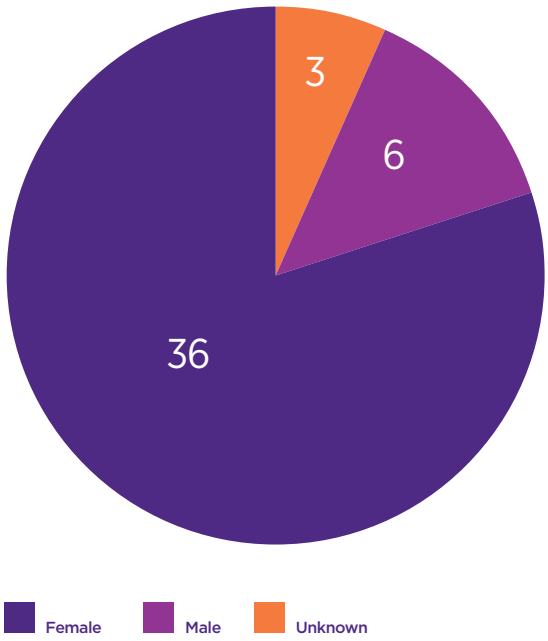
Formal reports by incident type



Gender of victim-survivors

80% of victim-survivors in formal reports were female, 13% were male, and 7% did not disclose their gender.

Gender for formal reports



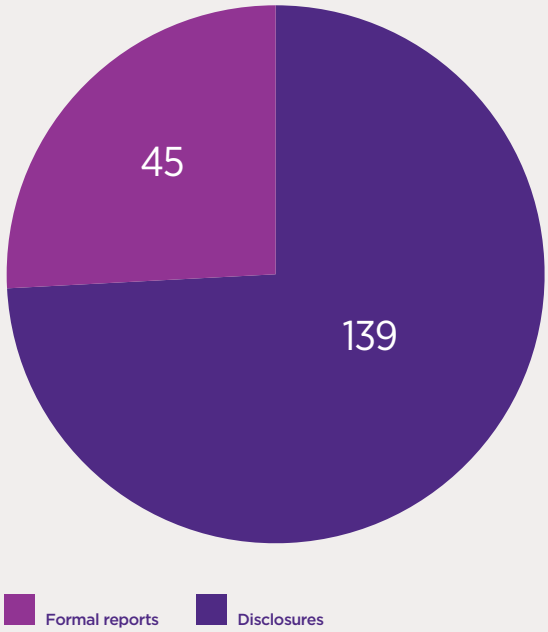
2024
Disclosures

In addition to the formal reports, the University received 139 unique disclosures.

- 116 incidents occurred within the previous 12 months
- 19 were from more than 12 months prior
- 4 did not specify a timeframe.

Of the 139 disclosures, 10 disclosures came from third parties (people who witnessed or were told about incidents of sexual misconduct but did not experience it themselves).

2024 formal reports and disclosures



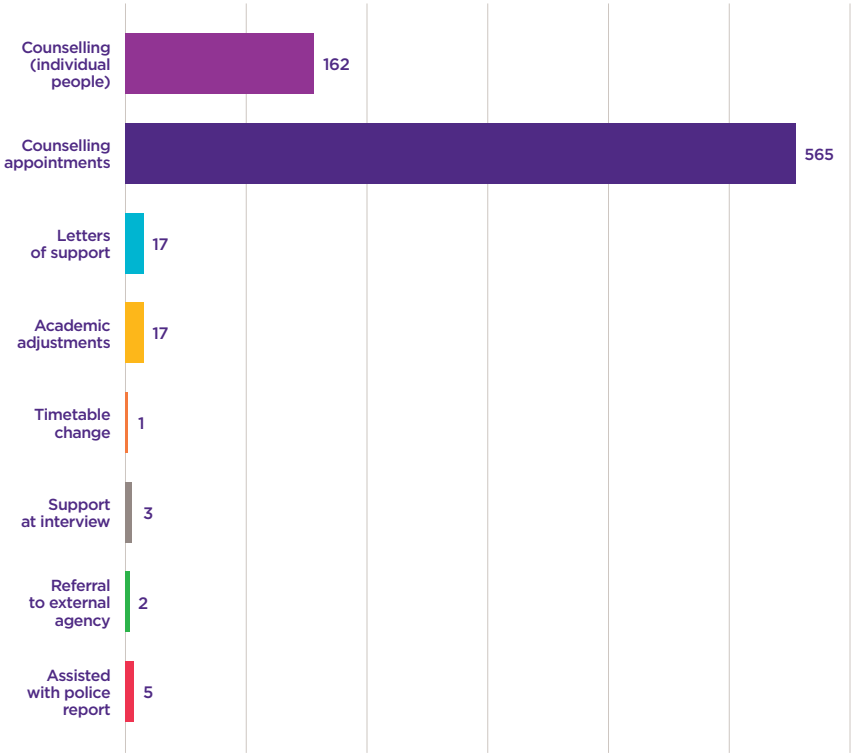
Support provided by the SMSU

In 2024 the SMSU provided support to 162 members of the UQ community. This support included 565 counselling appointments, as well as letters of support and academic adjustments.

Academic adjustments include support for assessment extensions, timetable changes and deferrals.

The SMSU offers victim-survivors referrals to external support services (e.g. Employee Assistance Program for staff and community organisations). It also provides support with reporting incidents either internally or to external agencies (e.g. Australian Health Practitioner/Regulation Agency).

Support provided



2025

Next steps

Respect Network

The Respect Network is planned to launch during Respect at Uni Week. The delivery of the Network will involve student and staff training, professional development and volunteering opportunities related to prevention, inclusion and safety.

Respect Network Ambassadors will play an active role in advancing UQ's whole-of-university approach to the prevention of gender-based violence through the promotion of key campaigns, resources and services within their networks. Volunteering opportunities through the Respect Network will also enable key prevention actions to reach a wider audience through the increased capacity of the program.

Education and training

After the successful delivery of the Respect at UQ module in 2024, the module will remain mandatory for students to complete every 2-years. Alongside the mandatory Workplace Behaviour module for UQ staff this will ensure a foundational knowledge across the University.

The trauma-informed practices training will continue to be delivered, and refresher training implemented. A training review is planned to ensure the workshop content effectively engages attendees and contains up-to-date and evidence-based information.

In addition to existing workshops, 2025 will also see the delivery of training to student leaders in clubs and societies in partnership with the UQ Union.

Campaigns and events

In 2025, the University will implement a new education campaign to raise awareness about the support and reporting options available for students through the SMSU. This campaign incorporates student feedback.

The University will also review its catalogue of active campaigns to identify opportunities to revitalise existing campaigns and address gaps.

UQ Respect will continue to deliver large-scale events for Respect at Uni Week and SEXtember in 2025, with plans to expand initiatives and broaden the reach.

Additionally, the University will participate in Domestic Violence Prevention Month through an activation for staff and students for the LGBTQ Domestic Violence Awareness Day on 28 May.

National Code

UQ is committed to actively progressing the Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education and continually engages with government, other universities, community leaders and stakeholders.

Transparency and accountability

The University will finalise its policy review, and publish the updated policies and procedures related to sexual misconduct.

The UQ Respect website will undergo a formal review to improve the accessibility and navigability of online information in relation to education, support, reporting and the governance of sexual misconduct at UQ.

Engaging men in prevention

In 2025, a student-staff partnership will deliver an engagement campaign to empower male students to engage in the Respect Network, attend training, and understand their role in the prevention of gender-based violence. The project will involve focus groups with students to better understand their attitudes, beliefs and knowledge in relation to sexual misconduct to ensure the campaign materials are evidence- and community-informed.

Appendix

Managing formal reports and disclosures at UQ

Action is taken in line with the University's disciplinary framework. UQ cooperates with police and other external agencies and reports matters where appropriate.

People may make a written or verbal formal report to the University via:

- the HR division or their supervisor
- the Academic Services division
- the SMSU
- UQ's complaints and appeals webpage (Advocate portal).

Formal reports (complaints) of sexual misconduct related to employees are handled in accordance with both the UQ's Complaint Management Policy and the Sexual Misconduct Policy.

UQ's Complaints Management Committee (CMC)

The CMC is responsible for making decisions about how complaints of a serious nature, including sexual misconduct, should be managed. The CMC meets fortnightly, or as otherwise required. Its members are the Provost (the Chair); the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO); the Director, Workplace Relations; the Director, HR (Client Partnering); and the Director, Integrity Unit (IU).

The Academic Registrar attends CMC meetings when student matters are being considered. The CMC may refer an allegation of sexual misconduct against a UQ staff member or student to the IU, HR, Student Conduct and Grievance Resolution unit (SCGR) or an external investigator.

Student respondent formal report

Sexual misconduct amounts to 'general misconduct' within the Student Disciplinary Framework. When a formal report is submitted against a student, it is received by the Academic Registrar. Immediate acknowledgement is sent to the person who made the report with information on support services available. The Academic Registrar considers immediate actions that may be required for the person making the report and the subject of the report. The formal report is reviewed by the Associate Director Student Conduct and Integrity and referred to the CMC and IU or SCGR for investigation.

Staff respondent formal report

Sexual misconduct can amount to 'misconduct' or 'serious misconduct' within the Staff Disciplinary Framework. When a formal report is made against a staff respondent, it is received by the CHRO and IU. An acknowledgement is sent to the person making the report with information about support services. The CHRO considers immediate actions that may be required for the person making the report and the subject of the report and refers the report to the CMC for review, where it can be allocated to the IU or Workplace Relations/Client Partnering for investigation.

Investigation and outcomes

An investigation is carried out and an investigation report and recommendations provided to the Associate Director Student Conduct and Integrity for student matters, or the CHRO for staff matters. For students, if the Associate Director decides to action a formal misconduct process, the case is then progressed by SCGR in line with the Student Disciplinary Framework. For staff, the CHRO considers further action, including initiating a formal misconduct process in line with the Staff Code of Conduct.

At the conclusion of all formal report investigations, the discloser will be provided with outcome advice to the extent outcomes are able to be disclosed, having regard to the welfare and safety of the persons involved and subject to UQ's obligations.

This advice will be provided in writing, and the discloser will be offered the opportunity to discuss the outcome advice in a face-to-face meeting (with a support person present).

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AUSTRALIA

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Information on the report

UQ Respect

W respect.uq.edu.au
E uqrespect@uq.edu.au

Support services

Sexual Misconduct Support Unit (SMSU)

W respect.uq.edu.au/support/sexual-misconduct-support-unit-smsu
T 07 3443 1000

UQ Mental Health Crisis line

T 1300 851 998

UQ's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

W staff.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/health-safety-wellbeing/mental-health/eap
T 1300 307 912

1800 RESPECT

T 1800 737 732