

Strategic Actions for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct

2024-2026

Safer Communities Office



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

What we strive to achieve

The Strategic Actions for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct sets out the Safer Communities Office's commitments to a trauma-informed strategy for the prevention of and response to sexual misconduct for 2024-2026.

Objectives

1. Implement an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct throughout our diverse student cohorts and aligned with the National Higher Education Code's key focus areas.
2. Embed trauma-informed and victim-survivor-led practices.
3. Acknowledge and address intersectionality in awareness raising, prevention and response initiatives.
4. Promote accountability, transparency and continuous improvement through reporting, monitoring, and evaluation.
5. Engage in collaborative, consultative and co-designed initiatives with stakeholders across the university.
6. Partner with survivors, NGOs, Government, and community organisations to co-design and evaluate effectiveness of prevention programs.
7. Use research, evidence, and best practice to develop awareness raising, prevention and response strategies.

Strategic focus areas

The Safer Communities Office's work for 2024-2026 is aligned with four strategic action areas to address sexual misconduct.

Capacity Building	Engagement and Early Intervention	Continuous Improvement	Governance
Prevention Education and Response	Awareness Raising and Partnerships	Practices and Processes	Decision-making, policies and procedures
Trauma-informed preventative education and response practices	Leverage key partnerships with service providers, residential colleges, student accommodation, student bodies, academic staff with disciplinary expertise	Improve inclusion and accessibility	Consistent and meaningful consultation with Advisory Groups and Communities of Practice
Tailored support for target cohorts (international, HDR, First Nations, LGBTQIA+, students with a disability)	Audience-focused communications and community events	Input from diverse community voices to improve prevention and response practice	Establishing MoUs/agreements with service and accommodation providers
Consent education training for all commencing students and student leaders	Student consultation and co-design	Improve transparency, accountability and proactivity	Continuous review and evaluation of Student and Staff Sexual Misconduct Policy and Response Procedures

Strategic focus actions

Deliverable	Action/s
Develop and co-design a new consent education module that is inclusive and accessible to all students, to replace the current Consent Matters module.	Co-design the new consent education module with current students, victim-survivors and our academics with expertise in this area to ensure that it includes student voices, lived experience and subject matter expertise and knowledge. To be completed end of 2024, due to be launched Sem 1 2025.
Build upon significant growth in utilisation of timely expert support provided by the University's Safer Communities Office (SCO).	<p>Increase reporting (including reports by bystanders) of incidents of sexual misconduct and use of services by 20% year-on-year (2024-2026), following a 100% increase in reports from 2022-2023.</p> <p>Work with colleagues across the wider University (Workplace Relations, Student Affairs Unit and beyond) to increase awareness of disclosure and complaints processes for students and affiliates.</p>
Alignment with the National Higher Education Code, Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education and National Student Ombudsman.	<p>Ensure strategic alignment with the National Higher Education Code and Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education across all campuses and domains of the University.</p> <p>Review and update all relevant University webpages to detail all available disclosures and complaints processes, including the National Student Ombudsman where applicable.</p>
Leverage relationships with University-owned and external accommodation services, including increased collaboration, visibility, service accessibility and reporting.	<p>Continue to strengthen and formalise partnerships between the University and accommodation services (including residential colleges) to promote information-sharing and encourage collaboration in response to sexual misconduct reports, with the aims of increasing incident reporting, improving student safety and minimising re-traumatisation of victim-survivors. Frequent Communities of Practice and formal points of contact with Residential Life staff and students and accommodation providers.</p> <p>Weekly co-location of a Residential Life coordinator within Student Accommodation sites to increase accessibility to Wellbeing support and education, including safety campaigns in residential settings and ethical bystander training for Student Accommodation staff.</p> <p>Work with accommodation providers to establish MoUs, policies and common actions to ensure gender-based violence is addressed in contractual arrangements with external contractors, and particularly high-risk environments such as clinical placement and student accommodation sites. One MoU</p>

has been signed to date in 2024, with our target for multiple MoUs to be signed by 2026.

Pilot and launch Ethical Bystander intervention and awareness training across key student cohorts.

Expand the current training available to student leaders by 90% and to include other key student cohorts as a pilot; feedback and evaluations obtained from pilot will be used to plan a wider rollout in 2025.

Co-design a peer-facilitation model for consent education training that improves engagement with students.

Expand the peer facilitation model of consent education to double the number of student peers who can co-facilitate workshops with the Safer Communities Office.

Continue to use feedback and evaluations as well as evidence-based research to tailor the workshops.

Promote awareness, inclusion, engagement and accessibility of the Safer Communities Office to students from diverse backgrounds.

Maintain co-locations of the Safer Communities Office at the Gadigal Centre to improve engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Overseeing the management and training of the University's LGBTQIA+ Student Support Liaison Officer program (staff volunteers with specialised training to support gender transition and affirmation). Tailoring questions for people from the LGBTQIA+ community in the intersectionality survey with the goal of 10% increase in participation.

Continue to work with the Cultural Safety Officer to engage with students in a collaborative, trauma-informed and safety-first approach.

Increase consent education workshop participation in Auslan by 20% to improve accessibility for students.

Student co-design and development of Project Respect, an initiative to improve international students' understanding of domestic, family and intimate partner violence.

Collaborate with the Digital Accessibility team to ensure that all training modules and all publications are accessible for people living with disability.

Partnerships

The Safer Communities Office is committed to ensuring its practices, policies and partnerships are collaborative, transparent and informed by the relevant expertise and experience, including partnerships with:

- Universities Australia, including the New South Wales Vice Chancellors Committee
- Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment G08 Working Group
- Residential Colleges, Student Accommodation, and external accommodation providers
- Our Watch, including the NSW Universities Prevention Connection
- Provision of Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) Priority Sexual Assault Counselling
- The Survivor Hub
- Full Stop Australia
- The Safer Communities Office and Gadigal Centre Partnership
- Increased collaboration between Safer Communities Office, University academics and SMEs
- Students' Representative Council, Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association, Sydney Uni Sport & Fitness, Newtown Police, Redfern Legal, Lou's Place and other higher education providers.

Community engagement

The Safer Communities Office leads a complementary program of targeted student and staff campaigns across the calendar year to ensure our community is supported, well-informed and connected to our commitment to providing a safe and inclusive environment.

Examples include:

- Dedicated Campus Culture program includes Courageous Conversations events, which seek to encourage and elevate open, respectful dialogues around potentially difficult topics.
- [It's all about consent](#) campaign delivered at high-volume Welcome events and across the University to promote affirmative consent in digital spaces, active bystander intervention in both digital and physical spaces, and education around the recording, creating and sharing of sexual content. It also raises awareness of where and how to report and seek support within the University.

Governance and reporting

Reporting, Policies and Procedures

The Safer Communities Office is committed to publishing an Annual Report on Sexual Misconduct every year, including detailed information about the University's prevention programs, campaigns, support services and the outcomes of complaints. The statistics published in this report include University related and non–University related incidents of sexual misconduct. The University also conducts a systemic and comprehensive two-year review of its policies and procedures, along with regular updates to ensure alignment with government legislation, policies, National Code and Student Ombudsman requirements. These documents include:

[Support for Students Policy 2023](#)

[Student Critical incident Procedures 2024](#)

[Student Sexual Misconduct Policy 2023](#)

[Staff Sexual Misconduct Policy 2024](#)

[Student Sexual Misconduct Response Procedures 2024](#)

[Staff Sexual Misconduct Response Procedures 2023](#)

[Guiding Principles to Responding to Claims of Historic Sexual Abuse](#)

University governance and reporting bodies, including the Safer Communities Advisory Group, Residential Life Community of Practice, and Consent Education Advisory Group leverage the expertise of students, practitioners, academics and victim-survivors to review procedures, program design and education offerings in alignment with best-practice compliance and further to the evolving nature of our social and tertiary landscapes.

Contact

Safer Communities Office (Student Life)
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building (G02)
160 City Road
Darlington NSW 2008

+61 2 8627 6808

Safer-communities.officer@sydney.edu.au

sydney.edu.au

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