Student Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Action Plan

Prevention, Support and Reporting

2021 - 2023

QUT Equity

Student Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Reference Group

October 21 2021

At QUT, we are fully committed to ensuring we continue to offer effective prevention strategies and reporting procedures, as well as the provision of support for our students and staff.

We must always remember the importance of respectful relationships.

There is no place for sexual assault and sexual harassment anywhere, including in our university communities.

Professor Margaret Sheil AO, Vice-Chancellor QUT

Introduction

We acknowledge that there is no place for sexual assault or harassment in universities or the broader community. At QUT we are committed to addressing these issues and working together to empower our students and staff while making QUT a safer space to study and work.

In 2016, QUT students participated in the anonymous and confidential national Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) survey about sexual assault and harassment. Following the survey, AHRC released the [Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities (2017),](#) which included nine recommendations. You can view the results of profile of QUT respondents [here](#).

As part of these recommendations QUT is now part of the national *Respect.Now.Always* campaign to prevent and address sexual harassment and assault. The campaign aims to:

- raise awareness of sexual assault and sexual harassment and lift the visibility of support services for students
- obtain data to guide further improvement in university policies and services, and
- assist universities in sharing global best practice resources across the sector.

Along with the *Respect.Now.Always* campaign QUT has a Student Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SSASH) Action Plan which outlines the strategies that the University is undertaking to continue to address the issues identified by the AHRC.

The Action Plan also draws on the [Universities Australia 10 Point Action Plan](#) and TEQSA's *[Good Practice Note: Preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Australian higher education sector](#)* which provide appropriate strategies to prevent student sexual harassment and assault, increase visibility of reporting and improve support services.

Priorities and Rationale

The SSASH Action Plan encompasses four key priority areas. For each priority area strategies, actions, timelines, and responsibility are outlined.

1. **Awareness and prevention.** QUT will provide a comprehensive awareness and communication strategy across the whole of QUT. Awareness and prevention strategies aim to create a safe environment for the QUT community where all staff and students know where to get help and support. Strategies include creating and disseminated up-to-date print and digital materials through relevant communication channels which empower staff and students with accurate and accessible information on prevention strategies, training opportunities, reporting mechanisms and pathways to support.

2. **Training and education.** QUT will provide a comprehensive training and education strategy across the whole of QUT. This training and education acknowledges the key drivers of sexual violence and normalises gender equality and respectful relationships. QUT recognises that some groups may experience disproportionate levels of violence influenced by systems of power (e.g., gender, race) which intersect with individual identities and attributes (e.g., gender identity, sexuality, disability, cultural background) and will develop inclusive and targeted strategies. Practical delivery of prevention strategies for staff and students will include respect and safety training, bystander training, responding to disclosures, and safe campus initiatives.

3. **Support and wellbeing.** QUT will provide strategies, mechanisms and services which are trauma-informed and support and empower people who have experienced sexual violence. Services include confidential mechanisms for disclosure and support through discrimination advisers; accessing internal counselling services and medical services; adjustments for study and safety support; and referral to external services as appropriate.

4. **Governance, monitoring and reporting.** QUT has specific policies and procedures around sexual assault and sexual harassment; mechanisms for reporting disclosures and managing complaints; a working group to monitor the Action Plan reporting to the Vice-Chancellor; and processes for internal and external reporting.

Our commitment through this Action Plan is guided by the following principles:

- Whole-of-institution leadership and commitment
- Respectful and inclusive strategies
- Evidence-based practice addressing the root causes of sexual violence
- Trauma-informed support, care, and complaint management
- Fairness, transparency, and privacy is maintained.

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Gender	Unlike sex, which is based on anatomical and physical markers, Gender is how a person identifies themselves. They may identify at any point within the spectrum, or outside of it entirely. People may identify with genders that are different to their natal sex, or with none at all. Gender also exists as a social construct, as gender 'roles' or 'norms'.
Gendered Drivers	The specific elements or expressions of gender inequality that are most strongly linked to violence against women. They relate to the structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life. The gendered drivers are the underlying causes required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women occurs. They must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage
Prevention	Primary Prevention: Whole-of-population initiatives that address the primary, or underlying, drivers of violence Secondary Prevention: Secondary prevention, or early intervention, aims to 'change the trajectory' for individuals at higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence Tertiary Prevention: Tertiary prevention, or response, supports survivors and holds perpetrators to account, and aims to prevent the recurrence of violence
Racism	Racism takes many forms and can happen in many places. It includes prejudice, discrimination or hatred directed at someone because of their colour, ethnicity, or national origin
Reinforcing Factors	Factors, behaviours, or attitudes that become significant in the context of the drivers of violence. These factors do not predict or drive violence against women in and of themselves; however, when they interact with the drivers, they can increase the frequency or severity of violence
Sex	Sex refers to a person's biological sex characteristics. This has historically been understood as either female or male. However, we now know that some people are born with natural variations to sex characteristics, referred to as intersex. A person typically has their sex assigned at birth based on physiological characteristics, including their genitalia and chromosome composition. This assigned sex is called a person's *natal sex*. This is distinct from 'Gender', which is how a person identifies themselves, which may be different from their 'sex' or with no 'sex' at all.
Intersex	Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of innate bodily variations of sex characteristics. Intersex people are born with physical sex characteristics (such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit typical definitions for male or female bodies.
Sexual Violence	Sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced, or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault, and rape.
Victim-Survivor	People, including children and young people, who have experienced sexual violence. QUT recognises that not every person who has experienced or is experiencing sexual violence identifies with this term. The use of the term acknowledges the strength and resilience shown by people who have experienced or currently live with sexual violence.
Violence Against Women	Any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life. This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural, spiritual, financial, and other) that are gender-based.

Priority Areas

Priority Area 1: Awareness and Prevention					
Item	**Action**	**Key results and outcomes**	**Responsible Area**	**Timeline**	**Related Documents**
1.1	Create and disseminate up-to-date SASH information though print and digital materials for students and staff, with materials to staff disseminated through relevant communication channels e.g., VC and UR newsletters, and committees	• Students and staff can see SASH information around campus and on the QUT website/intranet sites. • Students and staff will have the knowledge they need to identify SASH behaviours, report an incident, and respond to a disclosure.	• Equity • Marketing & Communication (M&C) • Student Guild • Human Resources (HR) • GLP (for University-level committees, where relevant)	Ongoing	• [Protocol for staff responding to student disclosures of sexual harassment and assault](#) • [Report a Concern](#)
1.2	Create up-to-date SASH prevention, reporting and support information on corporate website and digital workplace	QUT will have webpages with information, which is SASH specific, accurate and easy to navigate for students, and pages specific to staff around responding to disclosures, protocols, and support services.	• Equity • HR • M&C	December 31, 2021, with yearly review	• [Discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, and problematic behaviour - QUT Digital Workplace](#)
1.3	Promote SASH knowledge through: • Providing opportunities for students to engage in education and training opportunities. • Promoting the protocols, training, and reporting mechanisms to staff and students	• Training for staff and students is relevant and up-to-date • Training is prominent and part of enrolment/induction • Staff protocols are up-to-date and provided in digital and printable versions.	• Equity • Student Services • M&C • GRED	Ongoing	• [Protocol for staff responding to student disclosures of sexual harassment and assault](#) • [Discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, and problematic behaviour - QUT Digital Workplace](#) • [Report a Concern](#)
1.4	Provide information to students through Orientation Week and other transition-in activities including targeted information for international students (both on and off-shore), HDR students, and other at-risk cohorts	• Information and training modules are presented to new students as part of orientation. • Specific information sheets are created and disseminated to at-risk cohorts.	• Equity • M&C • GRED	Orientation	

Item	Action	Key results and outcomes	Responsible Area	Timeline	Related Documents
1.5	Provide information about Security and safety measures such as the SafeZone app, night security bus and security escorts	Information or link to information is included in SASH print and digital materials.	• Equity • Security	Ongoing	
1.6	Support Guild initiatives related to prevention, reporting and support	• Key SASH information is provided by Guild to students. • Training is provided to Guild and student leaders	• Student Guild • Equity	Ongoing	
1.7	Work with external partners such as accommodation providers to provide information about initiatives, safety information and support mechanisms	Students are aware of their rights, support services available, and reporting mechanisms in all aspects of their university experience.	• Equity • Student Services (Accommodation Services)	Ongoing	

Priority Area 2: Training and Education

Item	Action	Key results and outcomes	Responsible Area	Timeline	Related documents
2.1	Equip frontline staff to, • know who to report too • be confident in handling SASH disclosures and complaints • be able to seek support or refer others to support services at QUT and in the community	All frontline staff will complete training allowing them to confidently handle SASH disclosures and complaints and know the relevant protocol.	• Equity • Managers and Supervisors • Student Services • M&C • Graduate Research Education and Development (GRED) • Student Guild	Ongoing	• Universities Australia *SASH: What are the drivers and how can staff respond?* for staff (available through ELMO) • *Respect and Safety at QUT* online module (available to all students and staff through Blackboard) • MATE Bystander training for students and staff • QUT's Responding to disclosures of sexual harassment or assault
2.2	Training is made available for staff and student which • focuses on the drivers of sexual violence, reporting options and pathways and support services. • Is tailored to at-risk cohorts i.e. women, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, students with disabilities, LGBTIQA+ students, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	• See an increase in staff completing the UA SASH training. • Training is evaluated as to its impact on attitudes and behaviours.	• Equity	Ongoing	• Universities Australia *SASH: What are the drivers and how can staff respond?* for staff (available through ELMO) • *Respect and Safety at QUT* online module (available to all students and staff through Blackboard) • MATE Bystander training for students and staff
2.3	Ensure training is integrated into relevant curricular and extra-curricular programs as appropriate, with specific focus on student cohorts such as commencing students, international students, and higher degree research students. Training to be provided in:	Training is integrated into various programs to ensure relevant groups are adequately prepared to identify and handle SASH situations, and to know of the available supports.	• Equity • Student Services • HR • M&C • GRED • Student Guild	Ongoing	• QUT's Responding to disclosures of sexual harassment of assault • *Respect and Safety at QUT* online module (available to all students and staff through Blackboard) • UA's Principles of Respectful Supervisory Relationships for higher degree students

	• Student orientations • work-integrated learning • study abroad programs • creation or leadership of clubs/ societies • student purpose-built accommodation					• MATE Bystander training for students and staff
2.4	Provide staff with education and training on *Responding to Disclosures* and related processes.	50% of supervising staff having completed training module	• Equity	Ongoing		• QUT's Responding to disclosures of sexual harassment of assault
2.5	Review and update training modules and programs to ensure they provided required information in an accessible manner.	• All training will have up-to-date information • New training will be added if required. • Current training will be removed or replaced if outdated or better modules/programs are found.	• Equity	December 31, 2021, with yearly review		

Priority Area 3: Support and Wellbeing

Item	Action	Key results and outcomes	Responsible Area	Timeline	Related Documents
3.1	Provide and promote student access to support services, key contacts, and information on SASH, including: • Staff who are trained in responding and referring • HDAs • Counselling Services • Health and Medical Services • Security • Online reporting mechanisms • Relevant policies and procedures	Students have multiple avenues for accessing support and making a disclosure or formal complaint to the university and to seek appropriate support.	• Equity • Student services • HR • Academic Division • M & C • GRED • Security • Working Party	Immediate and ongoing	• [A/8.10 Sexual harassment and sexual assault](#) and • [A/8.5 Resolution procedures for sexual harassment, sexual assault and discrimination related complaints](#)
3.2	Ensure QUT website (corporate and intranet) provides clear and easy access to accurate information, policy, and processes for making a disclosure or complaint, and contact for support services (internal and external).	All webpages contain up-to-date and accurate information on SASH and support services available.	• Equity • M&C	Immediate and Ongoing	• [Report a concern](#) • [Safety on campus](#) • [Discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, and problematic behaviour](#) • [Respect and Safety at QUT](#)
3.3	Provide staff access to support services and information on self-care to prevent vicarious trauma.	Staff know where to access support.	• HR • HSE • Equity	Immediate and ongoing	• Staff EAP [Benefits and support - QUT Digital Workplace](#) • HSE [Health and wellbeing - QUT Digital Workplace](#)
3.4	Review and update SASH related pages on QUT website (corporate and intranet).	Annual reviews are completed Information is relevant and up-to-date	• Equity • HR	31 December initially, then annually.	• [Report a concern](#) • [Safety on campus](#) • [Discrimination, sexual harassment and assault, and problematic behaviour](#) • [Respect and Safety at QUT](#)
3.4	Provide students who have experienced SASH access to academic support through policy and administrative mechanisms to help manage their study loads and make appropriate adjustments.	• HDAs discuss academic support options with students including Equity Plan as appropriate. • Availability of academic supports is outlined on website.	• Equity • Academic Division	Immediate and congoing	• [QUT - MOPP - E/6.3 Student academic concessions](#) • [Late assessment - QUT Digital Workplace](#)

Priority 4: Governance, Monitoring and Reporting

Item	Action	Key results and outcomes	Responsible Area	Timeline	Related Documents
4.1	To monitor the SASH Action Plan using a dedicated working party to ensure all actions meet best practice and compliance standards policies and legislation.	Identification of any actions which are missing, or which need alterations.	• Equity • Reference Group	Ongoing	• TEQSA's Good Practice Note: Preventing and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Australian higher education sector
4.2	Engage with the Vice-Chancellor, and the Office of the Registrar with regards to the action plan priorities and strategies, and messages of support to QUT staff and student community.	• High priority projects and strategies are implemented within an appropriate timeframe. • Staff and students are kept up-to-date with projects and initiatives.	• Equity • University Registrar • Vice-Chancellor (VC)	Ongoing	
4.3	Review relevant QUT policies, procedures, and standard operating protocols, including record keeping, whilst considering guidance provided by Universities Australia and TEQSA.	QUT policies, procedures and protocols remain accurate and up-to-date with guiding and governing bodies.	• Equity • Governance, Legal, and Performance (GLP)	Ongoing	• A/8.10 Sexual harassment and sexual assault • A/8.5 Resolution procedures for sexual harassment, sexual assault and discrimination related complaints • F/6.1 Records management
4.4	Support Universities Australia by participating in the National Student Safety Survey	Contribute to the UA NSSS and facilitate a voice to students through this avenue for ongoing improvement.	• Equity • Vice-Chancellor (VC)	Ongoing	
4.5	Annual Compliance report to Risk and Audit Committee.	Ensure QUT is meeting compliance obligations	• Equity • HR • HSE	Ongoing	
4.6	Liaison with Governance, Legal and Performance to ensure QUT meets the relevant requirements of the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*, and reporting obligations via the Tertiary	QUT has updated documents and meets all relevant guidelines.	• Equity • GLP	Ongoing	

	Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). Liaison with GLP to check if the Queensland Government requires any relevant information to be included in the QUT Annual Report.				

Item	Action	Key results and outcomes	Responsible Area	Timeline	Related Documents
4.7	Provide staff and students the option to report or disclose sexual harassment and assault online with an option of anonymous reporting.	Staff and students are using the online forms to report incidents.	• Equity	Ongoing	
4.8	Continue current reporting arrangements through data management system (Q Records) and to Registrar on incidents of reports/disclosures or those seeking support related to sexual misconduct, waiting times, numbers of urgent/crisis request.	Trends and gaps are identified so improvements can be made.	• Equity	Ongoing	
4.9	Ongoing development and improvement of the case management system, data collection and ongoing improvements around data quality	Systems are up to date and use best practice.	• Equity	Ongoing	
5.0	Provide Vice-Chancellor with a de-identified report on incidents, trends, and recommendations for improvement	Trends and gaps are identified so improvements can be made.	• Equity • Vice-Chancellor	Every 6 Months	