

Whole-of- Organisation Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan and outcomes framework

1 January 2026 –
31 December 2029



Seeking support

If you require support, please reach out to the below services:

ACU services

STUDENTS

Safeguarding and Student Safety Team
respectandsafety@acu.edu.au, phone 0476 852 735

STAFF

Staffrespectandsafety@acu.edu.au, phone 0476 852 735

ACU's Employee Assistance Program (Acacia EAP). Contact 1300 364 273.

External services

1800 RESPECT

National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service.
Call 1800 737 732.

FULL STOP

24/7 sexual, domestic and family violence response and recovery service.
Call 1800 385 578.

LIFELINE

24/7 crisis support.
Call 13 11 14.

13 YARN

Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.
Call 13 92 76.

INTOUCH

Support for migrant and refugee community members.
Call 1800 755 988.

QLIFE

LGBTQIA+ peer support and counselling.
Call 1800 184 527.

MENSLINE AUSTRALIA

Counselling and support for men.
Call 1300 78 99 78.

If you are unhappy with how ACU has handled a matter relating to gender-based violence, you can also make a complaint to the **National Student Ombudsman**.

Acknowledgements

In recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's spiritual and cultural connection to Country and in continuing ACU's commitment to Reconciliation, ACU would like to acknowledge the First Peoples and the Traditional owners and custodians of the country where ACU campuses are located. We respectfully acknowledge our Elders past and present and remember that they have passed on their wisdom to us in various ways. Let us hold this in trust as we work and serve our communities.

ACU would like to acknowledge the victim survivors of gender based violence, and their strength in reporting their experiences to the university's Safeguarding and Student Safety Team and/or the Safety Support Network. ACU acknowledges the lived experience of victim survivors and acknowledges their ongoing courage in the face of adversity, trauma and recovery.

ACU recognises and acknowledges that victim survivors are at the centre of the university's response to and prevention of gender based violence. ACU recognises that it plays an important role in prevention by consciously addressing the societal attitudes and power imbalances which contribute to gender based violence.

Whole-of-Organisation Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan and outcomes framework

This is an abbreviation of ACU's Whole-of-Organisation Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan and outcomes framework submitted to the Commonwealth Department of Education. The full plan will be released once reviewed by the Department of Education.

Statement of commitment

As a Catholic university, our mission is at the heart of everything we do. Acting in truth and love, we are committed to improving the lives of others through compassion, empathy and respect, serving our communities and supporting our staff and students.

Violence of all kinds, including gender-based violence, is antithetical to ACU's mission, which prioritises respect for the dignity of every person.

At ACU, we are committed to fostering a safe, inclusive and respectful environment that is free from violence for every member of our community.

The 2021 National Student Safety Survey reported that one in six Australian university students has experienced sexual harassment, underscoring the urgent need for significant cultural change in our sector.

The Australian Government's introduction of the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (the National Code) presents a significant opportunity for ACU to reflect, strengthen and lead. In alignment with our values, we are taking decisive action to ensure meaningful change.

Our broad-reaching activities to implement the National Code at ACU have been a collaborative endeavour across the university to ensure we meet the Code's seven standards. Our approach was informed by an external review of ACU's processes and practices

that identified strengths to build on and areas for improvement. Importantly, it was informed by consultation with students and staff who generously shared their insights and lived experiences.

I have been proud to chair ACU's Interim Gender-Based Violence Taskforce, established to ensure we successfully deliver the National Code, and I look forward to continuing to lead the university's actions to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

As we move forward, our approach will continue to be guided by the voices of our community, evidence-based best practice, and a shared commitment to safety and respect. I extend my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development of this plan, especially those who have shared their experiences to inform our ongoing work. Together, we will drive the change needed to ensure that all members of the ACU community feel safe, respected and supported.

Professor Zlatko Skrbis
Vice-Chancellor and President
Australian Catholic University

A photograph of the ACU building, featuring a dark blue roof with the ACU logo and name in white. The building is partially obscured by out-of-focus autumn leaves in shades of orange and red in the foreground and top left.

ACU's approach

Gender-based Violence (GBV) encompasses physical and non-physical forms of harm, including harassment, abuse, coercion and threats, rooted in gendered power imbalances.

ACU's institutional response is guided by the **National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence**, developed in consultation with victim-survivor advocates, subject matter experts, and higher education stakeholders. The National Code provides a best-practice framework for sector-wide reform and informs ACU's direction. ACU's plan further draws on other national and sectoral frameworks, including the **National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022 – 2032, Our Watch frameworks** and relevant research, to ensure alignment with broader efforts to drive cultural and systemic change.

The plan outlines a four-year roadmap (2026 – 2029) to transition ACU from its current state to sector-leading practice. It is underpinned by the following principles:

- Trauma-informed and victim-centred: Prioritising safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment; respecting the agency and expertise of victim-survivors; and minimising re-traumatisation through empathetic, non-discriminatory support.
- Evidence-informed: Drawing on academic research, professional practice and lived experience to shape interventions and policy.
- Whole-of-organisation: Embedding GBV prevention and response across all domains of university life – including leadership, governance, teaching and learning, student services, research and community engagement.
- Incremental improvement: Recognising that cultural and institutional transformation is achieved through sustained, iterative reflection and action.

Progress will be tracked through an Outcomes Framework, with regular reporting to the ACU Senate (the governing body) and the Commonwealth Department of Education. ACU is committed to continuous improvement, guided by its core value of the pursuit of excellence.

In preparation for the National Code, ACU has undertaken several initiatives to strengthen its institutional response, including:

- developing a new overarching **gender-based violence policy and procedure**
- implementing the Symplicity Advocate CRM to enhance case management support, data collection and trend analysis for targeted prevention
- reviewing and enhancing risk management processes and staff capability
- partnering with Full Stop Australia to co-design and deliver a comprehensive GBV training program for staff and students, launching in 2026.

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

ACU's four-year roadmap (2026 – 2029) to prevent and respond to gender-based violence will work to achieve the following:



Effective governance that ensures responsibilities for leadership, operational coordination, consultation and quality assurance are clearly distributed across the university.



Environments are safe and systems continuously improve.



Safe and effective knowledge and capability building enables shared understanding and accountability across the university community.



Support services are safe and person-centred.



Responses to disclosures and reports of Gender-based violence are safe and timely.



Evidence to measure change is collected to inform ongoing improvement and contributes to the national evidence-base.



Student accommodation is safe for all students and staff.

Outcomes

ACU will demonstrate their progress and commitment to this work by successfully meeting key outcomes including:



Embedding a whole of organisation approach which prioritises safety and support, in the prevention and response of gender-based violence.



Ensuring ACU environments, including student accommodation, are safe for all.



Ensuring responses and support services are safe, timely and person centred.



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