



THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE

Within the University of Sydney

SEXUAL HARM AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE POLICY

1. Principles

It is the policy of The Women's College that any form of sexual harm and gender-based violence are not tolerated and constitute a breach of The Women's College rules. Such behaviours are also against the law.

Consistent with the College values of respect and integrity, diversity and inclusion, every student, employee and other occupant has the right to study and work in an environment that is free from sexual harm and gender-based violence.

All members of The Women's College community (including the College Council, staff and students) have a role in creating a safe and respectful environment.

2. Scope of this policy

This policy covers behaviours that constitute sexual harm and gender-based violence (including sexual harassment and sexual assault, actual or attempted), and the procedures followed by the College when such incidents are reported. This policy must be read in conjunction with the University of Sydney's Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy 2025, which provides comprehensive definitions and response procedures.

It must be noted at the outset that Women's College policies and procedures can only be enacted when incidents involve two or more members of the Women's College itself (see Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy for those considered to be members of the College).

Where an incident of sexual harm or gender-based violence involves at least one member of another college, or of the university or the general public, the College has no jurisdiction over such people and may not be able to resolve such matters itself, even if this person was a visitor to the College at the time of the incident. There are additional means of recourse and support should such incidents occur, some of which are set out in this document and in the College Handbook.

In all instances of sexual harm and gender-based violence, the College will take a stance of unbiased victim/survivor support.

3. Definition of terms

The following definitions are drawn from the University of Sydney's Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy 2025 and the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence. For comprehensive definitions and examples, please refer to the University policy.

Sexual harm

Sexual harm means any sexual activity a person does not consent to. This includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, non-consensual sexual touching, non-consensual sexual acts, voyeurism, and recording or distributing an intimate image without consent.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender (including sex, gender identity, or gender expression), that results in, or is likely to result in, harm, coercion, control, fear, deprivation of liberty or deprivation of autonomy.

This includes sexual harm, stalking, family and domestic violence, coercive control, forced marriage, and modern slavery.



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Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour, which makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment is not interaction, flirtation or friendship which is mutual or consensual. Sexual harassment is a type of gender discrimination.

Sexual harassment can be obvious or indirect, physical or verbal, repeated or one-off and perpetrated by people of every gender and sexual identity against people of every gender and sexual identity. The Sex Discrimination Act makes these behaviours unlawful if they occur in an educational or accommodation area (such as a college).

Sexual harassment may include:

- Staring or leering
- Unnecessary familiarity, such as deliberate brushing up against a person or unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing
- Suggestive comments or jokes
- Sexual gestures
- Insults or taunts of a sexual nature
- Intrusive questions or statements about someone's personal life
- Displaying, sending or requesting sexually explicit pictures and/or posters
- Sending sexually explicit emails or text messages
- Inappropriate advances on social networking sites
- Making or distributing a sexually explicit audio recording or photo-shopped image of another person
- Accessing sexually explicit internet sites
- Requests for sex or repeated unwanted requests to go out on dates
- Unwanted and/or clandestine voyeurism, or recording or distributing intimate images without consent
- Physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking or obscene communications.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault is a legal term used to describe a range of sexual offences, from showing indecent images to another person, to kissing or touching them without consent, as well as penetration of the person's body with a body part or object without consent, unwanted oral sex, and acts of indecency.

A person who has sex with another person without the consent of the other person and who has no reasonable grounds for believing that the other person consents to sexual intercourse is guilty of an offence, and may be punished by the law.

Consent

A person consents to a sexual activity if they freely and voluntarily agree to it at the time it occurs. Sexual activities with another person must be by free agreement and a person seeking consent has the responsibility to take steps to ascertain consent exists.

Consent may be withdrawn at any time. Passivity does not equal consent. Under affirmative consent laws introduced in June 2022:

- A person who is substantially intoxicated cannot consent
- A person can't assume someone is consenting because they don't say no. Silence is not consent
- Consent is an ongoing process. A person can change their mind and withdraw their consent at any time
- Consent can only be given freely and voluntarily. If you force or coerce your partner into sex, it is not consensual
- Consent must be present for every sexual act. If someone consents to one sexual act, it doesn't mean they've consented to others
- A person can't consent if they're asleep or unconscious

A person does not consent to sexual intercourse or sexual activity if the person (a) does not have the capacity to agree to the sexual intercourse, or (b) has the capacity but does not have the freedom to choose whether to have



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sexual intercourse, or (c) has the capacity and freedom but does not agree to the sexual intercourse.¹

4. Reporting

The Women's College is committed to promoting a culture of reporting incidents of sexual harm and gender-based violence. Should a member of The Women's College experience sexual harm and/or gender-based violence, or be a bystander to such conduct, they are encouraged to speak to a College staff member or contact the University's Safer Communities Office.

Students should feel confident that their report will be kept strictly confidential and that no action will be taken on their behalf without their consent unless the Principal or her delegate deems the complainant is at personal risk, or the incident involves anyone under the age of 18.

Reporting to The Women's College

Students may report to the:

- Principal
- Vice Principal
- Dean of Students,
- or Resident Assistants.

Staff and students can also contact the College's Grievance Contact Officers or Student Representatives.

Reports can be made in person, via email respect@thewomenscollege.edu.au, and using the online form (identifiable or anonymous) on the College website:

<https://www.thewomenscollege.com.au/respectwomens/make-a-report/>.

In an emergency, students should call the RA phone: 0421 016 454.

Reporting to the University of Sydney

The University of Sydney's Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy 2025 provides comprehensive avenues for disclosures and complaints. Such disclosures and complaints may be made anonymously, in person, or online via a dedicated portal.

To report to the University's Safer Communities Office:

- Online: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/safer-communities/report-sexual-misconduct.html>
- Email: safer.communities.officer@sydney.edu.au
- Phone: 8627 6808 (8:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri) or 1800 SYD HLP (1800 793 457)

Reporting to NSW Police

If a criminal offence has occurred or is occurring, members of The Women's College are encouraged to contact the NSW Police. If immediate assistance is required, call 000. Otherwise, call the Police Assistance Line on 131 444, or complete an online Sexual Assault Reporting Option (SARO) form.

The College encourages members to seek medical attention and preserve evidence if they wish to make a report to Police. However, the decision whether to report rests with the person who experienced the conduct. Reporting to College or University does not mean a person must also report to Police.

Your Options

You can choose any or all of these options, at any time, in any order:

¹ Australian Human Rights Commission, Discussion paper on the law of consent and sexual assault (2007).



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- Make a report to a trusted person at College
- Make a formal complaint to College that is concurrent with a complaint to Safer Communities at the University
- Make a complaint to Safer Communities at the University only
- Report to RPA Hospital
- Make a complaint to NSW Police
- Make an anonymous or identified report to NSW Police via the Sexual Assault Reporting Option (SARO)

5. Responding and Support

The College adopts a strong trauma-informed, person-centered stance of victim/survivor support, and sees its role as providing clear guidance on a variety of options for survivors/victims to disclose their experiences of sexual harm; to seek support, counselling and health services; and to identify procedures and timeframes for investigations, if appropriate. College staff will also provide ongoing pastoral care and assistance to students affected by sexual harm.

Resources at College

Grievance Contact Officers, Resident Assistants, House Committee, Academic Assistants and other staff of the College are provided with First Responder and Responding with Compassion training each year to assist them to support victims of sexual harm and gender-based violence. First Responders are not counsellors but are trained to provide an appropriate initial response. They will listen non-judgmentally, provide support, respect any decisions for action and guide victims to the right services.

In an emergency, students should call the SRA phone out of hours: 0421 016 454.

Resources offered by the University of Sydney

- Campus Security: 9351 3333 (24 hours)
- Safer Communities Office: 8627 6808 or 1800 793 457 (9am-5pm Mon-Fri)
- Counselling Services: 8627 8433 (9am-4:30pm Mon-Fri) or 1300 474 065 (after hours)
- University Health Service: 9351 3484 (8:30am-5pm Mon-Fri)
- The University's Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy 2025 and associated procedures set out comprehensive support services and response processes. Students and staff are encouraged to access these services.

External resources

- 1800 Respect (National Sexual Violence Counselling): 1800 737 732
- NSW Rape Crisis Centre: 1800 424 017
- Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Sexual Assault Service: 9515 9040 (Mon-Fri) or 9515 6111 (after hours)

For students at other universities, contact information is listed in the College Handbook.

Other resources

1800 Respect National Domestic
Family and Sexual Violence Counselling
Services 1800 737 732

NSW Rape Crisis Centre 1800 424 017

Royal Prince Alfred Hospital
Sexual Assault Service
(Ground Floor, KGV Bldg, RPAH) 9515 9040 (Monday to Friday)
9515 6111 (after hours)



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6. Handling of reports

The Women's College encourages any person who has been a victim of sexual harm to report incidents promptly under these procedures. The Women's College will also seek to facilitate the efficient handling of any complaint made.

The College will ensure reports are dealt with sensitively and expeditiously and that parties to a complaint are advised of progress and outcomes. All processes will be trauma-informed and procedurally fair.

Documentation relating to incidents of sexual harm and gender-based violence will be kept in a confidential file in the College Archives and only accessed with the permission of the Principal. The College will respond to external requests for information (for example from NSW Police, the University or other institutions), having regard to privacy obligations.

Detailed procedures for managing complaints, including investigation processes, interim measures, and disciplinary action, are set out in the University of Sydney's Student Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Response Procedures and Staff Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Response Procedures. The College will follow these procedures in managing reports.

In order to better support students, The Women's College has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Sydney. This will reduce the need for victim/survivors to repeat details of their complaint. Under the terms of this agreement, the Principal will inform the University of any sexual harm reported to College staff. This report will be anonymous unless the victim/survivor requests to be identified. It must be noted that under the NSW Crimes Act, both the College and the University may be obliged in some circumstances to report serious indictable offences to police.

Should an incident of sexual harassment or sexual assault involve two or more members of The Women's College, the Grievance Officer or staff member who receives the report will follow the procedures outlined in the College's Grievance Management Policy, Guidelines and Procedures. These guidelines contain detailed information on the handling and progressing of complaints, the requirements for procedural fairness, cautioning against victimisation, the handling of policy breaches and vexatious complaints, and penalties and disciplinary measures.

Should an incident of sexual harm or gender-based violence involve a member of another college, university or the general public as well as a member (or members) of Women's College, the College will utilise the policies and procedures that apply to its own members, while recognizing that other colleges' or university procedures may also govern their members. It may also refer members to other documents such as the Sex Discrimination Act and the Australian Human Rights Commission Act.

The Women's College will support any person wishing to report a matter to the police. Irrespective of whether or not the matter is reported, The Women's College will support the individuals concerned, but may elect not to run an investigation into a criminal act to avoid unintentionally marring or hampering a potential police investigation.

7. Related Policies

This policy operates, where appropriate, in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

The Women's College:

- Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Bystander Policy
- Critical Incident Management Plan
- Grievance Management Policy, Guidelines and Procedures
- Student Code of Conduct



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University of Sydney:

- Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy 2025
- Student Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Response Procedures
- Staff Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Response Procedures

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Sexual Misconduct Policy	TWC-ADM-D18	February 2018 Reviewed: annually Reviewed: February 2023 Reviewed: January 2024 Reviewed: February 2025 Revised: December 2025 Reviewed: February 2026
Renamed: Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Policy	Version 2.0	

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Principal

References:

Definitions and examples of sexual harm and gender-based violence are drawn from the Australian Human Rights Commission, the University of Sydney's Sexual Harm and Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy 2025, and the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (October 2025).

Sexual assault information from Women's Legal Service NSW.

Consent laws from NSW Government Communities and Justice.

Consent definition from Australian Human Rights Commission, Discussion paper on the law of consent and sexual assault (2007).