Policy Title

Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy

Preamble

Deakin College is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all students and staff. The College does not tolerate gender-based violence and is committed to preventing harm, supporting those affected, and responding appropriately to reports and disclosures.

Purpose

This Policy establishes Deakin College requirements for preventing and responding to gender-based violence. It ensures responses are safe, person-centred, trauma-informed, timely and consistent with the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2025.

Scope

This Policy applies to all prospective and current students; College leadership and governing body members; employees and other staff; contractors; volunteers; student leaders; affiliated organisations; and entities conducting activities on behalf of Deakin College, including organisations that operate on, use or lease facilities used by the College.

It applies to gender-based violence experienced or engaged in by a student or staff member, regardless of where or in what context it occurs, where Deakin College has responsibilities for safety, support, prevention, investigation, discipline or risk management. It includes conduct connected with study, work, social and digital environments; Deakin College and shared Deakin University campuses and systems; College activities and events; and relevant student accommodation arrangements.

A person does not need to make a formal report, participate in an investigation or report to police to access support or safety measures. This Policy does not limit rights or obligations under workplace, anti-discrimination, child safety, criminal, privacy or other applicable laws.

Where this Policy is inconsistent with an applicable industrial instrument, the industrial instrument prevails to the extent of the inconsistency. In that event Deakin College will take all steps available to it to meet its obligations under the National Code.

Policy

1. Principles

1.1. Deakin College does not tolerate gender-based violence and will take a whole-of-organisation approach to prevention, early intervention, safety, support and accountability.

1.2. Safety, dignity, agency and educational participation will be prioritised. Responses will be person-centred, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, accessible and proportionate.

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1.3. Gender inequality, discrimination, power imbalances and intersecting disadvantage can drive or compound gender-based violence. Prevention activities will address these drivers and the College's specific context.

1.4. Disclosures and formal reports will be handled respectfully, confidentially and without victimisation. Information will be shared only where authorised, necessary, proportionate or required by law.

1.5. Procedural fairness will be provided to Respondents. Safety measures are not disciplinary findings and may be implemented before or without an investigation.

1.6. Deakin College will collaborate with students, staff, people with lived experience, specialist experts, Deakin University and relevant third parties while retaining accountability for its own compliance.

1.7. Transparent complaint and appeal pathways will be available. Disclosers will be informed of their internal and external complaint rights, and Respondents will be informed of applicable rights to appeal disciplinary decisions. Complaints and appeals will be handled impartially, without victimisation and within the timeframes prescribed by applicable procedures.

2. Leadership, governance and planning

2.1. The College Director and Principal (the Principal Executive Officer) is accountable for implementation of this Policy and compliance with the National Code.

2.2. The Governing Body will endorse the Whole-of-Organisation GBV Prevention and Response Plan, gender equality action plan and outcomes framework, and receive a report against the outcomes framework at least every six months after the initial reporting date.

2.3. Deakin College will publish and implement a Whole-of-Organisation Plan informed by a systemic risk assessment, data, evidence, consultation and the experiences of groups disproportionately affected by GBV.

2.4. The Plan will include measurable actions, accountable owners, timeframes and indicators, and will be reviewed and amended where required by risk, evidence, duty of care or regulator feedback.

2.5. Deakin College will give the Plan and outcomes framework, and subsequent reports, to the Secretary in the time, manner and form required by the National Code.

3. Safe environments, systems and relationships

3.1. Deakin College will identify and address GBV risks across physical, digital, study, work, social and relevant living environments, including shared Deakin University spaces.

3.2. The College will comply with applicable working-with-children requirements and require prospective employees and Governing Body members to declare relevant prior GBV investigations or findings as required by the National Code. Declarations and associated risks will be considered in suitability decisions.

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3.3. Substantiated GBV findings will be considered in employment promotion, recognition and reward decisions. Material risks concerning non-employee staff will be assessed and controlled.

3.4. Employees must declare an existing or previous intimate personal relationship where they have, or are likely to have, supervisory, oversight, academic or decision-making responsibility for the other person. Deakin College will implement a documented conflict-of-interest management plan, including permanent alternative arrangements where necessary.

3.5. Where GBV is alleged, Deakin College may implement alternative teaching, study, supervision, employment, access or living arrangements to protect safety. Such measures will be proportionate, reviewed and will not determine the merits of an allegation.

3.6. Deakin College will not use a non-disclosure agreement unless requested by the Discloser. Any requested agreement must permit the person to seek support and advice and must not prevent regulatory reporting. Settlement terms must not include a non-disparagement clause that has the effect of requiring confidentiality about the person's experience.

3.7. Deakin College will implement applicable recommendations of the National Student Ombudsman.

4. Prevention education, communication and capability

4.1. Deakin College will provide ongoing, comprehensive, evidence-informed prevention education to students, leadership and staff. Education will address GBV, drivers and contributing factors, intersecting inequality, respectful relationships, consent, power, support and reporting options, ethical bystander action and compassionate responses.

4.2. Education and communication will be trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, accessible, tailored to Deakin College's community and capable of safe response to disclosures arising during delivery.

4.3. Student leaders, leadership, staff and other nominated persons will receive specialist disclosure-response training during onboarding and at least annually thereafter.

4.4. Staff conducting risk assessments must have the expertise, cohort competency and knowledge required by the National Code. External expertise will be engaged where internal capability is insufficient, except where urgent safety action is required.

4.5. Persons responding to formal reports, investigating or making disciplinary decisions must have the required GBV, trauma, cohort, procedural fairness, statement-taking and case-handling expertise and undertake refresher training at least every three years.

4.6. Deakin College will monitor and evaluate education and prevention initiatives and use findings to improve future delivery.

5. Disclosure, formal reporting and immediate response

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5.1. Deakin College will clearly publicise multiple channels for disclosures and formal reports, including in person, telephone, email and online channels. Formal reports may be made through any publicised channel and must be recorded in the Navitas DoneSafe reporting system. Anonymous disclosures and reports will be accepted.

5.2. Students, staff and third parties may disclose or formally report GBV, including where the Respondent is a student or staff member. Reports may concern conduct occurring outside College premises or activities.

5.3. On receiving a disclosure or formal report, Deakin College will respond with compassion, explain confidentiality and its limits, identify immediate needs, provide support and reporting options, and undertake a GBV risk assessment.

5.4. Staff will offer to assist the Discloser to record the disclosure in writing, but will not pressure the person to provide a detailed written account. If the person does not consent to an identified record, Deakin College will, where lawful and safe, create a limited de-identified record for safety, governance, trend analysis and compliance. Deakin College will take reasonable and proportionate action on anonymous information where possible.

5.5. Making a disclosure does not automatically commence an investigation. Deakin College will consider the Discloser's wishes and may use agreed resolution, safety measures without investigation, a decision not to investigate, or investigation.

5.6. Before investigating a disclosure that is not a formal report, Deakin College will seek and consider the Discloser's views. The College may investigate where necessary to protect the safety and wellbeing of students or staff and will explain this limit to choice.

5.7. Deakin College will investigate every formal report where the Respondent is a Deakin College student or staff member, subject to the scope considerations permitted by the National Code. The scope and depth of an investigation will be determined under the applicable procedure. A decision not to investigate a formal report may be made only where permitted by the National Code and must be documented with reasons and approved by the College Director and Principal.

6. Safety, support and adjustments

6.1. All disclosures and formal reports will receive an initial risk assessment by a suitably qualified person. Identified risks will be managed, documented, monitored and reassessed throughout the matter.

6.2. A suitably experienced staff member will work with the Discloser to develop a tailored support plan. The plan may include urgent safety measures, specialist and external services, interpreter support, academic or work adjustments, alternative arrangements, communication preferences and ongoing risk review.

6.3. Deakin College will minimise repeated retelling and, wherever possible, provide one clearly identified contact for the Discloser.

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6.4. A separate suitably experienced staff member will develop a tailored support plan with the Respondent, explain any safety measures affecting them, provide access to support and adjustments, and undertake ongoing risk assessment.

6.5. The same staff member must not support both the Discloser and Respondent. Where College capacity makes this impracticable, support for one party will be arranged through an alternative internal officer, Deakin University Safer Community or an external provider, and the arrangement will be documented.

6.6. Support and reasonable academic or work adjustments are available regardless of whether a formal report, police report or investigation occurs.

6.7. Support services will be monitored and formally evaluated at least once every three years, with findings used to improve services.

7. Investigations, decisions, sanctions and appeals

7.1. Investigations and disciplinary processes will be conducted by appropriately trained, impartial persons and will provide procedural fairness. Findings will be made on the balance of probabilities, based on the available relevant evidence and having regard to the seriousness of the allegation. Wherever practicable, the investigator will not be the disciplinary decision-maker.

7.2. If an investigation commences, the Discloser and Respondent will be notified in writing on the same day, with the Discloser notified first. Each party may be accompanied by a support person when asked about the matter.

7.3. Deakin College will not require a Discloser or Respondent to provide physical evidence relating to alleged GBV.

7.4. Following investigation, Deakin College may use an agreed resolution, safety measures without disciplinary action, a decision not to proceed to discipline, or a disciplinary process. The pathway will be safe, proportionate and consistent with applicable procedures.

7.5. Formal reports, including any disciplinary process, will be designed to be finalised within 45 business days. Extensions will be permitted only where required in the particular context and subject to oversight by the Principal Executive Officer. This timeframe applies to formal reports handled under both the Staff and Students Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Procedures.

7.6. Disclosers and Respondents will receive appropriate progress updates. Unless the Discloser requests otherwise, the Discloser will receive written notice of investigation and disciplinary outcomes, reasons, relevant sanctions and internal and external complaint rights on the same day as the Respondent.

7.7. Substantiated conduct will attract proportionate sanctions, which may include restrictions, suspension, exclusion, termination of employment or expulsion.

7.8. Unless the Discloser requests otherwise, Deakin College will provide the Discloser with written information about their right to make an internal or external complaint concerning the handling of a Disclosure or Formal Report, the disciplinary process or

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the outcome. The information will identify the applicable Deakin College complaints procedure and the availability of external complaint mechanisms, including the National Student Ombudsman and any other relevant regulator, statutory body or law enforcement agency. Making a complaint will not affect a person's access to support, safety measures or reasonable academic or workplace adjustments.

7.9. A Respondent may appeal a disciplinary decision in accordance with the applicable student or employee misconduct and appeal procedure. An appeal must be determined by a person or body who was not involved in the investigation or original disciplinary decision, has appropriate authority and competence, and is able to act impartially.

7.10. Where Deakin College has given the Discloser notice of the disciplinary outcome, the College will, unless the Discloser requests otherwise, give the Discloser written notice within two business days after a Respondent lodges an appeal. The notice will confirm that an appeal has been lodged and explain the potential outcomes of the appeal. Information will be provided in a manner that protects privacy and procedural fairness.

7.11. Deakin College's procedures will be designed to allow an appeal to be finalised within 20 business days. Deakin College will comply with the prescribed timeframe and will permit an extension only where required by the circumstances of the particular matter. Any extension must be approved through the designated authority and overseen by the College's Principal Executive Officer. The reasons for the extension, revised timeframe and communications with affected parties must be documented. This timeframe applies to appeals and reviews conducted under both the Staff and Students Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Procedures.

7.12. Unless the Discloser requests otherwise, Deakin College will give the Discloser written notice of the appeal outcome, including the decision, reasons and any relevant sanctions, together with internal and external complaint rights, including the right to complain to the National Student Ombudsman. The Discloser will be notified on the same day as the Respondent is notified of the appeal outcome.

7.13. A Discloser may use the applicable Deakin College complaints procedure to raise concerns about the handling of a Disclosure or Formal Report, a failure to follow this Policy or an associated procedure, the adequacy of support or safety measures, unreasonable delay, or another administrative action or omission. This complaint pathway is separate from a Respondent's appeal against a disciplinary decision and does not authorise the Discloser to direct the disciplinary sanction imposed on another person.

8. Privacy, information sharing and records

8.1. Information will be collected, used, disclosed and stored in accordance with privacy law, the National Code and the College's records requirements.

8.2. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where sharing is required by law, necessary to respond to a serious risk, required to provide procedural fairness, or necessary for

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regulatory, safety or institutional responsibilities. Wherever practicable, the person will be informed before information is shared.

8.3. Case records will be secure, access-controlled and separated from general student or personnel records where practicable. Only information necessary for an adjustment or safety measure will be shared with operational staff.

8.4. Deakin College will maintain de-identified data on the number of appeals, the types of appeal outcomes, the number of each outcome, appeal completion timeframes, extensions and, where lawfully and safely collected, the experience of Disclosers and Respondents with the disciplinary and appeal process.

9. Deakin University coordination

9.1. Deakin College will maintain documented protocols with Deakin University for GBV occurring in shared or University-controlled locations, involving members of both communities, connected with shared activities or systems, or disclosed to the organisation without primary responsibility.

9.2. Protocols will address immediate safety, security and emergency response; referrals; case coordination; interim measures; information sharing; privacy; records; investigation and disciplinary jurisdiction; and communication with affected persons.

9.3. Each institution retains responsibility for its own students, staff and legal obligations. Wherever practicable, the affected person will have one point of contact and will not be required to repeat their account unnecessarily.

10. Student accommodation

10.1. Where Deakin College directly owns, operates or manages student accommodation, it will meet all requirements of Standard 7 of the National Code and address those obligations comprehensively in its Whole-of-Organisation Plan.

10.2. Where Deakin College has a formal agreement, referral or preferred-provider arrangement with a relevant accommodation provider, the agreement will include proportionate GBV prevention, safety, disclosure, reporting, escalation, training, information-sharing, data, assurance and governance clauses.

10.3. Accommodation agreements will require serious incident notification subject to privacy, consent and safety requirements; cooperation with Deakin College and Deakin University where relevant; de-identified trend reporting; audit and review rights; and remediation, suspension of referrals or termination for material non-compliance.

10.4. Homestay providers are not treated as student accommodation providers under this Policy where those arrangements fall outside the National Code definition. Other legal, child-safety, welfare and contractual obligations applying to homestay remain unaffected.

11. Amnesty for good-faith reporters and bystanders

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11.1. Deakin College encourages affected persons and bystanders to disclose or report GBV without fear that minor alcohol or drug-related conduct occurring at or near the time of the incident will deter them from seeking help.

11.2. A student who, in good faith, discloses or reports GBV as an affected person or bystander will not ordinarily be subject to student conduct action solely for personal alcohol or drug use occurring at or near the time of the incident.

11.3. Amnesty does not apply to conduct that harmed or placed another person at risk, involved supplying substances to another person without consent, obstructed a response or investigation, or otherwise constituted serious misconduct. Support, health and safety interventions may still be offered.

12. Police, emergency and external reporting

12.1. Where conduct may constitute a criminal offence, Deakin College will explain and facilitate options to contact police or another relevant authority and will support the Discloser to make a report if requested.

12.2. Deakin College will respect the Discloser's decision not to report to police unless reporting is required by law or action is necessary and proportionate to address a serious or imminent risk to the safety of a person or the College community.

12.3. In an emergency or where urgent medical care is required, emergency services will be contacted immediately. The College's response and support obligations continue whether or not a police report is made.

13. Freedom of speech and academic freedom

13.1. This Policy will be applied consistently with lawful freedom of speech and academic freedom. Exposure to approved curriculum content, scholarly material or lawful views expressed for a genuine teaching, learning or academic purpose will not, without more, constitute GBV or harassment.

13.2. Freedom of speech and academic freedom do not protect unlawful conduct, targeted harassment, threats, discrimination, victimisation or conduct that otherwise constitutes GBV.

14. Immediate internal escalation

14.1. GBV incidents meeting the thresholds in the Navitas *Immediate Incident Escalation and Reporting Policy* must be escalated promptly to the relevant Deakin College and Navitas officers. Escalation will use the minimum personal information necessary and, wherever practicable, de-identified information.

14.2. Immediate incident escalation is separate from a Discloser's decision to make a Formal Report. Internal escalation must not unnecessarily disclose identity, trigger an investigation contrary to the Discloser's wishes, or remove access to support.

14.3. Serious or systemic risks, material control failures and incidents requiring regulatory notification will be reported to the Governing Body and regulators in accordance with law and approved protocols.

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15. Monitoring, review and continuous improvement

15.1. Deakin College will analyse de-identified data, feedback, complaints, evaluation findings and systemic reviews to identify barriers, gaps, trends and opportunities for prevention and improvement.

15.2. The Policy will be reviewed at least every three years through engagement with students, employees, people with lived experience, groups disproportionately affected by GBV, subject-matter experts and relevant placement or facility partners.

15.3. Gender impact assessments will inform the development and review of relevant policies and systems.

15.4. The Governing Body will oversee implementation, outcomes and material risks. The College will provide reports to the Secretary and other regulators in the prescribed manner and timeframe.

Related Policies
Whole-of-Organisation GBV Prevention and Response Plan and Outcomes Framework
Student Code of Conduct Policy
Staff Code of Conduct (*Navitas*)
Complaints Policy
Appeals Policy
Critical Incident Policy
Equity and Diversity Policy
Care of Students Under the Age of 18 Policy
Privacy Policy
Wellbeing, Health and Safety Policy
Work Health and Safety Policy (*Navitas*)
Navitas Immediate Incident Escalation and Reporting Policy
Navitas Student-Staff Relationship Policy

Procedures
Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Procedure - Staff
Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Procedure - Students

Definitions

Key Term or Acronym	Definition
Affiliated Organisation	An organisation connected with Deakin through agreement, partnership, service delivery, placement, facility use or another formal arrangement.
Appeal	A request by a person entitled under an applicable procedure for review of a disciplinary decision on one or more permitted grounds.

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College Activities	Any activity conducted by, for or on behalf of Deakin College, including study, teaching, assessment, placements and work-integrated learning, work, events, travel, social activities and online or digital activities.
College Community	Students, Staff, contractors, volunteers, student leaders, Governing Body members and other persons participating in College Activities.
Consent	Free and voluntary agreement to an act, communicated by words or conduct, and present at the time of the act. Consent may be withdrawn at any time and cannot be assumed from silence, lack of resistance, a relationship or previous consent.
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction about an action, omission, process, service or decision, including the handling of a Disclosure or Formal Report, which is addressed through an applicable internal or external complaints mechanism.
De-identified	Information from which identifying particulars have been removed so that individuals are not reasonably identifiable, used for governance, regulatory reporting, trend analysis, systemic review and continuous improvement.
Disclosure	A communication that a person has experienced or may have experienced gender-based violence. A disclosure may be made without seeking investigation or disciplinary action.
Discloser	A person who makes a disclosure or formal report, including a person affected by gender-based violence.
Formal Report	A report requesting, or requiring under this Policy, consideration through an investigation or formal institutional process.
Gender-based Violence	Any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threat that is directed against a person or group because of sex, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, or that disproportionately affects persons of a particular sex or gender. It includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, family and domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, technology-facilitated abuse, coercive control and other conduct within the definition in the National Code.
Non-disclosure Agreement	An agreement that restricts a person from disclosing information. The College will not use such an agreement in relation to gender-based violence unless requested by the Discloser and subject to the safeguards in this Policy.

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Governing Body	The body responsible for the governance oversight of Deakin College for the purposes of the National Code.
Interim Measures	Proportionate, precautionary safety measures applied while a matter is being considered, including changes to study, work, supervision, access, contact or participation. Interim Measures are not disciplinary findings and must be reviewed. Also referred to in this Policy as safety measures or alternative arrangements.
Person-centred	An approach that places the person's safety, agency, needs, choices and wellbeing at the centre of decisions and responses.
Procedural Fairness	Fair decision-making, including notice of relevant allegations and a reasonable opportunity to respond, an impartial decision-maker and decisions based on relevant information.
Respondent	A person whose conduct is the subject of a disclosure or formal report.
Risk and Needs Assessment	The initial and ongoing GBV risk assessment required by this Policy, conducted by a suitably qualified person. It is distinct from an investigation and does not determine whether alleged conduct occurred.
Staff	Employees, casual employees, managers and other workers engaged by Deakin College and, where the context requires, contractors and volunteers.
Student	A prospective, current or former student of Deakin College, including a student participating in placements or work-integrated learning.
Student Accommodation	Accommodation to which the National Code applies and that is directly owned, operated or managed by Deakin, or otherwise subject to obligations arising from a relevant formal accommodation arrangement.
Support Plan	The tailored plan of support, adjustments and safety measures developed with a Discloser or Respondent under this Policy.
Trauma-informed	An approach that recognises the prevalence and effects of trauma, promotes safety and choice, avoids re-traumatisation and responds without judgement.
DU	Deakin University
GBV	Gender-based violence

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HEPEO	Higher Education Principal Executive Officer
National Code	National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2025
NSO	National Student Ombudsman
PEO	Principal Executive Officer
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

Status and Details

Identification	Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy
Initial Issue Date	16/11/2026
Status	Current
Domain	Wellness, Health and Safety
Effective date	16/11/2026
Review date	30/11/2028
Approval Authority	Senior Management Group
Implementation Officer	College Director and Principal

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