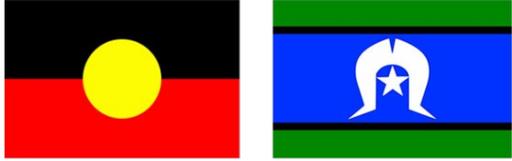




Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan 2026-2029

Acknowledgement of Country



Victoria University acknowledges, recognises and respects the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung of the Kulin who are the traditional owners of University land in Victoria, the Gadigal and Guring-gai of the Eora Nation who are the traditional owners of University land in Sydney, and the Yulara/YUgarapul people and Turrbal people living in Meanjin (Brisbane).

Acknowledgement of Victim-Survivors

Victoria University acknowledges the victim-survivors of family violence, sexual assault, and all forms of gender-based violence - including our staff, students and community members who have experienced harm. We are deeply grateful for their generous contribution to this work to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. We stand with you, support you and listen to you.

Content Warning

Discussing gender-based violence can be confronting and, for many, deeply personal. We recognise that these conversations may be distressing or triggering, particularly for those directly impacted. If you are concerned about yourself or someone you know, please contact one of the free call numbers on the inside back cover of this Plan or visit Victoria University's Safety and Support page www.vu.edu.au/safety-respect



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Introduction

Purpose

The introduction of the National Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence is both welcomed and celebrated at VU – a milestone that strengthens our unwavering commitment to safety, respect, and inclusion for everyone in the pursuit of education.

VU has built robust systems and engaged expert guidance to foster a culture of safety and inclusion. Yet we know this work is never finished. Our goal is to not only meet but exceed the requirements of the National Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence, effective 1 January 2026.

This Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan 2026-2029 builds on VU’s long-standing leadership in driving cultural change and creating inclusive environments. Our partnership with Our Watch (2022–2027) and the establishment of two dedicated taskforces – Educating for Equality (Higher Education) and the TAFE Respect and Equality Taskforce – reflect our sustained commitment to safety and respect across all settings.

Aligned with our strategic commitment to Protecting Country, this Plan recognises the deep connection between caring for people, place and planet. It is the outcome of a comprehensive review of our operations, support services and capabilities, informed by genuine consultation with students, staff, partners and those with lived experience.

Through this Plan, Victoria University will be a place where everyone feels safe, empowered and informed – a place where respect and safety is lived every day.



I am privileged to support this important work as Victoria University’s Executive Sponsor for the Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan 2026–2029, and Co-Chair of our Educating for Equality Taskforce.

VU’s community is proudly diverse and unique. This Plan responds to that and reflects the lived experiences of our students, staff and broader community. This is a whole-of university undertaking. It recognises that meaningful change requires more than policy – it demands a sustained commitment to education, prevention, partnership and response.

We will continue to drive progress towards a community where gender-based violence has no place – and where every member of VU can safely thrive.

Lisa Line
Deputy Vice-Chancellor

We are proud to be part of a university that fully embraces its responsibility for the wellbeing and safety of our students and staff. Our Council stands firmly behind the University’s commitment to ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for all who engage with us.

VU welcomes the introduction of the National Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence. We see this as a moment to both reaffirm and extend our own commitment and to stand alongside our peers in shaping a sector that leads with integrity, prioritises safety and champions inclusivity as a fundamental value - not just in principle, but in practice.

The Honourable Steve Bracks AC
Chancellor

Professor Adam Shoemaker
Vice-Chancellor

A strategic and integrated model

The Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan (the Plan) is a critical enabler of VU's Strategic Plan 2022-30: Start well, finish brilliantly.

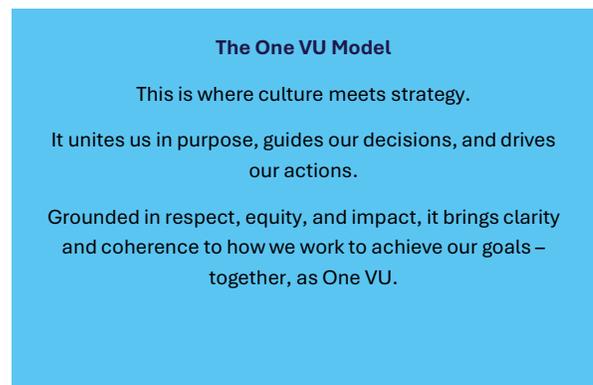
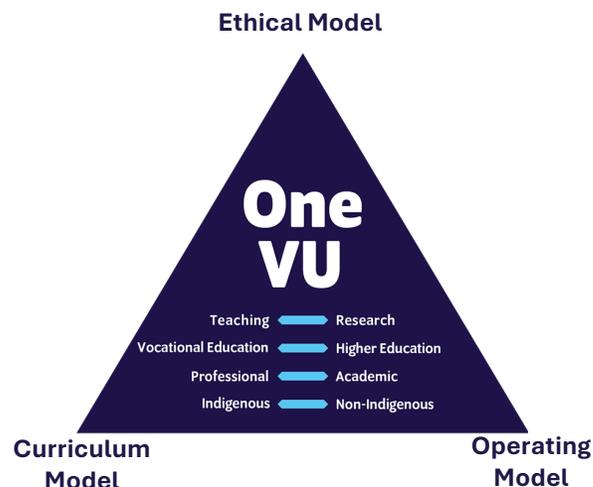
VU's Strategic Plan explicitly commits to continuously reinforcing our activities to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, under the **Protecting Country** driver.

Our Plan operationalises this commitment through clear prevention strategies, response protocols and measurable outcomes.

This is done through an integrated strategic approach and alignment with:

- **The Gender Equity Action Plan:** Embedding gender equity into governance, culture and systems to drive fair representation, close pay gaps and eliminate structural barriers. It strengthens accountability through data-driven reporting and ensures safe, inclusive environments by prioritising prevention, early intervention and survivor-centred support.
- **The First Nations Action Plan:** Brings to life our commitment to Protecting Country, focusing on increasing representation and success of First Nations students and staff, expanding First Nations research and deep community engagement for greater impact. VU commits to being First Nations-led in the design of safer, more inclusive environments.
- **The Progressive Inclusivity Framework:** A whole-of-university approach to advancing equity, inclusion and belonging. It is underpinned by targeted action plans focussed on disability and access, pride, cultural inclusion and wellbeing – ensuring meaningful progress across all dimensions of our community.

Victoria University Strategic Plan 2022-30: Start well, finish brilliantly.



PURPOSE

We are of Melbourne's west and of the world – championing progressive and excellent education, research, service and a deep commitment to Protecting Country.

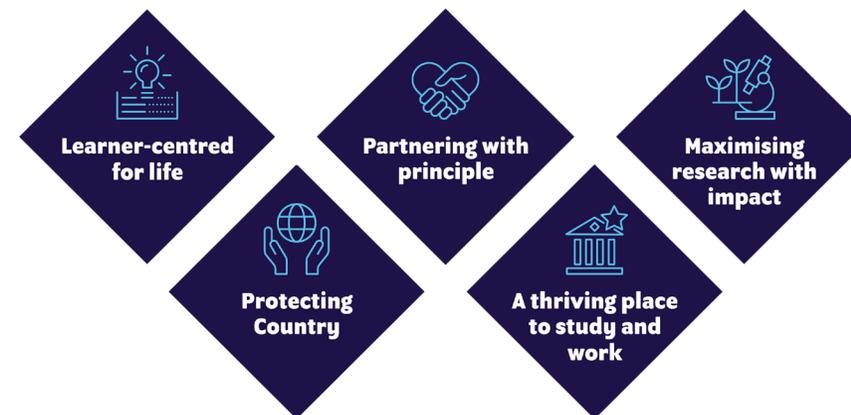
VISION

To be one of the leading **impact-driven universities** in the world by 2030

VALUES

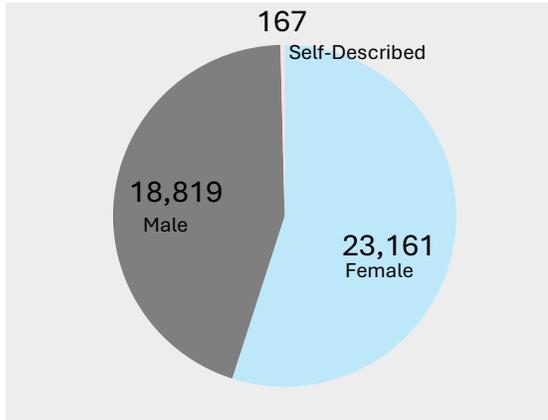
Always welcoming, ethical, shaping the future, together

STRATEGIC DRIVERS



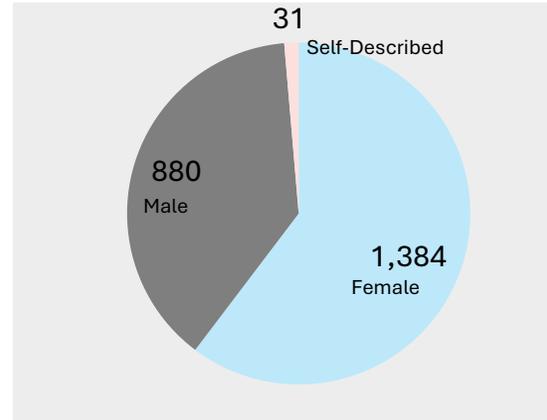
Student and staff profile

42,147* students



- 2,819** Students with a disclosed disability
- 393** First Nations students
- 197** Languages spoken
- 108** Nationalities represented

2,295* staff



- 1,376** Professional Staff (7 Senior Management)
- 577** HE Academic
- 335** VET Teacher
- 56** Nationalities represented

34,557 students studying in Victoria
at 6 campuses + 3 partner sites

2 x City Campuses	Sunshine	Whitten Oval (VU High-Performance Centre)
Footscray Park	St Albans	Sunshine Hospital (Midwifery Clinic)
Footscray Nicholson	Werribee	Footscray Hospital (Research Building)

3,836
Students studying online

3,424
Students studying at VU Sydney

330
Students studying at VU Brisbane



*2024 student and staff numbers

Progress so far

◀ 2016–22

01

Respect and Responsibility Preventing Violence Against Women Ten Point Plan (2016-2019)

- The first of its kind in the higher education sector.
- Embedded gender equity as the cornerstone of prevention, introducing new policies, trauma-informed support, awareness campaigns, staff/student leadership opportunities and safety improvements across all campuses.

02

Building Respectful Futures Together Strategy (2021-2023)

- Strengthened governance and accountability, expanded training and curriculum integration, enhanced partnerships and embedded intersectional and inclusive practices to address diverse experiences of violence and inequality.



2022 onwards ▶

03

Our Watch partnership established

- Five-year partnership formalised.
- The first of its kind in Australian higher and vocational education.
- Focussed on implementation of Our Watch's Educating for Equality (Higher Education) and Respect and Equality in TAFE frameworks, supported by evaluation, evidence-sharing and structural decolonisation practices.

04

Building Capability and Accountability

- Development of targeted training for specialist roles: first-responder roles and specialist investigations roles.
- Policies introduced / updated and implemented: Student Charter and Conduct Policy; Student Complaints Policy suite; Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Policy; Staff Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Staff on-boarding and induction processes updated to include Working With Children's Checks for all commencing staff and mandatory training in workplace behaviours.



05

Engagement to date (October 2025)

- **91% of staff** completed mandatory, bi-annual Workplace Discrimination and Harassment training.
- **132 staff** completed Building Respectful Futures Together training focussed on intersectional gender equity.
- **100+ senior leaders** completed Change the Story with Our Watch to consider social, political and economic factors that drive violence against women.
- **2200+ students** completed online learning related to gender-based violence prevention, consent, anti-racism and understanding LGBTQ+ identities.

VU's approach

Understanding the drivers of gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is serious and preventable in Australia, with research showing that:

- 1 in 3 women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15 (*Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2021*)
- 2.8 million Australians have experienced sexual violence (*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021*)
- One woman is killed every nine days by a current or former partner (*Australian Institute of Criminology, 2023*).

These patterns stem from systemic factors, including:

Societal drivers: gender inequality, rigid gender norms, power imbalances and attitudes that excuse, minimise, or normalise violence (*Our Watch, 2021*)

Intersectional impacts: certain groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, LGBTQ+ people, women with disabilities, racially and religiously marginalised women, international students and those with lived experience of violence, face compounded risks.

In university settings, the 2021 National Student Survey found that, one in 20 students experienced sexual assault in the previous year, and one in six experienced sexual harassment. Many reported that institutional responses worsened the trauma (*Universities Australia, Social Research Centre, National Student Safety Survey, 2021*).

VU's approach is grounded in evidence, prevention and partnership and reflects feedback resulting from broad consultation with our staff and students.

Consultation

More than 80 people provided feedback through the development of this Plan - including our Gender-based Violence Advisory Group, our living experience networks, Moondani Balluk, targeted consultations with specific groups, and open forums. We also acknowledge the ongoing partnership and contribution from our partners at Our Watch, and contributions from WestCASA and GenWest.

VU ensures student accommodation is available for domestic and international students close to the Footscray campuses through an affiliation with UniLodge. We work closely with UniLodge to ensure compliance with the Code.

The voices of staff, students, experts, community partners, and those with lived and living experience have been central to ensuring this Plan reflects the needs and aspirations of our entire VU community.

“

Our Watch recognises VU's long term commitment to addressing gender inequality and violence against women on a community, organisational and national level

Patty Kinnersly, CEO, Our Watch

“

The efforts that VU has put towards these causes are building blocks for actions that students can take towards gender equality throughout their lives

Shiva Foroutan, VU alumna and staff member

“

By grounding this work in Protecting Country, we acknowledge and confront the deep connections between colonisation, racism, and gender-based violence

Karen Jackson, Yorta Yorta woman and Executive Director, VU

Principles

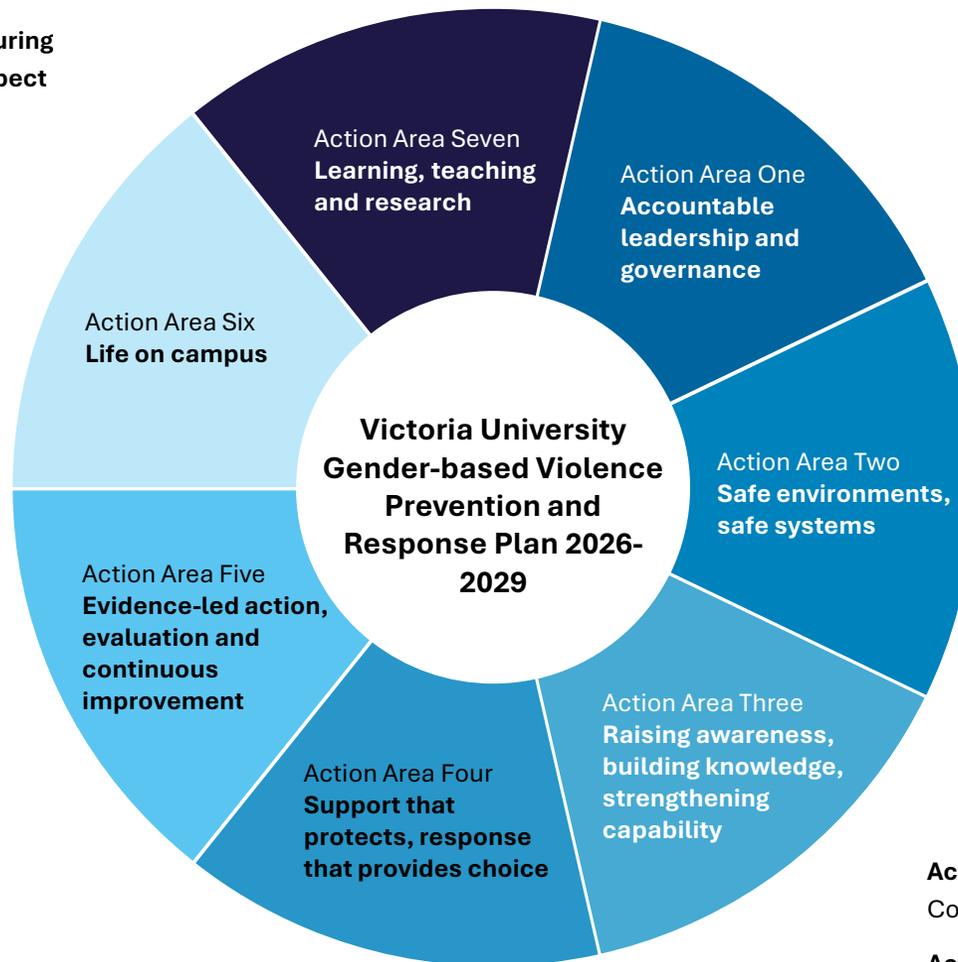
Principles that guide the Plan

First Nations and Truth-Telling	We acknowledge the link between gender-based violence, colonisation and racism and commit to truth-telling and culturally safe, decolonising practices.
One VU response	We ensure a whole-of-university approach which includes students and staff, fostering a safe and respectful environment across all areas of university life - an embodiment of One VU.
Intersectional and equity-led	We apply an intersectional approach and ensure equal access to education and employment for all genders and communities.
Active engagement of all genders	We engage all genders in prevention and response recognising that while women and LGBTQ+ people are most affected, men have a vital role to play.
Trauma-informed practice	We embed trauma-informed approaches that prioritise safety, compassion and dignity, acknowledging systemic and intergenerational impacts of violence.
Learning and working with others	We collaborate with expert organisations and community leaders, using their knowledge and experience to strengthen our efforts to end gender-based violence.
Research, lived experience and evidence-based	We use research, lived experience and data to guide us, ensuring our work remains inclusive and effective.



Victoria University Gender-based Violence Prevention and Response Plan

This Plan outlines VU's whole-of-institution approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence, ensuring a coordinated, university-wide commitment to safety, respect and inclusion in line with the National Code.



Action Areas 1-6: Directly address the standards in the National Code.

Action Area 7: Relates specifically to the University's delivery of learning, teaching and research.

Action Area One

Accountable leadership and governance

Leaders drive a whole-of-university approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Through strong governance and oversight they ensure accountability and a culture of safety and respect.

- 1.1 Deliver annual training to University Council, Executive and governance body members on gender-based violence to support their leadership responsibilities and informed decision-making.
- 1.2 Update Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee to include expertise in student and staff safety and wellbeing.
- 1.3 Establish a management Steering Committee chaired by the Vice-Chancellor - with representation from those with lived and living experience - to lead a whole-of-university approach to respect, safety, gender equality, diversity, inclusion, wellbeing and belonging.
- 1.4 Include gender-based violence responsibilities in leadership and student leader role descriptions and embed these responsibilities in performance goals.
- 1.5 Implement a multi-channel communication plan to:
 - Build knowledge and capability across the University
 - Promote support services
 - Communicate how data is used for improvement
 - Share actions taken in response to findings.
- 1.6 Apply the Plan consistently across all University settings, including face-to-face and online learning, research, work placements, and commercial spaces.
- 1.7 Meet all review and reporting requirements outlined in the Code within required timeframes.

Action Area Two

Safe environments, safe systems

Clear policies, ethical practices and accountable systems create safe learning and working environments.

- 2.1 Develop a dedicated Gender-based Violence (GBV) Policy.
- 2.2 Publish gender-based violence policies and processes in plain English and provide translation options via the VU website and staff/student portals.
- 2.3 Develop and implement procedures to meet Working With Children Check requirements, including screening for prior gender-based violence investigations and conducting risk assessments as needed.
- 2.4 Establish a system for recording and monitoring gender-based violence related findings or investigations and integrate this information into performance management, promotion and recognition processes.
- 2.5 Include gender-based violence conduct clauses and declaration requirements in contracts with third parties and contractors and mitigate identified risks prior to engagement.
- 2.6 Implement a conflict-of-interest declaration process for staff-student relationships, including annual declarations and clear guidance on managing risks in supervisory, teaching or decision-making contexts.
- 2.7 Develop and implement a protocol for safe alternative work, study or supervision arrangements following gender-based violence disclosures, in collaboration with support teams.
- 2.8 Conduct gender impact assessments during scheduled reviews of policies and institutional frameworks.
- 2.9 Design and implement a GBV response system that enables safe reporting, captures relevant data and informs continuous improvement.
- 2.10 Prior to appointing student leaders, screen for prior gender-based violence complaints and investigations.

Action Area Three

Raising awareness, building knowledge, strengthening capability

Staff and students are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to play their part in preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

- 3.1 Implement a Respect Capability Framework to guide inclusive, intersectional, culturally respectful and trauma-informed practice across VU.
- 3.2 Embed trauma-informed, person-centred and culturally responsive disclosure-response training for staff likely to receive disclosures and all student leaders.
- 3.3 Embed GBV and respect training across the staff and student lifecycle, including induction, leadership development and progression programs.
- 3.4 Deliver targeted gender-based violence risk assessment and response training to staff in specialised roles, refreshed at least every three years.
- 3.5 Establish and maintain structured monitoring, feedback and evaluation processes to inform improvements in prevention and response education.
- 3.6 Collaborate across VU to deliver campaigns and events marking days of significance, including Respect Week.
- 3.7 Implement the Educating for Equality and Respect (HE) and Equality in TAFE programs in partnership with Our Watch, ensuring diverse representation in prevention leadership.
- 3.8 Develop and deliver programs to broaden allyship in gender-based violence prevention, with a focus on engaging cisgender men and other key groups.
- 3.9 Review and strengthen gender-based violence risk assessment tools and internal operational capability.
- 3.10 Review and strengthen internal processes for managing gender-based violence cases including investigations, with external support if needed.

Action Area Four

Support that protects, response that provides choice

Timely, trauma-informed support and fair processes are available to anyone affected by gender-based violence.

- 4.1 Establish and communicate the multiple pathways available for receiving disclosures and reports.

- 4.2 Evaluate and strengthen processes for risk assessments, investigations and outcomes, ensuring timely communication, fair and proportionate responses and adherence to principles of safety, privacy, transparency and collaboration.

- 4.3 Coordinate interpersonal safety matters using a structured, risk-informed process with timely referrals.

- 4.4 Provide clear referral pathways to internal and external specialist services to support timely access to assistance.

- 4.5 Evaluate and update support services to align with person-centred, culturally safe and trauma-informed practice and procedures for disclosers and respondents.

- 4.6 Establish a central gender-based violence prevention and response team to coordinate resources and support.

- 4.7 Implement a regular review cycle and evaluation framework for support services.

Action Area Five

Evidence-led action, evaluation and continuous improvement

Data is collected and used safely to improve prevention and response efforts and contribute to sector-wide knowledge.

- 5.1 Establish a gender-based violence data governance framework that defines roles, responsibilities, and protocols for data collection, analysis, and reporting, incorporating privacy, transparency and cultural safety principles.
- 5.2 Collect data from disclosures and complaints using trauma-informed processes and use findings to inform updates to policies, practices, education and support services.
- 5.3 Conduct annual analysis of gender-based violence trends and gaps using quantitative and qualitative data and report findings to inform prevention and response improvements.

Action Area Six

Life on campus

Prevention is embedded across university life to create safe, inclusive environments – in staff-student interactions, online platforms, and physical spaces including student accommodation.

- 6.1 Update commercial agreements, policies, and monitoring processes for accommodation providers to align with the Code and assess ongoing compliance.
- 6.2 Deliver in-person 'Respond to Disclosures' training to UniLodge Residential Advisors and provide clear referral protocols to VU support services.
- 6.3 Continue to deliver the Thrive:Active Living and Wellness program, incorporating gender-based violence education opportunities to support connected and inclusive campus life.
- 6.4 Develop a Physical Safety Action Plan based on staff and student feedback and campus safety audits, addressing lighting, visibility, accessibility, inclusive design and safe spaces.
- 6.5 Include digital safety and online inclusion questions in annual staff and student surveys and develop a Digital Safety Action Plan based on the results.

Action Area Seven

Learning, teaching and research

Gender-based violence prevention is embedded across teaching, learning and research, fostering respectful learning environments and advancing research that deepens understanding of intersectional experiences and drives social change.

- 7.1 Expand curriculum integration of gender equality and primary prevention education across VU by building on pilot programs in TAFE, Early Childhood Education and Criminology through the Our Watch partnership.
- 7.2 Audit and improve physical and online teaching and learning environments, including work-integrated learning and clinical placements, to ensure they are equitable, accessible, respectful and safe.
- 7.3 Deliver training and resources to teaching and research staff to incorporate respect and inclusion principles into discipline-specific teaching practice.
- 7.4 Strengthen respectful supervisory practices in Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programs through targeted training and integration into the Researcher Development Academy.
- 7.5 Lead and expand research into gender-based violence prevention and gender equality to inform VU's approach and contribute to broader social change.



Ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement

This diagram is a cornerstone of our Progressive Inclusivity Framework - a living expression of VU's unwavering commitment to growth, learning and excellence.

It means:

- That this work is active and responsive
- That change will be constant
- That there is always more to learn
- That we must continue to innovate and improve
- Every step forward is powered by all of us, together, every day.



Support

Access to support at VU

At VU, we want our students and staff to know that if you choose to come forward confidentially, you will be listened to and supported.

For information about available services and resources, please visit VU's Advice and Support page www.vu.edu.au/current-students/advice-support

Students:

Students have access to our trauma-informed team and can make a confidential disclosure or lodge a formal report via our Safety and Support page www.vu.edu.au/safety-respect

Staff:

Staff can make a confidential disclosure or lodge a complaint via this email: confidential.support@vu.edu.au



Access to other support services

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732

This 24-hour national sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Safe Steps: 1800 015 188

Family violence support service is for anyone in Victoria who is experiencing, or is afraid of, family violence.

The Orange Door - <https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/>

Help for people who are experiencing or using family violence or who need support with the care and wellbeing of children and young people.

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Anyone across Australia experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide can call.

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

Information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health.

Djirra: 1800 105 303

Support for Aboriginal people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence.

13 Yarn – 13 92 76

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporters to yarn to: <https://www.13yarn.org.au/>

Rainbow Door: 1800 729 367

Rainbow Door is a free specialist LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Gender Diverse, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, BrotherBoys, SisterGirls) helpline providing information, support, and referral to all LGBTQ+ Victorians, their friends and family.

inTouch: 1800 755 988

Family violence services and support to migrants and refugees.

Mensline Australia: 1300 789 978

Supports men and boys who are dealing with family and relationship difficulties.

Men's Referral Service: 1300 766 491

Assistance, information and counselling to help men who use family violence.



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA