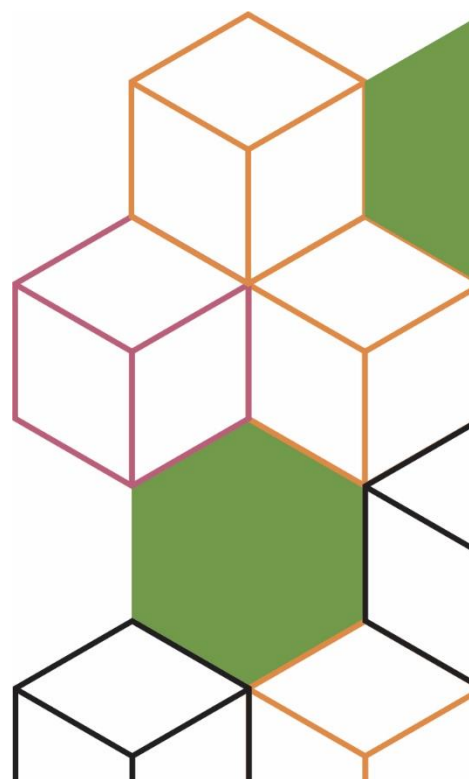


July
2023

Graduate Student
Association

**Consultation for
TEQSA sexual harm
good practice note**



About GSA

The University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association (GSA) is the independent representative organisation for all graduate coursework and research students at the University of Melbourne. We are led by 8 GSA Board members and 10 Representative Council members who are all elected University of Melbourne graduate students. On behalf of over 36,000 constituents, we represent graduate student interests to the University and wider community, provide student engagement events, activities, and information to the graduate student community, and support 150 affiliated graduate student groups.

GSA's vision is for inclusive, empowered graduate student communities that achieve meaningful and holistic university experiences. Our objectives are to achieve and support representation, academic support, transition to work, engaged and healthy communities, and organisational sustainability.

Introduction

GSA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback about the TEQSA sexual harm good practice note. Overall, the suggested changes to the reworked good practice note were found to be satisfactory and an improvement on the 2020 good practice note. Answers to the consultation questions are provided below. We look forward to future consultation opportunities involving the reworked sexual harm good practice note.

1. Which (if any) proposed sections for a reworked good practice note are logical and useful, and why?

We found all sections to be logical and reasonable. The ordering of these sections was also found to be reasonable and logical. We found the inclusion of Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 particularly encouraging for the following reasons:

Section 1 – genuine student and staff partnership with providers is crucial. This would involve not only listening, but also taking steps to address issues.

Section 2 – it is important to recognise the significant role that leaders play in preventing and addressing sexual harm. This also demonstrates a necessary move away from reporting being identified as the most important aspect of responding to instances of sexual harm.

Section 3 – risk mitigation is a key aspect of prevention. Prevention and response were grouped together in the 2020 good practice note. However, they require different considerations and approaches. Separating prevention and response into their own discrete categories is a positive change. Highlighting that risk mitigation is a continuous process is also crucial.

Section 4 – fostering a culture of respect and inclusion is also a practical and influential aspect of sexual harm prevention.

2. Which sections that are proposed to be removed from the reworked good practice note should be included, and why?

We found the proposed removals to be reasonable. The new proposed layout appears to be more logical. However, we note that **Appendix C: Prevalence** and **Appendix D: Knowledge resources** are both likely to contain valuable information and should be available in an alternative format where possible (e.g. – a resource bank).

3. Which elements are missing from the 2020 good practice note and should be included in the reworked version, and why?

We reiterate the importance of separating prevention and response as discrete sections, rather than grouping them together (as was the case in the 2020 good practice note).

We recognise the importance of trauma informed training and approaches to sexual harm prevention and response. We believe that this should be more clearly communicated in the reworked good practice note.

We support the use of stronger language and more direct guidance to ensure diversity within taskforces and working groups (e.g. – providers should be encouraged to do more than just ‘consider’ diversity).

While including students in decision making and consultation is crucial, providers should be advised to actively address the power imbalances that can arise in these settings. This is especially true for working groups and taskforces which include both students and academic staff.

We note that online modes of learning and class delivery have become increasingly common. We encourage the inclusion of more detailed information about sexual harm prevention and responding to sexual harm in the online sphere.

We highlight the importance of extending the focus of sexual harm prevention beyond just education and ease of reporting. We encourage not labelling a lack of trust in reporting systems as the sole reason students may choose not to report.

4. Which elements of the 2020 good practice note were most valuable and should be kept?

We found that the good practice examples valuable and suggest that they be included in the reworked good practice note, or in an alternative format (e.g. – a resource bank).

We support the use of inclusive language and, in particular, avoiding the use of gendered language/assuming the gender of the parties involved.

We support the inclusion of the ‘Assistance for alleged perpetrators’ subsection. We note that the information in this section can be expanded upon.

We support the inclusion of the ‘Academic support’ subsection. We recognise the importance of this type of support – along with other support including counselling, etc. – for students involved in incidents of sexual harm.