



Curtin University

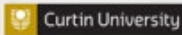
# RESPECT. NOW. ALWAYS.

A REPORT ON PROGRESS

Make tomorrow better.

July 2019

**RESPECT.  
NOW.  
ALWAYS.**



**SEXUAL ASSAULT.  
SEXUAL HARASSMENT.  
ZERO TOLERANCE.**

If this has happened to you,  
help is available.



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[curtin.edu/safer-community](http://curtin.edu/safer-community)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This document summarises the work coordinated and led by the University's *Respect. Now. Always.* (RNA) Steering Committee. This multi-disciplinary group includes student representatives and was established in 2017 following the release of the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course* report. The overarching aims of this committee are to:

- raise awareness of and communicate Curtin's zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and sexual assault;
- ensure policies/procedures are appropriate and clear; and
- ensure the availability of services to support the Curtin community.

Through the work of the RNA Steering Committee, Curtin identified eleven key objectives, which included responses to the recommendations made by the Australian Human Rights Commission, and those contained within the *Universities Australia 10-Point Action Plan: An initial response from Australia's universities to the national student survey on sexual assault and sexual harassment*.

This report summarises our progress against those eleven objectives, and it identifies new initiatives that are underway as part of Curtin's ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe community for students, staff and visitors.

In line with our commitment to public reporting, de-identified data relating to the number of incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault are also included within this report.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Deborah Terry'.

**Professor Deborah Terry AO**  
Vice-Chancellor

## INTRODUCTION

**In February 2016 Universities Australia, together with the Australian Human Rights Commission, launched an initiative to address the issue of sexual assault and sexual harassment across the university sector. The associated campaign 'Respect. Now. Always.' (RNA) aimed to raise awareness of sexual harassment and sexual assault, lift the visibility of support services for students, gather data for improvement, and assist universities in sharing best practice.**

Subsequently, a national survey on sexual assault and sexual harassment was conducted by the Human Rights Commission in September 2016, seeking to quantify the experiences of over 30,000 students across all 39 Australian universities. The report, entitled *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities* was published in August 2017, and contained institutional-level data and nine recommendations, eight of which were directed to universities and one that was aimed at university colleges.

Of the 1078 responses from students at Curtin<sup>1</sup>, 21 per cent reported that they had been sexually harassed (vs. 26 per cent nationally) with this occurring mostly on public transport to and from Curtin (29 per cent). Other areas where sexual harassment occurred were at university events or social spaces (17 per cent), on Curtin grounds (15 per cent), and in teaching spaces (8 per cent). Forty-eight per cent of respondents did not know (17 per cent) or knew very little (31 per cent) about where to seek support.

With respect to sexual assault, it was found that 0.3 per cent of respondents identified that they had been sexually assaulted at university (vs. 1.6 per cent nationally). Sixty per cent of respondents knew nothing (23 per cent) or very little (37 per cent) about where to seek support.

In response, Curtin formalised various precursor groups into a *Respect Now Always* (RNA) Steering Committee with overarching responsibility for the coordination of related work, reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor and Senior Executive Team.

Early work conducted by the RNA Steering Committee included the mapping of recommendations made within *Change the Course* together with other recommendations contained within the Universities Australia 10-Point Action Plan to form eleven key objectives. Informed by the survey data published within *Change the Course*, the RNA Steering Committee directed resources towards ensuring that:

- Curtin's zero tolerance stance was communicated to staff and students;
- members of the University community were aware of Curtin policies, procedures, and processes relating to sexual assault and sexual harassment; and
- Curtin staff were able to deal with reported incidents sensitively and effectively.

As outlined in the next section, the RNA Steering Committee plays an ongoing role in maintaining a safe community at Curtin, with a number of initiatives in train and forthcoming.

<sup>1</sup> <https://s17465.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2017/08/Curtin-University-Summary-Tables-V2-1.pdf>

## PROGRESS

The following sections outline initiatives (both completed and current) under each of the eleven objectives.

### 2.1 Objective 1

**To ensure that the policy framework at Curtin relating to sexual harassment and sexual assault is clear and consistently expressed.**

- An initial review of the existing policy framework at Curtin was undertaken in 2017, which confirmed that processes for managing cases were clearly set out, accessible, and robust.
- Curtin articulated a definition of ‘zero tolerance’, embedding this in a number of resources:

#### **Zero Tolerance**

*Curtin has a zero tolerance stance in regards to sexual assault and sexual harassment. We aim to foster a culture of respect, care and safety which will help to reduce incidents of sexual assault or harassment.*

*If we become aware of sexual assault or harassment affecting members of the Curtin community, or visitors to our campuses, we aim:*

- *to support and protect victims and survivors, in terms of both their physical and emotional wellbeing, and their study or work responsibilities;*
- *to give priority to investigating any allegations made in a fair and consistent manner, and with due consideration to the rights of all concerned; and*
- *to monitor our responses to continuously improve our support for victims and survivors, and to ensure consistency in our approach.*

*Our priority is to protect and support all members of the Curtin community. We will provide support regardless of where or when the incident occurred.*

*Consistent with our values, we will encourage and model respectful relationships at our campuses and ensure there is a shared understanding of the behaviours expected at Curtin University.*

- A video featuring the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Deborah Terry AO, was created to support the *Respect Now Always* campaign at the time of the release of the *Change the Course* report. (The video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/yphXzwCtoi0>)
- Current work is focusing on the issue of ‘special consideration’ within assessment and progression policies, and the development of an overarching policy guidance document.

### 2.2 Objective 2

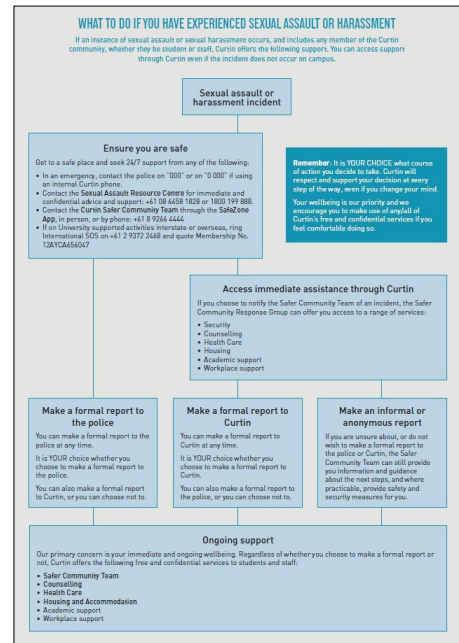
**To educate staff across Curtin campuses about acceptable behaviours and the impact of sexual assault and sexual harassment on mental health and wellbeing in accordance with Curtin’s values.**

- Training relating to sexual harassment and sexual assault is already included in the Equal Opportunity and Code of Conduct mandatory online training programs for new and existing staff.
- Curtin provided additional training for frontline student-facing staff to strengthen awareness and support for the University community.
- New supporting materials for staff<sup>2</sup> were produced to summarise key issues and processes, with information circulated to all staff explaining how to respond to a disclosure of sexual assault or harassment.

<sup>2</sup> <https://campaign.curtin.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2017/07/RespectNowAlways-Staff-Flyer.pdf>



- In collaboration with many areas across Curtin, student facing materials<sup>3</sup> were developed, including a unified process flowchart to provide a single page overview, as depicted below:



## 2.3 Objective 3

To educate students across Curtin campuses about acceptable behaviours and the impact of sexual assault and harassment on mental health and wellbeing in accordance with Curtin’s values.

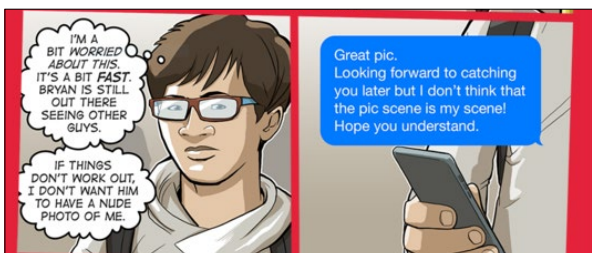
- There have been a range of activities designed to increase student awareness, including information provided within orientation activities for new students; posters distributed across campus locations; and materials placed on the RNA campaign website. The communications channels used as part of this strategy, included (amongst others):
  - Extensive communications to staff and students on the release of the Human Rights Commission’s report and Curtin’s response;
  - ‘Meet, Play, Live’ presentations delivered to new students during Orientation Week;
  - Relevant slides on the Curtin Digital Screen Network and in lecture theatres.

### Respectful Relationships: New Training Modules for Curtin Students

- Online training modules for students focusing on consent, relationships, support services and bystander interventions have been developed. The modules are consistent with Curtin Values and Curtin Graduate Capabilities, and are designed to equip students with a clear understanding of what constitutes consent in relationships, focusing on the skills, knowledge and strategies to effectively understand and communicate with other people regarding sexual relationships. The modules are designed to be viewed within a University environment.

<sup>3</sup> <https://campaign.curtin.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2017/07/RespectNowAlways-Student-Flyer.pdf>

- Consultation on content and design was undertaken with the Curtin Student Guild, Diversity & Inclusion Team, Counselling and Health Services and the Western Australia Sexual Assault Resource Centre. The Curtin Student Guild advised on module content prior to the pilot of the materials in November 2018 and January 2019. The modules take a contemporary approach, referencing popular culture, diverse genders and sexualities and use a mix of gamification, with video and graphic novel style illustrations to convey messages as shown below.

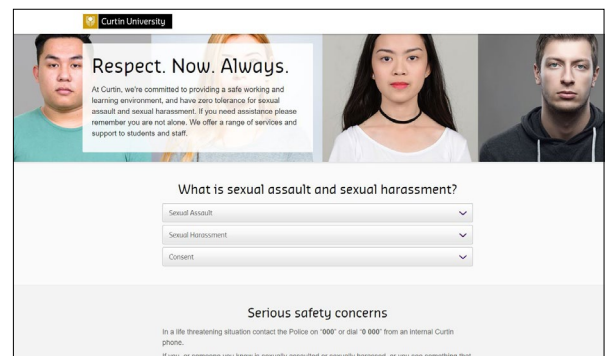


- The modules were developed by a Curtin Careers Consultant and a Health Promotion and Education Consultant and researcher, previously working for the Sexual Assault Resource Centre as their Education Coordinator, and now at Curtin as a Lecturer in Sexology. They will be available to students studying at Curtin's Australian campuses via the online Curtin Challenge Platform from July 2019.
- Work is underway to provide appropriate information for students at campuses in other parts of the world.
- Curtin will work with Universities Australia on planned student modules for 2020 and beyond.

## 2.4 Objective 4

To ensure that information for students and staff (primarily digital content) meets the needs of the whole Curtin community, and is collated and readily accessible.

- A new RNA campaign website was developed, primarily for students, but with relevance to the whole Curtin community. The website draws together a range of resources and key information, and is available at <https://campaign.curtin.edu.au/respect-now-always/>. The website was also search-engine optimised to ensure that common search terms will rapidly locate these materials. The website is now being reviewed as part of a wider review of all RNA communications to students and staff.



## 2.5 Objective 5

To ensure that the processes for managing and triaging cases is effective and adequately resourced.

- An internal review of the Counselling Service was undertaken in December 2017. The Student Wellbeing Advisory Team was subsequently restructured to become part of the Counselling Service in order to maintain adequate levels of appropriately trained counsellors, including a member of staff who also works for the Western Australia Sexual Assault Resource Centre.

### 2.6 Objective 6

To develop a Curtin-wide system for collecting and collating data relating to sexual harassment and sexual assault, ensuring that data are de-identified as appropriate.

- A University-wide data collection and reporting system was introduced in March 2018, to collate high level de-identified data securely within one repository without duplication.

### 2.7 Objective 7

To review existing mechanisms for appraising staff and student awareness of policies, procedures and support services to provide additional institutional data to complement national level initiatives.

- A review of questions contained within staff and student surveys was conducted. Where appropriate survey questions were amended to include specific wording relating to sexual harassment and/or sexual assault.

### 2.8 Objective 8

To examine the infrastructure (including online) and work with external agencies to improve safety and wellbeing.

- The main Curtin-owned social media channels (e.g. Curtin Facebook, Twitter, etc.) are regularly monitored and procedures were established to ensure that any disclosures or other posts indicating that student(s) may need support are swiftly escalated to relevant areas of the University.
- The campus infrastructure has been reviewed and improvements implemented, including external lighting upgrades to pedestrian pathways and outside of buildings. These are considered to contribute to improved functionality and security.

### 2.9 Objective 9

To evaluate the broader efficacy of the approaches undertaken at Curtin and report on progress and outcomes as required to the Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Executive Team.

- The RNA Steering Committee reports progress to the Vice-Chancellor against a detailed action plan at six monthly intervals.

### 2.10 Objective 10

To consider reports that will be released (e.g. by Australian Human Rights Commission, Universities Australia, etc.) from time-to-time in order to inform developments at Curtin.

- The RNA Steering Committee has considered a number of reports and initiatives, including but not limited to:
  - The *Red Zone Report*, produced for 'End Rape on Campus' (EROC) Australia, which raised serious concerns particularly about hazing in residential colleges;
  - The *Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships*, released by Universities Australia;
  - The *Guidelines for University responses to sexual assault and sexual harassment* released by Universities Australia; and
  - The *Respectful Research Training Instructional Materials*, released by the Australian Council of Graduate Research.

### 2.11 Objective 11

To communicate on progress across Curtin, and to publicly report on the University's progress towards implementation of these recommendations.

- Progress is communicated across Curtin, through presentations to the Senior Executive Team, Academic Board and relevant subcommittees, including Heads of School meetings and 'Town Hall' events.
- Curtin will make a public report available annually. This is the first of those reports.



## STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS: AHRC CHANGE THE COURSE

This table below charts Curtin's progress against the *Change the Course* recommendations made in August 2017. However, there are other reports, recommendations and guidelines from Universities Australia and other organisations, and these are also considered by the Steering Committee, and incorporated into action plans with impact across the University.

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
(1) Establish an advisory committee	Complete: The RNA Steering Committee was established in 2017, reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor. An action plan guides ongoing work, drawing on sources of expertise as appropriate.
(2) Address drivers of sexual assault and harassment	Complete: Curtin has developed a comprehensive set of resources for students. A key theme within this includes the wide publication of Curtin's 'zero tolerance' stance. Further work has been undertaken to develop a 'respectful relationships' program.
(3) Awareness of support services and reporting processes	Complete: The RNA website and associated materials have served to lift student awareness. A new online reporting form has been developed, and staff have been provided with information on how to receive and deal with a disclosure. The 'SafeZone' app enables an immediate response from the Safer Community Team without alerting an assailant.
(4) Independent review of policies and response pathways	Ongoing: Curtin undertook an internal expert-led review of policies and processes, to ensure that they were clear and accessible. Curtin will, during 2019, commission an independent review of policy and response pathways.
(5) Training for people identified to be most likely to receive a disclosure	Ongoing: Curtin has provided information and training for frontline student-facing staff most likely to receive a disclosure. Further work is required to ensure that all staff are suitably equipped to deal with a disclosure.
(6) Reporting and continuous improvement of processes	Complete: A comprehensive approach to data collection and sharing has been established, facilitating reporting of de-identified data. Regular reports have been provided to the Vice-Chancellor at six monthly intervals.
(7) An audit of university counselling services	Complete: A review of counselling services was completed in December 2017. The Student Wellbeing Advisory Team was subsequently restructured to become part of the Counselling Service in order to maintain adequate levels of appropriately trained counsellors.
(8) Regular reporting of sexual assault and sexual harassment	Complete: This will be actioned by Universities Australia on behalf of the sector with the next survey expected to take place in 2019. Curtin has committed to participating in future surveys.
(9) Independent review of contributing factors in university residences	Ongoing: Additional training was provided to residential staff and students. Curtin will, during 2019, commission an independent review of processes at the newly outsourced university residences.

## REPORTED INCIDENTS - 2018

Curtin University is Western Australia's largest university, with 56,695 enrolled students and 7,308 staff across its Australian and international campuses in 2018.

The tables below summarise data relating to the number of reported incidents of alleged sexual assault and alleged sexual harassment at Curtin in 2018 (including staff and students). Data have been collated from information provided by five key areas across the University where the reporting of incidents takes place: the Office of the Academic Registrar, the Safer Community Team, Support Services, Risk Management and the Integrity and Standards Unit.

Incidents are determined according to the definitions provided by the University, outlined below and available at: <http://campaign.curtin.edu.au/respect-now-always/>

Sexual assault is when a person is forced, coerced or tricked into sexual acts against their will or without their consent, including when they have withdrawn their consent. Sexual assault:

- Is behaviour that the survivor has not invited or chosen.
- Can be one-off events, or part of a pattern of violence.
- May have a range of effects, including physical, emotional and psychological.
- Sexual assault and other sexual offences are criminal offences.

Sexual harassment is:

- Any unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour, which makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.
- Interaction, flirtation or friendship which is not mutual or consensual.

### Number of reported incidences classified as alleged sexual assault

Year	2018
Off campus	7
On Campus	2
Unknown	1
Total	10
Frequency*	0.015 per cent

\* Calculated with respect to the overall student and staff population (64,003.)

The outcomes of the 10 incidents classified as alleged sexual assault are as follows:

- four did not proceed – no formal complaint, complaint withdrawn or insufficient grounds;
- two were reported to police;
- two led to findings of student misconduct;
- one investigation was conducted by a fieldwork provider; and
- one remains under investigation.

### Number of reported incidences classified as alleged sexual harassment

Year	2018
Off campus	5
On Campus	13
Unknown	0
Total	18
Frequency*	0.03 per cent

\* Calculated with respect to the overall student and staff population (64,003.)

The outcomes of the 18 incidents classified as alleged sexual harassment are as follows:

- four did not proceed – no formal complaint, complaint withdrawn or insufficient grounds;
- one was reported to the police;
- one led to the dismissal of a staff member (four matters\*);
- one led to a student's enrolment being terminated;
- four led to findings of student misconduct;
- one led to a third party contractor employee no longer being permitted to operate on campus;
- one led to performance management and/or training;
- one led to the issuing of a warning/caution; and
- one led to an improvement to safety procedures.

\* Note that the number of outcomes do not sum to 18, because one outcome was associated with four separate incidences of sexual harassment.

## REFERENCES

- Australian Human Rights Commission (2017). *Change the Course: National Report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2ueyJNs>
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