



Curtin University

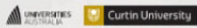
RESPECT. NOW. ALWAYS.

A REPORT ON PROGRESS

Make tomorrow better.

Report 2
July 2020

RESPECT.
NOW.
ALWAYS.



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SEXUAL HARASSMENT.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This second annual Report on Progress summarises the work coordinated and led by the University's *Respect. Now. Always.* (RNA) Steering Committee.

This multi-disciplinary group includes student representation 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 document summarises our progress against those eleven objectives, and it identifies new initiatives 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.



Professor John Cordery
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 campaign, named '*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.

A national survey on sexual assault and sexual harassment was conducted by the Human Rights Commission in September 2016, reaching over 30,000 students across all 39 Australian universities. The survey report, entitled *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities* was published in August 2017, containing 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, 21% reported that they had been sexually harassed (vs. 26% nationally) with this occurring mostly on public transport to and from Curtin. Forty-eight per cent of respondents did not know (17%) or knew very little (31%) about where to seek support.

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

In response, Curtin brought together existing initiatives and groups, forming the *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.

The RNA Steering Committee developed 11 key objectives for Curtin, all of which were consistent with the recommendations made within *Change the Course* and the recommendations contained within the Universities Australia *10-Point Action Plan*.

The overarching principles of the RNA Steering Committee were to ensure 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 following sections, the RNA Steering Committee continues to play an active and ongoing role in helping to maintain a safe community at Curtin.

PROGRESS

The following sections identify work undertaken during 2019 under each of the 11 objectives¹.

OBJECTIVE 1

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

Curtin previously developed and articulated a 'zero tolerance' statement. Building on previous activity in 2018, further work was conducted to develop an overarching policy statement, drawing together existing policies and procedures into one master document. This new policy was approved in 2019.

Curtin also introduced provisions for special consideration for students within assessment policies during 2019. These provisions support those impacted by sexual harassment and/or sexual assault by enabling assignment extensions and examination deferrals. In accordance with the Universities Australia Guidelines, students do not need to make a formal report or complaint about their experience of sexual violence to become eligible for special consideration. Processes have been established that facilitate the approval of these requests whilst maintaining confidentiality and limiting the circulation of information as far as possible.

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.

Information about Curtin's commitment to RNA and related initiatives (such as the Respectful Relationships program and Domestic Violence Awareness training) was provided to staff through key channels during 2019, including the Vice-Chancellor's Note to Staff, Curtin Weekly, Staff Portal and Staff News.

In July 2019, the Sexual Assault Referral Centre provided tailored training to the RNA Steering Group and other key staff in relation to responding to disclosures of Sexual Assault. Front line staff from our Counselling and Safer Communities teams also received additional training consistent with the increased likelihood that they would need to discuss issues with students or receive a disclosure.

By September 2019, staff were able to access the Student Respect Now Always learning module via the staff iPerform learning platform, and directly from the Respectful Relationships page on the Staff Portal. This increased awareness and visibility of this training to staff.

Curtin encourages all staff who hold a management role to undergo domestic violence training in which the impact of sexual assault (along with other behaviours) is discussed in depth. The training focuses on how to respond to disclosures and ways in which Curtin can support the individual(s) concerned.

The RNA Project Team was nominated for a Vice-Chancellor's Excellence Award, further raising the profile of this initiative.

¹ Refer to the [Respect. Now. Always.](#) webpage for the first *Report on Progress*, covering activities undertaken during 2018.

PROGRESS

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.

Following a pilot, the Respectful Relationships program was launched in 2019. This program takes a contemporary approach, referencing popular culture, diverse genders and sexualities and uses a mix of gamification, with video and novel style illustrations.

The program was developed in collaboration with members from the Curtin Student Guild, and in consultation with the Diversity & Inclusion Team, Counselling and Health Services and the Western Australia Sexual Assault Resource Centre. The program is now compulsory for all new to Curtin students at our Australian campuses.

The 60 minute program consists of three modules: 'Understanding Sexual Consent', 'The Active Bystander', and 'Support'. Content from all three modules has had input from students of a variety of backgrounds to ensure relevance and accessibility.

The program has a large emphasis on the legal and cultural expectations of consent and behaviour in Australia, and does not speak to any one particular ideology, religion, or political stance. The program presents a variety of scenarios and asks participants to assess the behaviour being exhibited. It also intentionally covers more nuanced and ambiguous scenarios to highlight that sexual harassment is not always obvious.

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.

During 2019, the RNA campaign website was superseded by a website focusing on Respectful Relationships, with updates to the information collated under the 'Personal Support' student-facing pages. The updated web resources draw together key information for students.

The information on our staff portal was updated in June to include direct reference to Respectful Relationships and guide staff members on responding to disclosures. Information was provided regarding support avenues for victims of sexual assault or sexual harassment.

OBJECTIVE 5

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

Curtin has a well-developed set of processes for triaging cases and ensuring that students are well supported. This is achieved through coordinated work across many services within Curtin, including the Safer Communities Team and Counselling Service, amongst others.

To support our Western Australian students more broadly, Curtin led a short initiative during 2019 to develop a flyer for the Perth Transport Authority.

All of the WA universities collaborated to develop the flyer, which provides key contact and process information for transport officers who are dealing with a sexual harassment and/or assault situation.

PROGRESS

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. In 2019, these processes were codified into the draft 'Guidelines for Reporting, Recording and Monitoring Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment affecting members of the Curtin Community'.

During 2019 and consistent with the Universities Australia Guidelines, reporting focused on formal reports, in recognition of the difference between a report and a disclosure.

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.

During 2019, Curtin identified the need for additional work to be undertaken in relation to staff awareness of policies.

Curtin will also consider the inclusion and/or modification of existing questions in forthcoming staff surveys to establish the level of staff awareness of policies and their confidence to report matters related to sexual misconduct.

Information regarding policies and processes will be incorporated in staff on-boarding activities, and induction materials. For example, Curtin will introduce a formal acknowledgment of the Code of Conduct at the employment offer stage.

Additional questions will also be included in forthcoming student surveys, complementing existing questions and focusing on participants' experiences of housing services.

Curtin will participate fully in the forthcoming repeat of the national survey (currently delayed in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic).

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. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) continue to be regularly monitored.

Procedures have been 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 by the Safer Communities team.

The campus infrastructure has seen many improvements to safety, access and wellbeing being made across Curtin. For example, in 2019 the new Curtin Central Bus Station, was opened. It is situated within the Perth campus and will be in the heart of a busy new precinct with improved safety features.

PROGRESS

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 continues to report progress against these objectives and the associated action plan.

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.

During 2019, Curtin provided feedback to the Social Research Centre, which is developing the next National Survey. Originally intended to be held in 2020, this is now expected to run in 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Curtin also participated in the Western Australian Public Sector Commission analysis of systems to prevent and manage sexual misconduct in WA universities.

Curtin joined a state-wide network of professional staff working in support of the broader RNA campaign. This has enabled participants to compare university processes, contributing to improved benchmarking.

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 also Heads of School meetings and other events as required.

Curtin published its first Annual Report in 2019, covering the 2018 reporting period.

This report, released July 2020, is the second Annual Report, and it covers the 2019 calendar year.

PRIORITIES FOR 2020

During 2020, Curtin will progress a number of specific initiatives that are related to *Respect. Now. Always.* These tasks complement our existing and ongoing commitment to provide a safe space for our Curtin community.

STAFF SURVEYS

Questions in the regular Curtin staff survey will be added or amended to more clearly establish staff awareness of policies and their confidence to report matters related to sexual assault or sexual harassment.

STAFF INDUCTION

Further information about 'zero tolerance' for misconduct relating to sexual assault and/or harassment will be added to staff induction materials.

UNIVERSITY RESIDENCES

Curtin will include questions that survey students' experiences in university residences, with a specific focus on matters relating to sexual assault and sexual harassment.

CAMPUS SPECIFIC MATERIALS

Further work will be undertaken to support the ongoing development of locally relevant *Respect. Now. Always.* educational materials for all campuses and especially those campuses that are located outside Australia.

CURTIN CODE OF CONDUCT

An acknowledgement of the Curtin Code of Conduct will be sought as part of the employment offer process.

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

As part of the transition from pilot project to business as usual, further work will improve recording and reporting processes associated with the Respectful Relationships program, launched in 2019.

ONLINE SAFETY

To further our work in the area of online safety, Curtin will draw on the recently released Toolkit for Universities designed to combat online abuse. The toolkit, produced by Universities Australia and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, aims to help university communities be safer online by building greater awareness of online safety risks.

STAFF TRAINING

To further raise awareness for staff in 2020, we will be adopting Universities Australia's training program, titled *Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault - What are the drivers and how can staff respond?* All staff will be encouraged to complete the training, with particular focus on student facing staff, and those in leadership roles initially.

Further training and guidance will also be provided to staff supervising PhD students to ensure clarity of expectations and interactions.

COMMUNICATION

The 2020 work of the RNA Steering Committee will include other activities designed to further raise awareness of Curtin's zero tolerance stance, and our policies, procedures, and processes relating to sexual assault and sexual harassment.

REPORTED INCIDENTS – 2019

Curtin University is Western Australia’s largest university, with 57,784 enrolled students and 7,490 staff across its Australian and international campuses in 2019.

The table in this section summarises data relating to the number of reported incidents of alleged sexual assault and alleged sexual harassment at Curtin in 2019 (including staff and students).

Data have been collated from information provided by the 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, which are outlined below:

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.

FORMAL REPORTS 2019

There were nine formal reports made in 2019. This includes five instances involving sexual harassment, and 4 involving sexual assault.

Whilst the number of reports represent a small fraction of the Curtin student and staff population (0.014%*) we recognise that there may be those that have not chosen to come forwards to make a formal report.

We also acknowledge and note the Universities Australia Guidelines relating to the difference between a formal report, and a disclosure (which may not lead to a formal report). Disclosures may relate to incidents that are unrelated to University activities.

From 2019 onwards, Curtin will include formal reports (only) within this report.

Of the sexual assault allegations, two involved student accommodation, one of which was at an overseas campus. The other two were related to fieldwork / placement activities.

Of the sexual harassment allegations, one was on campus, and one involved incidents that were both on and off campus. Two were in the workplace, and one was on fieldwork/placement.

FORMAL REPORTS 2019	
Sexual Assault	4
Sexual Harassment	5
Total	9

* Calculated with respect to the overall student and staff population (65,274.)

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