



1. Background

This quarterly report provides an update to the Audit and Risk Management Committee on progress against UniSC's Sexual Violence Prevention Action Plan 2023-2025, and disclosures by students who have reported experiencing sexual violence for the reporting period October-December 2023.

2. UniSC Sexual Violence Prevention Action Plan 2023-2025 - Update

2.1 Progress against the UniSC Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment Action Plan 2023-2025

Key achievements for Q4 are highlighted in green in the attached UniSC Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment Action Plan 2023-2025. These achievements include awareness-raising activities, as well as the establishment of a dedicated Primary Prevention Coordinator (funded until June 2024). There are several new actions (highlighted in yellow) that have been identified as priorities, which are also included in the attached updated Action Plan. This report highlights the improvements UniSC has made in detailed data collection and more granular analyses of reports of sexual violence.

October 2023 was Sexual Violence Awareness Month (SVAM). UniSC conducted a successful awareness-raising campaign utilising digital and hardcopy media, across all campuses. SVAM messages were incorporated into the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) weekly emails and social media channels, with messaging to staff via the Director, People and Culture newsletter. Hardcopy media was also posted to Varsity Apartments (Sunshine Coast campus privately owned accommodation). Varsity Apartments subsequently promoted messaging via social media channels.

It is evident from the most recent quarterly data and the trend data for 2023 that UniSC awareness-raising activities are beginning to have the desired effect, with increasing numbers of students reporting their experiences of sexual violence and seeking support, and, conversely, a decrease in the number of sexual violence incidents alleged to have been perpetrated by UniSC students.

2.2 Annual data on students' reported experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment

Disclosures of sexual harm have increased (36%) over the last three years (Table 1), while reports relating to on-campus sexual violence have decreased (75%). This positive reporting trend underscores the effectiveness of UniSC's efforts to foster a safe and supportive environment, encouraging students to come forward and seek assistance. It also highlights the need for continuous prevention education and awareness campaigns to empower students with the knowledge and confidence to report incidents, contributing to the ongoing commitment to student safety and wellbeing on our campuses.

In 2023, there were a total of 53 disclosures of sexual violence (sexual assault and harassment) to UniSC support services. Thirty-four of these disclosures related to sexual assault, and 19 related to students reporting that they had experienced sexual harassment. Seven students reported experiencing sexual violence on a UniSC campus, compared with 28 in 2021 and nine in 2022.

Female domestic students aged between 18-25 years are more likely to experience and report sexual assault and sexual harassment, with males being more likely to be alleged to be the perpetrator. Of the 53 disclosures made in 2023, only one formal outcome was sought, and this was progressed in conjunction with the work-integrated learning site where the incident was alleged to have occurred.



Table 1. Year-on-Year Comparison 2021-2023

| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sexual Assault Total | 20 | 26 | 34 |
| At a campus location | 12* | 2 | 1 |
| Off-campus | 8 | 18 | 33 |
| Not disclosed | | 6 | |
| Sexual Harassment Total | 19 | 8 | 19 |
| At a campus location | n/a* | 7 | 6 |
| Off-Campus | n/a* | 1 | 12 |
| Cyber related | | | 1 |
| Total of all reports | 39 | 34 | 53 |
| At a campus location | 28 | 9 | 7 |
| Student accommodation | 8 | 5 | 4 |

*Data captured on campus or during university-related activity

2.3. Q4 2023 data on students' reported experiences of sexual violence

As shown in Table 2, in Q4 2023, a total of 10 sexual assaults were disclosed to UniSC staff, and 10 alleged perpetrators were identified. All alleged perpetrators were male, with only one identified as a UniSC student. Six out of the 10 alleged perpetrators were known to the victims (partner/family member/colleague), with four reportedly occurring within the context of family violence. One assault occurred on campus, in a study area, and one assault occurred at privately owned student accommodation.

The female student who made the allegation against the male student did not wish to make a formal complaint to the university or the police, and there were no other behaviours of concern or information impacting the threat level identified by an assessment conducted by Safer Communities. In accordance with the Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment Procedures, no response was therefore sought from the student alleged to have perpetrated the sexual assault, however, subsequent disclosures that identify the alleged perpetrator as a person of concern would result in an escalation of the matter for investigation.

None of the 10 students impacted by sexual violence made formal reports to the university for resolution. All students were provided with support, referrals to specialist services, and academic adjustments. Two students engaged in *informal* grievance resolution with the alleged perpetrator.



Table 2. Sexual Assault Disclosures in Q4 2023

| Ten student disclosures of sexual assault In Q4 2023 | |
|---|----|
| Gender | |
| Female | 10 |
| Male | 0 |
| Age range | |
| 18-25 | 6 |
| > 25 years | 4 |
| Citizenship | |
| Domestic | 8 |
| International | 2 |
| Presentation period | |
| Acute (within 2 weeks) | 2 |
| Recent (within 12 months) | 2 |
| Historic (over 12 months) | 6 |
| Alleged perpetrator | |
| Partner, family member, colleague | 6 |
| UniSC student | 1 |
| Other | 3 |
| Context/location of alleged assault | |
| Off-campus (includes private accommodation) | 9 |
| On-campus (study area) | 1 |
| Reporting | |
| Queensland Police Service | 3 |
| Formal university report | 0 |
| Informal grievance resolution | 2 |

Table 3 shows that there were two disclosures of sexual harassment made in 2023. The impacted students were female, and the alleged incidents occurred on campus. The alleged perpetrators in both instances were male UniSC students, and reporting was related to inappropriate remarks and behavioural expectations. In alignment with UniSC guidelines, Safer Communities contacted both alleged perpetrators, outlining the concerns, the impact of their actions and the behavioural expectations of UniSC students. The student who made inappropriate remarks provided context to the comments and apologised but denied they were sexually orientated. The other student did not respond. The female reporting the incident indicated that she was satisfied that the matter was resolved and expressed that she felt safe to remain in class. Teaching staff were provided additional information and resources to remind students about the behavioural expectations of students. Both matters were resolved informally, and no further action was deemed to be required.



Table 3. Sexual Harassment Disclosures in Q4 2023

| Two Student disclosures of sexual harassment in Q4 2023 | |
|--|---|
| Gender | |
| Female | 2 |
| Male | 0 |
| Age range | |
| 18-25 | 1 |
| > 25 years | 1 |
| Citizenship | |
| Domestic | 1 |
| International | 1 |
| Presentation period | |
| Acute (within 2 weeks) | 0 |
| Recent (within 12 months) | 2 |
| Historic (over 12 months) | 0 |
| Alleged perpetrator | |
| Partner, family member, colleague | 0 |
| UniSC student | 2 |
| Other | 0 |
| Context/location of alleged assault | |
| Off-campus (private accommodation) | 0 |
| On-campus (Study Area) | 2 |
| Reporting | |
| Queensland Police Service | 0 |
| Formal university report | 0 |
| Informal grievance resolution | 2 |

Activity across the sector

On 17 November 2023, Universities Australia (UA) released a [Charter on Sexual Harm](#) to support the ongoing work of universities and other organisations in the community to address sexual harm. All 39 member universities committed to building on the many initiatives already in place. While there is agreement and endorsement on several aspects, there are notable gaps, particularly the absence of the student voice. Building on the UA Charter, UniSC intends to strengthen the student's voice, address intersectionality, and ensure appropriate safety measures are detailed in our Sexual Violence Prevention Action Plan.



In addition to the release of the UA Charter, in Q3, the Australian [Universities Accord Interim Report](#) highlighted gender-based violence as an area for immediate attention. A Commonwealth, State and Territory Officials Working Group was established to improve university governance, including the safety of staff and students. This quarter, the Government released their [draft proposal](#) addressing gender-based violence in higher education for consultation.

It is noted that the Government's draft proposal addressing gender-based violence in higher education articulates the origin of gender-based violence being deeply rooted in power inequalities, rigid gender norms and gender-based discrimination. Further, it suggests that for prevention to be achieved, these drivers must be acknowledged, addressed, and challenged. The proposal recognises the opportunity providers have to drive social change at scale and is well aligned to the Terms of Reference guiding the UniSC's Sexual Violence Prevention Taskforce.

The Sexual Violence Taskforce (SVPT) is actively engaged in supporting UniSC and joint sector responses to these proposals, and review by the SVPT identified the following key reflections.

Firstly, more is needed to recognise the importance of local context (including across different settings) to attend to key nuances of each individual institution's context. This should include guidance from environmental criminology and situational crime prevention frameworks such as Kaufman's situational framework¹.

The absence of a public health approach embedded in the proposal's principles limits the extent to which prevention can be achieved given the continuing focus on response (how to support victim-survivors) despite this being about prevention. UniSC will continue to leverage the SVPT to advocate for greater attention to primary prevention through a national public health strategy, which in turn, could help to mitigate the factors that contribute to the cycle of sexual violence in Australia.

¹ https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Situational_Crime_Prevention_for_CSA.pdf