Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles underpinning RMIT's commitment to preventing and responding to gender-based violence, and to outline the responsibilities of members of the RMIT community.

Section 2 - Overview

(2) Gender-based violence means any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender, that results in, or is likely to result in, harm, coercion, control, fear or deprivation of liberty or autonomy.

(3) Gender-based violence is unacceptable. This policy establishes a framework to support and enable the prevention of and response to gender-based violence at RMIT, reflecting our commitment to creating a safe place for everyone in the RMIT community, so that they feel included, respected and supported.

(4) This policy defines key concepts such as consent, gender-based violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. Additional explanations and examples for these terms are set out in the corresponding resources.

(5) This policy also defines a disclosure and a formal report, and provides guidance about where students, staff and Other Workers can go if they want to make a disclosure or formal report. More information on the process for making and managing a disclosure or formal report is provided in the Gender-based Violence Response Procedures.

(6) This policy and its corresponding procedures should be read in conjunction with the RMIT policies regarding behavioural standards and conduct listed in Section 7 below. Policies and procedures of relevant third parties may also apply in some circumstances (for example, the policies of industry partners hosting RMIT students on placement).

(7) Gender-based violence in our RMIT community is a complex issue. It is driven by gender inequality, which is reinforced by deeply entrenched attitudes, behaviours and systems. Other factors can contribute to it or make it more likely to occur. These include:

a. Power imbalances and hierarchical structures — unequal dynamics between students, staff, and supervisors that can prevent reporting or seeking support, including in postgraduate research contexts.
b. Social and cultural norms — broader societal attitudes which normalise gender inequality, sexual entitlement, and victim-blaming, creating a social licence for harmful behaviour.
c. Alcohol and social events — social settings involving alcohol. Alcohol does not cause violence, but it is frequently used to facilitate assault and to deflect perpetrator responsibility.
d. Residential student accommodation culture — insular student accommodation environments with long-standing traditions that can create cultures of entitlement and discourage reporting. Similar risks may also arise in specific time-limited settings where students have to live or travel together as part of their studies, including study tours, field work and placements away from campus.
e. Online and digital environments — digital platforms and tools that enable image-based abuse, online harassment and non-consensual sharing of intimate images, extending gender-based violence beyond physical

campuses.

f. Intersecting structural and systemic barriers — racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination combine with gender inequality. As a result, some members of the RMIT community, including women, First Nations people, people with disability, people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (including trans and gender diverse people and people with innate variations of sex characteristics), culturally and racially marginalised communities and international students, may be at higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence.

Addressing these drivers and contributing factors requires a whole-of-organisation approach that prioritises a safe culture, accessible and trauma-informed support, and meaningful accountability in how RMIT responds to concerns about gender-based violence.

(8) RMIT acknowledges that intersecting forms of discrimination can compound the impact of gender-based violence, and that some groups of people are disproportionately affected. Some people also face barriers to disclosing, reporting and seeking support, for a number of reasons, such as experiences of racism, concerns about cultural safety or confidentiality, or distrust of formal systems. These barriers come from systems and circumstances, not from the people who experience them.

Section 3 - Scope

(9) This policy applies to the conduct of all members of the RMIT community, including staff and Other Workers, students and associates (RMIT University Council members, representatives, and volunteers) of the RMIT Group, regardless of the context in which the conduct occurs. This includes, but is not limited to, conduct occurring on campus; online or through technology; in student accommodation; during placements, practicums or fieldwork; while travelling or working on RMIT business; and at RMIT-related events, functions or conferences, whether in Australia or overseas. This includes gender-based violence engaged in by a student or staff member outside any RMIT context. Where the conduct has no connection to RMIT other than the person's status as a student or staff member, RMIT will also consider if there are any risks to the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and Other Workers in determining an appropriate response. The RMIT Group is RMIT University and its controlled entities, currently RMIT Europe, RMIT Online, RMIT University Pathways and RMIT Vietnam.

(10) The conduct of third parties is also within the scope of this policy, so that RMIT can respond to and manage the risk of gender-based violence affecting its students and staff. Third parties include but are not limited to licensees and lessees, service providers, visitors, education agents, delivery partners, and partner organisations in Australia or overseas, where their conduct is connected with RMIT or its activities.

(11) Where a third party conducts activities on RMIT's behalf, is an affiliated organisation (an organisation that uses RMIT's intellectual property in its name, marketing, recruitment or governance), or operates on, uses or leases RMIT's land or facilities, this policy applies to it and RMIT will require it to comply with this policy. RMIT will take reasonable steps to prevent and respond to gender-based violence where students are living, studying or undertaking activities connected to RMIT, including in student accommodation, placements, internships, apprenticeships, work-integrated learning and with overseas partner institutions. RMIT's partnership and contractual arrangements require partners to comply with RMIT policies and the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (National Code).

(12) If gender-based violence is reported outside the scope of this policy, such as from members of the public, RMIT will provide referral options to appropriate support services. The Child Safe Policy takes precedence over this one to the extent of any inconsistency regarding harm to children.

(13) Some forms of gender-based violence also constitute a criminal offence. RMIT cannot make findings of criminal responsibility under criminal law. However, RMIT can and will determine whether alleged conduct breaches RMIT's policies and procedures. Where required by law (including under the Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Reporting

Procedure), or where there is a serious and imminent risk to a person's safety, RMIT will refer matters to relevant law enforcement agencies. Otherwise, the choice to report an allegation of gender-based violence to police for a criminal investigation rests with the person who has experienced the violence, and RMIT will support them if they choose to do so.

Section 4 - Policy

Principles

(14) Collective commitment: RMIT is committed to leading long-term social and cultural change to prevent gender-based violence, recognising the urgent need for action. This is supported through leadership accountability, clear policies, and comprehensive education.

(15) Gender-based violence is unacceptable and may be unlawful: Gender-based violence has no place in the RMIT community, regardless of the context in which it occurs. RMIT is committed to responding appropriately and proportionately to all disclosures and formal reports of gender-based violence.

(16) Leadership: Accountability for preventing and responding to gender-based violence resides at the highest level of RMIT, with the Vice-Chancellor accountable for embedding a whole-of-organisation approach that prioritises the safety and support of the RMIT community. RMIT leaders at every level are responsible for applying this policy, fostering a safe environment and respectful culture, and ensuring continuous improvement of processes to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (see Responsibilities).

(17) Confidentiality and privacy: RMIT is committed to protecting the confidentiality and privacy of individuals involved in gender-based violence cases, in accordance with the Privacy Policy. RMIT will communicate outcomes of resolution processes to the person who made the disclosure or formal report in accordance with their wishes. RMIT will be transparent with our RMIT community about the nature and extent of gender-based violence affecting our community, through de-identified reporting, and about the action we are taking to prevent and respond to it.

(18) Non-disclosure agreements: RMIT will not use non-disclosure agreements requiring a person to keep details of their experience confidential in gender-based violence matters, unless the person who made the disclosure requests this. RMIT will not pressure anyone to enter a non-disclosure agreement. Access to support, remedies or resolution will never depend on agreeing to one. A non-disclosure agreement requested by a discloser will not stop them from sharing their experience to seek professional support or advice, or prevent RMIT meeting its reporting obligations under the National Code.

(19) Procedural Fairness: RMIT ensures procedural fairness with impartial and transparent processes where all parties have an opportunity to present their perspectives, as part of reinforcing trust and supporting a fair outcome.

(20) Duty of care: RMIT acknowledges its duty of care to students, staff and Other Workers to take reasonable steps to prevent gender-based violence and to respond in a manner that protects their physical and psychological safety and wellbeing. This duty informs decisions made under this policy and its procedures, including where action is necessary to manage risk to a person or to the broader RMIT community.

(21) Human Rights: RMIT views all gender-based violence as unacceptable and a violation of human rights.

(22) Inclusive and intersectional approach: RMIT acknowledges that aspects of a person's identity and circumstances, such as race, age, socio-economic background, disability, visa status, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, and experiences of racism, discrimination, ableism, colonisation and other forms of structural inequality, can compound a person's experience of gender-based violence, create additional barriers to seeking support, disclosure and reporting, and influence their choices in how they participate in RMIT's response to their disclosures. RMIT addresses intersectional needs by ensuring that support and interventions are tailored to the

person, and that policies and processes are clear and accessible, for students and staff with diverse needs, including through access to interpreters and disability-accessible pathways.

(23) Trauma-informed and person-centred: RMIT prioritises safety and wellbeing and ensures the voices and needs of people who have experienced gender-based violence guide all support efforts, fostering an environment of compassion and respect. RMIT consult those who have been impacted by gender-based violence before making decisions about how we will address the relevant conduct. Wherever possible, people who have experienced gender-based violence will be given meaningful choice and agency in decisions that affect them, including how and when they engage with support and reporting processes. Where possible, and within the requirements of other RMIT processes, RMIT coordinates support across its services so that people do not have to repeat their account more than necessary. RMIT prioritises the safety and wellbeing of the person affected while maintaining procedural fairness for all parties.

(24) Cultural safety: RMIT recognises that preventing and responding to gender-based violence must be culturally safe and responsive, and that cultural safety is determined in consultation with the person receiving support. People will be supported in ways that respect their cultural identity, values, family and kinship structures, community connections and cultural rights. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, this includes recognising the impacts of colonisation, racism, dispossession and intergenerational trauma, and recognising cultural identity, family, kinship, community and connection to Country as sources of strength, safety and healing. RMIT supports self-determination and will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students and communities in how it prevents and responds to gender-based violence.

(25) Transparency and integrity: RMIT maintains evidence-based policies and procedures aligned to best practice, protecting against victimisation and supporting those who disclose or report harms. RMIT undertakes gender impact assessments when developing and reviewing this policy and other policies, programs and services that influence the prevention of, or response to, gender-based violence, consistent with its obligations under the National Code and Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic).

(26) Preventing harm: RMIT has a dedicated prevention team, RMIT Prevention and Respect, to lead all work associated with the prevention of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and sexual assault, focused on governance, awareness-raising, learning, and innovative projects.

(27) Dedicated and supportive responses: RMIT's Safer Community is the dedicated response service for students, staff and Other Workers to seek support for gender-based violence (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, or any concerning, unwanted, uncomfortable and/or threatening behaviour). Support is provided to RMIT students, staff and Other Workers regardless of the context in which the gender-based violence occurs. This includes, for example, reasonable academic adjustments to support students who have experienced gender-based violence to continue and complete their studies. It could also include leave entitlements for staff impacted by gender-based violence, including family and domestic violence leave (see the Leave and Public Holidays Policy and the Domestic and Family Violence Procedure). Depending on the circumstances, and in line with other relevant policies and procedures, adjustments may also include assessment flexibility, attendance adjustments, changes to placement or work arrangements, emergency accommodation and safety measures. Support services will be safe, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all members of the RMIT community.

(28) Safe environments: RMIT is responsible for maintaining a safe environment and continuously improving our systems to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. This includes complying with any applicable Working with Children Check requirements, in accordance with the Working With Children Instruction; requiring prospective staff and Council members to declare whether they have been investigated for an allegation of gender-based violence and if so, taking any such declaration into account in assessing their suitability; taking any substantiated finding of gender-based violence made during a person's employment into account in decisions about their promotion, recognition and reward; addressing any material risks arising from Other Workers and third parties; and making alternative arrangements where necessary to ensure safety.

Responsibilities

(29) All members of the RMIT community are required to:

a. refrain from engaging in gender-based violence, and role model accountable and appropriate behaviour in line with the standards outlined in the RMIT Code of Conduct, the Workplace Behaviour Policy, Student Charter, Student Conduct Policy, Student Conduct Regulations, and Staff-Student Relationships Procedure;
b. promote respectful culture and practice within their sphere of influence;
c. increase awareness and ensure compliance with relevant policies and procedures;
d. undertake and complete all mandatory training (including on the requirements of the National Code and responding to disclosures, as relevant to their role) to develop skills necessary to support a respectful, safe, and inclusive community; and
e. comply with reporting and record keeping obligations, as required.

(30) Council provides oversight of compliance with this policy, endorses RMIT's Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan and Outcomes Framework and any amendments to it, and receives 6-monthly de-identified reporting on incidents and progress against the Outcomes Framework, through Academic Board and the Nomination, Remuneration, People and Performance Committee.

(31) The Nomination, Remuneration, People and Performance Committee examines de-identified data reports to identify trends and systemic issues and enable RMIT to identify opportunities for improvements and implement changes where required. The Committee provides this 6-monthly report to the Council.

(32) The Vice-Chancellor and President, as RMIT's Higher Education Principal Executive Officer, is accountable for RMIT's compliance with this policy and the National Code, leads the implementation of RMIT's Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan, and reports to Council and relevant regulators as required.

(33) The University Executive is responsible for providing a safe, non-violent, gender equal and inclusive environment for all members of the RMIT community.

(34) The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is the central authority for implementing this policy and ensuring there is a clear reporting line through central committees and executive bodies, and effective management and oversight by senior management.

(35) Each member of the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Group for Addressing Gender-based Violence is accountable for leading the development and implementation of RMIT’s Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan within their areas of influence.

(36) Leaders at RMIT are responsible for embedding a whole-of-organisation approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence within their areas of influence. This includes role modelling safe and respectful behaviour, fostering a safe environment and respectful culture, ensuring their teams (and to the extent possible, any third parties they manage) understand and meet the expectations of this policy, supporting people who make disclosures and formal reports of gender-based violence, acting on data and opportunities for improvement in their areas, and responding appropriately to gender-based violence in accordance with the procedures under this policy.

(37) The Prevention and Respect and the Safer Community teams are responsible for delivering RMIT’s Whole-of-Organisation Prevention and Response Plan, including training on the National Code and confidentiality, and regular review of gender-based violence policies, procedures and practices. The Prevention and Respect team will keep a record of improvements made in response to National Student Ombudsman findings and recommendations, including the 'Can I talk about this?' report, and make it available to the Higher Education Gender-based Violence Regulator upon request.

Section 5 - Compliance

(38) A person who engages in gender-based violence will be in breach of this policy. Where an allegation of gender-based violence is substantiated, RMIT will consider an appropriate response in line with the corresponding framework that it has occurred in (for example, disciplinary action). Depending on the nature and impact of the substantiated allegation of gender-based violence, RMIT may also consider that additional actions are required as part of an appropriate organisational response. This may include implementing additional safety measures, terminating the person's contract or engagement of Other Workers or third parties at RMIT, and notifying the appropriate regulator or professional body, as required. Conduct that constitutes gender-based violence will be handled in accordance with the Managing Conduct Procedure (for staff and Other Workers) or Student Conduct Policy (for students). For more information on how to report gender-based violence, refer to the Gender-based Violence Response Procedures.

(39) Breaches of this policy are reportable via the Organisational Breach Reporting Form and are managed in accordance with the Compliance Breach Management Procedure.

(40) Any concerns about the adequacy of the gender-based violence policy suite in addressing RMIT's expectations should be raised in accordance with the Compliance Breach Management Procedure.

(41) This policy supports RMIT’s compliance obligations regarding:

a. Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
b. Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
c. Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)
d. Protected Disclosure Act 2012 (Vic)
e. Respect@Work – Changes to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
f. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy (2019)
g. Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
h. Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Framework
i. Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
j. Fair Work Act 2009
k. Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
l. Universities Accord (National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence) Act 2025 (Cth) and National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2025.

(42) This policy supports RMIT’s commitment to adhering to sector best practices and is informed by:

a. Australia Human Rights Commission – Guidelines for Complying with the Positive Duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) (AHRC)
b. National Plan for Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education 2024
c. Universities Australia Sexual Harm Response Guidelines
d. National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence 2025
e. National Student Ombudsman — Can I talk about this? The use of confidentiality requirements in university complaint handling (2025)

Vietnam Specific:

a. The revised Law on Prevention and Combat Against Domestic Violence (2022)

b. 2006 Law on Gender Equity (No.73/2006/QH11 dated 29/11/2006)
c. Viet Nam Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace International Labour Organization - A Code of Conduct paper issued by the Ministry of Labour Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) on preventing sexual harassment.

Section 6 - Subordinate Policy Documents

(43) Refer to the following documents which are established in accordance with this policy:

a. Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Policy - Schedule 1 - Explanations and Examples
b. Gender-Based Violence Response Procedure - Australia
c. Gender-Based Violence Response Procedure - Vietnam
d. Domestic and Family Violence Procedure - Australia
e. Domestic and Family Violence Procedure - Vietnam
f. Domestic and Family Violence Procedure - Schedule 1 - Explanations and Examples.

Section 7 - Other Relevant Policies

(44) RMIT policy suites regarding behavioural standards and conduct that are relevant to this policy include:

a. Student Conduct Policy
b. Code of Conduct
c. Workplace Behaviour Policy
d. Child Safe Policy and Child Safe Code of Conduct
e. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
f. Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Policy.

Section 8 - Definition

Term	Definition
Child or children	In Australia, an individual under the age of 18 years. In Vietnam, according to Article 1 of the Law on Children, any person below the age of 16. However, RMIT Vietnam has internal guidelines that extend the child safe duty of care to individuals under the age of 18 years.
Consent	As defined in section 36 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic), consent means free and voluntary agreement. Consent cannot be assumed. Consent must be ongoing and mutual. It must be present every time, including for the duration of any sexual act. Consent can be withdrawn at any time. Consent to one act does not mean consent is agreed to in any other act. Consent to an act with one person does not mean consent is agreed to in an act with a different person, or with the same person on a different occasion.
Disclosure	Where a person first makes known an incident of gender-based violence to RMIT (e.g., by telling a staff member or Safer Community). This may or may not lead to a formal report being made.
Formal report	The provision to RMIT, through formal reporting channels, of information about a person's own experience of gender-based violence, which requires RMIT to consider taking steps beyond the offer and provision of support services, including (without limitation) the commencement of an investigation and/or a disciplinary process in appropriate circumstances.

Gender-based violence	Any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats based on gender that results in or is likely to result in harm, coercion, control, fear, or deprivation of liberty or autonomy. Violence or harm can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, financial and technology-facilitated abuse (including image-based abuse), and stalking.
Intersectionality	The ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. An intersectional approach (sometimes called intersectionality) acknowledges that factors such as sex, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, being First Nations, being from a culturally and racially marginalised community, visa status and socio-economic background can compound the impact of gender-based violence. This can result in some people experiencing disproportionate impacts of gender-based violence and additional structural, social or institutional barriers to safety, disclosure, reporting and support.
Other Workers	Any person who carries out work in any capacity for RMIT, including employees; officers; contractor and subcontractors; employees of a contractor or subcontractor; employees of a labour hire company who have been assigned to work at RMIT; outworkers; apprentices or trainees; students gaining work experience; and volunteers. This has the same meaning as "worker" under the model Work Health and Safety Act. Other Workers in this policy includes associates of the RMIT Group, such as RMIT University Council members, representatives, and volunteers.
Person-centred	Ensuring that the needs and preferences of the person who made a disclosure or formal report are at the centre of decisions made in response to the disclosure or formal report, including by genuinely considering their wishes and the impact that decisions may have on them, while at all times ensuring their safety and wellbeing, and the safety and wellbeing of other students, staff and Other Workers.
Sexual assault	When: 1. a person (A) intentionally touches another person (B) and the touching is sexual 2. person (B) who was touched did not agree or consent to the touching, and 3. person (A) did not reasonably believe that person (B) consented. If person (A) knew that (B) was not consenting, this will be sexual assault; and if person (A) did not believe on reasonable grounds that (B) was consenting, this will also be sexual assault. For the purposes of this policy, RMIT also includes the following acts defined in the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic): (i) rape, (ii) rape by compelling sexual penetration, (iii) sexual assault by compelling sexual touching, (iv) assault (being the non-consensual application of force) with intent to commit a sexual act, and (v) threat to commit a sexual assault or rape. For succinctness, the specific elements of each are not set out separately in this policy. Additional examples and explanations are set out in Schedule 1 – Explanations and Examples. RMIT cannot make findings of criminal responsibility, including whether a person has engaged in sexual assault under criminal law. However, RMIT can and will determine whether alleged conduct breaches RMIT's policies and procedures.
Sexual harassment	When a person: 1. makes an unwelcome sexual advance, or an unwelcome request for sexual favours, or 2. engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to a person, in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. Additional examples and explanations are set out in Schedule 1 – Explanations and Examples.
Staff	As defined in the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Act 2010 (Vic). Staff means persons employed by RMIT.

Student	A person who is enrolled as a student with RMIT or is undertaking a course of study or a unit of study with RMIT, including: 1. a student as defined in the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Act 2010 (Vic), being a person enrolled at the University in a course leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, licence or other award; or a person who is designated as a student or is of a class of persons designated as students by the Council; and 2. a student undertaking a higher education degree by research, non-award study, enabling or bridging course, foundation program or vocational education and training course.
Third parties	Any person or entity external or separate to RMIT, including contractors, consultants, volunteers, visiting appointees and visitors as well as members of the public.
Trauma-informed	A strengths-based framework that applies the core principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration for shared decision-making, empowerment and respect for diversity. Trauma-informed services recognise the physiological, emotional, psychological and neurological effects of trauma; minimise the risk of re-traumatisation and promote healing; emphasise physical and emotional safety; and focus on the whole context in which a service is provided – not just on what is provided.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	2nd November 2026
Review Date	22nd October 2031
Approval Authority	Manager, Central Policy
Approval Date	22nd October 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Policy Owner	Mish Eastman Interim Chief Operating Officer & Vice-President
Policy Author	Shah Abdul-Rahman Executive Director, Health, Safety and Risk
Enquiries Contact	Prevention and Respect Team

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"RMIT Group" - RMIT University and its controlled entities (RMIT Europe, RMIT Online, RMIT Vietnam and RMIT University Pathways).