

# FACT SHEET

## Information for the Respondent of Sexual Harassment

Division of People and Culture (Fact Sheet reviewed July 2026)

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# Information for the Respondent of Sexual Harassment

This fact sheet provides guidance for staff members who have been named as the Respondent in a sexual harassment complaint. It outlines the process, expectations, and support available when the University receives and accepts a complaint of alleged sexual harassment.

## About sexual harassment complaints

1. The University has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment. All staff are expected to act respectfully and professionally at all times. If a staff member believes they are being sexually harassed, they are encouraged to:
  - Raise the matter directly with their supervisor (where appropriate),
  - Contact their Business Partner in the Division of People and Culture (DPC), and/or
  - Submit a complaint through the University's [complaint management system](#).
  - They may also choose to make a formal report to the police.
2. Terminology used in this document:
  - **Complainant** - the person making the complaint.
  - **Respondent** - the person the complaint is about.

## What is sexual harassment?

3. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome or unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that makes a person feel offended, humiliated, intimidated or distressed. It includes:
  - Unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours.
  - Other unwelcome sexual conduct towards a person.

### Key Points:

- The *impact* of the behaviour, not the intention, determines whether it is sexual harassment.
- A single incident can constitute sexual harassment.
- Context matters: Behaviour that is acceptable in one setting may be inappropriate in another.
- What is considered unwelcome may vary depending on personal circumstances, cultural or social background and workplace or study relationships, including power imbalances.

## Examples of sexual harassment

4. Sexual harassment can manifest itself in many ways. Some examples of sexual harassment include:
  - Remarks with sexual connotations, smutty jokes, or lewd comments
  - Intrusive questions or insinuations about a person's sexual activities or private life
  - Suggestive comments about a person's body or appearance
  - Persistent, unwanted requests for dates or a personal relationship
  - Persistent, unwanted declarations of affection
  - Requests for, or offers of, sexual favours
  - Displaying sexually suggestive material in inappropriate contexts
  - Offensive hand or body gestures
  - Uninvited physical contact such as patting, pinching, touching, or putting an arm around someone

- Unnecessary close physical proximity, including persistently following a person
  - Indecent exposure
  - Sexual assault
5. Sexual harassment does not include relationships of mutual attraction based on genuine choice and consent. However, where there is a power imbalance, “consent” may be compromised by fear, intimidation, or perceived coercion.

### Being named as a respondent

6. When a sexual harassment complaint is received, DPC conducts an initial assessment to determine whether the alleged behaviour, available evidence and any other relevant considerations; meet the threshold for sexual harassment.
- If the concerns do not meet the threshold, DPC may refer the matter back to the relevant School/Division for local management or, close the complaint.
  - If further consideration is required, DPC may commence a formal investigation and notify the respondent.

### How will you be notified

7. A DPC representative will contact the respondent to arrange a confidential meeting.
- This initial meeting is not for providing a response; it is to outline the complaint, explain the process, and clarify expectations. The terms ‘alleged’ and ‘allegation’ are used to uphold the University’s commitment to procedural fairness which means that complaints remain allegations until they are substantiated.
  - A separate meeting will then be scheduled to allow the respondent to present information, evidence, or context.
  - Respondents may also nominate potential witnesses for DPC to interview.

### How the University manages the complaint

8. The University considers sexual harassment to be serious misconduct. If the initial assessment indicates that the alleged behaviour may constitute sexual harassment, DPC may manage the matter under the serious misconduct provisions under the Charles Sturt University Enterprise Agreement (Clause 38).
9. Interim measures may be implemented during the investigation to support workplace safety and continuity. These may include:
- Temporary changes to reporting lines.
  - Adjustments to work locations.
  - Allocation of an alternative manager if the complaint involves a supervisor.
  - Other operational adjustments.

These measures are not punitive – they are designed to support you and ensure a fair process.

10. Respondents are generally instructed not to contact the complainant, and complainants are expected not to contact the respondent. Both parties must maintain confidentiality to protect the integrity of the process.

### Timeframes

11. All complaints are managed in accordance with procedural fairness. This includes interviewing relevant witnesses, gathering evidence, and allowing the respondent to respond to the allegations.
12. DPC aims to complete investigations promptly. However, the timeframe may vary depending on the

complexity of the matter. You will be kept informed throughout the process.

13. If the matter has been reported to the police, the University may pause its internal processes until criminal investigations are complete. This is to avoid interference and to respect legal processes.

## Confidentiality

14. Discussions with DPC, whether you are a complainant, respondent, or witness; are confidential. You should not share the content or existence of these discussions with other staff members (unless they are responsible for investigating the matter or providing counselling and support on behalf of the University). Maintaining confidentiality helps ensure a safe, respectful, and fair process for everyone involved. You may, however, discuss matters with your trusted support people external to the University.
15. The University and DPC have legal obligations, including a duty of care. Personal information will only be disclosed when necessary to manage the complaint, when required by law, or if there is a serious threat to health or safety. You will be informed whenever possible if information needs to be shared.

## Further information

16. Relevant documents include:

- [Charles Sturt University Enterprise Agreement 2023-2025](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy](#)
- [Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Management Policy](#)
- [Complaints Procedure – Workplace](#)

## Support available

17. The University recognises that being involved in a complaint process can be challenging. Respondents are encouraged to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for confidential support, counselling, and specialist services. Call 1300 687 327 or visit the [Employee Assistance Program](#) page for more information.
18. Respondents may bring a **Support Person** to meetings related to the complaint. This person may provide emotional support. For details, refer to the [Support Person Fact Sheet](#).

## Questions or assistance

19. If you have further questions:
  - Contact the DPC staff member who reached out to you.
  - If you are unsure who to contact, email [workplacerelations@csu.edu.au](mailto:workplacerelations@csu.edu.au) and a case manager will respond.