

FACT SHEET

Information for Supervisors managing reports of Sexual Harassment

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

Contents

Information for Supervisors managing reports of Sexual Harassment.....	2
About sexual harassment complaints	2
What is sexual harassment?	2
Examples of sexual harassment	2
How can you support a worker that has reported sexual harassment?.....	3
How the University manages a complaint.....	3
Timeframes	4
Confidentiality	4
Further information.....	4
Support available	4
Questions or assistance	4

Information for Supervisors managing reports of Sexual Harassment

This fact sheet provides guidance for supervisors who witness or receive reports of sexual harassment in the workplace. It outlines key responsibilities, processes, and support options available when the University receives and accepts a complaint of alleged sexual harassment.

About sexual harassment complaints

1. **The University maintains a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.** All staff are expected to act respectfully and professionally at all times. Staff who believe they are experiencing sexual harassment 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. **Supervisors play a critical role in prevention and response.** You have a personal and legal responsibility to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment within your area of responsibility.

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.

How can you support a worker that has reported sexual harassment?

6. Supervisors **must** act when they witness or are informed of sexual harassment. You should:
- Model the highest standards of conduct in line with the University’s code of conduct, policies, and procedures.
 - Address unwanted or inappropriate behaviour early or seek advice if unsure.
 - Act promptly and document relevant incidents.
 - Communicate the University’s reporting process.
 - Maintain confidentiality and handle information sensitively and on a need-to-know basis (see Point 7).
 - Protect all parties from victimisation.
 - Encourage staff to report incidents to management or DPC.
 - Provide or refer staff to support services such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
 - Understand relevant legislative requirements and support staff through information and training.
 - Contact Police on 000 if you believe someone is in immediate danger.
7. If an employee discloses **sexual harassment** to you in confidence, you must report the information to DPC. The safety and welfare of staff takes precedence over any express or implied requests for confidentiality.

How the University manages a complaint

8. When a complaint is received, DPC conducts an initial assessment to determine whether the alleged behaviour, available evidence, and other relevant factors meet the threshold for sexual harassment. 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.
9. 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).
10. Interim measures may be implemented to support safety and workplace 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.
11. 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

12. 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.
13. DPC aims to complete investigations promptly. However, the timeframe may vary depending on the complexity of the matter. Supervisors will be kept informed throughout the process.
14. 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

15. Discussions with DPC, whether you are a complainant, respondent, supervisor, or witness; are confidential. You must not disclose the content or existence of these discussions with other staff members.
16. The University has legal obligations, including a duty of care. Personal information will only be shared when necessary to manage the complaint, when required by law, or if there is a serious threat to health or safety.

Further information

17. 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

18. The University recognises that involvement in a complaint process can be challenging. Staff 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.

Questions or assistance

19. If you have further questions contact your assigned Business Partner or the DPC staff member who reached out to you.