

Setting the Scene

RNA, *Change the Course* and selected research findings: HDR and sexual violence/assault risk factors

UA Principles on Respectful Supervisory Relationships

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Change the course:

NATIONAL REPORT ON
SEXUAL ASSAULT AND
SEXUAL HARASSMENT
AT AUSTRALIAN
UNIVERSITIES • 2017

The campaign aims to:

- raise awareness of sexual assault and sexual harassment and lift the visibility of support services for students;
- obtain data to guide further improvement in university policies and services; and
- assist universities in sharing global best practice resources across the sector

At a glance...



30,000+ students responded to the national survey



39 Australian universities represented

Prevalence and location of sexual assault and sexual harassment at university.



One in five (21%) students were **sexually harassed** in a university setting, excluding travel to and from university, in 2016.

Recent incidents most commonly occurred:



14%

On university grounds



13%

In university teaching spaces



8%

University social spaces

1.6% of students were **sexually assaulted** in a university setting, including travel to and from university, on at least one occasion in 2015 or 2016.

Recent incidents most commonly occurred:



21%

At a social event at university or residence social event



15%

On public transport on the way to or from university



10%

On university grounds



10%

At a university residence or college

HDR candidates are somewhat masked in this report:

- Not clearly distinguished from taught P/G, and sometimes confused with WIL students (where supervisor may refer to WIL placement supervisor)
- Nonetheless, report highlights risks posed to HDR candidates who appear to be at greater risk from sexual harassment by academic staff of the university than undergraduate students.
- Women in male-dominated fields appear to be at greater risk than others. (This is supported by four decades of research in sexual harassment in a range of industry sectors).

How findings of *Change the Course* sit along findings from other research?

- American Association of Universities “climate” research (2013, 2015) into sexual violence on campuses corroborates Australian findings. High but different risk factors for students at different levels of study. Graduate students face higher risk of sexual violence from academic staff than other students.
- Several studies point to particular “at risk” fields/activities, for example disciplines involving extensive field work as in the study by Clancy et al (2014).
- Humanities research paradigm also produces high risk situations, see report of American Philosophical Association into Philosophy Department at University of Colorado Boulder (UCB 2014)

RESPONSES

Universities Australia: 10 Point Action Plan and development Principles on Supervision

Individual universities: Responses from most, actions taken are variable.

Disciplinary associations/councils of deans/learned academies:
Booming silence

CAPA: 19 recommendations including one multi-part recommendation directed at HDR candidates

ACGR: Is there a role for ACGR in taking further action beyond today's forum?

Other responses

Post-Weinstein

#metooPhD, see: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/metoophd?lang=en>

The Professor is in: A Crowd sourced Survey of Sexual Harassment in the Academy. See:
<https://theprofessorisin.com/2017/12/01/a-crowdsourced-survey-of-sexual-harassment-in-the-academy/>

CAPA

14. Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students, that is Doctorate and Masters of Research students, are at greater risk of encountering sexual assault and sexual harassment given the inherent imbalance of power between student and supervisor. Research students are extremely reliant on supervisors for academic and professional support and success.

There are a range of issues that Universities need to address in order to mitigate this problem, including:

- The University knowing all staff that are supervisors, and being able to communicate with these supervisors
 - Insisting on mandatory training, including ensuring this training is met by including it within the performance standards of academics. Mandatory training should include how to effectively supervise and ethical codes of behaviour
- Empowering students by ensuring they know their rights and responsibilities
- Enable regular and confidential reporting by HDR students on their supervisors

DRAFT UA Principles

1. Universities provide a quality, supportive teaching, learning and research environment.
2. The professional relationship between university staff and students is central to the student's educational development and wellbeing.
3. The professional relationship between a supervisor and the student is characterised by mutual respect and trust, inclusiveness and personal dignity.
4. Expectations, roles and responsibilities of students and their supervisors are clear.
5. Universities recognise there is asymmetry in the supervisor-student relationship and that this asymmetry confers power upon the supervisor.
6. Safeguards are used to protect students from situations of risk and unwanted advances from their supervisors.

UA principles (cont'd)

7. Sexual assault and sexual harassment are unacceptable.
8. Students and staff who are subjected to sexual assault or sexual harassment have a right to lodge a complaint under the university's relevant policy.
9. The safety and wellbeing of anyone who reports sexual assault and harassment are promoted and protected by the university.

Everyday sexism and non-inclusive research training cultures

Let me tell you about my trouble with girls [...] three things happen when they are in the lab....You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you and when you criticise them, they cry.

Professor Tim Hunt, Nobel Laureate in Medicine or Physiology, 2015

Selected references

American Association of Universities (2015)

<https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/aau-climate-survey-sexual-assault-and-sexual-misconduct-2015>

Change the Course report (2017). See: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/change-course-national-report-sexual-assault-and-sexual>

Clancy KBH, Nelson RG, Rutherford JN, Hinde K (2014) Survey of Academic Field Experiences (SAFE): Trainees Report Harassment and Assault. PLoS ONE 9(7): e102172. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0102172

Universities Australia (2017) 10 Point Action Plan. See: <file:///ntapprdfs01n02.rmit.internal/eh0/E88670/Downloads/Companion%20Report%20Web%20version%203.pdf>

University of Colorado Boulder (2014) *Report the American Philosophical Association Site Visit to University of Colorado Boulder*. See: http://spot.colorado.edu/~tooley/The_Site_Visit_Report_and_Administration_Summary.pdf