

# Domestic and Family Violence Support Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) It is reported that one in six Australian women, and one in 20 Australian men have, since the age of 15, experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner they have lived with (ABS, 2013), however the actual incidence of domestic and family violence is likely to be much greater.

(2) Domestic or family violence can affect anyone, regardless of their gender, sexual identity, culture, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, economic status or location. Individuals experiencing domestic and family violence may have complex social, physical, financial, emotional and legal needs.

(3) Western Sydney University is dedicated to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all staff and students. This policy outlines the University's commitment to supporting students and staff affected by domestic and family violence, and facilitating their continued participation and success in their study and work objectives.

(4) Our University acknowledges there is a prevalence of domestic and family violence in the Greater Western Sydney community, and also recognises that the majority of those who experience this type of violence are women.

(5) This policy works in conjunction with existing entitlements, policies and practices that support students and staff who are experiencing domestic and family violence, including the [Workplace Flexibility Policy](#), [Gender Equality Policy](#), relevant [Staff Agreements](#), and options as outlined on the University's [Domestic and Family Violence web page](#).

(6) This policy applies to all members of the University community:

- a. in attendance at a University campus or facility, be it owned or leased
- b. using University equipment, be it owned or leased (e.g. communications technologies, vehicles, facilities)
- c. in attendance at a University event, function or activity
- d. participating in any activity as a representative of the University (e.g. field trips inter-University events, conferences, practicum, clinical placements, etc).

(7) Matters that arise away from the University and that have no association with the University would not normally be covered by this policy except where there is a clear impact on the University's ability to fulfill its objectives in terms of this policy.

## Section 2 - Definitions

(8) For the purpose of this policy:

- a. Family member includes the following:
  - i. a married, de facto, opposite or same sex partner
  - ii. biological, adoptive, foster and step child relationships
  - iii. an ex-partner
  - iv. a parent or partner's or ex-partner's parent

- v. a brother or partner's or ex-partner's brother
  - vi. a sister or partner's or ex-partner's sister
  - vii. a grandchild or partner's or ex-partner's grandchild, or
  - viii. a grandparent or partner's or ex-partner's grandparent.
- b. Domestic and Family Violence refers to violent, or threatening behaviour, or any other behaviour, that coerces or controls a family member or causes a family member to be fearful. It extends beyond physical violence and may involve the exploitation of power imbalances and patterns of abuse over many years. The abuse may be physical, sexual, verbal, social, financial, psychological, or involve harassment and stalking. (Source: [NSW State Government Domestic Violence web page](#)). Examples of behaviour that may constitute domestic and family violence include, but are not limited to:
- i. an assault
  - ii. a sexual assault or other sexually abusive behaviour
  - iii. stalking
  - iv. repeated derogatory taunts
  - v. intentionally damaging or destroying property
  - vi. intentionally causing death or injury to an animal
  - vii. unreasonably denying the family member the financial autonomy that they would otherwise have had
  - viii. unreasonably withholding financial support needed to meet the reasonable living expenses of the family member or child(ren), at a time when the family member is entirely or predominantly dependent on the person for financial support
  - ix. preventing the family member from making or keeping connections with their family, friends or culture;  
or
  - x. unlawfully depriving the family.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(9) The University recognises the significant impact domestic and family violence can have on the life and experience of its students, staff and related individuals. Additionally, the University understands the transformative impact education and secure employment can potentially have for those affected by, and trying to overcome, disadvantages related to situations of domestic and family violence.

(10) This policy also aims to further consolidate the University's commitment to gender equality and equal opportunity, by ensuring that victims of domestic and family violence are supported in their educational and employment aspirations.

(11) The University considers the safety and security of our staff and students on campus as a priority. If there is a threat of harm to any individual at work or on campus, either through phone or email contact or in person, contact Campus Safety and Security via 1300 737 003. In the instance of an immediate life threatening situation call the NSW Police on 000.

(12) The University will undertake to provide a safe and supportive learning and working environment for students and staff affected by domestic or family violence through measures which include:

- a. providing flexible work or study arrangements where reasonably possible
- b. offering leave/study break options to manage matters related to domestic and family violence as guided by University policy or the relevant Staff Agreement
- c. offer referral to confidential counselling support services such as the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) for staff or the University's [Counselling Service](#) for students; and

- d. respecting a student or staff member's right to privacy if they choose to disclose matters relating to domestic or family violence, except in circumstances where:
  - i. there is a risk to the health and safety of the individual or other students or staff members
  - ii. when there is a legal obligation to disclose.

(13) The University also seeks to provide a study and work environment where individuals affected by domestic and family violence feel supported and comfortable in accessing and requesting assistance. As such the University will:

- a. undertake strategies to raise awareness of domestic and family violence issues; and
- b. promote the supports available for students and staff affected by domestic and family violence.

(14) There are certain positions within the University which may have mandatory reporting requirements as related to children under the age of 16, and defined by Section 27 of the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection Act 1998\)](#). Staff should ensure they are informed of their responsibilities, and should be guided by the [Mandatory Reporting Guide](#) on the Department of Community Services website.

(15) Further information on supports available to students and staff experiencing domestic and family violence, including external support services, is provided on the University's [Domestic and Family Violence web page](#).

## Section 4 - Procedures

(16) Nil

## Section 5 - Guidelines

(17) Refer to the [Domestic and Family Violence Support Guidelines](#) for Staff.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	16th August 2024
<b>Review Date</b>	23rd April 2025
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Director, Governance Services
<b>Approval Date</b>	16th August 2024
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Not Applicable
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