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Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy

Office of Administrative Responsibility:	Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) Office of the Associate Vice-President (Human Resources, Health, Safety and Environment)
Office of Accountability:	Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) Office of the Vice-President (University Services, Operations and Finance)
Approving Authority:	The Governors of the University of Alberta and General Faculties Council

Purpose

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is a complex and serious problem in society and on university campuses. SGBV can affect individuals of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations, as well as those of all ages, abilities, racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. The impact of SGBV is exacerbated for those at the Intersections of multiple social locations for whom additional barriers exist, with disproportionately adverse impacts on queer and trans, Indigenous, Black, and people of colour. SGBV is just one form of violence used in colonization to marginalize Indigenous peoples up to the present day, as evidenced by Canada's murdered and missing Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit people.

The university recognizes the harm caused by a culture in which common attitudes, norms and practices tolerate, normalize, trivialize, excuse or outright condone SGBV. Sometimes called "rape culture", it is perpetuated in a variety of ways such as through images, television, music, jokes, advertising, jargon, words and figures of speech that normalize sexual coercion and shift blame onto those who have experienced sexual violence. Additionally, rigid conceptions of gender binary and gender roles in which masculine traits are privileged and feminine traits marginalized contribute to gender based violence.

Where a power imbalance is exploited to facilitate SGBV, for example, in a teaching or supervisory relationship or where one person has the ability to influence another's participation or progress, barriers to disclosing are amplified. By creating barriers to disclosing, this culture conceals the problem and the information that institutions require in order to take the Corrective Actions needed to create and maintain a safe environment free from SGBV.

As an institution that exists in this context, the university takes seriously its responsibility to reduce SGBV through a Culture of Consent, gender inclusivity, anti-oppression and support, and to respond to misconduct or conditions that allow, facilitate, or give rise to SGBV. In addition, the university will engage in various preventative activities, including communication, education, training and policy.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- set out the principles that guide the interpretation and application of this policy and its associated procedures;
- articulate the commitment to those affected by SGBV;
- set out the responsibilities of the institution, senior leaders, and the university community with respect to SGBV;
- provide clear information on privacy, Disclosure and confidentiality;
- provide for the creation of guides to interpret and apply this policy;
- provide for periodic review of this policy and its related procedures; and
- provide definitions which apply to this policy and its related procedures.

Definitions

The attached definitions table outlines the terms used in this policy and any specific rules of interpretation that apply.

Scope

Compliance with this policy extends to all academic, support and excluded staff, postdoctoral scholars, and academic colleagues as outlined and defined in the *Recruitment Policy*; undergraduate and graduate students and post-graduate learners; emeriti; and members of the Board of Governors.

Policy Statement

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES
2. COMMITMENT TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE
3. RESPONSIBILITIES
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1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This policy and its associated procedures are guided by and will be interpreted and applied with reference to the following principles:

a. The university is obligated to maintain a safe, vibrant and supportive Working and Learning Environment (which includes all learning, research, workplace and community activities and spaces), and to foster a community in which SGBV is not tolerated. In addition, the university recognizes and values:

   i. the inherent dignity of all people and their human right to be free from acts of SGBV;

   ii. a Culture of Consent, inclusion, thoughtful action and support through education, training, policy initiatives and communications;

   iii. the need to identify and dismantle barriers to making a Disclosure and/or Complaint and to create an environment where Disclosure is encouraged;

   iv. the need for access to support and options for Disclosers or anyone who has been affected by SGBV;

   v. the legitimacy of options for accountability and/or healing outside of Complaint processes, especially to address the differential impacts and harms Complaint processes may have on those with intersecting social locations; and

   vi. equity, Procedural Fairness, Trauma-Informed practice, and support for the Parties to Complaint processes related to SGBV.

b. SGBV, including retaliation related to SGBV Disclosures or Complaints, is prohibited and constitutes misconduct, will not be tolerated, and is subject to discipline.

c. Disclosers will have access to support, regardless of where or when the SGBV occurred.

d. Where the SGBV has affected the Working and Learning Environment, Disclosers will have access to a range of options to restore or establish a safe and vibrant Working and Learning Environment.

e. Where the university has jurisdiction, Complaints will be addressed under the applicable policies or procedures, including, for example, the Student Misconduct Procedure, the relevant collective agreement, or other applicable employment contracts and agreements, as identified in the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Disclosures Procedure. Where there is a conflict between this policy and an article in a collective agreement, the article in the collective agreement will take precedence.

2. COMMITMENT TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

a. SGBV can have serious and enduring negative effects on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and wellness. The university recognizes the possible effects of trauma on

those who have been subjected to SGBV and supports the efforts of individuals to seek support and recover. Regardless of where or when it took place, any person who discloses and/or makes a Complaint of SGBV can expect to be:

i. treated with respect, dignity and compassion;

ii. informed about on- and off-campus resources and supports, including culturally specific resources, where available;

iii. provided with access to non-judgmental and coordinated support to mitigate barriers to participation in the Working and Learning Environment that occur as a result of SGBV;

iv. offered options for Modifications to prevent further unwanted contact with the subject of the Disclosure and reduce, to the extent possible, the negative impacts of the SGBV on the Discloser's ability to access and participate in the Working and Learning Environment;

v. informed of any available Non-Disciplinary Accountability Options and/or Institutional Accountability;

vi. provided with information about available Complaint processes should they wish to pursue a Complaint within the university and/or to an external law enforcement agency;

vii. offered safety planning assistance; and

viii. provided with an anonymous or third-Party disclosing option as outlined on the Options, Services and Resources for Those who have Been Subjected to SGBV web page.

b. In order to remove barriers to disclosing or making a Complaint under this policy:

i. Disclosers will not be subject to disciplinary action for their own prohibited alcohol or substance use connected with the incident(s) of SGBV.

ii. In any Complaint process, investigators and decision-makers will protect complainants from irrelevant questions and/or assumptions, including those based on sexual history or expression.

c. Subject to the limitations set out in sections 4 and 5 of this policy, Disclosers will be considered the primary decision-makers in matters pertaining to themselves. As such, they can determine whether, to whom and what to disclose, choose from a range of options, decide whether to make a Complaint within the university, and determine the extent of their participation in any university process. In addition, Disclosers may choose to make a Complaint to an external law enforcement agency, professional regulatory body, or engage in any civil legal process.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The university recognizes its institutional responsibility to:

i. provide an effective policy and procedures to address and prevent SGBV;

ii. raise awareness about the policy and procedures and relevant support services on campus through institution-wide communications, education, and/or training opportunities;

iii. raise awareness of consent, gender inclusivity, SGBV prevention, and appropriate responses to Disclosures of SGBV through institution-wide education;

iv. ensure equity, Procedural Fairness and Trauma-Informed practice for Parties to a Complaint, including timely resolution;

v. maintain safe, confidential and neutral mechanisms for individuals to disclose, make an SGBV Complaint, or alert the university to incidents of or conditions conducive to SGBV;

vi. ensure the safety of current and future students, staff and faculty by various preventative and responsive means, including the application of Interim Measures or other Corrective Action, where appropriate;

vii. provide coordinated and comprehensive supports for Disclosers to reduce barriers to participation in the Working and Learning Environment that occur as a result of SGBV;

viii. develop capacity and create space for voluntary accountability, restoration, and/or transformation for everyone involved wherever possible, both within and outside of Complaints processes; and

ix. require that all individuals involved in administering, advising on, investigating or adjudicating SGBV Complaints in any university Complaint process have appropriate training as outlined on the SGBV Education and Training web page.

b. All senior leaders, including the President, Vice-Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, Chairs, General Managers, and other officers of the university exercise administrative responsibility to implement this policy and the related procedures within their respective areas of responsibility, including by creating, supporting and maintaining a Working and Learning Environment free from SGBV that promotes a Culture of Consent and inclusivity.

c. All of those subject to this policy are responsible for creating a Culture of Consent, respect, dignity and inclusivity; and for contributing to an environment in which individuals feel safe and supported in disclosing experiences of SGBV or making the university aware of conditions conducive to SGBV.

d. In addition to being harmful to individuals, SGBV poisons the workplace and constitutes a workplace hazard, which is subject to Corrective Action by the university. In accordance

with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* of Alberta, employees and volunteers are expected to alert a supervisor when such workplace hazards become apparent.

4. PRIVACY AND PERSONAL INFORMATION

    a. Any use and Disclosure of personal information contemplated in this policy and the related procedures will be in accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* of Alberta, the *Protection of Privacy Act* of Alberta, and the *Access to Information Act* of Alberta.

    b. Privacy and the protection of personal information is essential for creating an environment where Disclosers feel safe in disclosing their experience and seeking support. The university will protect the privacy of those involved in a Disclosure or Complaint of SGBV to the extent possible. Possible limits to the university's ability to do so include when:

        i. there is a risk of harm to self or others;

        ii. necessary to administer Modifications, Interim Measures, other Corrective Actions, any Complaint process or other option.

    c. In such cases, the use or Disclosure of personal information will be limited to that which is reasonably necessary and only to those with a need to know. The extent to which the university can maintain privacy around a Disclosure will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The university will endeavour to inform all Parties of these limits on its ability to protect personal information.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

    a. University employees will only use or disclose personal information that they learn solely as a result of receiving a Disclosure or administering or participating in a university process related to SGBV in accordance with section 4 above. Contact the Information, Privacy, and Records Management Office for guidance about confidentiality and privacy.

    b. Parties and witnesses should not make public another person's personal information that they learn solely through any university process such as a Disclosure, Complaint, investigation, Interim Measures, Modifications, Corrective Actions or Non-Disciplinary Accountability Options and should refrain from:

        i. posting another person's personal information on social media or online;

        ii. distributing confidential university documents in whole or in part;

        iii. sharing another person's personal information with individuals outside of their immediate circle of support; and

        iv. prompting or eliciting others to disclose another person's personal information.

c. The university does not prohibit Parties and witnesses from speaking about their own experiences, including, but not limited to seeking support for healing or rehabilitation. However, when disclosing another person's personal information within their immediate circle of support, the Party or witness is also responsible for communicating the need to keep the information confidential.

d. In any event, inappropriate Disclosure of another person's personal information may affect the integrity of a university process, breach another person's privacy rights, and/or bring about other legal risks for the individual who breaches another person's privacy rights.

6. GUIDES FOR INTERPRETING AND APPLYING THIS POLICY

a. Additional information to guide the interpretation and application of this policy and the associated procedures is located on the Office of the Provost website.

b. The Vice-Provost (Access, Community and Belonging) ("Vice-Provost ACB") is responsible for generating information to guide the interpretation and application of this policy and its associated procedures and keeping that information current and up to date. Links to specific guidance on the university's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence website include:

i. Interim Measures Examples and Supports;

ii. Modifications Guidance and Support;

iii. Options, Resources and Services for those who have Been Subjected to SGBV;

iv. SGBV Education and Training;

v. SGBV Options Navigation Network Expectations and Training;

vi. SGBV in Work Integrated Learning.

7. REVIEW

a. This policy will be reviewed from time to time as necessary to ensure that it reflects best and promising practices and, at a minimum, it will be reviewed every five years.

Definitions

Any definitions listed here apply to this policy document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use. For clarity, defined terms listed here include grammatical variations thereof.	
Complaint	A type of Disclosure made to a university official that alleges SGBV misconduct for the express purpose of initiating a formal university disciplinary process, including an investigation and decision on disciplinary action.

Corrective Action	Measures undertaken by the university to address and prevent SGBV and ensure the safety of the workplace, including, but not limited to: education, training, improved procedures, physical alterations and/or restoration of respectful workplaces; Interim Measures, Modifications, university-initiated discipline for faculty, staff or students, and/or Non-Disciplinary Accountability Options.
Culture of Consent	A culture in which consent cannot ever be implied or assumed. Consent is a voluntary, ongoing, active and conscious agreement to engage in the sexual activity in question. Consent or a "yes" that is obtained through pressure, coercion, force, threats or by inducing intoxication, impairment or incapacity is not voluntary consent. Silence or ambiguity do not constitute consent. Additionally, there is no consent when: ● it is given by someone else. ● the person is unconscious, sleeping, highly intoxicated or high, or otherwise lacks the capacity to consent. ● it was obtained through the abuse of a position of power, trust or authority. ● the person does not indicate "yes", says "no" or implies "no" through words or behaviours. ● the person changes their mind and withdraws their consent. Consent cannot be implied (for example, by a current or past relationship, by consent to another activity, or by failure to say "no" or resist). In addition, consent cannot be given in advance of sexual activity that is expected to occur at a later time. It is the responsibility of the person wanting to engage in sexual activity to obtain clear consent from the other and to recognize that consent can be withdrawn at any time.
Discloser	Any person within the scope of this policy who discloses having been subjected to SGBV.
Disclosure	Any verbal or written report or account by any person within the scope of this policy to a member of the university community that they have been subjected to SGBV, often for the purpose of seeking support or assistance.
Institutional Accountability	Institutional Accountability options may include review of policy, procedure or practice to encourage Disclosures and/or discourage SGBV; examination of factors contributing to or permitting SGBV in a specific department, unit or area; and initiatives or projects with the aim of

	creating or fostering a safe and supportive Working and Learning environment.
Interim Measures	Non-disciplinary conditions or restrictions that the university may apply to a person within the scope of this policy alleged to have committed a violation under this policy. Such conditions may be applied in response to a Disclosure or Complaint. The purposes of Interim Measures are to ensure the Discloser's safety or the safety of the university's Working and Learning Environment, to remove barriers to the Discloser's access to the Working and Learning Environment, to discourage or prevent retaliation, prevent further harm and/or preserve the university's ability to conduct an investigation. Interim Measures are not based on a finding of a policy violation, are not considered sanctions under any university Complaint process, and will not be interpreted or used in a Complaint as evidence that the person under allegation committed misconduct.
Intersectional(ity) / Intersections	The acknowledgement that an individual can occupy multiple political and social locations, for example, along racial, gender, sexual, religious, ability, class and other lines, and that overlapping social locations can create a complex system of discrimination where individuals face compounded disadvantages.
Modifications	Adjustments the university may be able to make for any person within the scope of this policy who discloses having been subjected to SGBV. The Modifications may relate to their academic program, employment, university residence or recreational or other programs and are designed to mitigate the impact of SGBV on their access to or participation in the Working and Learning Environment.
Non-Disciplinary Accountability Options	Collaborative facilitated processes to explore interpersonal or institutional accountability options outside of a Complaint. Typically requested by the Discloser but voluntary for all Parties, interpersonal accountability options are intended to be flexible and creative, and may include, but are not limited to: restorative practices, transformative justice, culturally-specific and appropriate practices, peacemaking circles, educational and other remedial activities.
Party / Parties	A complainant or respondent under this policy and the related procedures.

Procedural Fairness	The elements of the process used by a decision-making body authorized by statute or policy to make a decision that affects an individual's rights, privileges, or interests, that give effect to an individual's right to reasonable notice of the case to meet, the opportunity to respond and the right to an impartial decision maker.
Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)	Any sexual act or act of a sexual nature, or act targeting sexuality, whether physical or psychological, in person or virtual, committed without consent, or other forms of abuse and control over another person, based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender. This includes, but is not limited to the following: a. Sexual Assault - Any form of sexual contact without consent. This can include unwanted or forced kissing, fondling, vaginal or anal penetration or touching, or oral sexual contact. b. Sexual Harassment - may be broadly defined as unwelcome conduct or comment of a sexual nature which detrimentally affects the Working and Learning Environment or otherwise leads to adverse consequences for the person who is the target of the harassment. It may consist of unwanted sexual attention, sexually oriented remarks or behaviours or the creation of a negative psychological and emotional environment based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. It may be an isolated act or repetitive conduct but cannot be trifling. Retaliation or threat of retaliation against an individual for rejecting a sexual solicitation or advance may also constitute sexual harassment. The person(s) engaged in harassment need not have the intention to harass; it is the objective assessment of the circumstances that matters. How would a reasonable observer perceive the situation? A complainant need not expressly object to unwelcome conduct or comments, although any clear indication that the behaviour is unwanted will satisfy the test. A complainant's apparent passivity or failure to object overtly to sexual advances does not necessarily signal consent or welcomed behaviour, especially where a power imbalance exists between the individuals. c. Stalking - Repeated unwanted contact or communication directed at another person that causes reasonable fear or concern for that person's safety or the safety of others known to them. The harm may be physical, emotional, or psychological, or related to the personal safety, property, education, or employment of an individual.

	Stalking can occur physically (such as watching and monitoring, pursuing or following, making threatening or obscene gestures, sending unsolicited gifts), electronically (for example, continuously commenting or contacting via social media, surveillance, letters, text messages, emails or phone calls), directly and/or indirectly through a third Party. d. Indecent Exposure - Exposing one's genitals, buttocks and/or breasts or inducing another to expose their own genitals, buttocks and/or breasts in non-consensual circumstances, in person or electronically. e. Voyeurism - Surreptitiously observing and/or recording another individual's full or partial nudity or sexual activity without the knowledge and consent of all Parties involved. f. Distribution of Intimate Images - Includes showing, sharing, distributing or streaming of images, video or audio recording, whether real or fake, of a sexual activity or full or partial nudity of oneself or others, without the consent of all the recipient(s) and the subject(s) of the image or recording, or the threat to do the same. g. Nonconsensual condom removal – The act of intentionally removing a condom during sex without the consent of the partner. h. Inducing intoxication, impairment or incapacity for the purpose of making another person vulnerable to non consensual sexual activity. i. Intimate partner violence (IPV), also known as dating violence or domestic violence - Abuse or aggression that occurs in a current or former romantic relationship. IPV can range from one episode of violence to chronic and repeated episodes over multiple years. IPV can include physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. j. Retaliation - Retaliating against another person in relation to a Disclosure or Complaint of SGBV. Retaliation includes taking, attempting to take or threatening to take any adverse action, reprisal or retribution of any kind against anyone involved in any process described in the *Sexual and Gender Based Violence Disclosures Procedure*, including the person who made a Disclosure or Complaint, and anyone involved in an investigation or resolution of an allegation of SGBV, or friends or family members of those individuals.

	k. Retaliation can take many forms, including threats, intimidation, pressuring, harassment, continued abuse, violence or other forms or threats of harm to others, and be carried out in varying modes, including in person, via electronic communication or through third Parties. Retaliation can also include adverse employment or educational actions taken or threatened against an individual because of participation in the reporting, investigating and/or resolution of an alleged violation of this policy, or any conduct that would discourage a person from participating. l. Other analogous conduct.
Trauma-Informed	An approach to processes, procedures, and service provision that incorporates and responds to the effects of trauma. A Trauma-Informed approach takes into account the potential effects of trauma on cognition, memory and behaviour and incorporates steps to address the needs created by trauma and to prevent retraumatization.
Vice-Provost (ACB)	Vice-Provost (Access, Community and Belonging),, or delegate.
Working and Learning Environment	The Working and Learning Environment is to be understood broadly to encompass all aspects of university life. It includes: a. physical and virtual spaces where university teaching, learning, work, research, residence, recreational and social activities take place; b. university activities, events and functions, including, but not limited to, teaching, research, studying, work, administration, meetings, public service, travel, conferences, and training; public lectures, performances, student group events, and social or sports activities.

Parent Policy Suite

- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy
- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Disclosures Procedure

Related Policy Documents

- Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Policy
- Accommodation Policy
- Conflict of Interest and Commitment and Institutional Conflict Policy
- Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Ethical Conduct and Safe Disclosure Policy

- Hazard Identification, Assessment and Control Procedure Appendix B Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Plan
- Helping Individuals At Risk Policy
- Protocol for Urgent Cases of Violent, Threatening or Disruptive Behaviour (GFC Policy Manual)
- Residence Community Standards Policy

Related Links

Supports and Resources

- Association of Academic Staff, University of Alberta (AASUA)
- Counselling and Clinical Services
- Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP)
- First Peoples' House
- Homewood Pathfinder
- Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (GPS)
- Graduate Students' Association
- Graduate Student Assistance Program (GSAP)
- Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Management System
- Human Resources, Health, Safety and the Environment
- Interfaith Chaplains' Association
- International Student Services
- The Landing (Students' Union)
- Non Academic Staff Association (NASA)
- Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights
- Office of the Student Ombuds
- Peer Support Centre
- Postdoctoral Scholars Benefits Overview
- Postdoctoral Fellows Association
- Residence Services
- Sexual Assault Centre
- Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton
- Student Success and Experience (SSE)
- Students' Union
- University of Alberta Protective Services
- Wellness Supports

Information

- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Information and Resources
- Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response
    - Interim Measures Examples and Supports
    - Modifications Guidance and Support
    - Options, Resources and Services for Those Who Have Been Subjected to SGBV
    - SGBV Education and Training
    - SGBV in Work Integrated Learning
    - SGBV Options Navigation Network (ONN) Expectations and Training
- Options for Survivors of Sexual Assault
- Responding to a Disclosure of Sexual Assault

Complaint mechanisms

- AASUA Common Agreement
- NASA Collective Agreement
- Postdoctoral Fellows Association Collective Agreement
- Postdoctoral Fellows Discipline Procedure
- Student Conduct Policy
- Incident Management (non-confidential)

History

- June 23, 2017 — Approved.
- November 22, 2022 — Approved.
- May 1, 2023 — Editorial amendment.
- June 20, 2025 — Editorial amendment. Formatting, office name and links.
- August 1, 2025 — Editorial amendment. Formatting, office name and links.
- March 9, 2026 — Editorial amendment. Formatting, links, and definition alignment with *Discrimination and Harassment Policy*, updated legislative references.

For questions surrounding policy document interpretation or implementation, please contact the Office of Administrative Responsibility.

The official version of this document may be obtained from https://www.ualberta.ca/policies-procedures/index.html