



WELLBEING AND SAFETY POLICY

Policy Document Owner	Dean and CEO
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Policy Document Approver	Board of Directors
Responsible Body/Person	Board of Directors
Approval date	13 November 2023
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Superseded documents	None (but note pre-existing Related Documents)
Related documents	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support Policy <i>Charter on Disability and Accessible Education</i> Code of Conduct Policy Critical Incident Policy Orientation Program Rules Grievance Resolution Policy - Students Risk Management Policy Risk Management Procedure Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Procedure Staff Grievance Resolution Policy Whistleblower Policy Workplace, Health and Safety Policy
Related HE Standards	2.3 (esp. 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4, 2.3.5), 2.2.1, 2.4, 5.3.5, 6.1 (esp. 6.1.4), 6.2 (esp. 6.2.1), 7.2 and 7.3.3
Student Lifecycle Stage/s	Admission, Enrolled, Graduated

If you or someone else requires help in an emergency, contact 000.

If you or someone else needs immediate support these national services are available:

- **Lifeline** (Ph: 13 11 14) – 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention
- **Beyondblue** (Ph: 1300 224 636) – Mental health support
- **Suicide Call Back Service** (Ph: 1300 659 467) – 24-hour crisis support and counselling for people affected by suicide
- **13Yarn** (Ph: 13 92 76) – 24-hour crisis support run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- **National Alcohol & Other Drug Hotline** (Ph: 1800 250 015)
- **National Debt Helpline** (Ph: 1800 007 007) – free and confidential financial counselling
- **Headspace** (Ph: 1800 650 890) – online support and counselling for people aged 12-25
- **1800RESPECT** (Ph: 1800 737 732) – 24-hour support for sexual assault and domestic violence
- **Kids Helpline** (Ph: 1800 55 1800) – 24-hour crisis support for people aged 5-25
- **Mensline** (Ph: 1300 78 99 78) – 24-hour counselling service for men

You can also find information about how to access support on the ACT website here:

<https://www.actheology.edu.au/student-support-services/>



1. PURPOSE

The Policy and its related policies, procedures and systems address a broad range of issues affecting the wellbeing, welfare and safety of students, staff, officers and volunteers of the Australian College of Theology (ACT) and its Affiliated Colleges. The ACT and its Affiliated Colleges promote and foster safe and supportive learning environments through timely access to student support services and addressing issues of wellbeing and safety collaboratively, proactively and responsibly.

2. DEFINITIONS

An **Aboriginal** person is a person of Aboriginal descent who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted by their community.

ACT is the Australian College of Theology Limited.

ACT Office is the office of the **ACT**.

ACT website is the website for the **ACT**: www.acttheology.edu.au.

Affiliated College is an institution approved to offer an accredited higher education award of the **ACT**.

Board is the Board of Directors of the **ACT**.

Bullying is the ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can be individual or group, in person or online and can have immediate, medium and long-term negative effects.

Course Learning Outcomes are **learning outcomes** for **courses of study**.

Course of study is a course of **units** that lead to an award given by the **ACT**.

Critical Incident is a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia), which causes extreme stress, fear or injury.

Dean is the Dean and Chief Executive Officer of the **ACT**.

Disciplinary action takes into account all relevant circumstances including the nature of the incident and is proportionate and fitting to the severity of the impact on those affected. Possible disciplinary action ranges from compulsory participation in an awareness program to expulsion (in the case of a student), termination of employment or engagement (in the case of staff) or removal from a position (in the case of an officer or volunteer).



Discrimination happens when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or group because of their background or certain personal characteristics.

First Nations is a collective term that acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

Learning outcomes are statements of what a student should have achieved by completing a **unit** or **course of study**.

Mental health is, according to the World Health Organisation, "... a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to her or his community."

Officer is a person who is a member of one of the governing boards or committees of the **ACT** or an **Affiliated College**.

Online safety is staying safe in an online environment. This includes ensuring risks to online harms are minimised and promotes positive and safe online experiences. Online harms can include adult cyber abuse, cyberstalking, trolling, fake accounts etc.

Precautionary actions are actions taken to promote the wellbeing and safety of students and staff and to minimise the risk of harm to them, and to preserve the capacity of the ACT and Affiliated Colleges to deal effectively with risks posed to wellbeing and safety.

Principal is the Principal or equivalent position at an **Affiliated College**.

ACT Registrar is the staff member of the **ACT** who manages academic administration.

Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.

Staff is any person employed or engaged as a contractor by the **ACT** or an **Affiliated College**.

Student is a current student of the **ACT**.

Student Support Officer is a designated staff member or officer of the **ACT** or an **Affiliated College** with responsibility for providing information and support in relation to wellbeing and safety.

TEQSA is the *Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency*.



a **Torres Strait Islander** person is a person of Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as a Torres Strait Islander and/or Aboriginal and is accepted by their community.

Unit Learning Outcomes are **learning outcomes** for **units**.

Unit is short for **unit of study**.

Unit of study is a block of study in a particular field.

Volunteer is any person who voluntarily serves the **ACT** or an **Affiliated College**, other than as an officer.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This Policy applies to all students, staff, officers and volunteers, with a particular focus on student wellbeing.
- 3.2. Students, staff, officers and volunteers are required to maintain standards of behaviour set by the ACT and Affiliated Colleges as a condition of enrolment, employment or engagement.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

- 4.1. The ACT affirms that all people are created in the image of God with sanctity and dignity (Gen 1:26-28) and therefore respect is due to every person (1 Peter 2:17).
- 4.2. The ACT seeks to provide for its students, staff, officers and volunteers a fair and safe academic environment free from bullying, discrimination and harassment, with resources and services which support wellbeing and advance academic flourishing.
- 4.3. The ACT considers all forms of bullying and harassment unacceptable and will not tolerate them under any circumstances.
- 4.4. The ACT promotes and fosters safe learning environments for students at Affiliated Colleges by using reasonable endeavours, working in conjunction with Affiliated Colleges, including:
 - raising awareness about the educational, social, health, cultural, and other issues affecting wellbeing and safety, including but not limited to the issues described at 5.1 to 5.10 of this Policy;
 - encouraging students to take appropriate responsibility for their own wellbeing, developing resilience and seeking wellbeing support through the



resources, referrals and services offered by the ACT and Affiliated Colleges;

- encouraging students to seek out safe and appropriate ways to encourage and support others in their learning community to develop resilience and seek support;
- providing access to appropriate, effective and timely information and services for wellbeing support for students affected by a critical incident and/or the identified issues described at 5.1 to 5.10 of this policy;
- encouraging Affiliated Colleges that provided residential facilities to foster a safe context for students and staff at these facilities;
- taking appropriate action in relation to student wellbeing and safety through systems and processes designed to foster a safe learning environment, mitigate risk, respond to incidents and prevent recurrences; and
- continually improving the ACT and Affiliated Colleges' approach to wellbeing and safety through good practice, consultation, feedback, current relevant research and internal and external review.

4.5. Specific support for individual students is determined by the nature of the incident, issue or support required.

5. PRINCIPLES

5.1. **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Increasing rates of mental health issues among students, often caused by stress, pressure and isolation, are a prime concern. The ACT and Affiliated Colleges provide access to education, resources, workshops and support systems to promote mental health and wellbeing. Resources include:

- [Centre for Theology and Psychology – Melbourne School of Theology](#)
- [Graduate Certificate of Pastoral Care for Mental Health](#)
- [Living Wholeness Institute – Brisbane School of Theology](#)
- [The Mental Health and Pastoral Care Institute – Mary Andrews College](#)
- [Universities Australia and Headspace Real Talk Framework](#)

5.2. **Physical Safety** includes ensuring a safe campus environment, and addressing issues such as harassment, bullying and physical violence.

5.2.1 The ACT's Workplace, Health and Safety Policy establishes the



provision of physically safe learning environments.

- 5.2.2 The ACT's [Critical Incident Policy](#) sets out the roles, responsibilities and courses of action in responding to a critical incident.
- 5.2.3 Bullying is linked to poor academic performance and poor mental health. The ACT and Affiliated Colleges provide access to information to raise awareness about and prevent bullying, hazing, discrimination and harassment, and access to support systems. Resources include:
- [Preventing and responding to Bullying Toolkit – Western Sydney University](#)
 - [Reachout's bullying information and support](#)
 - [Comcare's Workplace Bullying resources](#)
 - [Safe Work Australia's Guide for Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying](#)
- 5.3. **Online Safety:** The ACT and Affiliated Colleges will: (i) provide information about and support systems for issues of online safety and wellbeing; (ii) build awareness of online safety risks; and (iii) prevent, prepare for and respond to online safety incidents; through resources such as:
- [Universities Australia and eSafety's Toolkit for Universities](#)
 - [Charles Sturt University's Five Steps to Protect Your Personal Information](#)
 - [eSafety Guide](#)
 - [Reachout's cyberbullying resources and support](#)
- 5.4. **Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SASH):** The ACT and Affiliated Colleges have a stand-alone [Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Policy](#) and [Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Procedure](#), undergirding the provision of support to those affected by SASH and fostering a culture of respect and SASH prevention.
- 5.5. **Academic Stress:** High-pressure academic environments can lead to burnout and mental health issues. The ACT and Affiliated Colleges recognise that effective time management is associated with greater academic performance and lower levels of anxiety in students. The ACT promotes and encourages balanced study habits, time management skills and stress management through orientation programs, academic and study skills units, and resources such as:



- [Australian National University's free online study skills program](#)
- [Murdoch University's Ten tips to balance study, work and family life](#)
- [Deakin University's Stress, anxiety and time management resources](#)
- [The University of Melbourne's Ten tips to manage time and tasks](#)

5.5.1 The ACT recognises that critical incidents, such as SASH, will impact upon academic stress and achievement. Academic support, reasonable adjustments and/or other interventions may be required to best support a student's overall wellbeing.

5.6. **Financial Challenges:** Many students, including international students, face financial issues which can lead to stress and impact their academic performance. Providing resources for financial advice, information about scholarships, and support for students who are financially struggling are some of the services the ACT and Affiliated Colleges offer, including:

- [Moneysmart](#) is a government-run organisation providing information about financial literacy and services including financial counselling and crisis support.
- [Moneyminded](#) has online resources to create a budget, reduce debt and/or improve savings.
- [Anglicare](#) provides emergency food assistance, Community Pantries, no-interest loan schemes, bill assistance, help with rent and bond, financial counselling, as well as other help with housing, mental health, families and relationships.
- [The Salvation Army's Moneycare](#) service has free resources for financial wellbeing including a three-week course, videos and top tips, as well as urgent financial assistance.

5.7. **Addiction and Substance Abuse:** Drug and alcohol misuse, as well as issues of various kinds of addiction, can be significant problems in student populations. The ACT and Affiliated Colleges provide access to resources for substance abuse prevention, education and recovery, including:

- [Alcohol and Drug Counselling Online's support service](#)
- [Reachout's addiction resources and support](#)
- [National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre's research and resources](#)



- [Alcohol and Drug Foundation's \(ADF\) Drug Information Directory](#)

5.7.1 Research indicates alcohol is a contributing factor to students' experiences of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

5.8. **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:** The ACT has a specific policy framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students described at 5.9, and a reference group for students with disabilities described at 5.10.

5.9. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students:** The ACT's [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support Policy](#) describes how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are supported in culturally appropriate ways, in a fair and inclusive academic environment free from racism and discrimination, and with resources and services which promote academic flourishing.

5.9.1 The ACT recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are disproportionately affected by many of the issues impacting wellbeing described in this policy. As such, the ACT and Affiliated Colleges provide access to culturally relevant services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, such as:

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** [The Black Dog Institute](#) has social and emotional wellbeing sources as well as a [directory](#) of other mental health services for First Nations peoples.
- **Physical Safety:** [NACCHO](#)'s map locates 140 Aboriginal-controlled health organisations nationwide.
- **Online Safety:** [eSafetyFirstNations](#) is a resources package created in consultation with First Nations peoples to help them stay safe online.
- **SASH, Sexual Violence, Domestic and Family Violence:** [Wirringa Baiya](#) is the Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre and provides fact sheets on bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic and family violence.
- **Academic Stress:** The [Ooralá Aboriginal Centre](#) at University of New England has study skills videos and other academic skills resources.
- **Financial Wellbeing:** [First Nations Foundation](#) provides free financial literacy training and further resources.
- **Substance Abuse:** The Alcohol and Drug Foundation has collaboratively created [Indigenous Resources](#). [Positive Choices](#) provides access to national and state-based aboriginal-controlled alcohol and drug services.



5.10. Students with Disability: The ACT's *Disability and Accessible Education Charter* sets expectations for a fair, inclusive and safe learning environment free from discrimination for students with disability.

- 5.10.1 The ACT and Affiliated Colleges consider Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles where appropriate.
- 5.10.2 Students with disability receive individualised support through Learning Access Plans (LAPs), reasonable adjustments and other supports as needed.
- 5.10.3 Reasonable adjustments are informed by examples from the [Australian Disability Clearing House for Education and Training \(ADCET\)](#).

Governance

- 5.11. The Dean has established a Student Wellbeing Working Group with responsibility for the implementation of this policy and strategies to promote wellbeing, mental health and safe learning environments within the ACT and Affiliated Colleges. The working group monitors the outcomes of strategies and recommends improvements.
- 5.12. The Dean is to appoint as members of the working group one or more representatives from (i) the ACT Office, (ii) staff of Affiliated Colleges and (iii) ACT students. The responsibilities of the working group are established in the *Student Wellbeing Working Group Terms of Reference*. The working group reports to the Board through the Dean.
- 5.13. The Dean will review de-identified summary data for identified equity cohorts and oversee the implementation of responses to any concerns identified in reviewing the data.
- 5.14. Risks to wellbeing and safety, such as WHS, SASH and critical incidents, are regularly assessed and treated appropriately under the risk management framework established by the ACT, which is described in the *Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Procedure*.
- 5.15. When courses and units are reviewed there is to be consideration of the integration of material relevant to wellbeing. The Course Learning Outcomes and Unit Learning Outcomes will guide where such integration is appropriate.

Support services

- 5.16. The ACT will ensure information about appropriate support services is available to students, staff, officers and volunteers on its website. The ACT website will



provide referral to appropriate support services to students, staff, officers and volunteers as recommended at 5.1 to 5.10.

- 5.17. The range of support services will, where reasonably possible, include counsellors, be available to students, staff, officers and volunteers from all study locations, include 24-hour support services and be culturally and linguistically appropriate for student cohorts.

Provision of a safe environment

- 5.18. Upon enrolment, employment or engagement, students, staff, officers and volunteers will be given access to this Policy including its links to support resources. For students, staff (other than contractors), officers and volunteers, this normally occurs during induction or orientation.
- 5.19. Resources will be informed by reliable and up-to-date research and scholarship and will be reviewed regularly by the *Student Wellbeing Working Group*. Reviews shall also consider student and staff feedback.
- 5.20. Those to whom this Policy applies are also expected to maintain the confidentiality of information held by them about a disclosed or reported incident and protect the privacy of persons involved in that incident. It is appropriate for persons involved in incidents to speak in confidence with a trusted friend or family member, pastor or counsellor for the sake of personal support and maintaining wellbeing.
- 5.21. The ACT will take precautionary action where necessary for the provision of a safe environment. Precautionary action is not a form of disciplinary action and will be determined based on the interests and wellbeing of the persons directly involved and others potentially impacted by the circumstances.
- 5.22. The ACT will take disciplinary action against any student, staff, officer or volunteer who bullies or harasses or threatens harm to another person. Procedures for investigating allegations of bullying or harassment will involve procedural fairness and follow equivalent processes to those described for formal reports and investigations in the SASH Policy and Procedure.

Quality management

- 5.23. The ACT will monitor the compliance of Affiliated Colleges with this Policy and its related systems. ACT may request from Affiliated Colleges evidence of compliance with their obligations under this Policy and related legislation.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND LEGISLATION

[Age Discrimination Act 2004](#)



[Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)

[Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#)

[National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018](#)

[Privacy Act 1988](#)

[Racial Discrimination Act 1975](#)

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, "[Final Report: Executive Summary, Our vision for an inclusive Australia and Recommendations](#)," 2023.

[Sex Discrimination Act 1984](#)

TEQSA Guidance Note: Grievance and Complaint Handling, <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/hesf-2015-specific-guidance-notes>

TEQSA Guidance Note: Wellbeing and Safety, <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/latest-news/publications/guidance-note-wellbeing-and-safety>

TEQSA Material Change Notification Policy, <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Material-Change-Notification-Policy-3-5.pdf>

Universities Australia, "Safety and Wellbeing," <https://universitiesaustralia.edu.au/policy-submissions/safety-wellbeing/>

World Health Organization (WHO), *World Health Organisation – Mental Health: strengthening our response 2018*, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-ourresponse>

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

1. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	Board of Directors	13 November 2023	13 November 2023	New policy, incorporating existing policies and procedures.

Any hard copy of this electronic document may not be current as the ACT regularly reviews its policies. The latest version can be found online at www.actheology.edu.au/documents