

# Federation TAFE Bullying Prevention Guidelines

**Policy Code: CG2048**

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## Purpose

Federation TAFE is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Federation TAFE community
- make clear that no form of bullying (including cyber bullying) or harassment will be tolerated at Federation TAFE
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Federation TAFE to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in the Federation TAFE community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Federation TAFE.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Federation TAFE aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Federation TAFE acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

## Scope

These Guidelines apply to all students and prospective students in VET and VCAL, staff and prospective staff, and other individuals associated with the University and apply to all Federation TAFE activities, including fieldwork and excursions.

## Legislative Context

- Australian Quality and Training Framework Standards
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- Standards for Registered Training Organisations 2015
- Victorian [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012](#)
- Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority Guidelines [to Minimum Standards 2016](#)

## Definitions

A list of definitions **specifically** relevant to these Guidelines is included below:

TERM	DEFINITION
Bullying	<p>In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all Australian schools:</p> <p><i>Bullying</i> is an 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 involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.</p> <p><i>Bullying</i> can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example through sharing of digital records)</p> <p><i>Bullying</i> of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.</p> <p><i>Bullying</i> has three main features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It involves a misuse of power in a relationship</li> <li>• It is ongoing and repeated, and</li> <li>• It involves behaviours that can cause harm.</li> </ul> <p><i>Bullying</i> can be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>direct</i> physical bullying - e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.</li> <li>2. <i>direct</i> verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.</li> <li>3. <i>indirect</i> bullying – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person’s social reputation or social acceptance.</li> </ol> <p><i>Cyberbullying</i> is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, and/or audio.</p>

## Actions

### Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours

Federation TAFE recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with other Federation University policies (refer to *Further information and resources* below).

*Mutual conflict* involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

*Social rejection or dislike* is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

*Single-episode acts* of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at Federation TAFE and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour.

*Harassment* is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Federation TAFE and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour.

Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to Federation TAFE staff as soon as possible.

### Bully Prevention

Federation TAFE has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive culture. We strive to foster a culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Federation TAFE is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying. At Federation TAFE all staff and students have the right to:

- a safe learning and working environment that discourages bullying and promotes positive behaviour;
- receive support from classmates, educators and co-workers if they are being bullied;
- express their objections to being mistreated; and
- make a complaint about bullying without fear of reprisal and to expect that the complaint will be taken seriously and acted on.

### Incident Response

#### Reporting concerns to Federation TAFE

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at Federation TAFE.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to Federation TAFE staff as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Federation TAFE are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Federation TAFE should contact the Education Manager or Program Coordinator responsible for the student's program.

## Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, Federation TAFE staff are required to:

1. record the details of the allegations in the incident register and the student's file; and
2. inform the Education Manager or Program Coordinator responsible for the program who will inform the Director, Operations, Federation TAFE.

The Education Manager/Program Coordinator is responsible for reporting the alleged bullying behaviour to the Executive Director, VET who will be responsible for investigating the allegations in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Executive Director, VET may:

- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parents of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

Where appropriate, the Executive Director, VET may nominate another person to assist in conducting the investigation.

All communications in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to the Federation University Legal Office or Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

## Responses to bullying behaviours

When the Executive Director, VET has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, the Executive Director, VET will consider:

- the age and maturity of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target student
- whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the students engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Executive Director, VET may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student(s), the student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour or other affected student(s), including witnesses and/or friends

- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a process using the Support Group Method, involving the target student(s), the student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan and / or Behavioural Plan restricting contact between the target student(s) and student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide education, discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement disciplinary processes for the student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour.

Federation TAFE understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Where appropriate, Federation TAFE staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

The Executive Director, VET is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Students who are not with satisfied Federation TAFE's response to an allegation of bullying behaviour may lodge a complaint via the Federation University [student complaint portal](#).

## Supporting Documents

### Further information and resources:

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following Federation University policies:

- [Child Safe Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Student Complaints Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Equal Opportunity and Valuing Diversity Policy](#)
- [Discriminatory and Sexual Discriminatory and Sexual Discriminatory and Sexual Harassment Complaint Procedure](#)
- [Regulation 6.1 – Student Discipline](#)

Additional support is available for students from the following Federation University services:

- [Student Advisory Service](#)
- [Equity and Diversity](#)
- [Counselling](#)
- [Health Services](#)

The following websites and resources also provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)

- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

## Responsibility

- The Vice Chancellor's Senior Team reports and provides assurance to the University Council that student complaints are being monitored and appropriate steps are being taken to address underlying causes.
- The Pro Vice-Chancellor (TAFE) (as Approval Authority), is responsible for approving and overseeing the implementation of these guidelines.
- The Director Corporate Governance (as Policy Sponsor), through the University Grievance Officer and Student Integrity Office, is responsible for reviewing and implementing the [Student Complaints Policy](#).
- The University Grievance Officer and the Student Integrity Office is responsible for the effective processing and reporting of student complaints.

## Promulgation

These guidelines will be communicated throughout the University community via:

1. Induction of all staff and students
2. Distribution of e-mails to Head of School / Head of Department / University staff.
3. Policy Central which has access and visibility to staff, students, guardians, parents and the University community.

## Implementation

This guidelines will be implemented within Federation TAFE via:

1. Program information and induction sessions for students.
2. Federation TAFE staff induction and training sessions.
3. Policy Central which has access and visibility to staff, students, guardians, parents and the Federation University community.

## Review

These guidelines were adopted in September 2020 and will be reviewed every two years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or data relating to bullying, to ensure that the guidelines remain up to date, practical and effective.

## Records Management

Complaint records are held in the central complaints management system, the integrity of which is to be maintained by the Student Grievance Officers, Student Integrity Office and University Grievance Officer in accordance with the Public Record's Office requirements.