



University of the Highlands and Islands

Student Gender Based Violence Policy

POL

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Responsible Office/ Department:	HTC Management Group
Responsible Committee:	Click or tap here to enter text.
Review Officer (Post):	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date policy approved:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Date policy last reviewed and updated:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Date policy due for review:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Date of Equality Impact Assessment:	Click or tap to enter a date.
Date of Privacy Impact Assessment:	Click or tap to enter a date.

Accessible versions of this policy are available. Please contact the University Governance team.

Policy Summary

Overview	The policy highlights Highland Theological College UHI's approach to Gender Based Violence (GBV) as it impacts students, including the expectations and responsibilities of staff across the partnership. This is set within the context of the broader framework of policies and related procedures.
Purpose	The policy seeks to highlight and promote a culture across the partnership where GBV is not accepted or facilitated by staff or students. Where a student is subject to GBV (past, present, or potential) the policy seeks to ensure they are supported appropriately and that HTC UHI meets its duty of care.
Scope	This policy aims to serve current students of UHI and partners. The roles and responsibilities discussed relate to UHI Staff - this includes temporary staff, agency staff, consultants, Board of Management and University Court members, volunteers, and collaborators at UHI and partners.
Consultation	The policy has been developed by a short life GBV Working Group representing multiple partners and HISA. Drafts were available for consultation by representatives from all partners. The policy received endorsement from Partnership Council prior to approval being sought from Finance and General Purpose Committee.
Implementation and Monitoring	Partners are responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures are followed in their own organisation.
Risk Implications	This policy has the potential to reduce risk for partners, staff and students. Risks of GBV include loss of life.
Link with Strategy	This policy supports HTC UHI commitment to provide a safe and supportive learning and working environment for all, aligned with the Strategic Theme of 'Our Students'. Furthermore, this policy seeks to build trust in HTC UHI, complimenting the Strategic Value of 'Openness'.
Impact Assessment	Equality Impact Assessment and Appendix

	Privacy Impact Assessment: N/A
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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. HTC UHI recognises the severity of risk and harm that Gender Based Violence (GBV) presents, and has a duty of care to protect, and proactively respond to, students who; have past experiences of GBV; are currently experiencing GBV; and/or are at risk of potential GBV. HTC UHI affirms its stance that GBV is unacceptable, and victim/survivors are not to blame, by sharing foundational principles and values (3.1) and raising awareness of GBV to ultimately prevent or reduce harm (3.3).
- 1.2. HTC UHI's approach aligns with the themes set out in the Scottish Government's Equally Safe Strategy¹ and the Equally Safe in Higher Education (ESHE) Toolkit², most notably:
 - An ecological framework (2.2)
 - A gendered analysis (2.4)
 - An understanding of intersectionality (2.5)
- 1.3. HTC UHI recognises that its responsibilities in relation to Gender Based Violence are closely linked with its duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment, and advance gender equality, in line with the Equality Act 2010. For that reason, this policy is not limited only to responding to victim/survivors (2.11) and should be viewed in the context of all GBV workstreams.
- 1.4. Whilst HTC UHI recognises the severity of risk and harm that GBV also may present to its staff, approaches and response to this are not covered in this policy. Please see HR for appropriate policies and guidance.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. **Disclosing** – When a person or persons claims to have experienced or witnessed GBV whether historical, current, or suspected, and tells a member of UHI staff, or a third party (2.10), about this via online tools, in-person, email, appointment, phonecall, or other means. Different from 'Reporting' (2.8).
- 2.2. **Ecological Framework** – A model of acknowledging a range of risk factors that perpetuate and facilitate GBV – from the individual to the cultural and political. Using this framework shows an understanding that GBV is not just caused by personal qualities, but by, for example, social and cultural norms and the wider global context. This highlights that preventative activities can span across the framework and tackles risk factors at various levels.
- 2.3. **Gender Based Violence (GBV)** – Is an umbrella term for violence directed against someone on the basis of their gender or in the context of gendered power hierarchies – see 2.4. This includes, but is not limited to and is not always indicated by; physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring within the family and/or intimate partner relationships (including domestic abuse and coercive control); harassment relating to gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity; stalking; non-consensual intimate image sharing; drink spiking; rape and sexual assault; commercial sexual exploitation; sex trafficking; child sexual abuse including child sexual exploitation; and so called 'honour based' violence including female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.
- 2.4. **Gendered Analysis** – The gendered analysis recognises that gender inequality is both a cause and consequence of GBV. Rather than excluding men from support, it acknowledges that

¹ Scottish Government (2018). [Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.](#)

gender inequality, 'traditional roles', and stereotypes can negatively impact people of all genders – though those identifying as women disproportionately experience abuse related to this. GBV can also involve people punishing others when they don't behave in ways that are societally 'expected' of their sex or gender, including the potential expectation of heterosexuality or binary gender expression. UHI is committed to supporting any student who is a victim/survivor of GBV, regardless of their gender, sex, or sexual orientation.

- 2.5. **Intersectionality** - "The concept of intersectionality identifies additional factors which interact with gender along other axis of power and discrimination to exacerbate the risk of experiencing GBV: including race, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, poverty and areas of cultural diversity including religion, belief or ethnicity"². For example, ethnically diverse students can face additional barriers in accessing support and safety following GBV due to racism and unconscious bias, language barriers, and/or immigration status³.
- 2.6. **Alleged Party** - Refers to the person/people, named or otherwise, whom a victim/survivor, or third party, claims has instigated, carried out, or in some instances facilitated, an act of GBV. This may be a fellow HTC Student, HTC Staff, or external person/s.
- 2.7. **Precautionary Action**: See Section 5 of the UHI Student Disciplinary Procedures. Can be used where a student presents a risk of harm to themselves, other students, or staff, and consists of measures taken in the period between a report of GBV and; completion of UHI Disciplinary Procedures; completion of criminal justice proceedings; or completion of police investigation if confirmation that insufficient evidence means the case will not progress to the Procurator Fiscal.
Precautionary action is not a punishment but is intended to protect the interests of all parties. To maintain the safety of the victim/survivor, and the validity of any investigation, HTC UHI must take steps to limit potential contact between alleged party and victim/survivor, including online, on campus, and in halls of residence. During this time the alleged party will be able to continue to study remotely if possible, will continue to receive student support funds already in place, and continue to access support services they are in receipt of such as HTC UHI counselling, or HISA support. Additionally, student alleged parties should be allocated a HTC UHI staff contact (who is not already allocated to the victim/survivor) for support, appropriate case updates, and signposting – additional resource to ensure these measures may be sought from the partnership.

Precautionary action measures must be reviewed by the dates agreed and increased/decreased based on best available evidence and current context. Either party/parties involved may request a meeting to discuss early review of measures if evidence/context changes.
- 2.8. **Reporting** – When a person or persons choose to use formal channels for the purposes of an investigation process by either HTC UHI or police, usually to pursue action against the alleged party.
- 2.9. **Third Party** – Refers to a disclosure and/or formal report received by HTC UHI and made by someone other than the Victim/Survivor or HTC UHI Staff member/contractor e.g. fellow HTC UHI Student

² Donaldson A., McCarry M. and McGoldrick R. (2018) [Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit: Guidance and Checklist for Implementing a Strategic Approach to Gender-based Violence Prevention in Scottish Higher Education Institutions.](#)

³ Read more in the Equality Impact Assessment and Appendix

- 2.10. **UHI and partners** - UHI is an integrated university, made up of a distinctive partnership of independent colleges and research institutions. The partners are: UHI Argyll; UHI Inverness, UHI Moray; UHI Shetland; UHI North, West, and Hebrides; Highland Theological College UHI; UHI Orkney; UHI Perth; Sabhal Mòr Ostaig; and Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS).
- 2.11. **Victim/Survivor** – Refers to the student/s, named or otherwise, who claims or it is claimed has been subject to GBV past or present, regardless of if a report has been made or investigation carried out. Note that not all Victim/Survivors will disclose or report to HTC UHI and may remain unknown. This term is used for the purposes of this policy, being mindful that students may self-identify with one or neither term.

3 Purpose

3.1 GBV Foundation

- 3.1.1 This policy communicates our unified GBV approach – our foundational principles and values that should guide all related GBV work and initiatives. These include the acknowledgement of the ecological framework (2.2), a gendered analysis (2.4), and of GBV as a spectrum of violence. Our foundation is guided by best practice, guidance, and evidence – including the Equally Safe Strategy⁴.
- 3.1.2 GBV is not uncommon. 65,251 incidences of domestic abuse⁵, and 13,364 sexual crimes⁶, are recorded annually by Police Scotland (at time of writing). Statistics in England & Wales suggest that full-time students may be more likely to experience sexual assault and domestic abuse than people in any other occupation⁷. 1 in 7 female students in the UK experience serious physical or sexual assault, and 68% experienced sexual harassment, during their studies⁸. This policy seeks to ensure that HTC UHI is familiar with the prevalence and scale of GBV, and that our approaches and responses reflect this.
- 3.1.3 We also commit to demonstrating HTC UHI's core value of Openness in our GBV approach. There continues to be national and international media attention to campaigns such as the '#MeToo Movement'⁹, as well as continued coverage of sexual violence and harassment against female students and staff at universities¹⁰. Such coverage places reasonable expectations on HTC UHI and partners to be open and transparent, including by adopting an "It Happens Here" stance and communicating anonymous statistics where appropriate; and by reflecting on, and sharing, learning from incidents.

3.2 GBV Staff Training

- 3.2.1 This policy seeks to improve the knowledge and confidence of staff. Our staff training responsibilities (7.5) compliment, and are integral to, our entire GBV approach. We

⁴ Scottish Government (2018). [Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls](#).

⁵ Scottish Government (2021). Domestic abuse: statistics recorded by the Police in Scotland 2020/21. [Available here](#).

⁶ Scottish Government (2020). Recorded crime in Scotland 2019-20. [Available here](#).

⁷ ONS (2022). [Sexual Offences Victim Characteristics in England and Wales/Domestic Abuse Victim Characteristics in England and Wales](#).

⁸ NUS (2011). Hidden Marks. [Available here](#).

⁹ See The Guardian (2022) [#MeToo Movement](#)

¹⁰ See The Guardian (2020). [Universities fail sexual violence survivors. Will new rules change the culture?](#)

acknowledge the variety of roles, remits, and expertise of our staff across the partnership, and as such aim to offer or signpost to a mix of training and learning opportunities. It is key that all staff are aware of; what GBV is, HTC UHI's GBV approach (3.1), and how & when to signpost or refer students.

3.3 GBV Prevention & Awareness Raising

- 3.3.1 This policy highlights our Prevention and Awareness Raising responsibilities (7.6). We aim to raise awareness of GBV amongst staff, students, and our community, to ultimately prevent behaviours that allow and perpetuate GBV. Our approach to this is guided by the ecological framework (2.2) and relies on partnership working and promotion of appropriate and impactful external campaigns. Whilst we may share, or signpost to, prevention materials, safety 'advice', or safe bystander intervention methods, we acknowledge that responsibility for GBV ultimately lies with those who perpetrate it and not with victims/survivors or bystanders.

3.4 GBV Disclosures & Response

- 3.4.1 This policy responds to the research that suggests GBV cases are likely grossly underreported¹¹ by aiming to increase the awareness, availability and accessibility of GBV disclosure routes.
- 3.4.2 For guidance on the initial response to a disclosure, risk assessment, and ongoing case management, initially refer to the HTC UHI Staff Guidance for Responding to Student Disclosures of GBV.
- 3.4.3 We do not assume that students who disclose GBV wish to formally report incidents. However, our policy aligns with the Equally Safe Strategy¹ by ensuring, where possible and usually with consent of the victim/survivor, that "perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response". As such, we will refer appropriately to the HTC UHI Student Conduct Policy and Disciplinary Procedures, and/or HTC UHI Complaints Handling Procedure, and/or work with external agencies such as Police Scotland appropriately. In most circumstances, we would only take action via these procedures with consent of the student victim/survivor – it is therefore key that students are aware of these options, including both the benefits and limitations of each. See the HTC UHI Staff Guidance for Responding to Student Disclosures of GBV for further information.

3.5 GBV Support & Intervention

- 3.5.1 The ESHE Toolkit² recommends that we follow a 3-stage model of recovery for GBV victim/survivors, meaning that the policy and values are applicable to the support of survivors at points of crisis intervention and safety planning; therapeutic solutions and processing; and long term outcomes including "moving on" and reconnecting with community. Framing the policy in this way takes into account the student journey.
- 3.5.2 All types of GBV can cause harm and trauma. Many types carry serious risk of injury, long-term health consequences, suicide, and homicide¹². HTC UHI and partners have a duty of care to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students. Specialist staff in particular, such as Student Support or Counselling Staff, will work in a trauma-informed manner to ensure student wellbeing, retention, and success where possible.

¹¹ Rape Crisis Scotland (2020). Annual Report 2019-2020. [Available here](#).

¹² Summary available from [Safe Lives](#) (2022).

3.5.3 This policy also addresses intersectional needs (2.5). Our GBV work in all remits should recognise and address this – for example, LGBTQ+ and ethnically diverse students may face increased risk, and complex barriers to support¹³¹⁴. This policy also addresses duties relating to vulnerable groups and/or those with protected characteristics. All staff are accountable to legislation such as the Equality Act¹⁵ and, where applicable, The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act¹⁶. HTC UHI GBV activities must take account of equality and diversity, and strive for accessibility and inclusion across populations.

3.6 GBV Curriculum & Knowledge Exchange

3.6.1 To change the culture in and beyond UHI, our teaching practice and curriculum must; address harmful gender stereotypes, biases and behaviours; promote equality, equity, and rights; and support our GBV Foundation Principles (3.1). This is particularly relevant to Learning & Teaching Staff. For example, lecturers should consider the inclusion of gender diverse role models and projects.

3.6.2 Where students participate in courses linked with potential front-line responses to GBV (such as Education, Health and Social Care, and Criminal Justice), we strive to offer quality critical engagement with themes and principles relating to GBV, and equip students with the skills to work with victims, survivors, and perpetrators appropriately.

4 Scope

- 4.1 This policy applies when the victim/survivor of GBV is a current student at HTC UHI regardless of level or method of study – though the HTC UHI Safeguarding Policy is likely to apply for those who are also school pupils. This is not limited to term-time. This is regardless of who is thought to be the perpetrator (alleged party) of GBV.
- 4.2 Where the alleged party is a current student at HTC UHI but the victim/survivor is not, this policy may help frame our approach, but further information should be sought from the HTC UHI Student Conduct Policy, Disciplinary Procedures, Support To Study Policy, and potentially any course-specific Fitness to Practice guidelines (e.g. for those on Nursing & Midwifery programmes).
- 4.3 Where the alleged party is a HTC UHI applicant, and the victim/survivor is a current student, refer to the HTC UHI Student Criminal Offence Data Policy.
- 4.4 This policy applies regardless of location where GBV is thought to have been facilitated or perpetrated (including online spaces) towards a current HTC UHI student, on or off campus.
- 4.5 This policy acknowledges the broad range of behaviours included in the term 'Gender Based Violence' (see 2.3) and the sometimes subjective nature of whether the behaviour, however inappropriate or harmful, is gender based. Following disclosure/report/referral to UHI, this policy allows for the lead staff to carefully and anonymously discuss internally/externally with specialist agencies to decide if the Gender Based Violence Policy and associated guidance is the most appropriate and fitting for each incident on a case by case basis, or if behaviour may instead fall under e.g. HTC UHI Student Conduct Policy. As far as appropriate, victim/survivor wishes will be key in these decisions.

¹³ Scottish Transgender Alliance (2010). [Out of sight, out of mind? Transgender people's experiences of domestic abuse.](#)

¹⁴ See Women's Aid (2022). [Women from BME Communities.](#)

¹⁵ UK Government (2010). Equality Act. [Available here.](#)

¹⁶ Scottish Government (2014) [Children & Young People \(Scotland\) Act.](#)

- 4.6 This policy may compliment HTC UHI Student Conduct Policy, where the alleged party is a student at UHI or any partner; and the HTC UHI Complaints Handling Procedure, where the alleged party is a staff member or contractor employed by UHI or any partner. These pathways are further detailed in the HTC UHI Staff Guidance for Responding to Student Disclosures of Gender Based Violence.

5 Exceptions

- 5.1 This policy applies without exceptions, exclusions, or restriction.

6 Notification

- 6.1 All staff members will be notified of changes to the policy and guidance through the normal channels.
- 6.2 See 7.6.1 regarding notification responsibilities.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1 Finance and General Purposes Committee is responsible for approving the policy and ensuring that it is followed. Finance and General Purposes Committee are also responsible for ensuring the strategic effectiveness of the policy.
- 7.2 The Principal and Senior Management Team are responsible for operational compliance with and effectiveness of the policy, by ensuring that staff operate in an environment where they can fulfil their responsibilities in relation to the policy.
- 7.3 Student Support Services are responsible for collating anonymised data regarding GBV within their institution – i.e. number of disclosures made and number of disciplinary cases involving GBV – where possible. They may be asked to share this anonymous data with, or ensure it is available to, UHI to inform whole-organisation approaches and to measure effectiveness of this policy.
- 7.4 Line managers should also ensure that staff can access the policy and are supported to implement it in practice – to do this, line managers should also ensure their staff can access appropriate emotional and development support given the sensitive nature of GBV.
- 7.5 **GBV Staff Training Responsibilities**
- 7.5.1 All staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with the policy and guidance.
- 7.5.2 All staff must undertake any mandatory GBV training (including E-Learning available on Brightspace) and repeat at the frequency indicated by Student Support Services.
- 7.5.3 Student Services, with support from HR, are responsible for arranging further GBV training on behalf of their Academic Partner from external agencies. It is recommended that student-facing staff of all Student Services Teams, and student-facing staff participate in further evidence-based training such as Equally Safe in Colleges & Universities Training Stages 1, 2a, and 2b (available via Rape Crisis Scotland).
- 7.5.4 Where possible, Student Support Services with support from HR, are responsible for collating data on number of staff trained, course name, and level achieved. They may be asked to share this anonymous data with, or ensure it is available to, UHI Executive Office to inform whole-organisation approaches and to measure effectiveness of this policy.

7.6 GBV Prevention & Awareness Raising Responsibilities

7.6.1 Student Support Services, with support from their web team, have a responsibility to include this policy alongside GBV information on both student and staff-facing webpages. This responsibility can be met by ensuring the [UHI GBV Webpages](#) are clearly signposted to from academic partner websites, or by maintaining partner specific GBV webpages. The UHI GBV Webpages will be maintained and monitored by the UHI Executive Office Student Support Team.

7.6.2 All staff can engage in appropriate opportunities that raise awareness of the policy, our approach, and of GBV in general. These may be arranged internally or externally, and Student Support Officer or deputised staff may participate in Violence Against Women Partnerships to discover local opportunities for such. Local Communications Teams will be instrumental in ensuring messaging aligns with the approaches laid out in this policy, and reaches students appropriately e.g. social media.

7.7 Responsibilities of Students

7.7.1 All students have a responsibility to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct, which specifies behaviours of Gender Based Violence which are unacceptable.

8 Procedures

- UHI Student Survivor Tool Procedures

9 Legislative Framework

- [Adults with Incapacity \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)
- [Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#)
- [Children and Young Person \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Forced Marriage etc. \(Protection and Jurisdiction\) \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)
- [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) 2018](#)
- [Human Trafficking & Exploitation \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
- [Mental Health \(Care and Treatment\) \(Scotland\) Act \(2003\)](#)
- [Mental Health \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)
- [Police and Fire Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2012](#)
- [Protection of Children \(Scotland\) Act 2003](#)
- [Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)
- [Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#)
- [Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)
- [Victims and Witnesses \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)

10 Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Other Resources

- UHI Complaints Handling Procedures
- UHI Concerned Parent Protocol
- UHI Fitness to Practise Guidelines (course-specific)
- UHI Mental Health Strategy
- UHI Placement and Externally Supported Learning Policy

- UHI Policy on Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme membership for students
- UHI Safeguarding Policy
- UHI Safeguarding Procedure
- UHI Staff Guidance for Responding to Student Disclosures of GBV
- UHI Student Code of Conduct
- UHI Student Conduct Policy
- UHI Student Criminal Offence Data Policy
- UHI Student Disciplinary Procedure
- UHI Student Mental Health and Counselling Policy
- UHI Suicide Intervention and Risk Management Policy and Guidance
- UHI Support For Study Procedures

- [Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy to Eradicate Violence Against Women](#)
- [Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit: Guidance and Checklist for Implementing a Strategic Approach to Gender-based Violence Prevention in Scottish Higher Education Institutions.](#)
- [UHI Gender Based & Sexual Violence Webpages](#)
- [Gender Based Violence \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- [Hidden Marks \(2011\) @ NUS Connect](#)
- [Changing the culture: Report of the Universities UK Taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students](#)
- [NUS Report on Sexual Violence in FE \(2019\)](#)

10 Version Control and Change History

Version	Date	Approved by	Amendment(s)	Author
0				
1				
2				
3				
4				