



Transcript

National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence

Standard 3 - Knowledge and Capability

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Presented by:

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Larissa Hinds:

Hello, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar on Standard 3 of the *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence*. Standard 3 focuses on knowledge and capability.

My name is Larissa Hinds, and I am currently in the role of Assistant Secretary for the Gender-based Violence Reform Branch in the Department of Education, and I'm joined today by my colleague Kylie Smith, our Assistant Director of Education and Engagement.

This is the fourth webinar that we've done on the National Code, and I would like to thank those of you who have joined our previous webinars. I remind people that recordings of these webinars are now available via our [website](#), and a link will be posted shortly.

Slide 2 - Acknowledgment of Country

As I join you today, I'm from joining from the beautiful lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, and I would like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia. I pay my respects to them and their Cultures and Elders, past and present. And I also extend my respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people joining us today.

Slide 3 – Victim-survivor acknowledgement

As we begin today's session, I also want to acknowledge the strength, courage and resilience of those who have experienced gender-based violence and recognise the dedication of advocates and practitioners whose efforts have been instrumental in shaping the National Code and driving progress across the sector.

The National Code reflects a shared commitment to recognising gender-based violence as a systemic issue, one that demands a coordinated sector wide response – and this recognition extends beyond addressing isolated incidents to driving meaningful change across the sector and enabling safe, more respectful environments. A key component of this is addressed by Standard 3 of the National Code, which sets clear expectations to increase knowledge of gender-based violence and ensure the capability across staff, students and leaders – and these requirements will be our focus for today's webinar.

Slide 4 – Agenda

Today we aim to share approximately 25 minutes of content between Kylie and myself, and we'll cover an overview of Standard 3, highlighting the importance of building knowledge and capability, discuss requirements including education and training for students, staff and leaders, targeted and tailored communication initiatives, and ensuring staff expertise to fulfil key roles. Following that we'll have approximately 10 minutes for questions and answers.

A note on housekeeping for today: as with our other foundational topics and previous webinars on the National Code, you can access the webinar, recordings, transcripts and slide decks via the [Department of Education website under the National Code pages](#).

We will continue to produce guidance on the National Codes requirements - and we invite you if you haven't already done so, to join the [mailing list](#) so that you can receive updates from the department, including on future webinars. A link for this will also be posted shortly.

As per previous webinars, the chat function has been disabled for this webinar and so we invite you to submit questions via the Q&A function you should see at the top of your screen. We will seek to answer as many questions as possible today - and questions we don't get to will be grouped up into themes and addressed through updates to the [Frequently Asked Questions section on the website](#). For the purposes of a clean recording and to adhere to data privacy laws, the questions submitted will not be visible to all participants – and I'll hand across to you now, Kylie.

Slide 5 – Overview of Standard 3 – Knowledge and capability

Kylie Smith:

Thank you, Larissa. The National Code exists because of the prevalence of gender-based violence in Australian society and in higher education. Gender-based violence is a deeply complex problem with profound impacts requiring evidence driven, whole-of-organisation approaches.

Higher education providers have the influence and the opportunity to promote new norms and structures to prevent gender-based violence, mitigate its impacts, and equip their communities to positively contribute to safer cultures and societies.

By investing in knowledge, skills, training and expertise, higher education providers can simultaneously strengthen their ability to respond to gender-based violence and actively build prevention potential.

Standard 3 focuses on building institutional capability through comprehensive trauma-informed education and training for students, staff and leadership, tailored communication initiatives, and ensuring staff responding to disclosures and undertaking risk assessments, investigations and disciplinary procedures have the necessary expertise and experience to fulfil their roles. We're going to turn to the specific requirements of Standard 3 with a deliberate whole-of-organisation approach – training.

Education and communication serve as critical mechanisms to challenge gender-based violence and reduce harm. They can create structured opportunities for individuals to engage with current inequities and reflect on how to foster safer, more equitable and inclusive environments.

Slide 6 – Prevention Education and training

Under Standard 3.1, providers must ensure delivery of ongoing comprehensive prevention, education and training to students, leadership and staff that covers multiple learning outcomes. The first of these is raising understanding of what constitutes gender-based violence.

Many people do not understand the breadth of gender-based violence and this can be a barrier to help-seeking, reporting, and prevention. For example, physical or sexual harm are more readily recognised as violence than coercive control and emotional abuse.

The fact that gender-based violence is predominantly perpetrated by men against women and gender diverse people is also often misunderstood. For example, many people believe that family or domestic violence is equally committed by both men and women, despite this not being supported by evidence, such as that that has emerged from the National Community Attitude Surveys.

We also know that forms and nature of gender-based violence are complex and evolving. Zoom-bombing, doxing and the normalisation of sexual choking are examples of forms of gender-based violence that have emerged recently. Unpacking contemporary forms of violence in training in appropriate and culturally sensitive ways, supports content feeling relevant to the lives of staff and students, which fosters greater engagement.

Secondly, education and training are required to cover multiple concepts that are often inconsistently and incorrectly understood and applied. This includes gender, the drivers, and contributing factors of gender-based violence, the role of power dynamics, what respectful relationships look like, and consent.

Another required learning outcome for prevention training is increasing awareness of support services, reporting channels and resources for people who have experienced gender-based violence.

Given the data on the prevalence of gender-based violence prevention, training should be run presuming someone in that room – even if it's virtual – has experienced this violence or knows someone who has.

Finally, the National Code requires that prevention, education and training be designed to increase awareness and understanding of ethical bystanders and compassionate responses to disclosures.

Learning how to be an ethical bystander is a practical, transferable skill set. Integrating this learning outcome into prevention training can be a useful tool for engaging and empowering audiences. We know there are universities who have piloted and implemented bystander programmes, so there are lessons that can be shared across the sector to support good practise.

Responding compassionately to disclosures is an increasingly foundational skill for adults entering workplaces and communities. Increasing everyone's knowledge and capacity of how to respond to disclosure, including the importance of connecting to those with expertise, can positively impact outcome for disclosers, as many will initially disclose to a friend, a peer or a colleague rather than a specialist.

Now we'll turn to the requirements around the design of prevention and education.

Slide 7 – Prevention Education and training

Larissa Hinds:

Standard 3.2 requires that the development and design of prevention, training and education is evidence-informed and designed to support ongoing learning.

To support the outcome of shifting attitudes, norms and practises to prevent gender-based violence, training and education should be guided by approaches that have been demonstrated to be effective through research, evaluation or peer reviewed studies.

Evidence is clear that training needs to go beyond awareness, raising to address the underlying drivers of gender-based violence, and that it must be tailored to the target audience to ensure relevance and impact. Design should include opportunities for reflection and ongoing learning.

Higher education providers can draw on a broad, evolving body of knowledge across disciplines – including public health, health promotion, adult learning pedagogy, social marketing, gender studies and behavioural science.

Prevention, training and education must also be trauma-informed – meaning that the core principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment are applied to training design. This approach aims to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation and promote recovery and healing to the greatest extent possible.

Standard 3.2 is clear that training and education must be culturally appropriate. Culturally appropriate practise means designing and delivering services that are inclusive, respectful and responsive to the cultural identities, strengths and lived experiences of individuals and communities

– and this means that across different providers, training content may need to be tailored to the providers specific cohort of staff and students in practise. Providers might codesign prevention initiatives with communities, engage in cultural humility and ongoing learning, and provide interpreters or translation where needed.

Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is also important to consider in design. In practise this may look like ensuring facilitators are culturally aware, acknowledging the role of colonisation, systemic racism and ongoing inequities in gender-based violence as part of training content, or promoting critical reflection about bias and racism in training activities.

Standard 3.2 also requires that training and education is inclusive and accessible to students and to staff with disabilities. In practical terms, again, this might look like ensuring delivery methods and materials are accessible, the use of inclusive facilitation techniques like offering spoken, written, and visual ways to participate and allowing extra time for engagement if needed, consulting participants about access needs, and removing barriers to creating an environment where everyone can participate and contribute.

Standard 3.2 also emphasises the deliberate design of training and education to ensure that any disclosures made during education and training can be safely managed. Preparedness and sensitivity to the nature of re-traumatisation and taking steps to mitigate these risks is necessary to protect the safety of potential disclosures and other participants.

We'll move now to highlighting the importance of collaboration and engagement to inform the design of prevention, training and education.

Slide 8 – Prevention Education and training

Standard 3.3 of the National Code requires collaboration and engagement to inform training, development and design with experts in the prevention of gender-based violence [with] students, staff and those who have experienced gender-based violence, and those that may be disproportionately affected by gender-based violence. Collaboration and engagement in the development of training and education supports providers to identify barriers to engaging in the training and education, and how these might be overcome.

To establish a baseline understanding of often misunderstood concepts, including gender-based violence, indicates the likelihood and intensity of resistance to training content and reveals insights into the status preferences and attitudes of intended audience.

Training and education that is highly attuned to the realities of audience members is more likely to be impactful in the longer term, and providers may be required to report on how the engagement has informed the development of prevention education and training.

Slide 9 – Prevention communication and initiatives

Kylie Smith:

Standard 3.5 requires providers to promote and widely disseminate evidence, informed prevention messages and communication and across study, work, living and social environments.

Evidence is emerging about effective communication and campaigns to prevent gender-based violence, but it is clear that social marketing and communications are most effective when combined with other activities designed to have an impact at a community level as part of a whole-of-organisation approach.

Providers can look at how prevention communication can be strengthened by deliberate connection to other education, training, and engagement activities. Evidence is also clear on the importance of targeted messaging. There is a growing body of work on effective messaging on gender equality and gender-based violence that providers can draw from.

In practise, work to align with Standards 3.5 to 3.8 may look like developing and implementing a communication plan which covers objectives, target audiences and outcomes, key messages tailored to and tested with target audiences, identification of dissemination methods that will reach the target group – this may include peer education, sharing prevention, message messages in study work and social settings, as well as through posters, digital screens and social media, dissemination sites including student orientation events, staff inductions, student accommodation and clubs and associations, and processes to ensure communication activities are accessible, inclusive [and] responsive to the needs of disproportionately impacted groups.

We'll now turn to the critical component of education and training that relates to responding to disclosures.

Slide 10 - Responding to disclosures education and training

When staff and student leaders have the skills and capacity to respond effectively and compassionately to gender-based violence, it is more likely there will be a consistent, sensitive and appropriate response when a disclosure is made.

The National Code requires providers to deliver specialised education and training on responding to disclosures at least annually to students in leadership positions, leadership and staff, as well as any other person whom the provider considers necessary. This fosters an environment where disclosers are consistently believed, treated with respect and compassion, and supported to take any further steps needed.

Research and the lived experience of disclosures of gender-based violence clearly show that the response someone receives at the point of disclosure is deeply impactful. Disclosers who receive a supportive and compassionate response following a disclosure, have significantly improved outcomes than those whose disclosure experience amplifies – whether intentional or not – blame, suspicion or minimisation.

Education and training on responding to a disclosure is required to teach participants how to take a trauma-informed and person-centred approach, increase participants' awareness of the effect of trauma – including on a person's behaviour, memory and health and well-being – and take account of the needs of all members of the provider's community – particularly those members who are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence.

As with prevention, training and education, these sessions should be designed to safely manage any disclosure that may arise, including by providing information about internal and external support services and reporting channels.

To align with good practise and quality educational outcomes, education and training on responding to disclosures must be developed through engagement with or be approved by an accredited specialist - a specialist organisation or a person with expertise in responding to gender-based violence.

Now we'll turn to requirements concerning monitoring and evaluation of education, training and communication.

Slide 11- Monitoring and evaluation of education and training

Larissa Hinds:

Evaluation and continuous improvement ensure training, education and communication will remain effective, relevant and responsive to learners' needs. Standards 3.10 to 3.13 require providers to undertake monitoring and evaluation of education and training, as well as apply what they learn to iterate and improve approaches and materials over time.

Providers are required to consider learning outcomes as well as feedback from participants and gender-based violence experts. Common prevention education data capture methods include pre and post-session surveys, attitudinal questionnaires, key informant interviews and observational data.

Monitoring and evaluation and evaluating prevention education is quite a specialised field – and in meeting these requirements, providers might seek guidance from specialists on how they can best measure the outcomes and impact of their education and training initiatives, maintain organised and up-to-date records of evaluation reports ensure [correct] evaluation reports, document methodology, findings and resulting improvements, or establish internal procedures to consider evaluation findings and revise training and education as needed – including with regards to duty of care.

For all education, training and communication activities, providers may be required to report to the Department on how evaluation has informed future prevention training.

We'll now turn to the National Code requirements around expertise and experience.

Slide 12 – Expertise and experience

Kylie Smith:

The National Code identifies multiple key functions that require staff to have specific expertise and experience. These are risk assessment, and undertaking formal reports, investigations and disciplinary proceedings.

Providers must require that staff undertaking these key functions have knowledge of evidence-based risk and protective factors for experiencing gender-based violence, types, patterns and effects of gender-based violence, how gender-based violence is experienced by different groups of people, and the nature and impact of coercive control. Those staff undertaking risk assessments also need to have expertise in gender-based violence risk assessment and competency in working with specific cohorts.

Given the specific risks associated with formal reports, investigations and disciplinary proceedings, the National Code includes additional requirements for staff undertaking these processes. These are listed on the slide now and include expertise and experience in responding effectively to people who have experienced and use gender-based violence, the effects of trauma, competency in working with a range of specific cohorts, procedural fairness, taking and recording statements and handling reports and disclosures.

To ensure currency of expertise, staff undertaking formal reports, investigations and disciplinary proceedings are required to undergo relevant training – at least every three years.

Larissa Hinds:

Thanks, Kylie. This brings us now to the end of the content for our Standard 3 webinar on the National Code. Thank you for your participation. We also thank you for your questions.

Thank you all for attending today's session and for the questions and for your participation. As I've mentioned, a recording will be made available.

We see the higher education sector as an essential partner in this broader national effort to end gender-based violence. We're committed to supporting your leadership in fostering institutional cultures where safety is embedded, disclosures are met with appropriate and timely responses, and all members of the university community are able to thrive.

We look forward to continued collaboration as we work together to strengthen safe, inclusive, and supportive environments across the sector. Thank you, Kylie, and thank you everyone who has joined us today.

Kylie Smith:

Thank you everyone. Thanks Larissa.

[END]