

Sexual Violence Task Force Report

2020

September 2020

Background

Providing a safe, supportive, inclusive environment for all members of our campus community has long been a top priority for the University of Guelph. The University is committed to supporting students who have been affected by sexual violence and to continuous improvement through collaborative processes, services and supports.

The importance of this commitment cannot be over emphasized. Recent events such as the international #Me Too movement and high-profile cases in the entertainment industry, sports, politics, and academia – including at our University – have helped draw attention to the societal impacts of sexual violence and the need for vigilance, action and awareness.

In late 2019, the University of Guelph terminated its longtime track and field coach, Dave Scott-Thomas, after information emerged about his past and recent behaviour. The University does not tolerate unprofessional conduct and/or behaviour that is inconsistent with our core values and beliefs, our University's Coaches Code of Conduct, and our Sexual Violence Policy. With the goal that circumstances such as those exposed during the Scott-Thomas investigation will not be repeated, the University has initiated two independent reviews: one specifically examining policies and processes in the Department of Athletics, and one as a broad and comprehensive assessment of the University's current processes, procedures and policies regarding gendered violence.

We remain vigilant in our commitment to providing effective education and training that assists our community members in understanding and reducing sexual violence, responding appropriately as bystanders or confidantes, accessing support services if they are affected by sexual violence, and undertaking effective processes to hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable.

The University takes all disclosures and reports of sexual violence seriously and aims to ensure that effective procedures are in place to respond to reports in a survivor-focused and trauma-informed manner. Such an approach will mean survivors are treated with compassion, have their experiences validated, are provided with appropriate safety measures and academic or employment accommodations, have choice regarding the support they receive from the University, and that there is appropriate co-ordination and confidential communication among the members of the University community who are responsible for responding to reports of sexual violence.

The work to reduce sexual violence, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable at the University of Guelph is a collective effort involving strategic planning and affirmative action by the University and key community partners including the Guelph General Hospital, Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, and Guelph Police Services. At the University this work involves many units including Student Affairs, the Office of Diversity and Human Rights, Human Resources, Faculty and Academic Staff Relations, Campus Community Police, Student Judicial Services, the University Secretariat, and the Office of Legal Counsel. Additionally, students, faculty and staff from across the University make significant contributions to the work to reduce sexual violence and support survivors through their research, service on advisory committees, and active engagement to inform and provide educational and support programming.

Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey

Between February 16, 2018 and April 2, 2018 all university and college students studying in programs eligible for funding from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) were invited to participate in the *Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey*. The survey was developed to gather information about perceptions and experiences of sexual violence that can be used to inform and enhance sexual violence response and prevention efforts of publicly assisted postsecondary institutions. More than 160,000 students (21.9% of the 746,264 invited) from across the province participated in the survey. Questions related to personal experience asked students to respond based on their experiences on or off campus since the beginning of the 2017-18 academic year.

In March 2019, MCU published a [summary report](#) of the survey findings and the full dataset was released in February 2020. The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) published an [Overview of the Survey Results](#) with links to a [Demographics Breakdown Report](#) and an [Institution All Question Report](#).

As summarized in the COU overview, the findings from the *Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey* (2018) serve to reinforce our awareness that sexual violence is a pervasive, societal problem and considered together with Statistics Canada's 2018 [Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces \(SSPPS\)](#) finding that more than 11 million Canadians have been physically or sexually assaulted since the age of 15, the need for concerted action to reduce sexual violence, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable is clear.

The survey findings, in line with national trends in Canada and the United States, showed that certain groups are particular targets of sexual violence. Women, gender diverse¹, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students reported higher prevalence rates of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking than overall university sector rates as a whole. The same is true for students with

¹ There are a multitude of identities recognized under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella that are known to experience disproportionate rates of sexual violence. The categories mentioned above are those directly studied in the survey.

disabilities and students identifying as Indigenous. Survey respondents also reported different rates of sexual violence based on their racial or ethnic identity.”

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Following the March 2018 preliminary release of the *Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey* (2018), MCU directed all post-secondary institutions to conduct a review of sexual violence policies, processes, and educational programming and to submit to their Boards of Governors and MCU a report providing recommendations to ensure a safe environment for all. In response, the Vice-Provost (Student Affairs) established the Sexual Violence Task Force (Appendix A) to review the Sexual Violence Policy, related processes, and educational programming and to provide the recommendations articulated in this report. Members of the Task Force represent the diversity of students, staff and faculty and include members of the Sexual Violence Advisory Committee for Students and members of the University’s leadership team.

Recommendations

1. Develop a strategic vision and comprehensive framework to promote alignment and increased collaboration and coordination among staff, student groups, faculty, and community partners who engage in education, prevention, support, response, and investigative activity with an aim to reducing sexual violence, supporting survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable (“Sexual Violence Framework”).
2. Consider synergies and alignment between the Sexual Violence Framework and the Healthy U of G initiative currently being developed.
3. Review and consider the recommendations arising from current 3rd party reviews related to gender-based violence to inform the University’s Sexual Violence Framework and related strategic planning process.
4. Review and revise as appropriate, the University’s Sexual Violence Policy and its Procedures for Students and Employees with reference to current best practices, the need for appropriate resources and training and alignment with the Sexual Violence Framework.
5. Conduct a thorough analysis of the University of Guelph data from the *Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey* (2018), the *Thriving on Campus Survey* (2019) of LGBTQ2IA+ students and use key findings to inform the Sexual Violence Framework.
6. Develop recommendations such that the Sexual Violence Framework addresses the safety and security needs of groups that are statistically known to experience higher prevalence rates of sexual violence.
7. Develop a robust evaluation framework to assess the impact of the University’s sexual violence education and training programs for students, staff and faculty.

8. Conduct a review of the University's complaint process for students to better understand factors contributing to zero formal reports by students over the 2-year period from 2018-2020.
9. Given the greater risk of domestic violence and online sexual violence in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic, ensure education and support initiatives include focus on safe disclosure and reporting, and provide information for survivors to receive support from the University and in their local community.
10. Engage appropriate expertise to inform initiatives to reduce sexual violence, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable.

APPENDIX A

University of Guelph Sexual Violence Task Force

Mandate

The Sexual Violence Task Force chaired by the Vice-Provost (Student Affairs) will review the University's sexual violence policy, processes, and educational programming and will submit to the Board of Governors and MCU a report providing recommendations to ensure a safe environment for all.

Membership

Staff and Faculty Representatives:

1. Vice-Provost, Student Affairs (Chair)
2. Executive Assistant to the Vice-Provost (Administrative Support)
3. AVP, Diversity and Human Rights
4. AVP, Human Resources
5. AVP, Faculty and Academic Staff Resources
6. Student Judicial Services
7. University Secretariat
8. Office of Legal Counsel
9. Sexual Violence Support Centre for Students
10. Student Wellness Services
11. Gryphons Athletics
12. Campus Community Police
13. Student Housing Services
14. Diversity and Human Rights
15. Student Experience (including, but not limited to, the Sexual and Gender Diversity Advisor)
16. Faculty with expertise in the area

Student Representatives:

17. Central Student Association
18. Graduate Students' Association
19. Student Support Network
20. Interhall Council
21. Guelph Resource Centre for Gender Empowerment and Diversity (GRCGED)

Community Representatives:

22. Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis
23. Guelph General Hospital (Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centre)
24. Guelph Police Services