

Working with Vulnerable People (including Child Protection) - Academic Policy

1. Purpose of policy

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to articulate the University's approach to the protection of vulnerable people who are involved with the University community. USC is committed to the protection of children and vulnerable adults (collectively 'vulnerable people') who may be involved in University activities. This policy also specifies the requirements for compliance with the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* Qld (the WWC Act) and associated Regulations and the *Disability Services Act 2006* (Qld) (the Disability Services Act).

2. Policy scope and application

2.1 This policy and the associated procedures apply to the University community who have contact with vulnerable people in the course of their activities.

2.2 Under the WWC Act, the University's overarching activities of teaching and learning are considered 'private teaching, coaching or tutoring'. However, as an education provider, the University's primary functions are exempt and therefore are not considered regulated employment.

2.3 The University's operations include functions that are considered regulated employment under the WWC Act. These include, but are not limited to: health, counselling and support services (e.g. clinics and student services), marketing outreach activities in schools and sport and active recreation. Staff and volunteers in these areas may be required to undergo a Working with Children Check and obtain a Blue Card if they will be undertaking regulated employment for more than seven (7) days in a calendar year.

2.4 The policy principles apply when undertaking work with vulnerable people on behalf of the University in all jurisdictions domestically and internationally. Individuals working on behalf of the University in other jurisdictions (including overseas) should be aware that they may be subject to different legislative requirements and must comply with all relevant requirements.

2.5 This policy does not cover situations where a member of the University community brings a child in their care into a university facility. These situations are covered by the Children on Campus – Operational Policy

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures. Terms and definitions identified below are specific to this policy and are critical to its effectiveness:

'Abuse, neglect or exploitation': means all forms of physical and mental abuse, exploitation, coercion or ill-treatment. This may include, for example:

- sexual harassment, bullying or abuse;
- sexual criminal offences and serious sexual criminal offences;
- threats of, or actual violence, verbal, emotional or social abuse;
- cultural or identity abuse, such as racial, sexual or gender-based discrimination or hate crime;
- coercion and exploitation; or
- abuse of power.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Academic Board

RESPONSIBLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Academic Registrar and Director, Student Services

FIRST APPROVED

26 October 2018

LAST AMENDED

4 September 2024

REVIEW DATE

15 June 2026

STATUS

Active

Blue Card: refers to a card which is issued in Queensland to a person who is approved following a screening process known as a blue card check. The screening process is conducted to determine a person's eligibility to work with children based on past charges or convictions for offences, child protection prohibition orders, disqualification orders, information reported under legislation, disciplinary information from certain organisations and certain police investigative information

Blue Card Services: is a section within the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General that undertakes Working with Children checks and issues Blue Cards.

Child/Children: refers to any person under the age of 18 years (while recognising that young people under the age of 18 years may be independent and capable individuals).

Disability Services Act: refers to the *Disability Services Act 2006* (Qld).

Disability Worker Screening Clearance Card: refers to a card which is issued in Queensland to a person who has undergone a criminal history screening for eligibility to work with people living with disability with a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider in a risk assessed role or a Queensland-funded provider delivering disability supports or services.

Regulated employment: are categories of employment regulated by the WWC Act.

University community: relates to USC students, staff and other stakeholders engaging with the University, including visitors, contractors and volunteers.

Volunteer: is a member of the USC community who provides their services in a voluntary capacity to the University, not for financial reward but who may receive reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses. Volunteers are not staff of the University.

Vulnerable person (people) means:

(1) a Child

(2) an adult who is or may be unable to take care of themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability or any other reason.

Workplace integrated learning (WIL) placement course: is any course undertaken within a program of university study to gain experience in a workplace setting, also known as Supervised Professional Experience (SPE), internship, practicum, workplace learning (WPL), clinical placement or Work Experience Scheme (WES).

WWC Act: refers to the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (Qld).

4. Policy statement

4.1 The University is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all members of the University community, and expects all staff, students, contractors and volunteers to abide by the relevant University policies and procedures, in particular the Staff Code of Conduct – Governing Policy and the Student Conduct – Governing Policy.

4.2 The University will endeavour to provide not only an environment that is physically safe for children and other vulnerable people, but also supportive and respectful services or interactions where children and vulnerable people are genuinely engaged and where the likelihood of harm is minimised through education and appropriate risk management.

4.3 Compliance with the Blue Card system in Queensland (and similar systems in other jurisdictions) is critical in building and maintaining safeguards for children in regulated environments. The University implements the WWC Act, through this policy and associated procedures and guidelines. More information on the Queensland Blue Card system is available at www.bluecard.qld.gov.au

4.4 Compliance with the Disability Worker Screening system in Queensland (and similar systems in other jurisdictions), including obtaining a Disability Worker Screening Clearance Card where required, is critical in building and maintaining safeguards for people living with disability in regulated environments. The University implements the Disability Services Act, through this policy and associated procedures. More information on the Disability Worker Screening systems is available at <https://workerscreening.communities.qld.gov.au>

5. Principles

5.1 The University will maintain and comply with processes to fulfil its responsibilities and obligations under the WWC Act and the Disability Services Act and in accordance with other domestic and international legislative requirements relating to vulnerable people.

5.2 The University will maintain a Working with Vulnerable People Framework which includes a risk assessment. This risk assessment will:

(a) identify the level of contact with vulnerable people;

(b) identify the level of risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation;

(c) ensure appropriate controls are in place; and

(d) monitor compliance on an annual basis.

5.3 The University will ensure complete, accurate and reliable records relating to interactions with vulnerable people are created and managed. The University is committed to the proactive protection of vulnerable people through its ability to provide evidence of interactions in support of any future incident, allegation, disclosure or investigation of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

5.4 The University has respect for vulnerable people and provides opportunities for vulnerable people to have a voice and be involved in the review and enhancement of the University's services which support vulnerable people. The University will maintain and communicate strategies for working with vulnerable people.

5.5 The University is committed to implementing measures which improve diversity and inclusion. The University will identify and work to address power imbalances and any other form of inequity that may increase the likelihood of adverse impact on vulnerable people.

5.6 The University is committed to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations as an approach to cultivating organisational culture and practices that foster child safety and wellbeing.

5.7 The University will maintain a process to ensure students who interact with vulnerable people while undertaking Work Integrated Learning activities hold all relevant mandatory compliance checks prior to attending those activities.

5.8 The University will maintain a training framework that supports awareness, training requirements and responsibilities of staff, students, contractors and volunteers working with vulnerable people.

5.9 The University will maintain a process for reporting and handling complaints, and disclosures and/or suspicions of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

5.10 The University will ensure that all University research activities that involve vulnerable people comply with the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. This includes gaining ethical approvals through the processes set out in the Human Research Ethics – Governing Policy and associated procedures.

6. Authorities/Responsibilities

The following authorities/responsibilities are delegated under this policy:

UNIVERSITY OFFICER/COMMITTEE	ACTIVITY
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Manage staff and volunteers in regulated employment within their Portfolio (including Schools and their management of trainee students involved in WIL placement courses), research involving vulnerable people and health clinics.
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	Manage staff and volunteers in regulated employment within their Portfolio (including within counselling and support services offered by Student Wellbeing), Student Services and Engagement and Indigenous Services. Acts as the Child safety champion at the Executive level who promotes the importance of child safety within the University.
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global and Engagement)	Manage staff and volunteers in regulated employment within their Portfolio, including marketing activities in primary or secondary schools and education or outreach programs offered to children.
Chief Operating Officer	Manage staff and volunteers in regulated employment within their Portfolio, including sporting activities offered to children.
Director, Governance and Risk Management	Maintain a Risk Management Framework which has consideration for Working with Vulnerable People.
Director, Thompson Institute	Manage staff in regulated employment including health services and counselling services.
Director, People and Culture	Maintain a process for identifying positions where Blue Cards are required.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [Acceptable Use of ICT Resources - Operational Policy](#)
- [Acceptable Use of ICT Resources - Procedures](#)
- [Anti-Discrimination and Freedom from Bullying and Harassment - Operational Policy](#)
- [Children on Campus - Operational Policy](#)
- [Conduct on University Premises - Operational Policy](#)
- [Health, Safety and Wellbeing - Governing Policy](#)
- [Human Research Ethics - Academic Policy](#)
- [Information Management - Operational Policy](#)
- [Performance Management - Operational Policy](#)
- [Recruitment, Selection and Appointment - Operational Policy](#)
- [Resolution of Complaints \(Staff\) - Guidelines](#)
- [Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships \(Students\) - Operational Policy](#)
- [Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment and Respectful Relationships \(Students\) - Procedures](#)
- [Social Media - Operational Policy](#)
- [Social Media - Procedures](#)
- [Staff Code of Conduct - Governing Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct - Governing Policy](#)
- [Student Grievance Resolution - Academic Policy](#)
- [Students with a Disability - Academic Policy](#)
- [Work Integrated Learning \(Placement\) - Procedures](#)
- [Working with Vulnerable People \(including Child Protection\) - Procedures](#)

LINKED DOCUMENTS

- [Working with Vulnerable People \(including Child Protection\) - Procedures](#)

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

- [Working with Vulnerable People - Managerial Policy](#)

RELATED LEGISLATION / STANDARDS

- [Public Records Act 2002 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
- [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#)
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Child Protection Act 1999](#)
- [Disability Services Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Act 2000 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Working with Children \(Risk Management and Screening\) Regulation 2011 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Commonwealth Child Safe Framework](#)