

Report on Sexual Violence Policy Review Feedback

Drafting Phase

Office of the Vice-President (Students and Enrolment)
May 4, 2025

Content Warning

As a content warning, please note that this report includes a summary of the feedback received throughout the consultation process. We understand that reviewing the report can trigger strong reactions and we encourage the community to [connect with various support and resources](#).

Overview

The following report is a summary of the feedback received on Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy throughout the drafting phase of the consultation work plan.

Consultation Meetings

Throughout the drafting phase of the consultation process, key stakeholder groups were provided an opportunity to request a consultation meeting. Consultation meetings occurred with:

- CUASA

A total of 2 people were consulted as part of these meetings.

Information and Feedback Sessions

A total of 3 information and feedback sessions were scheduled for members of the Carleton community: one for students, one for faculty and one for staff. No one signed up or participated in these sessions. Throughout the drafting phase, individuals were invited to request a specific session or a one-on-one meeting by emailing svpolicy@carleton.ca.

The objective of these sessions was to host a supportive space wherein members of the community could provide their feedback on the revised draft of the Sexual Violence Policy.

Online Feedback

During the drafting phase, there were 6 anonymous form submissions and 3 emailed responses. To ensure anonymity in the feedback received, this online feedback has been summarized within the main themes below.

Main Themes

Throughout the drafting phase of the consultation process, the following main themes emerged from the feedback provided:

- **Scope and Clarity**
 - Policy Accessibility
 - Definitions
- **Process and Procedural Fairness**
 - Process and Timelines
 - Accountability and Transparency
 - Sexual Violence Review Committee
 - Consensual Relationships
- **Training and Communication**

This report has been organized by these themes and has the aggregated feedback received during the drafting phase of the consultation process. This feedback has been examined and assessed in the review of the Sexual Violence Policy. Responses to the feedback received have also been included.

Scope and Clarity

Policy Accessibility

- Clearly define who can access the policy and ensure it doesn't limit survivors from seeking alternative accountability.
- Move Section 8.1 to Section 3 to make it clear that the policy does not prevent survivors from seeking alternative or additional accountability through criminal or civil proceedings
- Explicitly state that complainants can file a report even if they are no longer part of the university community, provided the respondent is currently a member and the incident occurred during their time at the university

University Response

The feedback provided highlights important aspects that should be included in a policy of this nature. Upon review, Section 3 states, “this Policy applies to all members of the University community (as defined below), whether they are in the University’s learning, living, or work environment, on or off campus, or engaging through social or other electronic media.” In Section 4, the term University Community is defined as “all individuals who have a relationship with or to the University (or had at the time of the incident).” Section 8.1, which addresses the formal complaint process, is appropriately placed within the policy. These essential elements are clearly outlined and adequately positioned in their respective sections. Based on this feedback, clarity will be taken into account when updating training, resources and communication plans.

Definitions

- The definition of sexual misconduct should also apply to faculty
- Sexual misconduct should be added as a form of sexual violence under that term’s definition
- Add “capturing of intimate images” to the definition of sexual harassment

- Fraternities and sororities should be banned from operating on campus and students should be banned from joining them
- Clearly state that anonymous materials are prohibited and will not be relied upon in investigations

University Response

The provincial government's Bill 26, Strengthening Post-Secondary Institutions and Students Act, added new requirements regarding sexual misconduct towards a student by an employee of a publicly funded university or college. These new requirements came into effect on July 1, 2023, and the definition is taken from this legislation. Any sexual misconduct now falls under the broader definition of "sexual violence," which means that any act of sexual misconduct is considered a form of sexual violence.

Regarding photography, the term "production" includes the act of capturing images.

Carleton University does not recognize sororities and fraternities. However, students who are members of these organizations are still considered part of the "University Community". As such, they are held accountable under Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy and the Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy.

Section 9.1 (d) states what is required for a complaint to be considered including the name of the Respondent, the nature and the details of the circumstances, including detailed facts and specific dates.

Process and Procedural Fairness

Process and Timelines

- Ensure Complainants are notified before their complaint is shared with the Respondent
- Allow complainants to request internal investigations even if other investigations or proceedings are occurring
- Involve academic staff associations/grievance officers in correspondences when a member is involved to ensure that the association is part of the initial process
- Provide general updates on outcomes to both parties
- Clarify that providing or not providing comments will not negatively impact either party
- Reinstate the option for survivors to receive letters of apology from the perpetrator to give survivors agency in their healing process
- Provide clear timelines and roadmaps for each step of the process to both Complainants and Respondents

University Response

Through the review process, we received feedback regarding the process and timeline elements of the policy, and as a result, we have made the following revisions:

Section 9.2(c) has been updated to say "...and inform the Complainant one business day prior to informing the Respondent."

Section 9.1(c) has been previously updated for clarity as follows. “Other than in exceptional circumstances, jurisdictional or other legal considerations may arise (such as an active police investigation) where the formal complaint process in this Policy shall be suspended. Upon the conclusion of jurisdictional or other legal considerations, the Complainant can request that the formal complaint process be resumed.” Regardless of the status of any process, the support, accommodations, and interim and safety measures to Complainants will continue to be provided as detailed in the Policy and are kept in place even if the formal complaint process is suspended. To clarify, the support, accommodation and interim and safety measures are available to survivors at any point during the informal or formal complaint process.

As noted in Section 6.1, at any time, a person who has experienced sexual violence may consult with or seek advice and support from the relevant student association, union or other employee group. It is the staff member’s responsibility to engage union representation if they wish to do so.

At the end of the formal complaint process, all relevant documents and information concerning personal safety are shared with both the Complainant and the Respondent.

Section 9.4 has been adjusted to align with best investigative practices in order to ensure a survivor-centric process.

A letter of apology may not be an appropriate consequence or measure in response to the formal complaint process. This provision was removed based on feedback received during the listening phase of this consultation process. However, a letter of apology could be considered as part of the alternative resolution process in consultation with the survivor, to avoid causing further harm.

Section 8.6 of the policy covers timelines and timely progress updates. The university will make every effort to complete the complaint process in a timely fashion while maintaining procedural fairness. Section 9.4 (g) has been updated to specify that the Complainant and Respondent will be kept informed regularly on the status of the complaint and of the investigation.

Accountability and Transparency

- Include clearer accountability measures for the university in handling sexual violence disclosures and reports, particularly in the event students feel their case has been mishandled
- Outline what would happen if confidentiality is breached
- Under section 7.4 require that the survivor meet with the individual making the decision to move forward with a report on sexual violence even if the individual requests not to move forward
- Under section 7.4, the decision maker in this instance should be the trauma-informed investigator from section 9.4 (a)

University Response

Section 6 of the policy addresses disclosures and reporting, while Section 7 focuses on confidentiality. As highlighted in the previous feedback report, clearer guidelines and protocols will be provided to staff across the university on how to handle disclosures, reports and related matters. This will also include additional training for the community. The intent is to help ensure that the processes for handling disclosures and reports are well defined and consistently followed. In case of a confidentiality breach, the university will act in accordance with the policies and procedures based on the individual’s status

(student, staff, faculty, etc.). If a member of the Carleton community has any concerns about the processes outlined in Carleton's policies, they can contact the relevant unit responsible for the policy in question. Additionally, they are welcome to reach out to Ombuds Services, which applies to all policies at Carleton, for further assistance or clarification.

Following the final decision of the Sexual Violence Review Committee, a full appeal process is outlined in section 10. As noted, the appeal is heard by an Appeal Board which is chaired by a person external to the university who is a lawyer with the appropriate qualifications. To clarify, an addition has been made to ensure the Chair has the necessary trauma-informed and legal training with experience in investigating cases of sexual violence.

Section 10 outlines the appeal process which may be used if an individual feels there has been a fundamental procedural error in the making of the final decision and that such an error has resulted in, or will result in, actual prejudice to the person seeking the appeal.

As stated in section 7.4, the university will weigh a person's request that the university not act on a report of sexual violence.

Sexual Violence Review Committee

- Replace the Sexual Violence Review Committee (SVRC) with an expert in sexual violence matters with a trauma-informed approach who would receive, assess and determine whether a matter should proceed through to an investigation
- This expert should be in a neutral and impartial office/space and would expedite the process and minimize the number of times survivors need to repeat their story
- Ensure diversity within SVRC which would help racialized survivors feel more comfortable and supported in bringing their cases forward

University Response

Carleton University believes the best practice for reviewing formal cases of sexual violence is to have a committee review each case following an investigation conducted by a trained, trauma-informed investigator. This approach ensures that the process is comprehensive and sensitive to the needs of all involved. A single individual adjudicating these cases would not align with our practices and policies, nor does it reflect the model used for other processes across the university.

The SVRC's composition includes a range of expertise in areas such as mental health and wellness, safety, student conduct, collective agreement implications and academic support. Furthermore, all members of the SVRC and the appeal board receive training on sexual violence, procedural fairness, and trauma-informed practices, as outlined in sections 6.5(c) and 10.2 of the policy.

Consensual Relationships

- Under Section 2.2, identify a neutral, centralized administrator who has more specific training should handle disclosures of consensual romantic or sexual relationships and not the relevant Dean, University Librarian, Vice-President or President

University Response

The University strongly discourages consensual sexual or romantic relationships between individuals in positions of authority (such as faculty, instructional staff, managers or supervisors, and athletic staff), and the students or employees whose performance they are responsible for grading, supervising or evaluating. These types of relationships may lead to significant concerns, including allegations of sexual harassment, conflicts of interest and questions regarding the validity of consent. Given these potential challenges, the University emphasizes the importance of avoiding such relationships altogether. If, despite this guidance, a consensual romantic or sexual relationship does occur, it is crucial that the relationship be disclosed to the appropriate authority, in accordance with employment best practices

Training and Communication

- Glad to see that a renewed focus on training is an important part of the process
- Require additional and regular training relating to sexual violence prevention and education and on the Policy
- Ensure there is clearer communication and information relating to the rights of both parties and to processes
- Clearer information is needed on the applicability of the Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy and the Sexual Violence Policy – when you can expect which policy will come into play

University Response

Feedback gathered from this consultation process in relation to education and training will be shared with Equity and Inclusive Communities and the Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Committee for consideration to enhance their offerings under the campus sexual violence prevention strategy. Additional focus will also be placed on improving communication and exploring how existing resources can be updated and more effectively directed to all university stakeholders. Clarity will be added to the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) Policy to ensure matters of sexual violence will be directed to the Sexual Violence Policy and not SRR.

Carleton University continues to be committed to having a survivor-centric policy that is trauma-informed while ensuring procedural fairness. The University thanks the Carleton community for their engagement in this consultation process.