

Campus Safety Report



The UQ Union has conducted a safety survey following reports of verbal abuse and expressions of unease from students who feel unsafe on campus, particularly at night. This report summarises the results of that survey and contains recommendations to improve safety on campus and increase awareness of UQ procedures and student rights.

The survey found that many students feel unsafe on campus and reported offences range from verbal harassment to physical assault. UQ Union will liaise with UQ staff to discuss the recommendations outlined below to improve safety and awareness on campus. UQ Union will also increase information about safety measures already taken on campus to ensure students understand what measures are being taken and what services they can access.

When offences did occur, participants indicated a lack of knowledge about the UQ Code of Conduct which sets standards of behaviour on campus and prohibits harassment, and the UQ Student Grievance Resolution Procedure which can be used to deal with problem behaviour. Most students who answered that they had experienced problem behaviours also answered that they did not report the incident to either the police, UQ, or UQ Union. UQ Union will also increase advertisement of information about students' rights and reporting mechanisms.

It was noted that the majority of participants in this survey who reported an instance of verbal, sexual or other physical assault were women. The majority of these victims reported that a man was the perpetrator.

Some students indicated that they skipped late classes to avoid feeling unsafe on campus at night.

Impact of Problem Behaviours

This report and the actions that follow are important as students reported detrimental impacts on the following areas of life after experiencing problem behaviours:

- Confidence – 81.82% of participants (63);
- Mental health – 59.74% of participants (46);
- Relationships – 55.84% of participants (43);
- Education – 29.87% of participants (23); and
- Physical health – 20.78% of participants (16).

Demographics

The UQ Union survey received 875 responses, 854 of which were from current UQ students.

Of those, 95.57% were based at St Lucia campus, with roughly 1% of participants from Gatton, Herston, and Ipswich.

The ages of participants were predominantly 18-21 years old at 66.51%. A further 22.06% were 22-25 years old.

Women participated in higher numbers at 68.11% (596 students), compared to 29.49% men (256), and 2.4% (21) who answered 'not specified'.

The majority of participants, 72.23%, do not live near campus. This coincides with high figures of participants who reported that they felt unsafe at night at the Chancellor's Place and UQ Lakes bus stops, and the Green Bridge. A further 12.8% reported living in private residences in St Lucia and 14.06% in colleges on campus.

As optional questions:

- 15.54% of all participants (136) chose to identify themselves as LGBTIQ;
- 15.77% of all participants (138) chose to identify themselves as culturally and linguistically diverse;
- 8% of all participants (70) chose to identify themselves as international;
- 5.26% of all participants (46) chose to identify themselves as having a disability; and
- 2.06% of all participants (18) chose to identify themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

General Response

The majority of participants felt safe on campus during the day at 92%. Participants reported feeling unsafe on campus during the day at 1.37%, with 6.17% identifying that they felt safe sometimes during the day.

Participants reported feeling unsafe on campus during the night at 23.31%, with a further 51.89% reporting that they sometimes feel safe on campus at night.

Approximately half of participants reported altering their behaviour because they felt unsafe (46.97%). A further 24.57% indicated that they sometimes alter their behaviour for this reason. It is particularly dissatisfying to find that frequently reported behavioural changes included skipping classes at night, meaning that campus safety is having an impact on the educational experience of many students. Other frequently repeated responses included walking with keys in hand for protection, walking quickly, and maintaining a higher level of vigilance and safety awareness.

Participants reported behavioural changes, including avoiding dark or poorly lit locations, particularly the UQ Lakes bus stop and Dutton Park train station.

Participants reported feeling uncomfortable holding hands with their partner (noting the participation rate of students who identified themselves as LGBTIQ on the survey). One participant reported feeling unsafe dressing according to their true gender and dressing according to social expectations for the gender as designated at birth.

Other behaviours included pretending to talk on the phone, avoiding eye contact to avoid drawing attention, and parking as close as possible to their destination on campus in the evenings.

Problem Behaviours

Harassment

The most frequently reported unwanted behaviour was unwanted sexual comments, wolf whistling, cat calling or being asked unwanted questions about their sexuality out of context at 29.74% (221 of 743 participants for this question). These behaviours will be referred to as verbal harassment in this report.

Following this 6.19% reported someone touching their buttocks without consent (46 of 743).

Other unwanted sexual contact was reported by 4.71% of participants (35 of 743).

Flashing of sexual organs without consent was reported by 2.96% of participants (22 of 743).

No experiences of these unwanted behaviours was reported by 68.64% of participants (510 of 743).

Of this behaviour:

- 89.91% of participants (205) reported that the offender was unknown to them before the offense;
- 11.40% of participants (26) reported that the offender was an acquaintance or friend; and
- 91.67% of offenders reported were male (209), compared to 8.33% female (19).

Stalking

Participants were asked if they had ever been repeatedly followed, watched, phoned, texted, written, emailed, communicated with via social media or other ways, in a way that seemed obsessive or made them feel afraid or concerned for their safety.

Of those who answered this question 14.62% of participants (107) reported experiencing this.

Of this behaviour:

- 57.69% of participants (60) reported that the offender was someone unknown to them before the offence;
- 38.46% of participants (40) reported that the offender was an acquaintance or friend;
- 6.73% of participants (7) reported that the offender was a partner or ex partner;
- A concerning 3.85% of participants (4) reported that the offender was an academic or non teaching staff member; and
- 84.62% of offenders reported were male (88), compared to 15.38% female (16).

Sexual Assault

Of 721 participants for this question, 20.25% reported cases of unwanted sexual experiences (146). These assaults were reported as:

- Rape – 14 people;
- Sex when they were, or felt unable to, consent – 25 people;
- Assault by penetration – 13 people;
- Unwanted sexual experiences – 52 people.

It should be noted that the first three categories of offence fit the legal definition of rape though students did not always identify their experience as such.

When asked if offences had been repeated, 30 of 77 participants answered yes.

Of offenders, 66 of 77 were reported as male and 11 as female.

Locations of offending were reported as:

- 34 off campus, compared to 24 on campus;
- 28 in a private place, compared to 23 public place;
- 22 at a college; and
- 16 at a student event.

Other Physical Assault

When asked if participants had been hit or physically mistreated 3.43% answered yes (25) and 96.57% answered no (703).

Offenders were reported as:

- Academic or non teaching staff appeared as reported by 4 participants;
- An acquaintance or friend by 7 participants;
- Someone unknown before the offence by 13 participants;
- An ex partner or partner by 2 participants; and
- 20 offenders were male, compared to 4 females.

Reporting

When asked if participants had reported problem behaviours listed above, 10 answered yes, compared to 67 who answered no.

Of those who responded when asked why they did not report, most answered that they felt they wouldn't be taken seriously, wouldn't be believed, nothing could be done, or that it was a low level offence. Specific responses included:

- Feelings of humiliation, shame, and anger;
- Feelings of guilt by those who were intoxicated at the time of the offence;
- Feelings of guilt by those who felt they did not avoid a dangerous situation;
- Fear of further mistreatment if they reported;
- Feeling uncomfortable calling behaviour out; and
- That they were unable to identify accused.

Of those who reported offending behaviours:

- One reported to the head of their school and received an unsatisfactory apology from the staff member. The participant did not mention if a referral by head of school to the UQ Grievance procedure;
- Two reported contacting the police;
- One reported contacting an ambulance;

- Three reported contacting UQ Security or UQU Red Room Security:
 - For the first, no further action taken that student is aware of;
 - For the second, the matter was referred to the UQ Equity Office (now discontinued) and the behaviour ceased; and
 - For the third, the offender was escorted out of an event.

Problem locations

Key areas identified by students were the Green Bridge, Dutton Park, the UQ Lakes bus stop, and unlit spaces (particularly pathways on the edge of campus, near colleges, and on the way to the CityCat).

- Of those using the Green Bridge at night, 80.67% (313) did not feel safe.
- Of those using the UQ Lakes bus stop at night, 56.35% (275) did not feel safe.
- Of those using Chancellors Place bus stop at night, 24.38% (128) did not feel safe.

Behaviours listed above were reported as having occurred in areas security does not patrol, areas security patrols, and staffed areas, suggesting a need for increased security measures and improved service.

- The Green Bridge is partially patrolled by UQ Security. UQ has advised that past halfway on the bridge the Dutton Park Police Station should be contacted.
- Areas UQ Security already patrols which were reported as locations where offences have occurred are the Grassy Knoll area, the Great Court, Chancellors Place and UQ Lakes bus stops, Hawken Engineering, and Schonell Drive.
- Staffed areas that were reported as locations where offending have occurred are the Biological Sciences Library and the Red Room.

Counselling Services Accessed

Of 705 participants, 9.36% (66) reported accessing counselling services, 78.44% (553) reported that they had not, and 12.20% (86) reported that they were unaware of these services on campus.

Few participants advised which services they used, however several reported that Student Help on Campus had been helpful. Staff member Mitchell Robson was specifically mentioned by three participants as very helpful and professional. Participants also accessed online counselling and other services through UQ Union for assistance.

Other services or resources mentioned included the UQ Equity Office, UQ psychologists, welfare officers, the disability support services, and sexual harassment guidelines.

One responded noted that when attempting to access counselling services they had to make an appointment more than a week in advance.

Conclusions

Reported concerns about safety dramatically exceed reporting of problem behaviour involving physical assault, however harassment behaviours were frequently reported. To prevent students from feeling unsafe, more information about the safety precautions already taken can be provided.

The most common type of incident is street harassment, followed by more serious sexual harassment.

It is also apparent that when dealing with all problem behaviours, students are under reporting problems to UQ. This means that students do not feel comfortable approaching staff about their problems and that therefore UQ is not being made aware of trends that need to be addressed.

Currently UQ Security patrol the UQ Lakes and Chancellors Place bus stops, surveillance cameras are present, there is a phone box that automatically calls their office at each bus stop, and all student identity cards have UQ Security's phone number on the back. UQ Security also patrol part of the Green Bridge area as do police from the Dutton Park Police Station who also patrol that side of the bridge. Following lobbying by UQ Union, police patrols have increased in the Dutton Park train station and Green Bridge areas.

Recommendations

Overall UQ Union will be aiming to:

- Continue liaising with UQ and UQ Security to address safety on campus;
- Continue to fund valuable programs such as the availability of free counsellors through Student Help on Campus;
- Lobby for increased lighting on campus;
- Lobby for increased visibility of UQ Security patrols;
- Increase student awareness of the UQ Code of Conduct and reporting processes;
- Increase student awareness of UQ Security's services and of the Campus Safety Bus;
- Increase feelings of safety on campus; and
- Run consent and safety awareness campaigns on campus.

To achieve some of these aims the UQ Union will be initiating an ongoing security awareness campaign through social media and poster advertising. We will place posters in the Union complex outlining UQ Code of Conduct policy for specific areas outlined in the survey, namely harassment, stalking, and assault. These posters will include security's phone number, the Dutton Park Police Station phone number, counselling services on campus, and details the UQ grievance and misconduct procedures. The aim of this advertising is to ensure students are aware of their rights on campus, feel empowered to report problem behaviour, and are discouraged from infringing on the rights of others.

As students reported fear of not being taken seriously as a reason for not reporting, the UQ Union will continue to liaise with UQ Security and UQ staff to discuss behaviours that discourage reporting and recommending changes. UQ Union has already attended meetings with UQ staff and with the UQ Student Integrity and Misconduct Steering Committee to discuss matters relating to the reporting and how matters are resolved and will pursue this matter at upcoming meetings.

While concern for safety at night was reported at the Chancellors Place and UQ Lakes bus stops, these fears were reported in far higher numbers than reports of problem behaviours. Here, perhaps the problem is one of perception. As part of UQ Union's general response to the survey, we will be lobbying with UQ Security to improve visibility on campus as they already patrol these areas and lobbying UQ to increase lighting to improve feelings of safety.

The Green Bridge and Dutton Park area are particularly difficult to deal with as UQ Security does not patrol past a particular point on the bridge. UQ Union will liaise with UQ Security to improve visibility in this area. UQ Union will also advertise the existence of the emergency contact points located at UQ Lakes and Chancellors Place bus stops. These orange safety points contact UQ Security and are useful in the event that students are unable to make phone calls. UQ Union will also be distributing merchandise with UQ Security's emergency contact number, including a key ring torch. UQ Union will also be distributing cards at market day containing UQ Security's phone number and the Dutton Park Police Station phone number. UQ Union will also be advertising the Campus Safety Bus and that UQ Security can escort students on request. It should also be noted that surveillance already exists in this area and that, as mentioned above, Dutton Park Police Station have increased patrols to these areas following lobbying by UQ Union.

UQ Union will also lobby UQ regarding safety around night classes seeking to improve the visibility of UQ Security in key areas classes are scheduled at.

Unfortunately the overwhelmingly apparent trend from this data is that women are the victim of assaults and harassment that occur on campus while men are perpetrators. The UQ Women's Collective will be running a consent and safety campaign during semester 2 to highlight this issue and advertise how to respond to offending and provide general education on sexual violence and assault.