



St Leo's College

Whole-of-Organisation Assessment

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

Executive Summary

St Leo's College is committed to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive residential community where every member is treated with respect and dignity. The College has undertaken a Whole-of-Organisation Assessment ('Assessment') to support this commitment and meet the requirements of the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Grounded in the College's Catholic ethos and mission to develop young men of character, integrity and service, the Assessment draws on evidence-informed practice and is guided by Change the Story and the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032. It examines the gendered drivers of violence, recognises factors that may increase vulnerability and identifies key strengths, risks and barriers across the College's operations, including leadership and governance, culture, systems, student support, community engagement, and policies and procedures.

The Assessment identifies several key strengths at St Leo's College, including a strong commitment to leadership and governance, a clear Catholic foundation, dedicated residential support, established relationships with UQ and external support services, and a range of mechanisms through which residents can access support, disclose concerns and report incidents. St Leo's highly engaged residential community provides opportunities to build strong relationships, identify concerns early and foster meaningful connections among residents. The experience and diversity of the College Council further strengthens governance oversight with members bringing expertise across Catholic education, law, finance, and the St Leo's alumni community.

The Assessment also highlights that a positive residential culture cannot be achieved through policies, procedures and support services alone. The structures, norms, peer relationships, leadership practices and daily experiences of College life influence how residents understand respect, relationships, masculinity, consent and acceptable behaviour. As such, the Assessment identifies the need for continued focus on student culture, leadership, peer norms, bystander capability, gendered attitudes and behaviours, and the consistent communication and reinforcement of expectations across the College and community.

The findings also highlight opportunities to further strengthen the College's approach to prevention and response. Priorities include embedding a whole-of-organisation approach to gender-based violence prevention and strengthening staff and resident capability. This includes ensuring clear and accessible reporting and disclosure pathways, using data and feedback to identify any emerging risks, and consistently implementing, monitoring and reviewing policies and practices.

These findings will guide the College's ongoing work to prevent gender-based violence, strengthen its response, and foster a positive residential culture. The focus will be on translating the identified priorities into practical actions that build the College's capacity to

prevent gender-based violence, response appropriately when concerns arise, and foster a resident environment in which residents and staff feel safe, connected, respected and supported. This will require a coordinated and shared responsibility across leadership, staff, student leaders, residents and the wider St Leo's community, with a shared commitment to the dignity, safety and wellbeing of every member of its community.

Introduction

St Leo's College is an all-male Catholic residential college affiliated with The University of Queensland. It was founded in 1917 by Brisbane's Catholic Archbishop, Sir James Duhig D.D., and was located at 259 Wickham Terrace between 1917 to 1960. St Leo's College within The University of Queensland was opened on 12 March 1961.

St Leo's is home to 210 students who come from predominantly rural and regional Queensland with approximately 10% from overseas countries and another 10% from the Brisbane metro area. Over 95% of its cohort are undergraduate students with the remainder undertaking their postgraduate studies. Over 75% of students study at The University of Queensland and the other 25% are studying at Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University, or the Australian Catholic University.

The College is governed by a skills-based College Council consisting of nine members, and employs approximately 19 key staff, excluding contractors and casual tutors. The College operates under a College Executive Team comprising of the Head of College and Chief Executive, Deputy Head of College, and Dean of Student Wellbeing.

The College Council is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the College and for monitoring the performance of management in achieving the College's strategic objectives.

This Whole-of-Organisation Assessment (Assessment) is informed by evidence on the underlying causes of gender-based violence. Drawing on Australia's national prevention framework, Change the Story, it recognises that violence against women is driven by systemic attitudes, behaviours, and social norms, including:

- The acceptance or normalisation of violence against women
- Restrictive expectations about gender and gender roles
- Unequal power dynamics that limit women's autonomy and influence in public and private settings
- Male peer cultures

Understanding and addressing these drivers is essential to creating safer, more respectful, and inclusive communities.

In preparing this Assessment, the College considered a range of sources, including student and staff feedback, existing policies and procedures, community standards, behaviour expectations, incident reporting data, student leadership initiatives, and relevant

governance and operational practices. Consultation with the College executive, staff, and student leaders has informed the Assessment, with ongoing engagement across the College community to support continuous improvement.

This Assessment provides an evidence-informed evaluation of the factors that support or hinder the College's efforts to prevent gender-based violence and respond effectively to disclosures and incidents. Consistent with the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence; these factors are considered as enablers, risks, and barriers. The findings will guide strategic planning, inform future initiatives, and help ensure St Leo's College continues to align with national expectations, sector best practice, and its Catholic ethos and values.

Leadership, Culture and Environment

St Leo's is the only single-sex male college and one of ten independent colleges affiliated with The University of Queensland, St Lucia campus. Its residents regularly interact with residents from the other nine colleges through the Inter-College Council (ICC) competitions and events.

St Leo's College is an all-male residential college providing accommodation and meals, academic support, pastoral care, leadership development, social, sporting, and cultural opportunities, and a strong sense of community and belonging. Most residents are aged 18 years or older, although a small number commence their residency while under 18 years of age.

The College employs a diverse workforce that includes people of different ages, genders, backgrounds, and experiences. As an equal opportunity employer, St Leo's is committed to fostering an inclusive workplace and community. The College's leadership and governance structures reflect this commitment, with both men and women represented across management and governing bodies.

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Enablers	• Committed College Leadership and Council with responsibility for student safety, wellbeing and culture. • The College Leadership Team has extensive experience in universities and working with young people, with a deep commitment to the wellbeing and safety of staff and residents. • 24/7 staff support through on-site and on-call arrangements. UQ Security is also available to provide support 24/7. • Established student leadership structures that provide a link between residents and the College Leadership. • Ongoing Cultural Review provides an opportunity to strengthen culture, healthy masculinity, respect, consent, and accountability. • Strong relationships with UQ, QUT, ACU, Griffith University, and external specialist services. • College staff are members of the UQ Ally Network as well as the UQ First Responder Network. • The College Leadership works extensively with the Student Leadership Teams to provide opportunities for programs and activities that promote diversity, equity and inclusion.
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Systemic Risks	• Young male adults living in a highly social residential environment may experience increased exposure to peer influence, risk-taking and harmful behaviours. • Gender norms, peer expectations, and informal hierarchies may influence behaviour and relationships. • Annual turnover of residents and student leaders can affect continuity of positive cultural practices.
Barriers	• Differing levels of knowledge and understanding of GBV, consent, respectful relationships, and healthy masculinity. • Reluctance to challenge peers or report inappropriate or unacceptable behaviours. • Established practices or expectations that may not align with contemporary standards of safety and respect.
Key Actions in Response	• Continue and embed the Cultural Review. • Deliver ongoing GBV, consent, bystander and respectful relationships education. • Strengthen student leader capability and accountability. • Monitor culture through student feedback, incident data and other relevant indicators.

Structures, Norms and Practices

The structures, norms and everyday practices of a residential college have a significant influence on how students experience safety, belonging and respect. Student leadership, social activities, events, traditions, peer relationships and informal hierarchies all contribute to the culture of the College. At St Leo's, these experiences are shaped by the College's Catholic ethos and values of **Conscience, Compassion, Respect, Excellence, Emotional Literacy** and **Connectedness**, which provide a foundation for how members of the community are expected to treat and support one another.

St Leo's recognises that positive culture is not created through policies and processes alone. It requires consistent expectations, active leadership and a willingness to examine practices that may unintentionally reinforce exclusion, inequality, harmful behaviours or unsafe peer norms. It also requires the College community to actively live its Catholic ethos and values through relationships and decisions, daily actions, and creating an environment where every resident feels valued, respected, connected and safe.

Enablers	• Clear College values and behavioural expectations. • Student leadership structures that support community standards. • Established processes for student events and activities. • Opportunities for residents to develop leadership, responsibility, accountability and positive relationships.
Systemic Risks	• Peer culture and informal social hierarchies can influence behaviour. • Residential traditions, rituals and practices may reinforce behaviours or expectations that are inconsistent with a safe and respectful culture. • Student-led activities can create risks where appropriate planning, supervision or risk management is not undertaken.
Barriers	• Peer pressure and reluctance to challenge established norms. • Annual turnover of student leaders and residents. • Difficulty identifying informal practices that may not be visible to College leadership.
Key Actions in Response	• Review College activities, rituals and practices through a safety and cultural lens. • Strengthen ethical and active bystander and positive leadership education. • Ensure student leaders understand their responsibilities and boundaries. • Continue to challenge behaviours inconsistent with College values.

Systems and Infrastructure

St Leo's College has a range of measures in place to support the safety and security of residents, staff and visitors. The College is not a fully secure or restricted-access site; however, access to residential areas is limited to residents, staff and authorised visitors, with CCTV, staff presence and established procedures providing oversight of activity across the College. These measures provide a level of security appropriate to a residential college while recognising the open, communal and accessible nature of the College environment.

The College's IT infrastructure and services are proactively monitored, with cybersecurity risk mitigation and management supported through UQ and the College's external IT service provider. These arrangements are designed to minimise the risk of data breaches, unauthorised access and other cybersecurity incidents.

St Leo's provides 24-hour support through a combination of on-site and on-call staff. On-site staff monitor activity across the College through direct observation and CCTV, with significant or critical incidents escalated to the Head of College or their delegate. The College's on-call arrangements enable a rapid response, with access to UQ Security, UQ Student Support and Wellbeing Services (SSWS) and emergency services where required.

The College's Leadership team provides dedicated pastoral, wellbeing and residential support to students. Student matters are managed confidentially within the team, with clear protocols governing the collection, sharing, storage and handling of information to protect student privacy and confidentiality. The College maintains strong referral pathways with UQ and external support services to ensure students can access specialist assistance when required.

Staff have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), while students and staff have access to appropriate expert support, disclosure and reporting pathways. Together, these physical, digital, staffing and support arrangements provide a framework for maintaining a safe, responsive and supportive residential environment at St Leo's College.

Enablers	• Secure residential environment and established access controls. • Staff available on-site and/or on-call. • Incident management and risk management processes. • Access to UQ Security, UQ Student Support and Wellbeing Services and emergency services. • Event approval and risk assessment processes.
Systemic Risks	• Residential environments require a balance between privacy, independence and safety. • Physical spaces and social environments may create opportunities for unsafe behaviour. • Technology and communication systems require ongoing review to ensure reporting and support remain accessible.

Barriers	• Student practices may undermine established safety controls. • Resource and infrastructure constraints. • Residents may not consistently understand or follow security and safety procedures.
Key Actions in Response	• Regularly assess physical environments and emerging safety risks. • Review incident and safety data to inform risk management. • Maintain clear emergency, reporting and escalation processes. • Continue education about security, access and event safety. • Review Risk Management Framework and Risk Register.

Service Delivery

St Leo's College provides a holistic residential experience in which the residential environment is designed to support residents' academic development, personal growth, independence, relationships and preparation for life beyond university. As an all-male residential college, St Leo's places particular emphasis on creating a positive community where residents are encouraged to develop confidence, responsibility, respectful relationships and a strong sense of belonging.

Accommodation is provided in a range of room configurations, with shared bathroom facilities and communal spaces supporting both independent living and connection with others. Residents have access to three catered meals each day, as well as shared facilities for additional food preparation. The College provides a range of common spaces for study, recreation, socialising, exercise and relaxation.

Resident development and wellbeing are supported through the College Leadership team, including the Residential Assistants. Students have access to academic and wellbeing support, mentoring, and opportunities to develop leadership, interpersonal and professional skills. The College also provides opportunities for residents to engage with alumni, industry and community members through professional development, networking, mentoring and career-focused activities. These opportunities are increasingly supported through The Leo's Advantage, which connects residents with the broader St Leo's community and extends the benefits of the College experience beyond graduation.

St Leo's Catholic ethos provides an important foundation for residential life, with opportunities for students to engage in prayer, reflection and the sacramental life of the Church. The College's values underpin expectations for how students live together and contribute to the College community.

The College provides 24-hour support through a combination of on-site and on-call staff, including overnight Duties Officers and staff available to respond to critical incidents. Residents are also supported through established referral pathways to UQ and external wellbeing and specialist services where required.

All residents are members of the St Leo's College Students' Club, which provides opportunities to participate in social, cultural, sporting, service and community activities throughout the year. Residents also participate in the Inter-College Council, connecting St Leo's with other residential colleges across UQ through sporting, cultural, social and service activities. These experiences provide residents with opportunities to build relationships, develop leadership skills and contribute actively to the wider College and university communities.

Enablers	• Holistic residential model incorporating academic, pastoral, wellbeing and personal development support. • Staff available to support residents and facilitate referrals.
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	• Established relationships with UQ support services and external providers. • Student leadership, mentoring and development opportunities.
Systemic Risks	• Students may experience competing academic, employment, social and personal demands that affect engagement with prevention and support services. • Students may commence at different points during the year and miss key information. • Residents may not recognise behaviours as requiring support or intervention.
Barriers	• Low engagement with formal education or support programs. • Reluctance to disclose concerns or seek assistance. • Information provided at orientation may not be retained throughout the year.
Key Actions in Response	• Provide prevention and safety messaging throughout the year. • Ensure multiple accessible pathways for disclosure and support. • Embed prevention within existing student development and leadership programs. • Ensure staff and student leaders understand referral and response responsibilities.

Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures provide the formal framework for establishing expectations, managing risk and responding to incidents. St Leo's has a range of policies and processes that support safe community living and provide guidance for residents, staff and student leaders.

The effectiveness of these policies depends on more than their existence. They must be understood, accessible and consistently applied, with key expectations reinforced through induction, student leadership, education and everyday College practice. Regular review is also required to ensure the policy framework remains aligned with legislative, regulatory and University requirements.

Enablers	• Established policies supporting safe community living and appropriate behaviour. • Alignment with UQ requirements and relevant legislation. • Formal processes for incident management, risk management and student conduct.
Systemic Risks	• The policy environment must continue to evolve in response to legislative and regulatory requirements. • Policies may not always reflect the complexity of contemporary residential culture and student behaviour.
Barriers	• Students may have limited understanding of policies or may not actively engage with them. • Policies can be perceived as compliance documents rather than practical guidance for community living. • Formal policy review processes can take time.
Key Actions in Response	• Review relevant policies through a prevention, safety and student experience lens. • Simplify key expectations into accessible student-facing resources. • Reinforce policies through orientation, leadership training and ongoing education. • Regularly review policies against legislative, regulatory and UQ requirements. • Review Risk Management Framework and Risk Register.

Management and Governance

St Leo's College is a not-for-profit charitable institution and operates as a residential college within The University of Queensland. The College operates in accordance with its Constitution, as approved by The University of Queensland Senate, and relevant UQ statutes, policies and requirements. As a Catholic institution, St Leo's is ultimately accountable to the Bishops of Queensland and maintains an established relationship with the Provincial Finance Council of Queensland, which provides financial oversight and advice within the broader governance structures of the Catholic Church in Queensland.

The St Leo's College Council is responsible for the governance and strategic oversight of the College and provides oversight of its financial, operational and strategic performance. The Council works within the College's constitutional and ecclesial governance arrangements and maintains appropriate reporting and accountability relationships with the Provincial Finance Council and, ultimately, the Bishops of Queensland.

The Council brings together a diverse range of professional, community and educational experience, supporting informed and effective governance of the College. This includes two Council members who are St Leo's alumni with professional experience in law and finance, as well as members with experience working in Catholic schools and Catholic education. This breadth of experience provides valuable perspectives across governance, finance, legal matters, education, student development and the Catholic context in which St Leo's operates.

The Head of College reports to the College Council and is responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of the College, supported by the College staff. The College Leadership has specific responsibility for supporting student wellbeing, development, residential life and engagement.

The College's Catholic ethos and values provide an important foundation for its governance and operations, informing the way St Leo's seeks to create a respectful, inclusive and supportive residential community in which residents are encouraged to develop personally, academically and as responsible members of society.

Enablers	• College Council provides governance and oversight of organisational risk. • College leadership has responsibility for day-to-day operations and student safety. • Established risk management and reporting structures. • Access to professional development and specialist advice.
Systemic Risks	• Student safety and GBV prevention require sustained organisational attention. • High turnover of residents and student leaders requires continual renewal of knowledge and capability. • Emerging legislative and regulatory requirements may increase organisational responsibilities.

Barriers	• Limited organisational resources and capacity. • Risk information may be distributed across different systems and areas of College operations. • Student culture can change more quickly than formal governance and policy processes.
Key Actions in Response	• Maintain student safety and GBV as standing risk and governance considerations. • Provide regular reporting to Council on risks, incidents, prevention activities and actions. • Ensure appropriate resources for prevention, training and response. • Incorporate student safety and cultural indicators into strategic and operational planning. • Review Risk Management Framework and Risk Register.

Community Engagement

St Leo's College is grounded in its Catholic ethos and is committed to the development of young men who are confident, responsible and respectful members of their communities. This ethos informs the way the College approaches residential life, student development, leadership, relationships, service and engagement with the wider community. Residents are encouraged to reflect on their responsibilities to others and to contribute positively to society.

The College provides opportunities for residents to engage with the Catholic tradition through prayer, reflection, liturgy and connection with the broader Catholic community. St Leo's also encourages participation in charitable, community and service activities, recognising the importance of social responsibility and contributing to the common good.

St Leo's has a diverse student community, with residents drawn from metropolitan, regional and rural areas and from a broad range of schools and backgrounds. The College maintains relationships with schools, community organisations and other Catholic institutions, providing pathways for prospective students and opportunities to strengthen connections across the wider community.

The College recognises that relationships formed at St Leo's can extend well beyond a student's time in residence. It is strengthening alumni engagement through reunions, professional development and networking opportunities, mentoring, guest speakers and philanthropic engagement. Through The Leo's Advantage, the College is developing stronger connections between current residents, alumni and community partners to create opportunities for professional development, knowledge sharing and lifelong engagement with the St Leo's community.

St Leo's also provides scholarships to assist students who may otherwise face financial barriers to attending university and living at College. These opportunities support access to a St Leo's residential experience for students from a range of circumstances.

The College maintains a strong and collaborative relationship with The University of Queensland, working with the University and other partners to support student development, wellbeing, academic success and positive participation in university and community life.

Enablers	• Strong alumni and community connections. • Established relationship with UQ and other residential colleges. • Opportunities to engage alumni, community partners and external experts in education and mentoring. • Catholic ethos providing a foundation for dignity, respect, relationships, responsibility and service.
Systemic Risks	• Alumni and former residents can influence contemporary student culture. • External expectations or historical perspectives may not always align with contemporary College expectations.

	• Community relationships can reinforce positive or negative cultural norms.
Barriers	• Differing views about College culture and established practices. • Limited understanding among some external stakeholders of contemporary residential college expectations. • Maintaining engagement across a diverse alumni and community network.
Key Actions in Response	• Engage alumni and community partners in positive cultural and educational initiatives. • Clearly communicate contemporary expectations around safety, respect and conduct. • Strengthen partnerships with UQ and specialist organisations. • Ensure external contributors understand and support the College's expectations.