

Sexual Violence and Harassment, Prevention & Response Committee Updates Bulletin

07

FEBRUARY 2026



Pictured L-R : Rebecca Connolly [UG], Gemma MacNally [UG], Gillian Connolly [TCD], Rachel Skelly [TCD], Elaine Mearse [TCD], Niamh Kavanagh [UG], Pádraig MacNeela [UG], Maisie Hall [UG] at the Speak Out National Report Launch October 2025

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SUPPORTS

[A list of supports available to staff & students can be accessed here.](#)

If you would like more information or guidance on the supports available please email Rebecca / Niamh in confidence.

Contact Us

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Sexual Violence and Harassment,
Prevention & Response Team

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2025

Everyone deserves to feel safe, in classrooms, on campus, at home, and online.

That commitment sits at the heart of the Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment: Prevention & Response (SVH) programme at the University of Galway.

For 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2025, the SVHPR Team were proud to launch a new video co-created with students and staff. Designed to spark honest conversations, deepen awareness, and reaffirm that sexual violence and harassment have no place in our university community. This project reflects the voices and lived experiences of our campus community and stands as a shared call to action: we all have a role to play.



[Watch Video 1](#)



[Watch Video 2](#)

Active* Champions AY2025 / 2026

We were delighted to welcome a new group of Active* Champions to the University of Galway's Galway and Shannon campuses for AY 2025/26.

The Active* Champions are a network of student peer educators and leaders who support initiatives focused on ending sexual violence and harassment, promoting consent, sexual health and wellbeing, and developing active bystander skills. Through training and ongoing support, Active* Champions develop strong sensitivity and knowledge around positive, active consent; the prevention of sexual violence and harassment; and effective signposting to supports for those who have experienced sexual violence or harassment.

The Active* Champions are involved in developing and supporting campus-based initiatives on ending sexual violence and harassment, as well as engaging in informal, peer-to-peer conversations on relevant topics.

[Learn more about the Active* Champions here](#), or follow them on [Instagram](#) to stay up to date.



University Skills Passport | USP



Active* Champion

Active* Champions are passionate student leaders committed to ending sexual violence and building a culture of consent at the University of Galway in partnership with Active* Consent. Through specialist training and ongoing support, Active* Champions...

- Communication
- Empathy
- Ethical Awareness
- Leadership
- Teamwork

The SVHPR Team is happy to announce the launch of the "Active* Champion" and "First Point of Contact" University Skills Passport.

The USP is all about recognizing, articulating and rewarding skill development. Employers are seeking graduates who have a rich and well rounded skills profile.

The USP gives students a mechanism to evidence and develop these skills, and a formal credential from the university to verify this.

[Learn more about USP here](#)



First Point of Contact Disclosure Management

Delivered in partnership with Active* Consent, Galway Rape Crisis Centre, University of Galway Student Counselling Service, and the Office of the Vice President for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, this psychotherapist-led training programme equips...

- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Self-Awareness

ENLIGHT

ENLIGHT Awards - Uppsala Sweden

Two student-led projects at University of Galway have won top prizes for sustainability and diversity and inclusion as part of the ENLIGHT European University Alliance. The awards were announced at this year's ENLIGHT Teaching and Learning Conference in recognition of outstanding initiatives led by students that demonstrate impact, innovation, and alignment with ENLIGHT's core pillars.

In the Diversity and Inclusion category, Galway's Active* Champions project was awarded first place. Judges highlighted the project's peer-education approach and its impressive impact in addressing key challenges around inclusion and awareness, emphasising that "we can never have enough initiatives that highlight these issues."

The award was accepted by postgraduate student María José Hun on behalf of a dedicated team of Active* Champions who are a network of student peer educators and leaders for initiatives on ending sexual violence and harassment, consent, sexual health and well-being, and active bystander skills. The Active* Champions initiative is led by the Office of the VP Equality Diversity and Inclusion.



ENLIGHT /Student Network Bootcamp



Rebecca hosted a workshop as part of the Enlight Student Network Bootcamp at the University of Galway in August. It was a pleasure to meet so many peer educators from across Europe. The session provided a great opportunity to showcase the work of the University of Galway Active* Champions, share experiences, and discuss student-centred approaches to consent and sexual violence and harassment prevention. We also made valuable connections with colleagues and students from across the Enlight network.

SPEAKOUT - National Report Launch

Universities and colleges across Ireland have teamed up to release national data from anonymous reports of abuse and harassment by staff and students from 2022-2024. The data shows that bullying and harassment were the most common abuses reported to Speak Out, an anonymous online reporting tool introduced at 17 higher education institutions (HEIs) in a bid to enhance safety for students and staff. See details of the Speak Out National Report 2024 findings.

Reported by TCD "Universities and colleges across Ireland have teamed up to release national data from anonymous reports of abuse and harassment by staff and students from 2022-2024.

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abuses reported to Speak Out, an anonymous online reporting tool introduced at 17 higher education institutions (HEIs) in a bid to enhance safety for students and staff.

Funded by the Higher Education Authority, Speak Out's dataset will be used to inform future responses to abuse and harassment in higher education, and to encourage formal reporting.

While 1,011 staff and students made anonymous reports over this period, only 12% of students made a formal complaint to their university or college about the abuse while only 4% of students made a complaint to An Garda Síochána.

The report, based on data from the 16 HEIs that implemented this tool from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024, should not be read as reflecting the true prevalence of these behaviours. The number of reports made through Speak Out is expected to rise as the service becomes more established. HEIs exist within the wider cultural and societal context, and as such many of the issues reported are reflective of the broader experiences of those living within Ireland. [Learn more here.](#)

Foundations in Investigating Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education training

The SVHPR Team and Aoife Cooke, Head of EDI, recently attended the Foundations in Investigating Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education training, facilitated by Prof. Melissa Hamilton (Professor of Law & Criminal Justice, University of Surrey) and Clarissa J. DiSantis, MSSW (Education & Training Lead, Active* Consent). The session provided valuable insights into the significant impacts that failing to prevent and effectively respond to sexual violence and harassment can have on universities, highlighting the importance of robust, trauma-informed and institution-wide approaches



Pictured L-R : Rebecca Connolly , Niamh Kavanagh Masie Hall, Pádraig MacNeela, Gemma MacNally



Pictured L-R : Prof. Melissa Hamilton, Clarissa J. DiSantis

Dundalk Institute of Technology

Understanding & Responding to Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

In December, Rebecca completed the Understanding & Responding to Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence module at DKIT. The training brought together a mix of practitioners, Gardaí, and support services, and it was encouraging to see that we are all sharing the same message.



“Completing the module has been an invaluable experience. It has strengthened the work we are already doing at the University of Galway, provided fresh insights, and equipped me with new tools and approaches to improve and influence our initiatives going forward. I’m excited to apply what we’ve learned to create safer, more supportive, and informed campus environment for all.”

RiVeR Project Conference



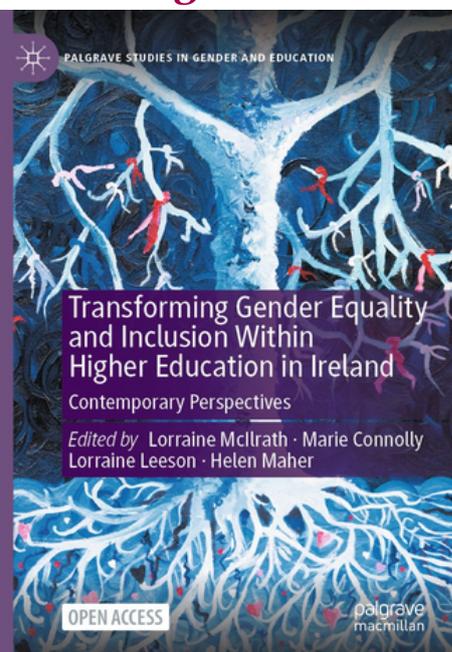
The DKIT RiVeR Project Annual Community of Practice Conference, themed Educating for Change: Celebrating a Decade of DSGBV Education at DKIT took place in January 2026.

University of Galway had a strong presence at the conference,

with presentations from Prof. Pádraig Mac Neela, Sinéad McGrath, Patrice Byrne and Active* Champions, Liam McBrearty, and Rebecca Connolly. The event provided a valuable opportunity to share practice, highlight ongoing work in education, training, and research, and to connect with colleagues committed to a zero-tolerance approach to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.



Transforming Gender Equality and Inclusion within Higher Education in Ireland – Contemporary Perspectives



The “Transforming Gender Equality and Inclusion within Higher Education in Ireland – Contemporary Perspectives” book was officially launched by Mary Mitchell O’Connor, former Minister of State at the Department of Education at Mary Immaculate College in October 2025. The publication features contributions from University of Galway colleagues, including chapters on ‘Mobilisation and Resistance at Galway: Impact and Wider Influence on Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education’ by Dr Helen Maher, Aoife Cooke, Dr Laura Loftus, and on ‘The Active* Consent Programme’ in relation to Higher Ed, by Prof. Pádraig Mac Neela, Gavin Friel, Charlotte McIvor, Paul O’Reilly, Dr Siobhán O’Higgins and Rebecca Connolly. The launch was a great opportunity to celebrate research and practice that is shaping gender equality and inclusion across higher education in Ireland.

[The book is available to read here.](#)

SVHPR 1 Hour Introduction Session



The SVHPR Team is delighted to announce the launch of our 1-hour Introduction to Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention & Response session. This session aims to build awareness of the SVH landscape in higher education and ensure participants are familiar with the policies, procedures, and supports that underpin effective prevention and response.

Participants will:

- Gain an overview of the Sexual Violence and Harassment Programme of Work
- Understand the relevant policy landscape
- Develop awareness of the prevalence of sexual violence and harassment in higher education, both nationally and locally
- Understand what we mean by sexual violence and harassment
- Learn about the impact of trauma
- Learn how to support a student or colleague
- Know how to direct themselves or others to appropriate supports



Booking information

Sessions are available to book now via CoreHR, or you can contact the SVHPR Team directly to arrange a session for your team or unit.

SPEAKOUT

Speak Out is an online anonymous reporting tool available to all students and staff to disclose incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination, hate crime, coercive behaviour / control, stalking, assault, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape.

The information you provide using this tool is valuable as the data collated will help inform initiatives aimed at addressing bullying, harassment and ending sexual violence and harassment at the University of Galway.

It is important to remember that as the Speak Out reporting tool is completely anonymous, there is no way of identifying or contacting any member of the university community who uses the tool.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting [FGM/C] Training

The SVHPR Team recently hosted the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) to deliver specialist training for medical staff in the student health unit, colleagues and students from the CNMHS on the FGM/C, and Free FGM Treatment Services.

This training raised awareness of Female Genital Mutilation, its health impacts, and the supports available through the IFPA's national service, supporting staff to respond appropriately and sensitively in a healthcare setting.

[Further information on the IFPA Free FGM Treatment Service is available here.](#)

SAFEZONE APP

The safety and wellbeing of students and staff is our top priority at the University of Galway. We have introduced a free smartphone app that promotes staff and student safety across all of our campuses.

SafeZone enables users to call for help and assistance when they need it most, giving you fast access to security whenever and wherever you are on campus, and allows the University to send notifications to users, e.g. in the event of severe weather or building closure.

SafeZone also allows you to easily check in and share your location on campus.

The app is now available to download from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).



Available Training

STAFF & STUDENT

First Point of Contact | Disclosure Management Training

You don't need to have all the answers to be there for someone, but knowing how to respond matters. This training is for staff who may be the first person a friend, colleague, student, or peer turns to after experiencing sexual violence or harassment.

The programme builds confidence and practical skills for responding to disclosures with care, respect, and sensitivity. You'll learn how to listen without judgment, understand your role and boundaries, and know where and how to signpost someone to the right supports and options. The training also looks at looking after yourself, recognising the emotional impact of supporting others, and knowing when to seek help. If you want to be better equipped to support others, this training offers valuable, real-world skills in creating a safer and more supportive student community.

Upcoming Training Sessions:

10.00 am - 1.00 pm Thursdays:

5th March | 12th March | 19th March | 29th March [Sign up here](#)



NEW!

Staff Bystander Intervention

Now available on Canvas.

This is a module designed to provide training and other resources on how to step in, speak up and support others in situations of sexual violence and harassment.

By the end of the programme, participants will be able to:

1. Recognise inappropriate or harmful behaviour and understand the impact of sexual violence.
2. Appreciate the role and responsibility of a bystander in promoting safety and respect.
3. Apply safe and effective strategies to intervene or seek help.
4. Contribute to a campus culture of consent, respect, and active citizenship.



STAFF

Staff eLearning Programme: Trauma-Informed Institution

Now available on Canvas.

This short module takes approximately **30 minutes** to complete.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand what 'trauma' is and recognise common trauma responses and impacts.
- Promote and prioritise safety in interactions.
- Know best practices for responding to a disclosure.
- Apply trauma-informed principles to teaching, learning, or campus life contexts (as relevant to your role), ensuring appropriate support and avoiding re-traumatisation.
- Identify sources of help and access further information and resources.





Ending Sexual Violence & Harassment

At the University of Galway, we recognise that sexual violence and harassment, including, but not limited to, rape, sexual violence, sexual harassment, stalking, and relationship abuse, are serious issues that affect university communities.

The Sexual Violence and Harassment, Prevention & Response team, Niamh & Rebecca are committed to creating a safer environment in which to live, work, and study. We believe that every student has the right to feel safe, respected, and supported.

Our free services include:



**Confidential
Triage
Meetings**



**Support
Options**



**Reporting
Options**



**Training &
Education**



**Get Involved:
Advocacy &
Allyship**



**Advice & Support
for: Clubs,
Societies, Class
Reps & Managers**



Rebecca
Connolly

Niamh
Kavanagh

Sexual Violence and Harassment,
Prevention & Response Team

As we welcome you to our university community, we want you to know, ending sexual violence is everyone's responsibility, and support is always available.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence or harassment, recently or in the past, or you are worried about your own behaviour, we are here to support you.

**Scan here to get
support or learn
more.**

