Information sheet: Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
Scholars Forum 2026

This information sheet provides information on how to be safe and what to do if you feel unsafe or experience sexual harassment.

Introduction

The Scholars Forum is an important part of the Australia Awards South Asia and Mongolia (AASAM) program. The Forum provides an opportunity for scholars to network, deepen their understanding of the meeting theme, and explore the potential for collaborative work in future.

It is important for us all to be safe and to know what to do if we feel unsafe or experience sexual harassment.

Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) encompasses a range of behaviours and actions including but not limited to sexual harassment, coercion, abuse of power, and any form of sexual exploitation or abuse. SEAH is not always obvious, repeated, or continuous. It can include one-off incidents, or it can include a pattern of behaviour that makes the working environment uncomfortable or threatening in a sexually hostile way.

Sexual harassment does not have to be directed at a specific person. It can also affect people who are exposed to or witness it (for example, overhearing a conversation between colleagues or seeing a colleague's sexually explicit screensaver).

A wide range of behaviours constitute sexual harassment – including:

- sexually suggestive comments or jokes that offend or intimidate
- intrusive questions about a person's private life or physical appearance
- inappropriate staring or leering
- inappropriate physical contact
- unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing.
- sharing or threatening to share intimate images or video without consent
- images or videos that are sexually suggestive or that constitute a sexual advance
- repeated or inappropriate invitations to go out for drinks, meals, coffee etc.
- requests or pressure for sex or other sexual acts
- actual or attempted rape or sexual assault
- being followed or watched inappropriately, or someone loitering inappropriately, either in person or via technology
- sexually explicit comments made in person or in writing, or indecent messages, phone calls or emails—including the use of emojis with sexual connotations.
- sexual gestures, indecent exposure or inappropriate display of the body
- technology-facilitated unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature—including during virtual meetings
- repeated or inappropriate advances on email or other online social technologies.

Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) is a critical issue and demands attention in all development programs including Australia Awards.[1] PSEAH refers to the measures and mechanisms that are in place to prevent and address any incidents of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment within specific contexts such as programs and projects.

It is necessary that all participants actively contribute to PSEAH by promoting a culture of respect, dignity, and equality throughout this workshop. Any incidents or concerns related to PSEAH must be reported promptly and handled with sensitivity and confidentiality. Reporting channels and procedures are provided in this information sheet.

Disclosing sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or sexual abuse

AASAM has zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

If you experience or witness sexual harassment and would like to talk to someone confidentially or report the incident, you can share the incident with any of the Australia Awards team present at the Scholars Forum.

Our team Safeguarding Focal Point is Olivia Leach. Contact: 0490 966 929

In a situation where the incident is criminal and the victim, survivor or whistleblower wishes to report the incident to ACT Policing, please contact: 13 1444. The Australia Awards team can also assist with this.

Please Note:
AASAM will offer support to victims/survivors irrespective of the lodgement of a formal complaint. The decisions regarding support and reporting will respect the wishes of the survivor.

You may also choose to confidentially report on sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, as well as any other observations of corruption, fraud, terrorism support, human trafficking, slavery, child abuse, or any other violations of the Code of Conduct or the Law via the Palladium Integrity Hotline, accessed at palladium.ethicspoint.com. Palladium manages Australia Awards in South Asia & Mongolia on behalf of DFAT.

The Integrity Hotline is hosted by Navex EthicsPoint, a third party engaged by Palladium to collect reports through a website form. Reports will be confidentially shared with specific trained individuals within Palladium to evaluate and respond to.

All incidents investigated by Palladium will be reported to DFAT according to the PSEAH policy to improve safety procedures.

[1] As per the letter of offer signed by all participants, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's *Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy* can be found here