



CASE STUDY

Promoting positive cultural change at University of Technology Sydney with *Consent Matters*

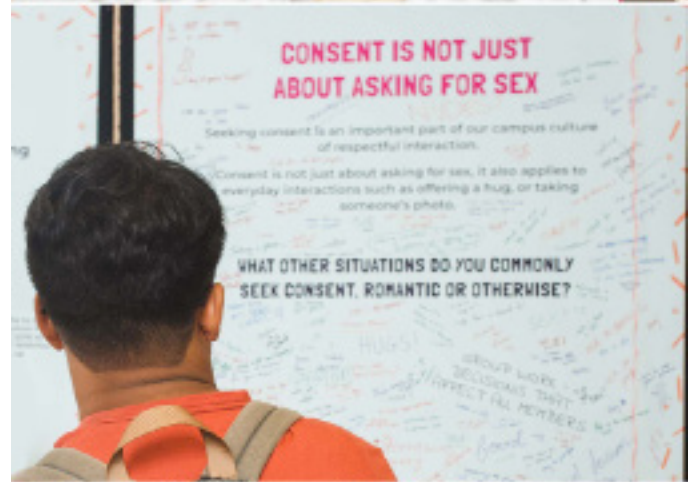
Background

University of Technology Sydney (UTS) is well-known for its innovative teaching. As an institution, it is their commitment to drive social change both on campus and beyond.

The university introduced Epigeum’s Consent Matters course in 2018 as part of a suite of initiatives to help promote a safer university community. UTS has run several sexual violence prevention schemes, each focusing on shifting attitudes and changing behaviors on campus. Examples of initiatives undertaken range from education about consent to campus security enhancements, all of which are underpinned by six guiding principles: Honesty. Integrity. Authenticity. Transparency. Inclusivity. Respect.

While progress has been made over the years, UTS wholeheartedly acknowledges that there is still much more to do. For this case study, we spoke to Catharine Pruscino, UTS’s Program Manager of “Respect. Now. Always.,” a nation wide campaign led by Universities Australia (UA) that aims to eliminate sexual assault and harassment on Australian campuses.

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Implementation

Consent Matters plays an important role in the university's strategy to build a culture of respectful behaviour. The course is mandatory for all students and staff, and requires a 100% pass mark. "We see it as one part of UTS's efforts in helping reduce unwanted sexual behaviour and encouraging healthy relationships within our community," says Catharine. Students are encouraged to revisit the course to refresh their knowledge throughout the academic year.

UTS has minimised barriers to accessing this online content, working closely with Epigeum to adapt the course to learners with access requirements. In addition, UTS's Higher Education Language and Presentation Support (HELPS) provides sessions to assist non-native English speakers in completing the course.

The university takes a serious approach to the sensitive topics covered within Consent Matters seriously, offering counselling to all students and staff, and an exemption process for those with a valid reason to not undertake the course. UTS has customised the course to link to UTS-specific resources within and outside the university, complementing Epigeum's in-course links.

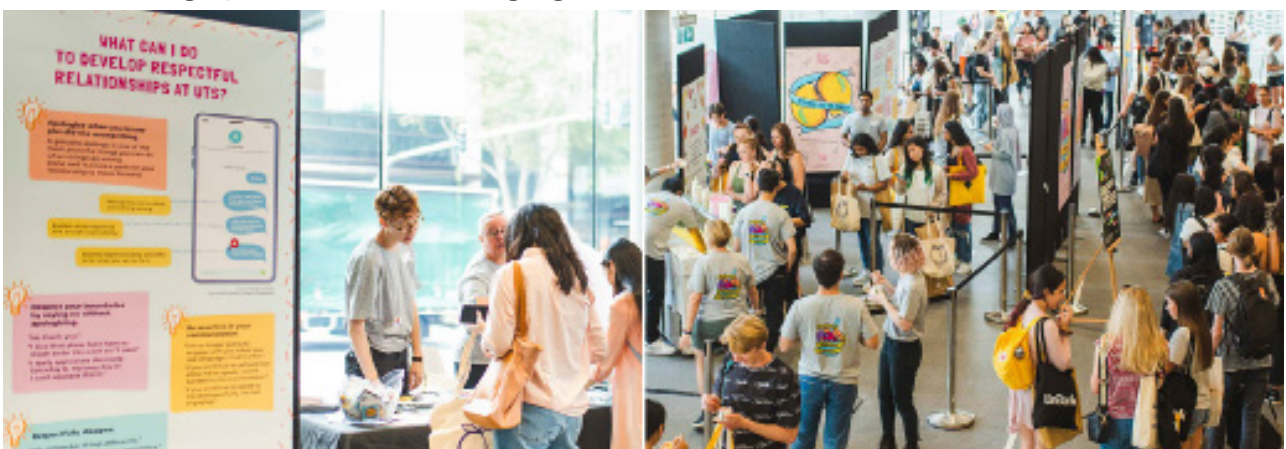
Catharine continues to spread sexual consent awareness through promotional messaging,

reaching out using the university's newsletters and social media. Key student engagement teams also work to spread awareness, including the Library who run Consent Matters training sessions, and the Activate UTS's sporting clubs and societies. UTS' bold sexual consent merchandise on sale such as pens and t-shirts also act as a visual advertisement to help students engage with the topic and build a better understanding of consent.

"We want the work we do around consent to be woven through all fibres of the university," Catharine surmises. This outlook has proven successful; In 2020, UTS's "Respect. Now. Always." campaign was recognised as one of Australia's most successful design projects for driving societal change at the Australian Good Design Awards.

Outcome

Encouraging conversation and engagement is all made easier with access to Consent Matters. As of October 2021, almost 80,000 students and staff have completed Epigeum's course. This is indicative of positive change across the university, fuelled by conversations around sexual assault and consent in the media via the recent "Changing the Culture" report. But in Catharine's words "The social settings around consent are dynamic. We are just one player in that space, and there is still a lot more to do." We look forward to checking in with her again soon to record further progress!



Find out more about *Consent Matters* and how it can support both new and more experienced supervisors at your institution.