University Voice Panel Guide

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

Context

The University of Canberra (the University) is developing a Social Cohesion Action Plan because the campus community is changing. Students are learning in different ways, in different places, and with different life experiences. Staff and students are navigating a mix of physical, digital, global, social and workplace spaces. Broader social and economic pressures also shape people's ability to participate, connect and feel a sense of belonging. These shifts make it important to understand what helps people feel recognised, respected and able to contribute across the whole university community.

At the same time, the University is committed to fostering environments where people feel safe, empowered and able to express their views. Students and staff work within a diverse community, with different identities, values and expectations. Questions about how to uphold freedom of expression, how to define safety, how to trust information with the rapid growth of AI-mediated communication, and how to respond to wider socio-political changes are becoming more prominent. These are complex issues and central to how a university community functions, learns and grows.

This deliberative process gives the University community space to explore these issues with care and depth. It brings people together to share experiences, weigh up trade-offs and consider the conditions that support cohesion across all parts of university life. The actions developed through the University Voice Panel (the panel) will help inform a **Social Cohesion Action Plan** that reflects the needs, priorities and aspirations of the people who live, study and work at the University.

Remit

The University of Canberra is developing a **Social Cohesion Action Plan** to strengthen belonging and safety across a community where experiences of identity and connection often differ and sometimes collide.

How can the University of Canberra become a place where everyone feels they belong, can express who they are, and connect safely across difference?

Success measures

Rational objectives are...

The Panel produces practical actions that reflect diverse student perspectives and informs the Social Cohesion Action Plan.

The deliberative process supports learning, understanding, sharing of perspectives and experiences that results in new advocates for Social Cohesion at the University.

The deliberative process provides clear guidance on the tone and behaviours the community expects from the University leadership and identifies the leadership actions needed to foster conditions that support respectful engagement across the University.

University-wide commitment to social cohesion and that it becomes part of everyone's responsibility.

Experimental objectives are...

Panel participants feel safe and empowered to express their views, even when perspectives differ.

Panel participants experience the process as inclusive, welcoming and respectful, with space to express identity and difference.

Panel participants feel they are contributing to a meaningful process that builds legitimacy and a shared sense of ownership of the Social Cohesion Action Plan.

Panel participants feel valued and listened to, with their lived experiences recognised as essential contributions to shaping the Social Cohesion Action Plan. It builds confidence and encourages more students to express freely.

Panel participants enjoy the deliberative experience and become advocates for the topic and future communications and engagement processes.

Level of influence and promise

INVOLVE
(based on the IAP2 Spectrum)

We will work with the panel to ensure their concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the Social Cohesion Action Plan. We will:

- Listen to what people say.
- Document and record all inputs.
- Report back on what we have heard.
- Work to understand your concerns and priorities and reflect them in our decisions.
- Identify where advice has influenced our thinking.
- Identify where we can't incorporate a recommendation and clearly explain why.
- Provide transparent, regular progress updates during finalisation of our decisions.

Scope: Negotiables and non-negotiables

Negotiable
(what the panel can influence)

The panel can shape the range of practical actions to inform the Social Cohesion Action Plan

How the panel explores the 3 themes – *identity & belonging, safety & freedom of expression, and cohesion across physical, digital, global & social spaces* — and influence how these are understood in their final report.

The panel can contribute insights that help build a shared sense of ownership of the Social Cohesion Action Plan.

How to define "social cohesion" at the University based on students' real experiences.

Non-negotiable
(what the panel cannot influence)

The final Social Cohesion Action Plan will be informed by several information sources. The actions identified by this panel will be one, and where they cannot be included the reasons why will be shared.

Who and how the Social Cohesion Action Plan gets implemented including structure, timeline and budget.

Amendments to existing University policies or codes of conduct. *(These may be discussed to support understanding but not altered through the process.)*

Wider voices and perspectives, beyond the panel, will be incorporated into the process.

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Engagement Roadmap

	PREPARATION	BROAD CONSULTATION	UNIVERSITY VOICE PANEL	REPORTING & CLOSING THE LOOP
	Nov-Feb	*Jan-Mar 2026*	*Mar-April 2026*	*May-June 2026*
PURPOSE	Get ready for the Deliberation engagement	Gather a broad range of insights and perspectives on the issue for Panel deliberation	Deliberative engagement process with representative sample to discuss, deliberate and respond to remit	Draft the Social Cohesion Action Plan and report back to Panel on outcomes
KEY ACTIVITIES	Prepare Discussion (Background) Paper Prepare Broad Consultation Survey and plan deployment Prepare Panel Recruitment materials Prepare all materials for the Deliberation Panel including agendas	Broad consultation survey Analysis of survey results and preparation of 'wider engagement report' Targeted conversations with clubs, societies, faculties, residents, students *(int'l, online, leaders, mature age)*, security, Services & Facilities	Panel sessions - Meet & Greet (18/3/26), Session 1 (25/3/26), Session 2 (22/4/26), Session 3 – (29/4/26) Expert speakers in conversation with Panel	Finalise Social Cohesion Action Plan, including success measures Panel Recall activity to report back on how their recommendations informed the SCAP Application to Welcoming Universities
INPUTS	Reference Group discussions	Survey Tool	"Broad Consultation Findings" Discussions (Background) Paper Expert speakers	Panel report of practical actions
OUTPUTS	Discussion (Background) Paper Broad Consultation Survey Panel Recruitment materials Panel materials (incl. runsheets, materials, speakers etc)	"Broad Consultation Findings"	Panel report of practical actions in response to remit to inform Social Cohesion Action Plan	Social Cohesion Action Plan with measures of success