UNIVERSITY OF
CANBERRA



# Social Cohesion Action Plan: Conversation Guide

February 2026

# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide helps you facilitate a conversation with colleagues, peers, or your network about social cohesion at UC. The insights you gather will directly inform the Social Cohesion Action Plan.

**Suggested time:** 30 minutes
**Participants:** 3-15 people
**Materials needed:** Whiteboard/butcher paper OR laptop for shared notes

# FACILITATOR NOTES

**Your Role:**

- Create a welcoming space where everyone feels comfortable sharing
- Keep time and ensure all voices are heard
- Capture key themes rather than verbatim quotes
- You don't need to be an expert - your job is to listen and guide discussion

# INTRODUCTION – WELCOME AND CONTEXT SETING (5 minutes)

## Acknowledgment of Country

## Context:

*UC is developing a Social Cohesion Action Plan to strengthen belonging and safety across our community. We are exploring how the University can be a place where everyone feels they belong, can express who they are, and connect safely across difference.*

*Your insights today are part of a broader consultation process happening across UC. The themes and ideas today's conversation will be analysed alongside survey responses and written submissions. This input will be shared with the University Voice Panel (a group of students, academic, and professional staff) who will decide which recommendations are made to the DVC.*

*So, the conversation we're about to have isn't just for this room - it will genuinely contribute to shaping UC's approach to social cohesion. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear about your real experiences and ideas.*

## Ground Rules:

*Before we begin, let's set some ground rules to make sure everyone feels comfortable sharing:*

- *First, we're going to have different perspectives in the room, and that's exactly what we want. Please respect that others may see things differently than you.*
- *Second, we encourage active listening. Listen to what others are saying without interrupting. Everyone will get a chance to speak.*
- *Third, as we discuss these topics, let's focus on sharing experiences and ideas that apply to a range of people across the university.*
- *Finally, what's shared in this conversation stays here unless we all agree otherwise. This helps create a safe space for honest discussion.*

*Does anyone have questions about these ground rules or want to add anything?*

## Question for opening discussion and to get everyone talking:

In one word or phrase, how would you describe your sense of belonging at UC right now?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20 minutes)

Choose 2-3 questions that resonate with your group. Spend 6-10 minutes on each.

## THEME 1: BELONGING AND CONNECTION

### Q1: What helps you feel like you belong at UC? What gets in the way?

Prompts if discussion stalls:

- Think about times you've felt connected vs. isolated
- Consider interactions in meetings, class, online, or around campus
- What role do physical or digital spaces play?

### Q2: How do you currently connect with people different from yourself at UC? What would make this easier or more meaningful?

Prompts if discussion stalls:
- Think about curriculum, collaborations and group work, events, or informal interactions
- What opportunities exist? What's missing?

## THEME 2: SAFETY AND EXPRESSION

### Q3: What does feeling 'safe' mean to you at UC - physically, psychologically, intellectually?

Prompts if discussion stalls:
- Think about safety in meetings, classrooms, online spaces, campus areas
- Consider physical safety (feeling welcome and able to be present in all spaces)
- Consider psychological safety (being yourself without fear of judgment)
- Consider intellectual safety (expressing views, asking questions)

### Q4: How can UC balance freedom of expression with ensuring everyone feels safe and respected?

Prompts if discussion stalls:
- Are there tensions you've witnessed or experienced?
- What principles should guide how we navigate difficult conversations?

## THEME 3: SPACES FOR CONNECTION

### Q5: What physical or digital spaces at UC help you connect with others? What spaces could be better designed for connection?

Prompts if discussion stalls:
- Think about "sticky places" where you naturally linger vs. places you just pass through
- Consider online platforms, learning management systems, social spaces
- What would help you spend more time connecting?

## CLOSING (5 minutes)

### Final Question:
If you could change ONE thing at UC to strengthen social cohesion, what would it be?

Thank participants for their time and insights.

## SHARING YOUR INSIGHTS

We'd love to hear what emerged from your conversation! Choose the option that works best for you:

### OPTION 1: Photo

- Take a photo of your whiteboard, butcher paper, or notes

### OPTION 2: Shared Document

- Create a Google Doc or Word doc with key themes (bullet points are fine!)

### OPTION 3: Voice Memo

- Record a 2-3 minute summary of key themes on your phone

Whatever you choose: email it to Emanuela.Savini@canberra.edu.au with subject line: Social Cohesion Conversation - [Your Group/Department]


## WHAT TO CAPTURE

Please make sure you capture number and type of participants (e.g., 5 professional staff or 8 students)

You don't need detailed notes!  They should focus on:

- Key themes that emerged
- Specific ideas or suggestions
- Any tensions or trade-offs discussed
- Quotes that stood out (optional)

### QUESTIONS?

**Contact:** Emanuela.Savini@canberra.edu.au
**More information:** https://www.delibdem.org/new-projects-grants-and-awards/university-voice-panel-for-uc-social-cohesion-action-plan

# Thank you for contributing to UC's Social Cohesion Action Plan!