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Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Principles

1. The College aims to provide a safe and secure environment for all students, staff and visitors who access its facilities and services whether online or in person. This policy and procedure applies to all staff, students and visitors to the College and outlines how, in practical terms and in the context of the College's legal responsibilities, Birkbeck strives to ensure that staff and students can develop personally and academically.
2. A safeguarding issue can be defined as actions or behaviour prompting concern about the well-being of staff, students or visitors. Our aim is to reduce risk to students and staff and to ensure that, where we recognise that the risk and complexity exceeds what we can manage as a Higher Education institution, we refer the student on to where they can receive appropriate support (e.g., NHS services) or to where the risk is more appropriately managed (e.g. the police). Risk management is not done by one person in isolation; cases are discussed, and decisions are made after careful thought and input from appropriate staff within the College.
3. The College has an established Safeguarding Team who work collaboratively with colleagues to gather information, formulate an understanding of the concerns and provide guidance and support to facilitate appropriate responses. In instances where the information available may be limited, we endeavour to respond to concerns to the best of our ability and reach the best possible outcome for all parties.
4. This policy and associated procedures are primarily concerned with any risk to the wellbeing and safety of students, children and adults at risk. It also considers any risk posed by students to our college community.
5. This policy is aligned with other [College's Regulations, Policies and Procedures](#), in particular; Being Part of the Birkbeck Community, Dignity at Work and Study, the Student Discipline and Student Support and Wellness policies, which should be read in conjunction with this Policy

Definitions

Duties, liabilities and responsibility

What are our duties and liabilities towards our students?

6. We have duties to manage risk across a wide range of areas, for example under health and safety legislation about the College estate. This document is only focused on the risk to wellbeing posed by students to themselves and to others, and to the safeguarding risks posed to children and vulnerable adults in the first instance, but also the broader safeguarding risks to all members of the College community. It also includes the College's responsibilities under legislation, for preventing members of the College being drawn into terrorism or violent extremism. This aim of this policy is to explain how the College considers and approaches its response to risk in relation to what we term safeguarding.

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7. This policy and procedure should be followed with regards to identifying and reporting safeguarding concerns and responding to disclosure. This information should be passed to the Safeguarding Team who will consider how the College and/or trusted contacts and external agencies, where appropriate, can support the individual to ensure their physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as their ability to be successful on their course.
8. The safeguarding framework for under 18-year-olds is outlined in the [College Policy on Admission of Students Under the Age of 18](#). The [Safeguarding Children Policy supports the safeguarding of children in the Birkbeck BabyLab](#).
9. Where a member of the College community is made aware - through their connection to the College - of any concerns about a child or adult at risk they should report this to the Safeguarding Team without undue delay. Where we have any concerns about an individual child or adult at risk's welfare, we will take appropriate action to address those concerns by working in partnership with other agencies such as Social Work Departments.

Who to contact for advice on Safeguarding

10. There are five Operational Safeguarding Officers in the College (Director of Student Services & Deputy Academic Registrar and Safeguarding Lead; Head of Wellbeing Services; Deputy Head of Wellbeing Services; Student Services Manager and the Counselling Service Manager). The College Secretary has oversight for Safeguarding at the College and is also a Safeguarding Officer.
11. You can [e-mail the Safeguarding Team](#) for advice and guidance on a wide range of safeguarding issues. This includes concerns about the health or behaviour of a student whether at application or enrolment stage. Working with the Counselling, Mental Health and Disability and Dyslexia Services through regular Complex Case meetings, the Safeguarding Team can assist colleagues across the college to build a network of support around vulnerable students. If the Complex Case meeting feels that an issue has been raised that gives concern that there is a risk that a student may cause harm to others that cannot be dealt with internally, the case may then be referred to the Safeguarding Team to agree the appropriate action to take.
12. Concerns about the behaviour of employees should normally be flagged through line management structures and/or the [Director of Human Resources \(email\)](#)

Emergency situations

Where there is an emergency, emergency services should be called. If you need help during a crisis, please contact the Emergency Services, your GP, or visit your nearest hospital's Accident and Emergency department. Please refer to the details below for more information on emergency contacts.

Crisis Support

- [University College London Hospital](#) is the nearest Accident and Emergency department to Birkbeck College. If you require help urgently, call 999.

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- The Samaritans can be called on 116 123. Their service is free and open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- If you are already receiving mental health support from the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust, you can contact their Crisis Care Team 24 hours a day on 0800 917 3333.

Further Help

- We have a range of supportive resources to provide you with further guidance on practising good self-care and managing your condition.

The College cannot provide emergency services.

Customer Service Desk in Malet Street

- A reception service is provided at the main building on Malet Street and 8am-10pm, Monday-Friday. Weekends dependent on booking in Gordon Square, Clore Management Centre, 25-28 Russell Square, 30 Russell Square.
- An Attendant/Security presence acts as a first point of response to breaches of security and to minimise criminal activity.
- Phone: +44 (0)20 7631 6031
- [Customer Services website](#)

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Our Approach to Safeguarding

13. When a concern is raised with the Safeguarding Team, confidentiality is held within the relevant staff team: this is usually made up of the Safeguarding Team, and the relevant Head of Department or Programme Director, Executive Dean, Director of Operations and relevant member of College professional services (e.g. College Secretary).
14. Reduce risk: Where a student poses a perceived risk to themselves or others the Safeguarding Team, or relevant department/Student Service will try to work with the student to ensure a support structure is in place that will reduce the risk to a reasonable level. This can involve developing a support plan with the student, involving College support staff, mentors and external agencies such as GPs or Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs), as well as putting reasonable adjustments in place to help the student manage their studies successfully while reducing the identified risk.
15. Refer risk: Establishing boundaries as to who holds the risk associated with a student is an important and appropriate part of risk management. The College cannot act as an auxiliary arm of other statutory services such as the health service, the probation service or a local authority. At times, this may include contacting the Trusted Contacts that a student has informed us about on enrolment. At times the College will become aware of a risk and is required to inform statutory services. For example, if we come across information that a child may be at risk, we have a duty to report this to Children's Services. Having reported this, we then handover the management of that risk to the local authority whose role and structure enables them to manage that risk. Similarly, we might refer a risk associated with a student's mental health condition to external support, either by placing the student on a break in studies under our Study Support and Wellness Policy while they are being treated in hospital, or by agreeing a support plan with a student about who they will contact if they are in crisis. Prevent referrals into Channel work in the same way.

Responsibility of All Staff: How do we know about risks?

16. All members of the College community have a responsibility for the well-being of staff, students and visitors. The College recognises that staff, students and visitors have an ethical duty to report suspected abuse of any child, young person or vulnerable adult.
17. In certain areas of the College there may also be specific responsibilities for health and safety relating for technical or operational reasons. The Vice-Chancellor delegates responsibility for the safeguarding of students and staff to the Director of Student Services and the Director of Human Resources respectively.
18. Key to managing risk is to ensuring that any member of the College community will know how to report any concerns they might have, and to ensuring that this gets fed through our risk assessment and management processes. It is important the issues are reported to the Safeguarding Team because if a situation escalates, the College will be deemed to have known about the risk even if just one member of staff knows about it. The Safeguarding Team can be contacted at safeguarding@bbk.ac.uk

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Students' responsibilities

19. Students are required to provide details of a Trusted Contact(s) on enrolment. A Trusted Contact can be a family member, partner or friend. Although we will aim to gain agreement from the student before contacting a Trusted Contact, where there are serious concerns about a student's safety or mental health, we may decide to involve trusted contacts without agreement. Such decisions will be made in the student's interests, be taken by appropriately qualified staff and be based on grounds for serious concern.
20. The College provides a framework for students to report instances where they believe that their safety is compromised. Students can report any instances of harassment or abuse on the Report, Respond, Resources Moodle [module](#). Visitors or prospective students can use the Ask facility to report any issues to the College – www.bbk.ac.uk/ask
21. Students are encouraged to disclose any health conditions on enrolment that might create a risk and are encouraged to disclose at any time during their studies. It is a requirement that students disclose any probation conditions or community treatment orders upon enrolment.

Safeguarding Procedures

22. When the Safeguarding team are approached about a concern, they think collaboratively with the referrer about how to best approach the issue. It may be that this conversation, and some advice about how to deal with the issue, means that the referrer can continue to liaise with the student and there is no further requirement for the Safeguarding Team to be involved.
23. Where a safeguarding issue is referred, the Safeguarding Team will normally convene to formulate a plan. The Safeguarding Team may seek advice and expertise from a number of internal services e.g. Schools/Departments/Mental Health/Counselling Services as well as external ones e.g. College Psychiatrist/Police/NHS. An external referral may be made for additional support.
24. No agency or individual should supply personal information about a student or applicant without checking with the appropriate operational contact, as there are established processes for doing so. The Safeguarding Team can provide guidance on how to manage concerns through established College policies and procedures. Staff, students and visitors are strongly encouraged to seek support on any topic that could impact the health and safety of a member of the College.

Safeguarding panel

25. Where the level of safeguarding concern is such that a student's studies may be temporarily suspended, withdrawn or a prospective student may be denied entry to the College, a Safeguarding Panel will meet.

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26. A Safeguarding Panel will normally comprise representatives from Student Services the relevant academic School/Department and any other relevant College Services. The composition of each Panel is likely to vary given the nature of the safeguarding issue being considered. The Panel will include one or more members of academic staff if the issue has academic dimensions. Colleagues from other services, including ITS, External Relations and Estates and Facilities will be consulted for advice as appropriate, if the issue is linked to College facilities or wider public or media interest.
27. All members of the Panel are expected to undertake regular safeguarding and unconscious bias training. The Panel will also ensure equality and diversity is promoted. This will normally be through regular training briefing and sourcing expert opinion on equality issues where required.
28. The Safeguarding Panel will also use the College's existing operating and policy framework to manage situations on a case-by-case basis; in particular this policy may overlap with the Study Support and Wellness Policy or Student Discipline Policy.

Safeguarding Training

29. Safeguarding Officers run training explaining risk and how to report it, and the Counselling and Mental Health Advice Services deliver sessions on managing student mental health problems. Student Services have a sharepoint [site for staff](#) with information about Safeguarding and about other Student Services.

Related policies

30. Study Support and Wellness Policy, Student Discipline, Whistleblowing, Criminal Convictions, Student Complaints, Under 18s Policy, Pregnancy and Maternity and Dignity at Work and Study policies are all published on [the website](#) and all outline how members of the College community can report concerns.

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Appendix A – How to recognise a safeguarding issue

Disclosure and how to make a safeguarding referral

You can [e-mail the Safeguarding Team](#) to raise a safeguarding issue. When you do so you will be prompted to complete a simple online form that will ask you key information about the student.

As soon as you become aware of an issue, you should make a record of what the issue is and the individuals involved.

Recording

To ensure that everyone is safe, it is important to record relevant information- you will find guidance on how to manage a disclosure and questions to ask further down in this document.

Please take record of:

- Names of any people who are present during the disclosure
- Date and time of the conversation, and a brief outline of what may have happened, when, and to whom (remember other children or vulnerable adults may be involved and at risk too)
- Brief description of any injuries which are visible or alleged any nonverbal signs that you noticed
- Are there any services already involved?
- Did you or anyone else contact emergency services?

Actions to take if an individual makes a disclosure

- React calmly so as not to make the student more anxious or discourage them from telling more.
- Listen carefully to what the student says without interruption.
- Use open questions to encourage further information, but do not probe.
- It is OK to have periods of silence
- Take what the student says seriously.
- Reassure the student that he/she was right to tell, and that he/she is not to blame.
- Reassure the student that there are many sources of help and that you will help and support them in seeking help.
- Ensure that the student is safe from the situation reported by asking specific questions such as, are you currently worried about your safety, have you reported this to the police?, etc.
- Explain to the student that you will need to report this to the Safeguarding Team.

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- If you think there is anyone at imminent danger please contact 999 immediately
- Make a full record of what was said, using their own words (don't assume or paraphrase).
- Note the time and location.
- Report the matter by e-mailing the Safeguarding Team without delay.

Actions to avoid during a disclosure

- Panic – it may be difficult for you, however it is likely far more difficult for the student. If you are distressed by the disclosure inform the Safeguarding Officer for advice and support.
- Allow your shock or distaste to show.
- Probe for more information than is offered.
- Speculate or make assumptions.
- Make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Approach the alleged abuser.
- Make promises that you will be unable to keep, e.g. to keep this secret.
- Discuss the matter with colleagues/friends.

<mailto:safeguarding@bbk.ac.uk>