

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Principles

1. Since its foundation in 1823 Birkbeck's mission has been to ensure 'the universal benefits of the blessings of knowledge' through providing study opportunities to those that desire them. This policy and procedure outlines how, in practical terms and in the context of the College's legal responsibilities, Birkbeck will ensure that it sustains a safe environment in which staff and students can develop personally and academically.
2. This Policy applies to all staff, students and visitors to the College. With around 14,000 students and 2,000 members of staff, the College community is extremely diverse. The aim of having a comprehensive safeguarding framework is to support students and staff and at the same time maintain good campus relations. A safeguarding issue can be defined as actions or behaviour prompting concern about the well-being of staff, students or visitors. Appendix A illustrates how safeguarding issues can be referred for support.
3. All members of the College community have a responsibility for the well-being of staff, students and visitors. 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 Academic Registrar and the Director of Human Resources respectively.
4. Staff, students and visitors also have the right to work and study unhindered by harassment or intimidation. This includes adherence to the College's Principles of Dignity at Work and Study. Rights to freedom from harassment and intimidation are set out in the College's Regulations, Policies and Procedures, which should be read in conjunction with this Policy.
5. The College aims to provide a safe and secure environment for all students, staff and visitors who access its facilities and services. This includes protecting the freedom and dignity of the individual to the extent that it does not interfere with the freedom and dignity of others or undermine community cohesion. It also includes the College's responsibilities under legislation, for preventing members of the College being drawn into terrorism.
6. The College further aims to ensure that the same safe and secure environment is applied in relation to all online or blended learning, providing staff and students with guidelines, information and procedures about how to recognise and raise safeguarding concerns while involved in online learning.

Vulnerable Groups

7. The College recognises its particular responsibility to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable groups including children and young people engaged in the breadth of the College's activities by ensuring that there are appropriate arrangements in place to enable it to discharge its duty to provide a safe and secure environment.
8. The College recognises that it has a duty to help staff and students (through guidance, support and training), to promote safe working practices in order to minimise risk to vulnerable individuals and protect staff and the institution from the possibility of vexatious allegations. It is not intended that staff should be restricted from normal ways of working, but staff are advised to consider how an action may be perceived.
9. The College recognises that staff, students and visitors have an ethical duty to report suspected abuse of any child, young person or vulnerable adult.
10. The College seeks to ensure that its policies and procedures comply with statutory duties and reflect guidance and good practice in safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, and that safeguarding arrangements are proportionate and practical.
11. 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 and the Birkbeck Evening Nursery. Both of these facilities will maintain their own more detailed safeguarding policies.
12. We also understand that, where we have any concerns about an individual child or vulnerable adult's welfare, we will take appropriate action to address those concerns by working in partnership with other agencies such as Social Work Departments. Where a member of the College community is made aware - through their connection to the College - of any concerns that a child or vulnerable adult might be at risk they should discuss their concerns with the Head or Deputy Head of Student Services without undue delay.
13. Most of our students would not be considered to be either children or vulnerable adults; however the College has a consistent commitment to their safety and wellbeing. Whilst there will usually not be a statutory responsibility to refer such matters to Social Services, this policy and procedures should be followed with regards to identifying and reporting abuse and dealing with disclosure. This information should be passed to the Safeguarding Officer who will consider how the College and/or external agencies can support the individual to ensure their physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as their ability to be successful on their course.

Who to contact for advice on Safeguarding

14. The Head of Student Services and the Deputy Head of Student Services are the key College operational contacts for safeguarding issues. They can be approached 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 Head and Deputy Head of Student Services 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 Panel to agree the appropriate action to take.
15. 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. Student Services 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. Concerns about the behaviour of employees should normally be flagged through line management structures and/or the Director of Human Resources.

Operational Contacts for Safeguarding

- **[Head and Deputy Head of Student Services \(email\)](#)**
 - Phone: +44 (0)20 7631 6316
 - [Student services website](#)
- **[Academic Registrar \(email\)](#)**
 - Phone: +44 (0)20 7380 3056
 - [Registry website](#)
- **[Director of Human Resources \(email\)](#)**
 - Phone: +44 (0)20 7631 6000
 - [Human Resources website](#)
- **Attendant Desk in Malet Street**
 - A 24-hour 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
 - [Attendants website](#)

Safeguarding Panel

16. Where a safeguarding issue is referred to one of the officers above, they will normally convene a Safeguarding Panel to assess the risk to staff, students or visitors in the College community. The Safeguarding Panel 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. Following a College level risk assessment, an external referral may be made for additional support. It is anticipated that the Safeguarding Panel will consider the following topics as part of any risk assessment. The impact and likelihood of each will also be considered.

Outline risk assessment

- What is the issue under consideration?
- Who could be/is potentially affected?
- What is the likelihood of the safeguarding issue occurring or repeating?
- Is there an imminent risk to staff, students, and visitors?
- Can the College manage the safeguarding issue internally?

17. A Safeguarding Panel will normally comprise representatives from Student Services, the relevant academic School/Department and Registry 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 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.

18. 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 in the membership. This will normally be through regular training briefing and sourcing expert opinion on equality issues where required.

19. The Safeguarding Panel would use the College's existing operating and policy framework to manage situations on a case-by-case basis.

Notes:

Further information on College Policies and Procedures, please visit the [Registry's policy web pages](#).

Appendix A – How to recognise a safeguarding issue

Disclosure and how to make a safeguarding referral?

20. You can raise a safeguarding issue in person, by phone or by email. As soon as you become aware of an issue, you should make a record of what the issue is and the individuals involved.

- Listen to what the individual is saying without interruption and without asking leading questions.
- Respect the person's right to privacy but not promise confidentiality.
- Reassure the e.g. student that he/she has done the right thing in telling.
- Explain to the individual that in order to keep him/her safe from harm the information that has been shared must be passed on.
- Report what has been disclosed.
- Record, as soon as is practical what was said in the individual's own words.
- It is likely to be extremely difficult for a student to disclose abuse and all staff have a role in supporting students through this process and ensuring we help them give as much information as possible.
- If you have reason to believe that a student is at immediate risk of harm, including self-harm or suicide, bring them to the attention of a member of Student Services as soon as possible.

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.
- Explain to the student that you will need to discuss with the Safeguarding Officer naming them – and state that you can be with them when they meet. It is often most appropriate to take them to meet the Safeguarding Officer providing they are comfortable with this.
- 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 to the Safeguarding Officer 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.

Recording

20. Make a brief signed note (using the student or individual's words) of any allegations:

- the names of any people who are present during the disclosure
- the 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)
- a brief description of any injuries which are visible or alleged
- any nonverbal signs that you noticed
- the individual's preferred action

21. The content of this report will inform the decision to convene a Safeguarding Panel. The report should be sent without delay to the College Safeguarding Officers.

Safeguarding and causes for concern

The Safeguarding policy establishes a Safeguarding Panel whereby any concerns about student behaviour, wellbeing or risk of harm to self or others can be referred. The panel can then assess the most appropriate support, intervention or policy and procedure to deal with the specific issue raised. Any concerns by staff or students can be raised via safeguarding@bbk.ac.uk.

Fitness to study

Policy to assess concerns about student behaviour. Safeguarding officer will work alongside academic department to identify appropriate support or action.

Student discipline

Formal complaints from students or staff can be dealt with under the Code of Student Discipline. Report any incidents via studentcomplaints@bbk.ac.uk.

Children and under 18-year-olds

Three separate policies address our specific legal duties for safeguarding in relation to the Nursery, BabyLab (both appendices to the Safeguarding policy) and students enrolled who are under the age of 18.

Freedom of speech

Policy and procedure to protect academic freedom while being mindful of duties under Dignity at Work and Study principles. Relates to the Birkbeck community and external visitors. Policy overseen by the Academic Registrar via studentcomplaints@bbk.ac.uk.

Whistleblowing

If there is evidence of serious malpractice, dishonesty or illegal behaviour, it should be disclosed to the College Secretary as soon as possible. If the allegation concerns the College Secretary, the matter should instead be raised with the Vice-Chancellor. If the allegation concerns the College Secretary and the Vice-Chancellor, the individual should raise it with the Deputy Chair of Governors, or, in the case of possible financial malpractice, with the Chair of the Audit Committee.

Academic issues

Separate appeals policies for taught and research students all via examappeals@bbk.ac.uk. Mitigating circumstances are dealt with via the academic department. Admissions issues dealt with via admissions@bbk.ac.uk.

Criminal convictions

Students are asked to declare any relevant convictions on application. This information would only be disclosed to other members of staff as and when relevant as outlined in the policy.

2021/22



Staff complaints

Staff complaints about other colleagues or workplace issues should be dealt with via line managers first and then via grievance procedures with HR. Issues relating to students should be via studentcomplaints@bbk.ac.uk