

Safeguarding Policy			
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<p><i>Note: All policies must be read in conjunction with all other SOAS policy, procedure and guidance documents. Printed copies of policies may not be the most up to date, therefore please refer to the policy pages on the SOAS external website or intranet for the latest version.</i></p>			

1. Purpose and Aims

- 1.1. SOAS is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all members within our learning community – including students, staff and visitors who access the University’s facilities and services. This policy has been developed in accordance with the University’s obligations under the Equality Act (2010), Public Sector Equality Duty and the SOAS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- 1.2. SOAS acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the wellbeing of children (under 18) and those individuals deemed to be adults at risk.
- 1.3. SOAS expects that all staff, students and volunteers uphold the fundamental principle and legal requirement that, in any given situation, the welfare of a child (under 18) or adult at risk must be of paramount importance. The SOAS Safeguarding Policy applies to all staff and students.
- 1.4. This policy is designed to assist SOAS in fulfilling its statutory obligations in relation to:
 - Children’s Act 1989 & 2004
 - Children and Families Act 2014
 - Care Act 2014
 - Care Standards Act 2000
 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
 - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
 - Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015
 - Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025

2. Terminology

2.1. Safeguarding

2.1.1. This term is used to promote the welfare and protection of children from harm, as well as the relationship between students/children and adults at risk. It is broader than 'child protection', which specifically refers to activities undertaken to prevent children from suffering significant harm. Safeguarding, in addition to child protection, also includes protecting children and adults at risk from maltreatment, and preventing the impairment of their health.

2.2. Abuse

2.2.1. This is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, or take the form of neglect or an omission to act. It may also occur when a person with care and support needs is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or lacks the capacity to consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm or exploitation. It may be planned or unplanned and can consist of a single act or repeated acts. Abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Discriminatory abuse
- Online abuse

2.3. Child or young person

2.3.1. This term applies to any person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. In legislation and guidance, the term 'child' typically refers to individuals under the age of 18 who are still in full time education, while 'young person' refers to those under 18 who have left full time education. The fact that a child has reached the age of 16, is living independently, or is in Further or Higher Education does not change their status for the purposes of this policy.

2.4. Adult at risk

2.4.1. SOAS defines an adult at risk as a person over the age of 18 who may require services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is, or may be unable to take care of themselves, or protect themselves from significant harm, abuse or exploitation. However, SOAS recognises its responsibility to the whole community who may, at a particular time, need to be protected from exploitation whether that be financial, sexual, criminal, extremist or political, as well as emotional abuse, domestic abuse, or grooming.

2.5. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

- 2.5.1. This is a statutory body that helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable individuals from working with vulnerable groups, including children. DBS checks are not conducted for all SOAS employees but are used where it is clear that a role involves significant and sustained contact with vulnerable groups.

3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 3.1. This policy has been developed in accordance with the University's obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and the SOAS Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Wellbeing Plan 2026
- 3.2. As such, the policy ensures that no individual is disadvantaged on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

4. Scope

- 4.1. This Safeguarding policy applies to all members of the SOAS community. The following examples are included here with reference to interactions with specific groups, individuals or activities:
- Students admitted to SOAS on a programme of study while under the age of 18;
 - Study abroad students and doctoral researchers undertaking study or fieldwork away from SOAS;
 - All research activities that involve vulnerable participant groups (which must also comply with the requirements of SOAS' Research Ethics Policy);
 - Activities organised by the University whether this takes place
 - on SOAS premises
 - on SOAS SU premises
 - during off-site placements
 - in other off-site locations that the University is directly responsible for
 - SOAS Students with spent or unspent criminal convictions;
 - SOAS Alumni working with current students, whether they are under-18 or a vulnerable adult.
 - Any member of the SOAS community whose behaviour raises concerns regarding wellbeing and/or safeguarding issues.
- 4.2. The University will never directly assume the role of loco parentis (in place of a parent) for students under the age of 18 or for the children of staff visiting SOAS.
- 4.3. Examples of how staff and students may come into contact with vulnerable groups include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Staff and students may encounter children or adults at risk through widening participation initiatives and other pre-entry activities, both on or off site. For further guidance, please refer to the Additional Policies section, specifically the Access and Participation Safeguarding Policy.

- Professional Services staff (such as those in Student Advice and Wellbeing and other student-facing roles) may work directly with students under the age of 18 or those who may be considered adults at risk.
- Academic staff who act as academic advisors or tutors may teach or support students who are under the age of 18 or deemed adults at risk.
- Some student-led groups may engage with young people and adults at risk, either as volunteers or through specific projects.
- Research undertaken involving children and/or potentially vulnerable participant groups; including fieldwork conducted within the UK or overseas.
- Line managers may notice a change in behaviour in a member of their team, or a SOAS Wellbeing Ambassador may be concerned by a conversation with a colleague.

5. Partnership providers and other institutions

- 5.1. If a staff member is working with, at or on behalf of a third-party institution, and a safeguarding concern arises on that institution's premises, the staff member should follow the safeguarding policy and procedures of that institution.
- 5.2. SOAS has partnerships with various national and international education providers. When students are based at a partner institution, they are required to follow the safeguarding policies and procedures of the host organisation. Any safeguarding concerns should be reported directly to the Safeguarding Officer at the host institution. If a student feels unable to report the concern or does not receive a satisfactory response, the concern should be escalated to the central safeguarding team at SOAS, where the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will assess the situation.

6. Safeguarding Working Group and Designated Lead

- 6.1. The University has developed a clear approach to safeguarding procedures. Reducing risk is achieved by ensuring that this policy is comprehensively implemented across all areas of the University. Additionally, the University is committed to investing in staff development, including the provision of specialist safeguarding training for staff who work with children or adults at risk.
- 6.2. The University has appointed a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), supported by several Deputy Safeguarding Leads within the Student Advice & Wellbeing team. This group is responsible for triaging and responding to complex safeguarding concerns. The group meets formally on a fortnightly basis, with cases referred through Student Advice & Wellbeing's weekly Complex Case meeting, or via other appropriate channels. The group may also meet on an ad hoc basis if necessary and maintains regular communication throughout the working week to ensure timely responses to emerging issues.
- 6.3. The team can be contacted by emailing studentadviceandwellbeing@soas.ac.uk, calling 0207 074 5015 or by visiting in person on the lower ground floor of the Paul Webley Wing.

7. Responsibilities across the university

7.1. All staff are expected to:

- Be familiar with and adhere to this policy and its related procedures, including any local Safeguarding protocols specific to their department or team.
- Complete all mandatory Safeguarding training related to this policy for their role.
- Ensure that Safeguarding responsibilities are incorporated into event planning and risk assessments for University activities, in compliance with Health and Safety procedures. This also applies to any activities outside regular teaching and learning programs that involve children or adults at risk.
- Notify their line or project manager if they have concerns or questions about whether their work activities require an appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to work with children and adults at risk.
- Report any concerns, suspicions, or information regarding Safeguarding concerns to the appropriate Safeguarding Lead Officer.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding any suspected or confirmed Safeguarding incidents related to the University, following the Safeguarding reporting system and whistleblowing procedures as needed. In some instances, staff and students may also be required to use the Safeguarding reporting systems and whistleblowing procedures in external workplaces or placement providers, where similar standards of confidentiality apply.
- Fully cooperate with any internal or external Safeguarding investigations, including those conducted in professional, clinical, voluntary, and international settings.

7.2. Where the concern relates to a student, the SOAS Community is expected to:

- Take Safeguarding seriously and do everything reasonably within their power to minimise Safeguarding risks across the University.
- Promptly escalate and report Safeguarding concerns or risks to the Student Advice & Wellbeing team, or to any member of staff as soon as possible. Reports may be made via email, telephone, or in person.
- Report any suspicious activity immediately to the Campus Safety Team or to any member of staff.

7.3. Where the concern related to a staff member,

- Advise the staff member to seek help if they are not in any immediate danger to themselves or others. You can refer staff to SOAS Wellbeing Ambassadors, or refer the staff member to the Employee Assistance Provider, the details for which are on the staff intranet site. If you are their line manager, you should also alert your HR Business Partner and discuss next steps.
- If you are concerned that the staff member is an immediate and significant danger to themselves or others, you should call emergency services, and seek internal support from the Campus Safety Team. You should follow-up with the Director of People who can work with the relevant line manager.

8. Policy Implementation

8.1. The University recognises its duty to take all suspicions and allegations of Safeguarding breaches or abuse seriously. It is committed to responding appropriately and as swiftly as possible, in accordance with established Safeguarding procedures.

8.2. Risk Assessments

8.2.1. Risk assessments should be undertaken prior to any activity involving children or adults at risk. This includes risk assessments for students undertaking placements – such as work placements and a year abroad as part of their degree programme. Risk assessments are also required for researchers undertaking fieldwork, whether in the UK or overseas and are formally integrated into the University's Research Ethics procedures.

8.2.2. Risk assessments should be undertaken by the relevant member of staff responsible for the placement, or by the department responsible for the student during their fieldwork or year abroad. Any Safeguarding concerns identified from the risk assessment process should be raised with either the DSL or one of the appointed Deputy Safeguarding Leads.

8.2.3. External groups hosting events on University premises must provide approved risk assessments. This requirement also applies to events delivered in partnership with the SOAS Students' Union, where the Union also holds responsibility for Safeguarding. Should any concerns be identified, the Students' Union will communicate them to the University to ensure appropriate support from University Safeguarding structures.

8.3. Criminal Convictions

8.3.1. The University must ensure that it follows a clear and consistent policy regarding the admission of ex-offenders. Where a Safeguarding concern is raised in relation to an applicant with a criminal record, the DSL will assess the case and determine whether appropriate measures can be implemented to mitigate any identified risk. Related policies and procedures will be followed where necessary.

8.3.2. DBS checks will be required for all staff or students who have regular, unsupervised contact with children or adults at risk. Equivalent checks will also be required for researchers - at all levels - who work with children or vulnerable participant groups.

8.3.3. It is the responsibility of any third-party contractor employing staff to work on University's premises to ensure that all individuals have been appropriately recruited for the roles they are undertaking. This includes obtaining DBS checks for all appropriate roles, in accordance with the statutory eligibility criteria.

8.4. Confidentiality

8.4.1. Student Advice and Wellbeing staff (e.g. in Counselling and Disability Support) are most likely to encounter issues pertaining to confidentiality. However, it is not uncommon for academic advisors, tutors and departmental student support officers to face similar issues.

8.4.2. Staff who are not professionally obliged to offer confidentiality should be discouraged from giving assurances of complete confidentiality. Where this becomes a concern, the limits of

confidentiality must be clearly explained to students. All information will be treated with respect and only shared on a strict 'need to know' basis. This approach should be applied as a means of enabling appropriate support and Safeguarding, rather than as a barrier to disclosure.

9. Procedures

- 9.1. Once the DSL is made aware of a concern, they will undertake an assessment to determine whether the concern requires referral to the relevant external authority. Where a referral is deemed necessary, the DSL will contact the appropriate agency, which may include the Local Authority Designated Officer, Children's Social Care, the Police or the Independent Safeguarding Authority. The Student Advice & Wellbeing team will also attempt to contact and support any student that have been cited in the Safeguarding concern.
- 9.2. Safeguarding concerns, incidents or allegations should always be referred as quickly as possible to Student Advice & Wellbeing. This team will assess the concern and determine the appropriate course of action – whether the matter can be managed internally or requires referral to statutory agencies. The DSL may also seek advice and guidance from external partners where appropriate.
- 9.3. All concerns relating to the potential abuse of under-18s or vulnerable adults must be referred to external agencies as quickly as possible to ensure that professionals with the appropriate expertise undertake any subsequent investigation. It is not the responsibility of the University or its staff to investigate allegations or suspicions of abuse. This responsibility lies with statutory agencies such as Children's Social Care and/or the Police as detailed in Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- 9.4. Children's Social Care (formerly Children's Social Services) have a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 that is reinforced by the Children Act 2004, to Safeguard the welfare of children. When a child protection referral is made, its staff have a legal responsibility to initiate appropriate enquiries.
- 9.5. An internal investigation by the University may take place once the relevant statutory authorities have concluded their investigation, or if those external authorities decide not to investigate. Where it is found that conduct has breached University policies, the University reserves the right to trigger the relevant disciplinary procedures for students or staff.
- 9.6. Data collected as part of a Safeguarding investigation will be held securely and stored separately from the standard staff or student records. Such data will be retained only for as long as necessary, in accordance with the SOAS Data Protection Policy.

10. Employee Support

- 10.1.1. Where appropriate, the DSL will offer a debrief to any individual involved in reporting a Safeguarding incident.

- 10.1.2. The Employee Assistance Programme offers a confidential support service for SOAS employees and their families. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and can be accessed by phone or online at: <https://soas.spectrum.life/login>

11. Information sharing

- 11.1. SOAS has a responsibility to share relevant information with appropriate agencies in order to Safeguard children and adults at risk. Where possible, SOAS will seek consent from the individual concerned prior to disclosing Safeguarding information to an appropriate authority or agency. However, where there is a legitimate Safeguarding concern and it is believed that sharing the information will support the timely protection of a child or adult at risk, SOAS may disclose information without consent. Data protection legislation should not be regarded as a barrier to the appropriate sharing of Safeguarding information.
- 11.2. When SOAS determines that information should be shared without an individual's consent, a clear and accurate record of the rationale and decision-making process will be maintained.
- 11.3. Any information shared must be limited to what is strictly necessary and disclosed on a need-to-know basis. This will be determined by the DSL and, where necessary, in consultation with SOAS's legal team and Information Compliance.

12. Additional Policies

- 12.1.1. As outlined in this policy document, Safeguarding responsibilities and procedures are applicable to all staff and students, including students under the age of 18. However, when dealing with students under the age of 18, staff and other students where appropriate, should refer to the University's Safeguarding Under 18s Policy which includes a Child Protection Code of Practice.
- 12.1.2. SOAS maintains a dedicated policy for all outreach, access, student recruitment and widening-participation activities delivered by the Access, Experience and Success (AES) team and the UK Student Recruitment (UKSR) team. This framework is set out in the Access and Participation Safeguarding Policy and should be read alongside this policy. The Access and Participation Safeguarding Policy provides additional, activity-specific processes to ensure that children and young people who take part in pre-entry or engagement activities are protected. All staff, students, student ambassadors and volunteers involved in these activities are required to comply with both this policy and the specific safeguards, risk-assessment processes and conduct expectations outlined in the Access and Participation Safeguarding Policy.

13. The Prevent Duty

- 13.1. As part of its safeguarding responsibilities, SOAS recognises its statutory duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent individuals from being drawn into terrorism. This is known as the Prevent Duty. The University is committed to safeguarding and supporting students and staff who may be vulnerable to radicalisation; promoting a safe and inclusive learning environment that

protects freedom of speech while also recognising and mitigating risks associated with extremist ideologies; and ensuring that concerns about radicalisation are managed sensitively, proportionately, and through established safeguarding processes.

- 13.2. Further information can be found in the University's separate Prevent Policy and related guidance documents.

14. Key Contacts

Title	Name	Contact
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Mike Chung	mc124@soas.ac.uk
-	Student Advice & Wellbeing	studentadviceandwellbeing@soas.ac.uk
Doctoral School Manager	Tim Maugherman	tm76@soas.ac.uk
Head of Access, Experience & Success	Victoria Edwards	ve2@soas.ac.uk
Director of People	John Macey	jm127@soas.ac.uk