

Safeguarding 2024 Annual Report

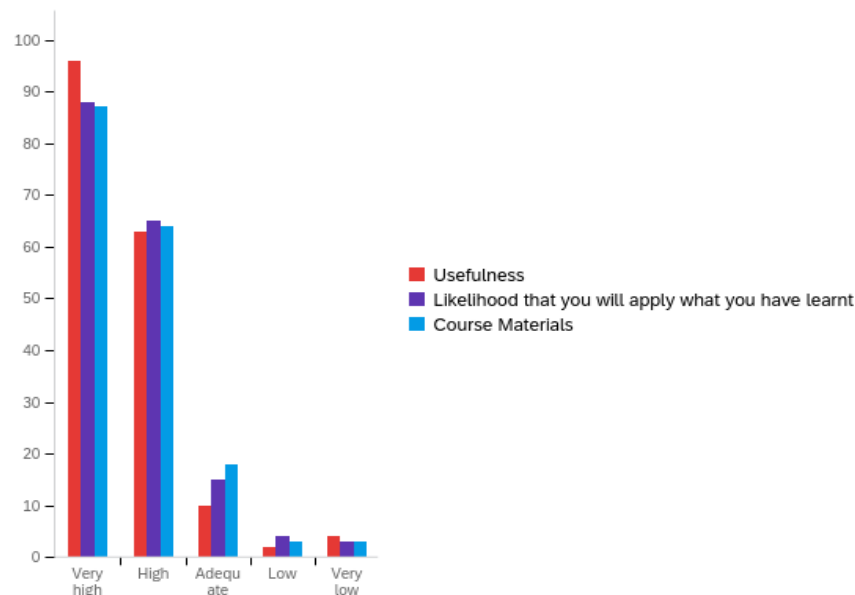
Prepared by the Director of Safeguarding

1. The purpose of this document is to provide an annual update on progress against the safeguarding priorities that were identified in the 2023 report and to highlight additional areas for focus that emerged during the year.

Training

2. The Safeguarding e-learning course is part of the Essentials suite of mandatory courses. It is required for new starters to complete within six months of joining and for existing staff to repeat every two years. More than 5,000¹ people completed the training in 2024, either for the first time or as a refresher. Feedback on the course has been positive with most rating the course highly.

SAFEGUARDING e-Learning Course feedback - January to 31st December 2024



3. All detailed feedback commentary has been reviewed to inform options for further improvements to the course. An updated version was implemented in January 2025. This refresh has focussed content to be relevant for all University roles through the removal of detail of the underpinning legislation and a focus on recognising, responding, and reporting concerns (including low level concerns). There is clearer signposting to the internal referral routes and new information on managing issues of confidentiality and consent for under 18s and adults at risk.
4. The changes to the course have an additional benefit of reducing the content in length to less than 45 minutes to enable quicker completion times. For those who are taking the course as a refresher, there is the option to proceed straight to the online assessment and to revisit any specific modules to cover gaps in knowledge without the need to repeat the course in full.

¹ This figure includes those on short term fixed contracts.

5. The Essentials management dashboard record of completed tests is only available for those with an employment contract. The e-learning is still recommended for all positions working alongside young people, for example, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), as they are also able to observe concerns with young people in their day-to-day activities. The Director of Safeguarding will be attending the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC) meeting at the end of February 2025 to discuss changing their current position that *recommends* GTAs complete the essential safeguarding training. The PRQC will be asked to agree that undertaking this e-learning is *mandated* as a requirement in line with all other University roles.
6. An annual Safeguarding training event was held in December 2024. The topic was 'Safeguarding considerations for the young people we engage with from schools and within the University' with presentations by the Imperial College Outreach team and an external trainer from the Westminster City Council Prevent Team. This in-person event was open to members of the Safeguarding Committee and to members of their departments and c30 people attended with positive feedback.
7. The 2025 training will focus on a priority identified by George Wigley, Head of Community Safety and Security. This will develop a full day safeguarding module as part of the SIA license arrangement for the officers. The bespoke in-person learning will raise awareness of the range of safeguarding issues that can arise in an HE context and help equip teams with information on appropriate referral and response.

Policies, Procedures, and casework

8. **Disclosure and Barring Checks** The Staff Compliance team within the Human Resources Division continue to handle a high volume of DBS applications and follow up checks (1146 in total, 579 new/renewal applications and 567 update service checks), a 20% increase on the previous year. The number of update checks has increased by 24% due to the team's work to improve uptake which has resulted in approximately 79% of applicants now subscribing to the service. After the implementation of Digital ID verification in late 2023, 68% of applications (393 new/renewal applications) have had successful digital ID results (pass or partial pass) in 2024. Following a review of the website content, guidance is now available on the processes for managing DBS disclosures, responsibilities for carrying out DBS checks and completing research passport requests for students, staff, and atypical workers. The University wide review for Faculty of Medicine departments is still in progress as engagement proved slower than expected. Priorities for the next 12 months include continuing to improve processes and completing the Faculty of Medicine review. The team will also be engaged in the Great Service project integrating compliance processes into the new Enterprise Resource Planning system.
9. The Director of Safeguarding meets with subgroups during the year to review learning from casework and to identify opportunities to update guidance and procedures, for example on domestic violence, and to flag shared risk concerns, for example, with the crossing of Exhibition Road. There has been a particular focus on

preparation and learning from the events run by Outreach and commercial summer schools. A workshop will be held in April 2025 to bring together University roles that support these events to consider opportunities to improve incident prevention and response and to clarify roles, responsibilities, and resource implications. In the absence of a centralised case management repository, teams continue to record referrals on local databases.

10. Within the research context, there continue to be requests for support with grant funding application forms that require evidence of safeguarding practice and risk assessments. A welcome improvement in awareness of the safeguarding guidance available has increased the number of research leads contacting the Director of Safeguarding for advice, for example in the preparation of risk assessments for field trips. There is still a lack of central reporting of safeguarding incidents arising during research activity, including low level issues that could inform training requirements. Options to improve reporting will continue to be explored.
11. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Code of Practice has been subject to an extensive review to reflect procedure and practical issues that have become evident as relevant to the University since the documents were originally written in 2018. The changes update statutory definitions, clarify roles and responsibilities, and includes updated policy positions, for example, on social media check requirements as part of safer recruitment, online safe working and investigations following reported concerns. Some operational detail, for example on the Disclosure and Barring process, risk assessments, work experience and other templates and guidance, have also been updated but moved to links on the safeguarding webpages. The Safeguarding Committee, c50 members, has been renamed as a Network for consistency with other University advisory groups.
12. The revised policy and code of practice has been reviewed by the University's Legal & Regulatory Affairs team and by members of the Safeguarding Network. The documents are commended to the Risk and Compliance Committee for delegated approval on behalf of the University Management Board. Following approval, the new documents will be used as a framework to review any local safeguarding policies and procedures (for example in Outreach and EYEC) to ensure consistency in approach.

The Risk and Compliance Committee is requested to:

- Note and comment on the update on safeguarding activity and actions identified for the coming year.
- Approve the updated Child Protection and Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy and the Safeguarding Code of Practice.

Louise Lindsay, Director of Safeguarding, Report submitted to the Risk and Compliance Committee
February 2025