



TUS

**Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest**

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

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TUS Child Protection Policy 2022 – 2024



Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook	
Volume 5: No 8	
Document Title	TUS Child Protection Policy 2022- 2024
Document Entrust	Academic Council
Document Status	Approved
Revision No	1.0
Pages	Page 2 of 8
Approval Body	Academic Council
Date of Approval	30/09/2022
Next Revision	2024

Revision History	
Revision No	Comments/Summary of Changes
1.0	Approved by Academic Council

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1.0 Purpose

This Policy is intended to inform members of the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (hereafter referred to as TUS or the Technological University) community, who have contact with children, to be aware of their legal obligations to recognise child protection and welfare concerns and to respond appropriately. TUS may have students under the age of 18, who have been offered places on approved programmes. TUS provides education, engages in research and provides activities that may involve children. This policy sets out an overview of the responsibilities of members of the Technological University.

The Technological University community, in relation to child protection, supports the use of professional and safe practices when working with children and young people. Full details are outlined in the Technological University “Child Protection Procedures”. The policy is based on “*Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017 and 2019 addendum re: online safety)*”. For the purposes of this document, the term “member of the Technological University community” includes staff and students of TUS and those working on a voluntary/unpaid basis on behalf of the Technological University.

2.0 Responsibility and Scope

The President of the Technological University is responsible to the Governing Authority for the implementation of this Child Protection Policy in TUS. The President discharges that responsibility through the appointment of Designated Liaison Person(s) (DLP’s). The Policy will be reviewed biannually.

It is the duty of each member of TUS to be familiar with and comply with the Policy.

In the area of Child Protection, this policy takes precedence over all other TUS policies.

3.0 Policy Statement

TUS:

1. recognises that the safety and welfare of children for whom it has responsibility is paramount, and undertakes to maintain the highest possible standards in order to meet its responsibility to protect and safeguard those children;
2. recognises that interactions with registered students who are under 18 years

- of age is on the basis of the normal rules applying to all registered students;
3. has adopted appropriate measures, in line with legislative requirements, for the vetting of staff, and students whose work/programme of study brings them into contact with children (see the Technological University “Child Protection Procedures (2022-2024)” for details;
 4. has identified mandated persons within TUS and recommended the e-learning training programme called ‘Introduction to Children First’ to ensure that they meet their legal obligations; <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/>
 5. recognises that Child Protection is a multiagency, multidisciplinary activity and has adopted procedures to ensure that appropriate reporting and information sharing arrangements are in place;
 6. has prepared a Child Safeguarding Statement and Child Protection Procedures;

This Policy is Based on the Following Principles:

1. A child is a person under 18, (*Child Care Act, 1991*), excluding a person who is or has been married;
2. The protection of children must always come first;
3. Child abuse can be categorised as neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse;
4. Children should be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their own views taken into consideration;
5. Members of the TUS community have a duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of others which may be harmful to children;
6. The safest possible practices will be adopted by TUS to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children, and to protect members of the TUS community from the necessity to take risks which may leave them open to accusations of abuse or neglect (see the Technological University “Child Protection Procedures (2022-2024)” for guidance for staff and students).

The Technological University will maintain links with TUSLA (the Child and Family Agency) and will facilitate the reporting and sharing of information as required.

4.0 Designated Liaison Persons

The Technological University has appointed Designated Liaison Person(s) to act as a resource to any member of the TUS community who has child protection queries or concerns. The Designated Liaison Person(s) liaise with external agencies as required and are responsible for reporting suspicions or allegations of child abuse to TUSLA and/or An Garda Síochána.

5.0 Mandated Persons

Mandated persons (in accordance with the provisions of the Children First Act 2015) are people who have contact with children or adults and who, because of their qualifications, training, and employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. Mandated persons who are employed by TUS, or mandated persons who are providing services to TUS, have a statutory obligation to report mandated concerns to TUSLA. This obligation is normally discharged by mandated persons making a joint report with a DLP to TUSLA whilst certain professionals i.e., the Head of Student Counselling reports directly to TUSLA with relevant notification to the DLP. The Schedule of Mandated Persons is outlined in Appendix 7 in the Technological University “Child Protection Procedures (2022-2024)”.

6.0 Mandatory Reporting to State Authorities

The Technological University is obliged to inform TUSLA of any **reasonable grounds for concern** that a child may have been, or currently is, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Reporting is done by the DLP (except in the case of mandated persons). Subsequent to, or in parallel with this reporting, internal investigations may be carried out. It is not necessary for any member of the Technological University community to prove that abuse has occurred in order to report a concern to TUSLA. All that is required is that there are reasonable grounds for concern. It is TUSLA’s role to assess concerns that are reported.

7.0 Actions to be Taken by Members of the Technological University Community (Staff or Students)

Members of the TUS community must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact could be victims of abuse. If staff members or students have any concerns, or anyone raises concerns with them, they must contact one of the DLP(s) immediately to seek advice.

In cases of an on-campus emergency, where it is believed that a child is at serious and imminent risk, immediate contact should be made in the first instance with the

Estates Manager who will ensure the immediate safety of the child on campus, and who will alert An Garda Síochána.

The DLP(s) should be informed, who will immediately inform the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA). In the absence of the Designated Liaison Person, these further contacts will be made by the Estates Manager.

A member of the TUS community should not interview the child or the child's parent(s)/, guardian(s)/, carer(s) about the alleged abuse, as this is a function of TUSLA or An Garda Síochána.

Contact details for all relevant persons in the implementation of this Policy are published in the accompanying "Child Protection Procedures (2022-2024)", Section 7 of the Technological University- Child Protection Procedures 2022-2024.

8.0 Records

It is important that any member of the Technological University community reporting suspected child abuse (neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse or sexual abuse), should accurately record the conversations/observations which establish the basis for their concerns. These observations (which may include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information which may be relevant) should inform the discussion with the Designated Liaison Person.

9.0 Confidentiality

Confidentiality must never be promised to a child or young person making a disclosure. All information regarding possible or suspected child abuse should be shared only "on a need to know basis", in the interests of the child. The requirement to report to the DLP and to TUSLA can be explained in a supportive manner to the child/adult.

Information may be communicated to TUS personnel who have a legitimate involvement or role in dealing with the issue; it is not a breach of confidentiality to give information to those who need to have that information, for the protection of a child including the DLP(s), TUSLA or An Garda Síochána.

10.0 Persons Reporting Possible Child Abuse

There are legislative provisions to protect from civil or criminal liability any member of the Technological University community or Designated Liaison Person(s) who

reports suspicions of child abuse reasonably and in good faith to designated officers of TUSLA or to An Garda Síochána (*Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998*).

This legislation also creates an offence of false reporting of child abuse, where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

It is noted that it is an offence to withhold information about a serious offence against a person under 18 years, or a vulnerable person [*Criminal Justice (Withholding of information on offences against children and vulnerable persons) Act, 2012*].

11.0 Accompanying Procedures

The Technological University has published “Child Protection Procedures (2022-2024)” for staff and students to accompany this policy, which includes details of the Technological University Designated Liaison Persons, Mandated Persons and guidance for staff and students on reporting Child Protection concerns.