



Procedure and Guidelines for Working Safely with Children

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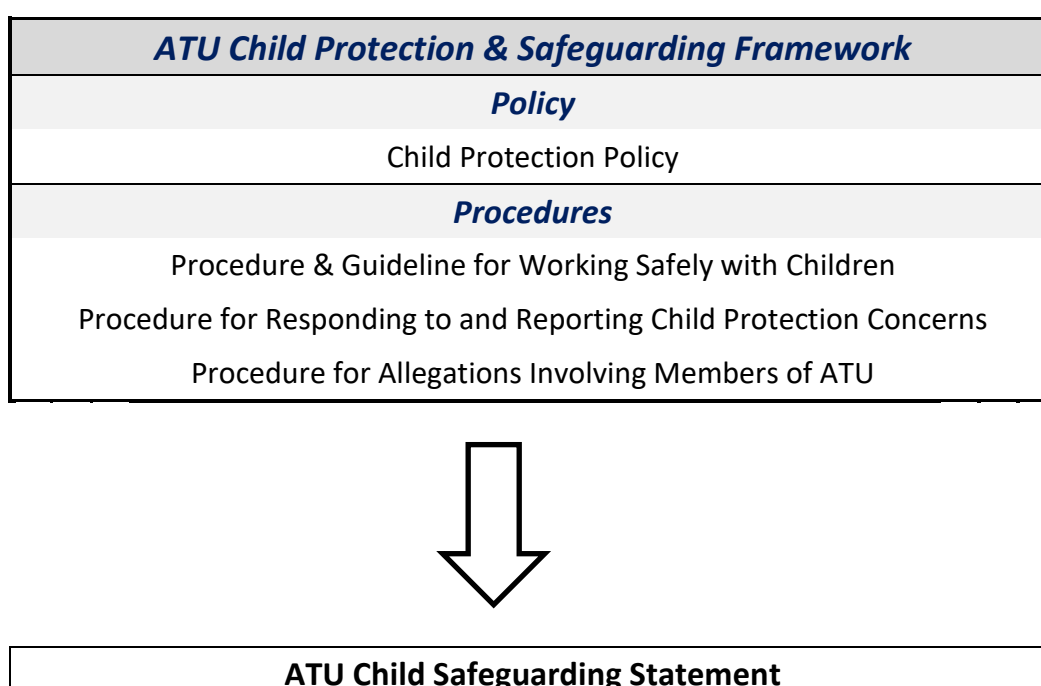
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1. Purpose

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) recognises its responsibility to promote and safeguard the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable persons. The University's Child Protection Procedures have been developed following extensive consultation, and take account of the *Children First Act, 2015* and the *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Tusla 2017)*.

This document** is part of a suite of university documents provided to give clear direction and guidance to all members of the ATU community in relation to meeting their statutory obligations, and in how to implement (non-statutory) best practice guidance **when working with children, young people, and vulnerable adults:**



2. Scope

This procedure applies to all University members including:

- All employees of ATU, including employees of campus companies and research centres.
- All students who may have contact with children or vulnerable adults on campus, online, or off-campus in the course of their duties or in fulfilment of the requirements of their programmes of study.
- All external parties (including agents, contractors, student unions of the university, and volunteers) who operate at any time within or for ATU.

3. External Reference Documents

- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 – 2016
- Children First Act 2015
- National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Tusla, 2017)

4. Procedure and Guidelines for Working Safely with Children

4.1 Responsibilities of University Units

All ATU Units must ensure that:

- the ATU Child Protection Policy is formally adopted and fully implemented within the Unit.
- employees and students being placed in outside agencies and organisations inform themselves of that agency's / organisation's Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Child Safeguarding Statement.

4.2 Responsibilities of University Members

All University members must ensure they:

- are aware of how to recognise signs of child abuse.
- avail of appropriate training where necessary.
- follow the reporting procedures, as outlined in the *ATU Procedure for Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Concerns* (a separate procedure document), where they have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of any child involved in any service provided by ATU.
- fully co-operate with the relevant statutory authorities in relation to child protection matters.
- comply with confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.
- read and sign the 'Acceptance of the ATU Child Safeguarding Statement' (See Appendix X).

4.2.1 Additional Responsibilities of Students on External Placement

A student on external placement must be familiar with the policies and procedures in relation to child protection at the placement (host) organisation.

A student on placement who suspects or is aware of suspected child abuse should without delay, follow the procedures of host organisation.

A member of ATU staff visiting a student on external placements who suspects or is aware of suspected child abuse should without delay, follow the procedures of the host organisation.

4.3 Working Safely with Children

At all times every member of the ATU community must ensure that they:

- Adopt the safest possible practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children through the conduction of risk assessments where appropriate (Appendix 1- Risk assessment exemplar)
- Treat all children / young people equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Demonstrate exemplary behaviour in the presence of children.
- Never use physical punishment.
- Always work in an open environment (avoiding private, remote, or unobserved situations).
- Avoid being alone with a child (where a one-to-one meeting is necessary, it should be conducted in a room with visual access).
- Provide a safe, appropriately monitored environment for any visiting children.
- Always refer reports of current or retrospective child abuse, welfare, and safety issues to the University's Designated Liaison Person (DLP). If a member of ATU is inhibited for any reason in reporting the incident internally to the DLP or where they are dissatisfied with the response, they should contact Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

4.3.1 Research involving Children

Research conducted or commissioned by members of the ATU community which involves the participation of children must be approved by the University's Research Ethics Committee or another appropriate body recognised by the University prior to the commencement of the work.

In addition:

- Informed consent must be obtained from the parents / guardians of children.
- Informed assent must also be obtained from the children themselves, where appropriate, and in a manner comprehensible to them.
- Appropriate language should be used to inform children so that they understand the purpose of the research in which they have agreed to participate.
- The effect of the research on the child must be monitored as the research progresses to ensure that they feel comfortable in continuing.

- Persons proposing to conduct the research should provide evidence to the committee that they have completed TUSLA Children First E –Learning programme.

4.4 Child Protection Training

Effective protection and safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable people depends on the *skills, knowledge, and values* of those working and interacting with them. Relevant training and education is an important means of developing such skills, knowledge, and values. It is thus imperative that all ‘units’ of the University – **including academic units (faculties, schools, and departments), research centres, professional, technical, and service units, as well as university campus companies and subsidiaries** – develop a culture of awareness and knowledge of this procedure (and related policy and procedures) and ensure that appropriate training is undertaken by members of the unit(s), where appropriate.

All ATU employees must complete TUSLA Children First E-Learning programme freely accessible [here](#) and on the Tusla website.

Students who are required to be vetted as a condition of programme participation or students who hold positions in the university who may have potential contact with children (e.g. student ambassadors, mentors) must complete the TUSLA Children First E-Learning programme.

All mandated persons will be required to complete specific Mandated persons training

5. Documents Associated with this Procedure

- ATU Child Protection Policy
- ATU Child Safeguarding Statement
- ATU Procedure for Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Concerns
- ATU Procedure for Allegations Involving Members of ATU

6. Measurement of Effectiveness of this Procedure

This procedure will be reviewed periodically by the ATU Child Protection Committee (the terms of reference and composition of this committee is provided for in the ATU Child Protection Policy).

7. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
001	New Procedure Approved Governing Body 24 June 2024 Audit and Risk Committee 14 May 2024	24/06/2024

8. Appendix 1

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Child Safeguarding Statement

Atlantic Technological University (ATU) is one of Ireland's largest Higher Education Institutions providing third level education. The facilities of ATU are also accessed by the wider community for sporting and cultural events.

In accordance with the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 has agreed the Child Safeguarding Statement set out in this document, which is binding on all members of ATU.

Principles to Safeguard Children from Harm

ATU recognises the importance of child protection and welfare considerations in relation to university life and that these must be reflected in all policies, procedures, practices, and activities. In its policies, procedures, practices, and activities, ATU will adhere to the following principles of best practice:

ATU will:

- Recognise that protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance, regardless of all other considerations.
- Fully comply with its statutory obligations under the relevant legislation relating to protection and welfare of children.
- Fully co-operate with the statutory authorities in relation to child protection and welfare matters.
- Adopt safe practices to minimise the possibility of harm or accidents happening to children and to protect workers from the necessity to take unnecessary risks that may leave themselves open to accusations of abuse and neglect.
- Fully respect confidentiality requirements in dealing with child protection matters.

ATU will also adhere to the above principles in relation to vulnerable adults.

Risk Assessment

In preparing this statement we have completed a risk assessment of the potential for harm to children when engaging with ATU and in response have developed the following policy and procedures:

- ATU Child Protection Policy
- Procedure and Guidelines for Working Safely with Children
- Procedure for Responding to and Reporting Child Protection Concerns
- Procedure for Child Protection Allegations Involving ATU Members

Details of Personnel to Contact if you are Concerned about the Welfare and Safety of Children:

If you have a safeguarding concern or wish to report an allegation of child abuse, please contact our Designated Liaison Officer (DLO) or one of our Deputy Designated Liaison Officers.

Designated Liaison Person

ATU Maura Finnegan, 071 9305309

Deputy Designated Liaison Persons

ATU Connemara Paul Leamy, 091 742655

ATU Donegal (Killybegs) Nicola Dunnion, 074 9186645

ATU Donegal (Letterkenny) Rory McMorrow, 074 9186810

ATU Galway (Cluain Mhuire) Celine Curtin, 091 7454408

ATU Galway (Dublin Road) Debbie Molloy, 091 742596

ATU Mayo Justin Kerr, 094 9043249

ATU Mountbellew Edna Curley, 087 6695058

ATU Sligo Gerry Hegarty, 071 9305126

ATU St. Angela's Amanda McCloat, 071 9143580

Review

This Statement will be reviewed in line with the Child Protection Policy or as soon as is practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which this statement refers.