

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF PENANG SCIENCE CLUSTER (PSC)

Revision History – Child Protection Policy

Date	Remarks
1 November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft – Creation
21 December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised Key Contacts • Added Supplementary Document: Safeguarding Policy for Vulnerable Adults

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF PENANG SCIENCE CLUSTER (PSC)

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

Child Protection is the fundamental commitment to safeguarding children from any form of harm, including neglect and abuse such as mental, physical, or sexual abuse. Its primary goal is to minimize children's vulnerability by providing them with care, protection, and support to ensure their well-being, development, and flourishing. Regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or beliefs, every child has the inherent right to protection against abuse.

The welfare of the child is of paramount importance, as a child who is not shielded from intentional or unintentional harm cannot realize their full potential in education or life. Child protection is an integral part of Penang Science Cluster's (PSC) mission.

All PSC staff, interns, facilitators, and volunteers have a professional duty to ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in our activities and areas of influence. Adherence to PSC's Child Protection Policy ensures that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the children under our care.

There is a supplementary document that extend the cover for vulnerable adults that must be read alongside this document.

1.2. Scope of the policy

Who is covered by this policy?

This policy is designed to protect all individuals who engage with PSC programs from their initial interactions and throughout their lives. When a student reaches the age of 18, the child protection elements and associated legal obligations no longer apply, but other safeguarding measures remain in effect.

There is a supplementary document that extends the cover for **vulnerable adults** that must be read alongside this document.

Who should apply this policy?

This policy applies to all participants in PSC programs, including PSC staff, interns, volunteers, consultants, third-party suppliers, guest speakers, and programming facilitators, irrespective of whether they have a contractual agreement, and regardless of their remuneration status. These individuals will be referred to as "**participants**" hereafter. If this policy is more stringent than

the safeguarding policies of partner organizations, it supersedes those policies for interactions related to PSC programs.

1.3. Aim

The aim of Penang Science Cluster's Child Protection Policy is to promote best practices and provide students with the appropriate safety and protection while in the care of PSC staff, participants, volunteers, and stakeholders. PSC commits to Preventative Measures (outlined below) aimed at eliminating the likelihood and possibility of child abuse. Additionally, PSC commits to implementing Protective Measures (outlined below) for students who have experienced child abuse or have had their rights violated.

1.4. Definitions

The Government of Malaysia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) in 1995, defining a "child" as any individual under the age of eighteen years. For the purposes of this Policy:

- **Applicable law** encompasses all relevant statutes, laws, acts, decrees, ordinances, regulations, constitutional provisions, treaties, conventions, rules of civil or common law, and legal principles.
- **Child** refers to all children and young people under the age of eighteen years old.
- **Child abuse** encompasses intentional, unintentional, and perceived abuse or maltreatment of a child, including physical abuse, emotional abuse/ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligent treatment, and commercial or other exploitation, all of which violate applicable law and may result in harm to the child's health, development, or dignity.
- **Emotional abuse** includes verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment, which encompasses acts or omissions by parents or caretakers causing or likely to cause serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental trauma in children. This includes extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishment, belittlement, rejection, and derogatory language.
- **Neglect** includes the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether physical, educational, or emotional. Physical neglect encompasses inadequate provision of food, clothing, medical care, supervision, or shelter. Educational neglect pertains to failure in providing appropriate schooling or special educational needs. Psychological neglect involves lack of support, love, and attention, as well as allowing substance abuse by the child.

- **Physical abuse** comprises intentional or unintentional infliction of physical injury upon a child, including hitting, punching, kicking, shaking, burning, or other harmful actions.
- **Sexual abuse** involves a child in sexual activity beyond their comprehension or ability to provide informed consent, violating societal norms or laws. It often includes a power imbalance and the intention to satisfy the needs of an older child or adult.
- **Peer-on-peer abuse** recognizes that children and young people can harm, exploit, or bully their peers of similar age.
- **Rights** encompass various child rights, including freedom of expression, thought, and association; the right to the highest attainable standard of health; the right to an adequate standard of living for physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development; the right to education; the right to rest and leisure; the right to be protected from economic exploitation and hazardous work.
- **Risks** include inappropriate sexual behaviour involving a child, such as fondling, intercourse, incest, rape, exhibitionism, and sexual exploitation. To be classified as "child abuse," these acts must be committed by a person responsible for the child's care. If committed by a stranger, they would constitute "sexual assault" under applicable law, handled by law enforcement.

1.5. Key Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Leaders:

1. Aimy Lee, Chief Operating Officer – aimy@pscpen.com
2. Dr. Rebecca Ow, Program Director – biochem@pscpen.com

Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat Malaysia:

Talian Kasih: 15999

WhatsApp: 019-2615999

2. Preventative Measures

2.1. Procedures

Safeguarding Risk Assessments and Training

PSC staff must undergo mandatory safeguarding risk assessment and training for all PSC events and activities involving children. Risk assessments consider factors like the student group profile, identified hazards/risks, likelihood, and consequences. This information informs the level of safeguarding measures necessary for event safety. Training includes guidance on how to handle child or young person issues.

Professional and Personal Conduct of Staff

PSC is committed to ensuring professional behaviour in relationships between staff and children, with clear expectations outlined in the Child Protection Policy. All PSC staff must be aware of and adhere to these expectations.

Staff Safeguarding Training

PSC provides comprehensive induction, education, and training programs for staff to fulfil our commitment to safeguarding children and young people. This includes regular, systematic professional safeguarding training for safeguarding leads, staff, and participants. New staff receive an induction that covers child abuse awareness and reporting procedures. Additionally, all new staff are required to complete Child Protection training, with advanced training provided for Designated Safeguarding Leads.

Safer Recruitment

PSC follows best practice standards in staff, intern and volunteer recruitment and ensuring all necessary checks are made in compliance with local laws and good practice.

Volunteers

Volunteers must be directly supervised by a PSC staff member and complete Child Protection training before interacting with students.

2.2. Acceptable Behaviour

Participants must understand that child abuse is a criminal offense and take PSC's Child Protection Policy seriously. PSC ensures that all participants are educated about the policy and potential risks to students.

PSC shall:

- Ensure that all participants are aware of PSC's Child Protection Policy.
- Ensure that through awareness and training, participants shall minimise risks to children.
- Commit to enacting a proper level of due diligence in the recruitment of participants.

Participants shall:

- Raise awareness of children's rights within classrooms and the community through parent and community meetings.
- Be vigilant about situations that could endanger children and mitigate risks by planning and organizing work to minimize them.
- Work in supervised groups when possible.
- Foster an environment of openness where children can voice concerns.
- Empower children to discuss their rights, what is acceptable or unacceptable, and how to respond to risks or abuse.
- Encourage children to discuss their interactions with participants and report concerns.
- Report any child risk or abuse following PSC's policy for appropriate action.

2.3. Unacceptable Behaviour

Participants must not engage in any behaviour that could harm children, including:

- Physically abusing a child.
- Developing exploitative or abusive relationships with children.
- Using inappropriate, offensive, or abusive language, suggestions, or advice.
- Acting in a way that embarrasses, shames, humiliates, or degrades a child.
- Engaging in behaviour that may be abusive or pose a risk to children.
- Discriminating against children based on race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or other factors.
- Behaving inappropriately or provocatively, especially in a sexually suggestive manner that could be considered sexual abuse.
- Allowing a child to stay with you unsupervised during the day or night without parental knowledge.
- Sharing a room or bed with a child you are working with.
- Engaging in inappropriate physical contact with a child.
- Providing unsolicited personal care to a child that they can do independently.

- Allowing children to participate in sexually provocative games.
- Ignoring or not taking action when witnessing inappropriate actions inflicted by children on others or encountering offensive material.
- Spending excessive time alone with children without supervision.
- Taking children home or to other places without supervision, especially if they will be alone with you.

This list is not exhaustive and may be updated as needed. Participants should avoid actions or behaviour that could constitute poor practice, abusive behaviour, or violations of a child's rights, or pose a risk to any child, whether associated with PSC or not. Deviations from this policy may result in adverse consequences, including employment termination and legal action.

2.4. Online Safeguarding Guidelines

When using digital communications, participants should:

- Only contact children and young people for professional reasons.
- Not share personal information, including contact details, with children and young people.
- Not request or respond to personal information from children or young people unless relevant to their professional role or if the child is at immediate risk.
- Avoid sending or accepting friend requests from children or young people on social networks.
- Use appropriate reporting routes if personal details are compromised.
- Ensure transparent and open communications.
- Be cautious in communications with children to prevent misinterpretation.
- Keep personal and professional online lives separate.
- Avoid posting information online that could harm PSC's reputation.

2.5. Whistleblowing

PSC encourages staff to report concerns regarding another staff member or participant. Information about what constitutes abuse, boundary crossing, how to identify them, and the steps to take if feeling unsafe or uneasy during engagement with PSC is shared with staff and participants. Any staff member witnessing misbehaviour by another staff member should report it to their direct manager.

2.6. Confidentiality

PSC acknowledges its responsibility to manage sensitive information professionally and in accordance with applicable law. Staff must maintain strict confidentiality regarding all information related to suspected or reported safeguarding incidents. Only staff directly involved in managing the identified risk to a child, young person, or the PSC community should have access to this information. PSC operates within the framework of local and international

child protection laws, sharing relevant safeguarding concerns with necessary parties as required. Despite the duty of confidentiality, any staff member who believes that a child may be in harm's way or at risk must promptly report this information to a Designated Safeguarding Lead. In certain situations, staff may be required to share sensitive information, such as:

- Responding to court orders or legal requirements.
- When the individual provides consent for information sharing.
- When sharing information is justified in the public interest.

2.7. Record Keeping

All safeguarding records related to students should be entered and stored securely in a digital record-keeping system within PSC's database. Safeguarding Leads are responsible for ensuring that all case documents are accurate and complete. When documenting case notes, staff should distinguish between facts and professional judgments and provide a clear rationale for any professional judgments. Case files related to safeguarding allegations against PSC staff, volunteers, or partner organizations will be maintained in paper form, securely stored by the Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead will maintain a central record of such cases.

3. Reactive Measures

3.1. Breach of Policy and Consequences

- In the event of a participant found to be in breach of the Penang Science Cluster (PSC) Child Protection Policy during the PSC program, appropriate disciplinary actions may be taken, subject to a case-by-case evaluation.
- If, at any point during their tenure at Penang Science Cluster (PSC), a participant is deemed unsuitable to work with children due to a student complaint or any other valid reason, they may be prevented from commencing work or subjected to disciplinary actions, including potential dismissal. This clause aims to protect students from participants who may appear compliant with this Policy but have undisclosed histories related to child abuse or related offenses, rendering them unsuitable for participation due to increased risk to students.

3.2. Reporting Abuse

- All staff, volunteers, and interns are encouraged to be vigilant for signs indicating that a child may require assistance. The reporting procedure is readily accessible to ensure that everyone understands the necessary steps for ensuring the safety of children and other witnesses.
- Any witnessed, suspected, or alleged violations of the Penang Science Cluster (PSC) Child Protection Policy must be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities. The primary consideration in this process is always the safety of the child.
- Initially, it should be determined whether the concerns are internal to the organization or related to an external situation.
 - For **internal concerns** involving staff, volunteers, or participants' behaviour, it should be assessed whether it warrants reporting to local/national authorities. If not, the internal safeguarding procedure should be followed.
 - For **external concerns** involving abuse outside the organization's purview, it should be considered whether the organization's business practices contribute to the concern. Reporting may be necessary to local or national authorities, followed by the internal safeguarding procedure.
- An evaluation of the specific type of support and assistance required by the affected child(ren) should be offered promptly. This may involve arranging for a medical assessment. Contact information for child protection services, local services department, policy information, emergency medical assistance, and helplines should be easily accessible. A safeguarding report should be compiled to document incident details. The "best interests of the child" should be a guiding principle throughout this process.

3.3. Intervention

Action to be Taken When Abuse is Suspected

In an Emergency Situation

1. This includes situations where a child is in immediate danger.
2. Immediately contact the Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL) and the necessary authorities.

In a Non-Emergency Situation

1. Contact the DSL.

Action to be Taken When a Child Discloses Abuse to You

If a child discloses abuse or boundary violations, promptly report it to a Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL). Follow these recommended steps:

1. Do not promise to keep the information a secret. Explain that you may need to share it with someone who can help.
2. Inform the child that only those who need to know, such as the DSL, will be informed.
3. Maintain composure and avoid overreacting when a young person discloses potential harm. It is essential not to display panic or anger.
4. Reassure the young person that they did the right thing by confiding in you. Avoid physical contact to reassure them.
5. If the child discloses harm or abuse in a group setting, thank them for sharing (if appropriate) and continue with the event without drawing attention to the disclosure or asking for further details publicly. Interject if necessary to prevent further disclosure in a public setting. Inform the DSL to follow up with the participant in a more suitable environment.
6. Take notes immediately after a child discloses abuse. Focus on recording keywords rather than attempting to remember every word.
7. Avoid including personal opinions or extrapolations in your notes.
8. Ask clarifying questions, avoiding leading or suggestive inquiries.
9. Do not make promises regarding future actions.
10. Do not engage with an alleged perpetrator regarding the child's disclosure.
11. Ensure the disclosure is shared with the DSL within 24 hours of receiving the information or complaint.