

LSI College London Under 18's and Missing Persons Policy

Date of policy review: September 2024
Next review: August 2025
Lead for review: Principal

AIM:

Please note:

Before implementing this Policy you must list and identify who the Designated Safeguarding Lead is. You need to add their name and contact details to this Policy and ensure that these details are always up to date.

It is the responsibility of the Principal / Compliance Manager to update the details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead upon annual review of this Policy.

LSI College London are committed to providing a caring friendly and safe environment for all our students so the students can learn and be taught in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. As such it is the aim of this Policy to act and investigate and provide effective support and interventions to students who are under 18 of age and reported as 'missing' or who have taken leave without appropriate permissions.

Additionally, LSI College London will work to reduce the incidence of students going missing and the risks associated with students / young persons who go missing or take leave without appropriate permissions.

This Policy is consistent with the legal duty to safeguard and promote the Welfare of students as described in Section 175 of The Education Act 2002, Keeping children safe in Education September 2022, Working together to Safeguard Children 2018 and DFE guidance Children missing Education 2016.

All staff at LSI College London should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly can act as a vital warning sign of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation or child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risks of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risks and to help prevent the risk of a student going missing in future.

Purpose:

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a clear framework to all staff, including volunteers, who work at LSI College London to adopt the approach of managing incidences of missing students or students who take leave without appropriate permissions.

It should be remembered that international students are a vulnerable group who are often isolated by friends and family who may be living thousands of miles away. International students may have an imperfect command of English and or be unfamiliar with British customs. As such, information requests from the families of international students should be dealt with particularly sympathetically; as persons may not appreciate the provisions of the Data Protection Act, or LSI College's position on confidentiality.

Responsibility:

Ultimate responsibility for this Policy and procedure should lie with the Principal LSI College London has a legal responsibility for the health safety and welfare of students staff and visitors and aims to provide a healthy and safe environment that promotes the welfare of all. All staff and students have a legal responsibility to take reasonable care for their own safety and that of others.

All members of staff including volunteers especially those who deal directly with international students should be aware of this Policy, procedures and sanctions applicable to incidences of missing students or students who take leave without permissions and apply them accordingly.

The procedures in this Policy may be adapted as necessary. The Principal / Head of Compliance should have wide discretion in relation to the procedures in this Policy.

Thresholds

There are two thresholds which allow for different procedures to be adopted in the case of missing students or students who are absent without leave. The thresholds are under 18's and over 18's (those who have just turned 18). In most cases staff will be dealing with students who are absent without proper authorisation. Cases in which students are determined to be missing are 'rare'.

In order to ascertain which procedure needs to be followed when a student is missing or absent without permission the senior member of staff with the relevant authorisation should determine the age of the student and assess the risk. Staff should be aware that they do not need to wait until the threshold to report any students that they have concerns about. A number of contextual reasons should be considered:

- 1) The student is despondent, mental and physically impaired
- 2) The student is experiencing academic personal or financial problems
- 3) Has the student disappeared before
- 4) Does the student have a known drug or alcohol problem
- 5) Has the student received any threats or warnings
- 6) What is the student's lifestyle? Does the student have a criminal record
- 7) Did the student or perpetrator leave a note
- 8) Identify the possible threat factors, time of day, darkness, weather conditions, known local concerns

Over 18's (those students that have recently turned 18)

For the purposes of this Policy an over 18 student is defined as missing when they have been missing for 48 hours without proper authorisation or notification and where all other avenues of information gathering about their location and wellbeing have been exhausted.

Staff should review contextual factors and should not wait 48 hours if concerns have already been identified and there is evidence of known concerns.

These students are adults have to be treated as such, students who are over the age of 18 have the right to privacy. Their parents, guardians next of kin, members of staff or fellow students do not have the right to know their whereabouts. Indeed, to reveal an over 18's whereabouts to any of these parties, without the authorisation of the student may be seen as breach of GDPR that came into effect in the UK in May 2018.

It is important to remember that some students who do not wish to have contact with their immediate family for personal reasons as adults for these reasons must be respected. It is a serious matter to disclose personal details of a student to a third party. Even if it is an over 18's next of kin. Personal details should only be disclosed with the permission of the Designated Safeguarding Lead / Principal of LSI College London. It is important to remember that any persons who decides to breach confidentiality must be able to justify their actions in terms of the prevention of serious harm or a genuine or reasonable belief that serious harm to the student might be prevented by such disclosure.

The attendance staff will monitor daily absent reports. Any student who has unauthorised null attendance for 2 consecutive days will have a Compliance note referral and the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) should be notified by email immediately.

Over 18's on Level 5 courses and above

These students are encouraged to work independently and trusted to manage their own workload. Therefore an over 18 student studying at Level 5 above should be reported as missing after 3 consecutive days without proper authorisation or notification and where all other areas of information gathering about their location and wellbeing have been exhausted.

However, staff should not wait to start mitigating actions if there are concerns about the student, by staff, students friends or family. The contextual factors mentioned above should be considered in all cases and a decision made with the best course of action for the individual student.

A 17 year old student studying on an A Levels / AEM (Academic English Module) course will fall into the under 18 category below until their 18th birthday.

Under 18's

For the purposes of this Policy an under 18 student is considered missing when they have not attended or signed into LSI College London registers and are absent for 2 consecutive days with no reply received from their parent or guardian stating that they are aware of their whereabouts.

Daily protocol for students under 18 that fail to attend:

LSI College London need to follow the following for students who have just turned 18 or under 18:

- Ensure that Reception / daily attendance taker has a list of contact numbers and addresses of where the student are staying.
- The Receptionist /daily attendance taker needs to wait until 9:30 before ascertaining whether the student is running late or not coming in at all.
- By 9:30 the Receptionist / Daily attendance taker needs to make a record of the students that have not yet attended
- If by 9:45 the students in question have still not made contact or arrived at LSI College London the Receptionist. Daily attendance taker needs to start contacting the students to see why they are running late /or if the student will be attending at all
- If the students are still not contactable by phone then an email needs to be sent out to the students
- If by 10:30 the students still do not arrive then the Safeguarding Lead needs to be notified immediately for a risk assessment of the situation to be made
- Once the Safeguarding lead is notified then this under 18's Policy must be adhered too
- It is at the discretion of the designated Safe guarding lead to ascertain when they think it is appropriate to contact the Police / and or Social services

All students:

General procedure upon discovery that a student is missing or taken leave without permission.

The safety of the student is paramount. The absence of a student within LSI College London for a prolonged period of time, or an extremely anxious inquiry from a friend or relative, may give rise to concerns about the student's safety. These concerns may be considered acute if it is known that a student is suffering from a health problem. It is essential that the member of staff dealing with the inquiry checks with all relevant sources of information to ensure that they have a full picture of the circumstances before escalating to Senior management / Head of Operations / or any third parties such as Social Services or the Police. Since the flow of information is vital, a designated person should be identified, regulate the flow of information to appropriate individuals and/or bearing in mind the statutory obligations outlined above.

The first step must always be to confirm that the student is missing or taken leave without permission using the thresholds laid out above. Having confirmed that a student is missing or taken leave without permission all other avenues for information gathering about their location and well being should be exhausted.

These may include:

- Investigate all available sources of information

- Acquiring information through daily attendance reports / Compliance Manager discussion to ascertain the last time the student was on campus
- The student file to ascertain whether there is any information on the file that may help and other relevant information
- Obtain a photo so that you are aware of what the student looks like
- Ascertain friends / next of kin contact details to ascertain any information of the student's absence
- Ask other students to see if they are aware of the reasons for the absence
- If appropriate visit the private residence of the student

If none of the above produces any information and all avenues of information have been reasonably exhausted, then the Designated Safeguarding lead needs to decide to enquire or inform the parents / guardians of the missing student and/ or to inform the Police. The designated Safeguarding lead will also make the decision who will make contact to the relevant authorities.

The designated contact person leading on the student inquiry needs to ensure that there are accurate records of all notes, records and recordings of all telephone conversations.

Reporting a student missing to the Police

When reporting a student the Police will ask many questions.

The questions that may be asked are as follows:

- All personal details known to you, including their full name, date of birth, address.
- Any details relating to the disappearance; when you or others last had contact with the individual, what they were wearing when they disappeared and any other details relating to possible reasons behind their disappearance.
- Any factors that might put the student at risk. This might be age, physical or mental health issues or perhaps the individual may have received bad news or been in emotional distress.
- The police may ask for various personal items belonging to the missing individual. This may include mobile phones, diaries and laptop computers. ▪ The police may also want to visit the accommodation and carry out a routine search and ask for a picture of missing student.

What to do when the missing student returns:

In the event that a 'missing' student returns to LSI College London the relevant staff must telephone Senior Staff, at most appropriate time, e.g. if student returns at 3am and makes contact via email the staff member must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

The police should be informed as soon as the student returns. When the student returns an interview should be completed, documenting where the student has been, who they have been staying with, reasons for being absent, etc.

Staff must maintain all notes, records, and recordings of conversations and telephone calls.

Confidentiality Staff cannot and should not promise total confidentiality. All staff must follow the appropriate procedure for confidentiality.

Follow-on procedures Based on the return interview, students will usually be required to speak to a member of the welfare team / Compliance team regarding their being missing. The welfare team / Compliance team will consider what support the student requires upon returning to the College in accordance with other relevant Policies.

Follow up should be in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy as well as any guidance from local agencies. Completion of the 'missing' student procedures is onerous.