

OU DS and OUTTS Guidance to Performing Intimacy

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Purpose and Scope

This guidance is designed to support safer and more ethical practices in the creation and staging of intimacy and nudity in student theatre productions at The University of Oxford. Its aim is to help productions make informed decisions about whether their production may require, or benefit from, an Intimacy Director, and how to approach working with or without one. The principles outlined here should guide all work involving intimacy and nudity. However, each production is unique, so the way these principles are applied may need to be adapted to suit the specific needs of the production, performers, and creative team. At its core, this document encourages open communication, respect for individual boundaries and agency, and an approach centered on consent for everyone involved.

This guidance should be reviewed and updated every few years as needed. It was written by certified Intimacy Coordinator and Intimacy Director **Sophie Cooch** in collaboration with Noah Wild (University Drama Officer), Theo Joly (OUDS President), Rosie Morgan-Males, and the OUDS and OUTTS committees.

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What is an Intimacy Director (ID)?

An Intimacy Director (ID) works on the creation of scenes involving intimacy, nudity and/or hyper-exposure. An Intimacy Director is a liaison between departments to ensure everyone is informed and aware of what is needed for performing intimacy. They act as an advocate for the performers, company and creative team, ensuring everyone is working within their boundaries and consent levels. They are also a specialist intimate choreographer and will choreograph moments of complex intimacy, such as simulated sex. An Intimacy Director is a member of the creative team, like a Movement Director, and is also a specialist in mitigating risk and supporting safe practice, similar to a Fight Director.

Identifying Intimacy, Nudity, and Hyper-Exposure in your script.

When preparing a production, it's important to identify any content that may be considered intimate, nude, or hyper-exposing. Below is a list of examples to help identify moments that may need further consideration or support.

Intimacy:

Kissing – such as a peck on the cheek or lips, lip-to-lip kissing, passionate kissing, “making out”, kissing on the body (e.g neck, décolletage).

Intimate Touch – such as embracing, hugging, sexualised dancing (partner or solo).

Simulated Sex – a simulated sex act, which may include simulated manual stimulation, oral stimulation, or penetrative sex. This can involve one person (e.g. simulated masturbation), two or more people, and may also include the use of a prop or sex toy.

Depictions of Medical Intimacy – such as childbirth, miscarriage, a gynecological examination, a rectal or breast examination, someone receiving a sponge bath from a caretaker.

Depictions of Kink – such as bondage, role play, fetish play, dominance/submission dynamics, sadism, masochism, exhibitionism, voyeurism, fetishism.

Depictions of Non-Consensual Intimacy* – such as simulated sexual assault, and in some cases domestic abuse, coercion, or grooming.

Depictions of Performative, Professional, or Transactional Intimacy – such as characters portraying strippers, striptease performers, adult film actors, or sex workers.

Depictions of Bodily Functions – such as simulated urination, defecation, or menstruation.

Sexual Sounds and Vocal Journeys – such as heavy breathing, arousal or pleasure sounds, vocalisation of intimacy or simulated sex. This may happen independently or alongside physical action and still constitutes intimate work even when no physical contact is involved.

Depictions of Familial Intimacy – such as a parent bathing a child or putting a child to bed.

**A further note on scenes depicting Non-Consensual Intimacy: These dynamics can take many different forms, and depending on the nature of the scene, may require collaboration with a Wellbeing Facilitator or Production Drama Therapist, either alongside or instead of an Intimacy Director. Where scenes involve both violence and intimacy, a Fight Director must also be involved.*

Nudity:

Nudity – Exposure of **one or more areas** of the body that would typically be covered by swimwear, such as the chest, breasts, buttocks, or genitals. E.g – *frontal nudity above the waist (exposure of breasts/chest).*

Full Nudity – Exposure of **all** of the areas of the body that would typically be covered by swimwear. This may be described as *full nudity* (exposure of the entire body), *full frontal nudity* (exposure of the full front of the body), or *full rear nudity* (exposure of the full rear of the body).

Implied Nudity – When a character is not actually nude, but the story being told is that they are. This may involve the use of objects, props, other performers, or specific sightlines to obscure parts of the performers body. For example, a performer removes all costume

items while facing upstage; the audience assumes they are nude but never sees the front of their body, which remains covered by modesty garments.

States of Undress – Varying degrees of undress, ranging from fully clothed to wearing only underwear or swimwear.

Hyper Exposure:

Hyper exposure acknowledges that everyone is different and what feels exposing for one person may not for another. It takes a person-centred approach to nudity, states of undress and the exposure of areas of the body someone would typically keep covered in daily life. This includes consideration of personal, religious, or cultural sensitivities around bodily exposure.

A note on intense emotional or psychologically distressing scenes / storylines –

Scenes involving intense emotional or psychological distress are not classified as intimacy work. While these moments may require care and support, they do not fall within the remit of an Intimacy Director. If such material may impact members of the cast or crew, productions should flag it separately and ensure appropriate welfare support is available.

If you have identified intimacy or nudity in your script you may be considering if you need to hire an Intimacy Director...

Does my Production need an Intimacy Director?

When is an Intimacy Director beneficial, recommended or required...

An ID is **Required** for performances involving...

- Simulated sex (including simulated masturbation)
- Nudity
- Partial Nudity
- Implied Nudity
- Simulated Sexual Assault & Non-Consensual intimacy
- Passionate Kissing
- Or if a cast member has requested an Intimacy Director

An ID is **Recommended** for performances involving...

- States of undress
- Kissing on the body (neck, chest/torso, shoulders, cleavage/breasts, buttocks, legs, feet).
- Sexual sounds (with no action)
- Sexualised dancing (partner or solo)
- Sexualised intimate touch
- Depictions of bodily functions

An ID is **Beneficial** for performances involving...

- Light intimate touch (embracing)
- Light kissing (a peck)
- Sexually charged dynamics

Please note: Intimacy, and what is considered intimate, exposing or vulnerable to perform, is subjective. In some cases, the specific context of a production, or the needs or boundaries of the performers, may mean that intimacy in the **Recommended** or **Beneficial** categories above will still **require** the involvement of an Intimacy Director.

Creative teams should break down scripts and their content with an open-minded approach, free from assumptions about how individuals may feel around performing intimacy. It's essential to engage in open and transparent communication with the performers involved, ensuring they're active participants in the conversations around intimacy to ensure you have the necessary support and safety measures in place.

How does an ID work in productions?

Each Intimacy Director will have their own practice, however the process and how they work with a production will be informed by the specific needs of that project and the performers and creative team involved. Below is a basic outline of a workflow for an Intimacy Director adapted to consider the needs and budgets of student productions at The University of Oxford.

Preparation :

1. During preparation an Intimacy Director will do a script breakdown highlighting moments of intimacy and nudity that could need Intimacy Direction. However, in some contexts in student productions, if the ID is being brought in for a specific moment(s), they may only ask for relevant script pages and necessarily context instead of doing a full script breakdown.
2. The ID will have a meeting with the Director to discuss their vision and requests for scenes of intimacy.
3. The ID will have individual conversations with each actor involved in moments of intimacy to discuss their boundaries, consent levels, any concerns and the practicalities of performing intimacy and/or nudity.
 - a. If the actors' boundaries are in conflict with the proposals for intimacy/nudity within the Directors vision, the IC can support creative conversations and provide alternatives that are within the actors boundaries and serve the story being told.

4. The ID will reach out to other departments as necessary. See list on [collaboration with other departments](#).
5. **[Modesty Garments and Intimacy Barriers](#)**: For scenes involving simulated sex and/or degrees of nudity the ID will advise on the use of modesty garments and intimacy barriers. These may include internal barriers (worn inside a modesty garment) or external barriers (placed between performers during physical contact). The ID will discuss these during conversations with the director and actors. Once consent levels and choreography have been established, the ID will either source these items for the production or liaise with the costume department to advise on suitable options. – [Intimask](#) is a UK-based company that designs and supplies modesty garments specifically for use in staged intimacy.

Rehearsal Process:

1. In professional productions the ID should be present for all rehearsals of the scenes involving intimacy. However this may not always be possible with student budgets and schedules. Therefore the production and ID should discuss how many rehearsals the ID will need to be present for. This could look like a dedicated Intimacy Rehearsal, scheduled towards the beginning of the rehearsal period to look at each moment of intimacy. The length of this rehearsal will be dependent on how much intimacy/nudity is involved, the risk level of the intimacy being portrayed, the level complex intimate choreography needed, and how many characters are involved in moments of intimacy/nudity.
2. During the **intimacy rehearsal** the Intimacy Director will:
 - a. Choreograph any moments of complex intimacy
 - b. Establish placeholders to be used in place of kissing throughout the rehearsal process.
 - c. Create alternative choreography in case of sickness.
 - d. Offer the cast & creative team tools for consent conversations, boundary check-ins and closure practices.
3. The Intimacy Director will create a **record of the intimacy choreography** created and will share this with the cast and relevant creative team.
4. **Closed Rehearsal** – Rehearsals of intimate scenes should only include essential members of the creative team. This is normally the cast performing, the director, the intimacy director, your welfare officer and, if applicable, the stage manager.
 - a. Signage stating that it is a Closed Rehearsal should be put on the doors to the rehearsal room and all windows should be covered.
5. **Tech/Dress Rehearsal** – For shows with a high amount of intimacy, complex intimacy involving technical aspects or intricate staging, nudity, partial nudity or implied nudity, it is advised to have the Intimacy Director at Tech/Dress to assess the intimacy in the performance space, sightlines and adjust choreography as needed. If your Intimacy Director is not present in the Tech rehearsals then a member of the team should check sightlines from all audience angles during Tech Rehearsals.

Intimacy Call:

1. An **intimacy call** is similar to a fight call. It takes place before a show or a full-run rehearsal and provides an opportunity for the cast to check in with their boundaries for that day and mark through the intimate choreography, ensuring continuous consent.
2. For scenes involving **nudity, simulated sex, complex physical intimacy or passionate kissing**, there should always be an intimacy call. For scenes of lower risk intimacy, it will be decided between the ID and cast in rehearsals whether an intimacy call is required. Depending on the level of intimacy some scenes may require a check-in only, whereas some may require marking through the beats of the choreography. This should be decided on scene by scene.
3. It will be decided between the ID, Director and cast as to whether an intimacy call is required and which member of the team will facilitate the intimacy call (sometimes called the *Intimacy Captain*).
 - a. The Intimacy Captain should be a member of the creative team who will be present at all shows and full-run rehearsals. This is normally the stage manager or deputy stage manager but due to these roles not being as present within rehearsals for OUDS/OUTTS productions, this role could also be fulfilled by the welfare officer, or assistant director.
4. The intimacy Captain will always be present for the intimacy call, they will have the intimacy choreography notes and read along while the actors mark out the action.
5. An Intimacy Call should not happen in private between the actors alone – for example, not with the actors alone in a dressing room.
6. Intimacy Calls should never involve any performance of nudity.

Performance:

1. If boundaries change during production for any reason including sickness the Intimacy Director should be informed and will offer alternative choreography.
2. Similarly if a new cast member replaces someone in the company during the run the Intimacy Director will need to be present for the rehearsal of the scenes of intimacy.

ID's collaboration with other departments

An Intimacy Director will often collaborate with multiple departments throughout the rehearsal process to ensure that everyone is informed and aligned on how scenes of intimacy will be created. Some examples of this collaboration include:

Stage Management Team – to discuss closed rehearsal protocols, intimacy call protocols, and choreography/blocking notes.

Costume Department – to discuss modesty garments and barriers as needed, how the costumes function if the actor is dressing/undressing and costume changes.

Fight Director – for any scene that involves both intimacy and violence portrayed at the same time it's necessary to have both an Intimacy Director and Fight Director. This would

require a rehearsal with both the Fight Director and the Intimacy Director present where they will work in collaboration to establish safe choreography from both their perspectives and responsibilities.

Sound Department – Supporting any pre-recorded intimacy vocal sounds (e.g. heavy breath, arousal or pleasure sounds, vocalisation of intimacy or simulated sex).

Movement Director/Choreographer – Any scenes where movement and intimacy overlap (such as sexualised dancing) the ID and MD/Choreographer will work in collaboration.

Lighting Department – for scenes where lighting states are used to mask exposure or restrict visibility of nudity or simulated sex. Lighting states should be planned in collaboration with the ID to ensure the intended level of concealment/exposure.

Design Departments (Set, Props) – to discuss the safety and practicality of the set and staging environment (e.g. beds, sofas, bathtubs), and discuss the use of props in intimate scenes.

Hair and Make-Up Department – to discuss body make-up, merkins (pubic wigs), or the covering of tattoos.

Welfare Officer – to discuss documentation such as content warnings or cast & crew notices for intimate scenes that audiences, creatives or cast may find challenging or activating.

Wellbeing Facilitator/Production Drama Therapist –

Additional Specialists

In professional settings productions may hire additional specialists as well as an Intimacy Director to ensure authenticity, accuracy, and appropriate support for performers and creative teams. Depending on the storyline or requirements of the piece, these may include:

- Kink / BDSM consultant
- LGBTQIA+ Consultant
- Cultural Consultant
- Production Drama Therapist / Wellbeing Practitioner / Wellbeing Facilitator
- Disability Consultant

Hiring an Intimacy Director

When to hire an Intimacy Director?

As early as possible and ideally when you're putting the rest of your creative team together, before rehearsals start. A lot of an Intimacy Director's work happens during the preparation phase. The earlier you bring an ID on board, the sooner they can begin essential conversations and necessary work needed before the intimacy rehearsals.

How to budget for an ID?

It is common practice for Intimacy Directors to charge a day or half-day rate for rehearsal days. Preparation time is usually charged hourly, to more accurately reflect the amount of work done ahead of rehearsals. Occasionally, Intimacy Directors may offer a set fee for preparation negotiated between the production and the Intimacy Director.

If your production requires the use of modesty garments and/or intimacy barriers, you will need to budget for these costs separately, as they are often provided or sourced by the Intimacy Director or production team.

Some Intimacy Directors may offer discounted rates for student productions.

Productions should be transparent about their budgets and discuss fees and expectations clearly upfront to avoid misunderstandings.

Why should an ID be a trained professional (and not a fellow student, or the Director)

Intimacy Directors undergo rigorous, specialised training which covers multiple areas such as; consent, communication, intimacy choreography, masking techniques, modesty garments, power dynamics, disrupting coercion and harm, mediation, conflict resolution, and trauma-informed practices. They also receive training in relevant laws and resources around consent and harassment, and are certified Mental Health First Aiders. This breadth of training is essential due to the level of responsibility and liability involved in the work. The psychological and physical risk to performers during intimate scenes can be significant if not properly mitigated by a qualified professional. In the eventuality of an incident (e.g. breach of consent, sexual harassment complaint, trigger, physical injury) which escalates up the reporting pathway, an untrained student intimacy director may end up in very difficult position that they aren't properly prepared or insured for.

Intimacy Directors function as a neutral third party, positioned outside the creative hierarchies and power dynamics that inherently exist within any production. In student theatre, it is especially important that the Intimacy Director is not a fellow student, as existing friendships or peer relationships can compromise a performer's ability to speak openly about their boundaries or consent.

How can I check that my Intimacy Director is properly trained?

Transparency and open communication are core tenets of Intimacy Direction, so a professional Intimacy Director should be open about their training and experience. This information should be clearly stated on their CV, website, or professional profile. If it isn't readily available, it's entirely appropriate to say that you are committed to finding a comprehensively trained ID and to therefore ask about their training. You can then look into

the training provider to understand the nature and scope of the programme. If you're unsure about their qualifications or can't find the necessary information, you can contact the University Drama Officer on drama.officer@admin.ox.ac.uk, who has a current list of recognised training providers for Intimacy Direction and Coordination, and can help you cross-reference.

Intimacy & Auditions

Casting calls

It is essential that casting calls/briefs are transparent about the level of intimacy, state of undress and/or nudity requested or required for a role, in order for people to make informed decisions on whether they would like to audition. Additionally, comprehensive information about the role's requested or required intimacy should be sent with invites to a recall and/or casting offers.

Is intimacy required or requested?

Consent is always reversible. This means you need to think in advance about what happens if a performer later revokes consent for specific intimacy or nudity. Ask yourself, if a performer's boundaries change, would that mean recasting, or can the moment be told in a different way?

In most productions there is more than one way to stage intimacy while still telling the story. It is very rare that intimacy and/or nudity must be shown in one specific way, with no scope for alternative action. An Intimacy Director can help you find creative solutions if boundaries shift, so that the action can change while the story remains clear.

In a small number of cases, a particular intimate action or level of nudity may be genuinely essential to the story you're telling or your vision of the production. If this is the case, and the role requires nudity or specific intimate action, be transparent about that from the outset. State clearly in audition and casting what intimacy and/or nudity is required, and explain that if consent for those specific elements is later withdrawn, the role may need to be recast.

This situation should be the exception rather than the norm. Clarity about what is required does not remove a performer's right to change their mind. If consent does change, the first step is always to explore an alternative option that respects the performer's boundaries and still serves the story.

Audition Protocols

Performers should never be requested to perform a state of undress, nudity or intimacy in an audition.

- No intimacy performed at an audition
 - No nudity or states of undress performed at an audition
 - No sexually charged scenes should be read between a performer and a member of the creative team (e.g. director or producer).
-

Production considerations for productions including intimacy

These considerations help ensure that the technical and logistical aspects of a production uphold the same consent-based standards established in rehearsal. They're most effective when addressed early, collaboratively, and with transparency across departments.

Production Content Warnings

If a production involves intimacy and/or nudity this should be included in the production content warning for audience members. Your intimacy director can support the drafting of this language to make sure it is accurate.

Cast and Crew Notices

A **Cast and Crew Notice** is a document shared with everyone working on the production, outlining significant moments of intimacy or nudity that people will be working in proximity to or may witness. This may not apply to all moments of intimacy but should be considered for scenes involving nudity, simulated sex, or depictions of non-consensual intimacy. The notice ensures everyone involved in the production is informed in advance and allows individuals to speak to welfare, request adjustments, or opt out of witnessing specific scenes if needed.

The notice should include:

- Where the moment appears in the script.
- A brief description of what is being performed, and what is visible to the audience versus what is implied.
- The safety measures in place (e.g. *this choreography has been created with the Intimacy Director and performers will be wearing modesty garments with an intimacy barrier inside*).
- Contact details for the Intimacy Director and the production's Welfare Officer, should anyone need further information or support.

Costume and Quick Changes

The production should ensure all quick costume changes that need to happen outside of the dressing room (in the wings or other working spaces) are supervised respectfully and that the performer's privacy is maintained.

Any quick changes should be practiced to help mitigate any risk of exposure for the performer.

Modesty Garments and Intimacy Barriers

Production will need to provide a private space for performers to apply, remove, or adjust garments and barriers. Intimacy garments and intimacy barriers (in-underwear or external) should be clean, properly fitted, and only handled by the performer or a designated member of the team.

Set, Props, and Technical Safety

Any set pieces used in intimate scenes should be tested to ensure they're fit for purpose, safe and stable. Any props used in intimate scenes should be clean, sanitary and safely stored between performances.

Building a Consent-Based Rehearsal and Creative Process: Core Principles and Practices

Building a consent based workspace

A consent based workspace is an environment that fosters mutual respect, open communication, and willing accountability among all participants. It employs specific tools and practices to ensure that everyone's boundaries are respected and that consent is actively sought and given throughout the creative process.

Attending Intimacy in Performance Workshops

OUDS will endeavour to offer a workshop at least once a year on Intimacy in Performance, in this workshops participants will be offered practical tools on how to build a consent based workspace, explore how to work with Intimacy in Performance and look at the Pillars of Intimacy – Communication, Consent, Choreography, Context & Closure – in more detail. Students who are active in the Oxford theatre scene, whether as an actors, directors, producers, stage manager, and/or welfare officers, should all try to attend this workshop if they're considering working with Intimacy, whether an ID will also be involved or not.

The Pillars of Intimacy

The Pillars of Intimacy were created by Intimacy Directors and Coordinators (IDC) and are the “*key components for the safe and ethical creation of intimate content in live performance, tv, or film.*” The five pillars are **Context, Consent, Communication, Choreography** and **Closure**. Embedding these principles across the rehearsal and creative

process establishes a consent-led, transparent, and respectful approach that extends beyond the intimate scenes themselves.



The Pillars of Intimacy in Production

The five pillars of intimacy in production define key components for the safe and ethical creation of intimate content in live performance, tv or film. While these principles are defined with respect to a scene of intimacy, many of them can and should be applied beyond intimate scene work to contribute towards a collaborative and consensual rehearsal and performance culture.

Context

Context refers to the shared analysis of the given circumstances for both the piece and the production as a whole. Each scene of intimacy will require a slightly different approach, and context allows for the unique attributes of each situation to be named, addressed, and understood by all those involved.

Consent

Consent is a freely given and knowing agreement between two parties to participate in a specific predetermined action. Consent can only exist when it is voluntary and allows for all parties to change their mind. In a culture of consent, individuals can choose between "Yes" and "No" freely, without fear of perceived negative consequences.

Communication

Communication must be open and free flowing during the production process to ensure that everyone understands what is being asked of them. Clear and continuous communication that uses inclusive language affords every team member the opportunity to give their informed and confident consent to both the story being told and to the actions in which they are involved.

Choreography

Choreography is a roadmap for the physical movements and emotional journey of the scene. It is a framework, within which actors can safely and effectively work physically and emotionally with one another. Intimacy choreography is meant to be adaptable to fit the needs of the storytelling. It can be hyper specific, or it may create broader containers for consensual impulse exploration.

Closure

Closure is a specific ritual or practice for the purpose of containing, processing, and categorizing feelings and experiences that emerge while working on a project. Building opening and closing practices help practitioners more safely explore imagined scenarios without experiencing repercussions in their everyday lives. Closure practices support the wellness of the entire creative team, and promote sustainability in the workplace.

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You can read each of the Pillars here: [Pillars of Intimacy in Production](#)

Consent in Performance – CRISP

Consent is the central tenet for the ethical creation of intimate scenes. For some time, intimacy professionals when explaining consent would use the acronym FRIES created by planned parenthood to define consent in real-life contexts: Freely Given, Reversible,

Informed, Enthusiastic, Specific. However, Intimacy Directors and Coordinators ([IDC](#)) felt that **Freely Given** and **Enthusiastic** did not fully capture the nuances of consent in a performance context. So they adapted the acronym to **CRISP**, which is now widely used amongst intimacy professionals. **CRISP** stands for:

Considered

Actors must be able to give an informed and considered “yes” to the actions being requested. They should fully understand what is being asked, have had time to consider the request and its potential impact, and retain full agency to consent or decline.

Reversible

Consent is always reversible! At any stage of the process. Even if you’ve already been cast, even if you’re halfway through rehearsals, even if you’re halfway through the performances.

Informed

Consent requires that actors have all relevant information about the scene and its context. This includes the story and character background, as well as detailed information about how the intimate performances will be created and performed. This covers the rehearsal process, choreography, costume, technical elements, performance space, lighting, and any other factors that might affect the actor’s experience.

Specific

“Consent is applied to a specific set of circumstances and must be sought anew if any circumstances change. Each separate action of simulated sex and/or nudity must be discussed and consent given without assumptions or expectations.” For example, if an actor performed nudity in one scene that does not mean they consent to performing nudity in another scene.

Participatory

“Means that people need to be involved in the decision-making process around what happens with and to their bodies. It means that decisions aren’t just handed down to actors about what will happen in a scene, but that they are invited into the conversation as full and equal participants in the creative decision-making process. Participatory speaks to the fact that this should be a collaborative process in which the actor is an equal member of the collaborative team.”

[Click here to read IDC’s reasons for adapting FRIES into CRISP...](#)

Practical Tools for Building a Consent Based Workspace

→ [Checking in and out](#) (Closure)

- ◆ Building a check-in and check-out into rehearsal processes encourages open communication and shared awareness. It invites cast and team members to connect with how they're feeling in that moment (physically, emotionally, or energetically) without pressure to share more than they wish to.

A check-in might take the form of a brief verbal prompt (for example, "One word to describe how you're arriving today") or could include a physical element such as a group warm-up, grounding exercise, or movement-based game/activity. Similarly, a check-out provides an opportunity to debrief on the work that's happened, and acknowledge how people are leaving the space, which can help to release residual tension and close the session with intention.

These practices can:

- Support ongoing consent and self-awareness.
- Help identify when adjustments might be needed.
- Strengthen trust within the ensemble by normalising honest, non-judgemental reflection.

→ Communication & Collaboration

- ◆ Free flowing, open and transparent communication is essential to ensure informed and continuous consent. Producers and directors should ensure conversations around intimacy happen with good notice and include the actors.
- ◆ This means:
 - Scope of intimacy and/or nudity clearly outlined with the casting brief.
 - Open communication with the actors throughout the process around intimacy and nudity. Actors should always be included in conversations around what is being asked of them in relation to intimacy and nudity.
 - Open communication with the intimacy director throughout the process, this includes access to the full script, conversations with the cast, director and creative team ahead of any intimacy rehearsals.
 - Crew

→ Boundary Conversations

- ◆ If you're working with an intimacy director they will help incorporate a way for the performers to check in with their own and each other's boundaries throughout the production process to ensure continued consent.
- ◆ If you're working *without* an intimacy director on intimacy in the "recommended" or "beneficial" category, especially if it involves physical touch, it is best practice to incorporate a boundary check in. This is where the two or more actors engaging in the intimate action clearly define to each other where on their bodies the other person is ok and not ok to touch.

- **“Baseline boundaries” or “General Boundaries”:** this is a boundary that is always in play for all actors. For example, if your production never requires an actor to touch another’s buttocks, that would be a baseline boundary and should be restated by the director before actors have their boundary conversations.
 - **Please Note:** There should never be any actual touch to genitals. This is a baseline boundary and should be reiterated in the first intimacy session. Touch to breasts and buttocks should never be added into action without warning and conversation ahead of the day.
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Working on Intimacy Without an Intimacy Director?

Working on Intimacy that does not necessitate an ID:

If the content in your production falls into the **Beneficial** category and you choose to work without an Intimacy Director it is important the creative team and cast discuss how they will handle the moments of intimacy, and engage in consent forward practices, such as those outlined above, to use in the rehearsal and creative process.

If You Can’t Afford an Intimacy Director:

If your production cannot afford to engage an Intimacy Director, and the content falls into the **Required** or **Recommended** categories listed above, you must seriously reconsider whether those scenes should remain in the production.

Productions should not stage simulated sex, nudity, or non-consensual intimacy without qualified professional support. If that level of intimacy is central to the piece, the production should delay, adapt, or select another play that can be staged safely within its means.

Budgeting for appropriate professional support, such as a Fight Director or Intimacy Director, should be an essential part of the decision-making process when selecting material. These roles carry responsibility for the physical, psychological, and emotional safety of performers, and should be treated as essential safety positions rather than creative extras.

Reporting Pathways

Immediate or Production-Level Concerns

The Production Welfare Officer (PWO), is the first point of contact for any member of the company who wishes to raise a concern relating to rehearsal or performance.

You can approach your PWO to discuss:

- Concerns about consent or respectful working practices
- Instances of inappropriate behaviour, harassment, or bullying

If your concern involves the PWO, or you do not feel comfortable speaking to them, you can go directly to one of the society welfare officers listed below.

If your concern is specifically regarding the intimate content or approach to working with intimacy you can raise your concern with the Intimacy Director. The intention of an intimacy director is to exist outside of the inherent dynamics and hierarchies within a production, they are a safety role hired to mitigate risk around the creation and performance of intimacy and nudity. However, in OUDS productions the production company is responsible for overall safety of a production and its cast and creative team. Therefore when an issue is raised to the Intimacy Director they may need to inform the PWO and the relevant members of the production team.

Society-Level Support

OUDS Welfare Officer – is the main contact for concerns relating to performers, directors, producers or non-technical crew. You can contact them at welfare.ouds@gmail.com

OUTTS Welfare Officer – the main contact for concerns relating to technical or backstage crew. You can contact them at welfare@outts.org

These officers can:

- Offer confidential advice and support
- Help mediate or escalate a concern if needed
- Refer the issue to the OUDS or OUTTS Committee for review, in line with the society's Complaints Procedure

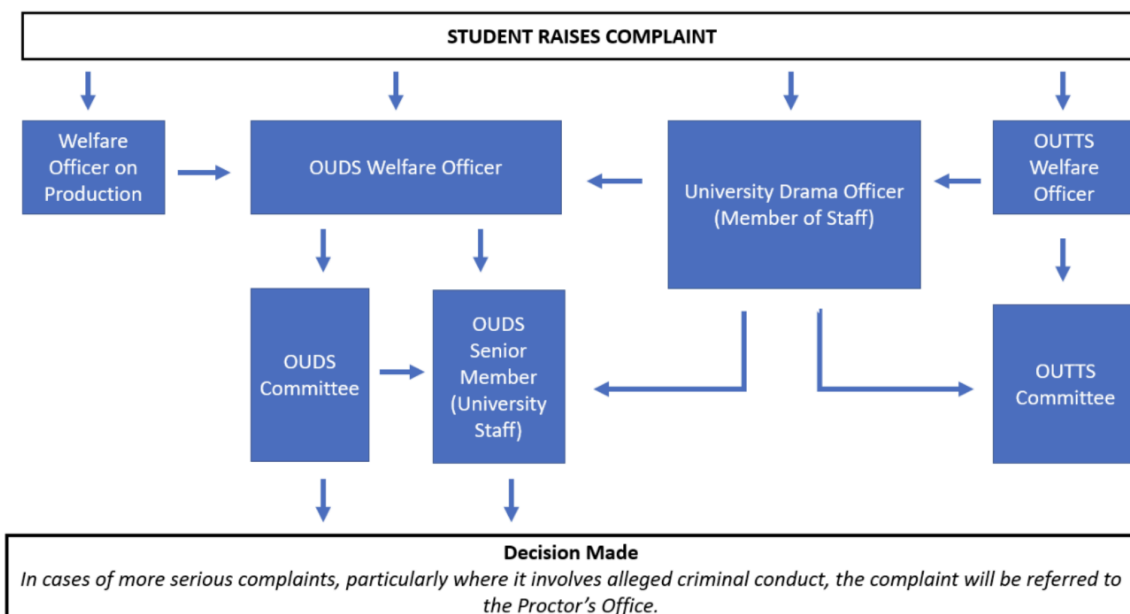
If a concern reveals a conflict of interest within the committee, it can be referred to the OUDS Senior Member. You can check who currently holds this position via the [OUDS website](#).

Formal Complaints and Escalation

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, or involves serious misconduct, it may be escalated through:

- The OUDS or OUTTS Complaints Procedure.
- The University's Harassment Procedure or [Proctors' Office](#), particularly where there may be a breach of University policy or criminal behaviour

Formal outcomes may include temporary suspension from society activities, removal from office, or loss of membership, depending on the case.



Anonymous Reporting

Anonymous reports can be submitted via the [OUDS Welfare Officer form](#). Submissions go directly and confidentially to the OUDS Welfare Officer's inbox. While anonymity may limit follow-up, it can still be a helpful first step to flag a concern or pattern of behaviour.

Emergencies and Urgent Support

If someone is in immediate danger or serious distress, contact:

- Emergency Services – 999
- University Security Services (24 hrs) – 01865 (2)89999
- University Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service – www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/supportservice

You can also seek support through your college welfare team or the University Counselling Service.

Signposting & Mental Health/Wellbeing Support

An intimacy director is a certified mental health first aider and should have training in trauma informed practices. They're not therapists or mental health professionals. If you're working on a project that is affecting your mental health and wellbeing please speak to your welfare officer(s) and use the links below to additional resources.



Student Theatre Welfare Support

Whilst making student theatre, access practical and welfare support within the society and beyond.



In Student Theatre

The Welfare Officer on Your Production

Provides informal welfare support & can help you raise issues with the production team.

OUDS or OUTTS Welfare Officer

welfare.ouds@gmail.com / welfare@outts.org

- Confidential and compassionate support from outside your production team
- Contact them to raise a complaint against the behaviour or conduct of a student or staff member.

University Drama Officer

drama.officer@admin.ox.ac.uk

Available for advice and guidance online or in-person. A staff member of the university, their office is in the Burton Taylor Studio.

OUDS Senior Member

You can contact the Senior Member with a complaint against the behaviour or conduct of a student or staff member. Their contact details can be found on the OUDS website.

In the University

Peer Support



For a confidential conversation with a fellow student.

College Support

Your college will have its own varied welfare support team: from personal tutors, trained support staff and medical help.



More Specialist Support



Including:

- Counselling Service
- Disability Advisory Service
- Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service

You can find information related to welfare support offered across The University of Oxford via the University's website (www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare) or by downloading the My Oxford App via the App Store or Google Play. Both include links to various support services, including:

- University counselling service
- University Disability Advisory Service
- Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service
- Peer Support Service (a network of students who have undergone training to be listed as a 'peer supporter')

Each individual college has their own welfare support. A directory for welfare support in each college is listed here: www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/collegesupport This will vary, but may include college welfare teams, alongside college nurses, doctors and counsellors, chaplains, junior deans and tutors.

[Oxford Nightline](#), an independent listening, support and information service run for and by students of Oxford and Oxford Brookes Universities, can be accessed during term time between 8pm and 8am.

A list of specialist and external support services can be found on this [webpage](#) and are listed below:

- [Mental Health Foundation](#): Info and research on mental health.

- [Mind](#): Free mental health support.
 - [Rethink](#): Info and support for mental health challenges.
 - [SANE](#): Practical info and emotional support for anyone impacted by mental health problems.
 - [Students Against Depression](#): Resources for students.
 - [B-eat](#): Support for eating disorders.
 - [Cruse Oxfordshire](#): Grief support.
 - [Relate](#): Relationship counselling.
 - [Domestic Abuse Oxfordshire](#)
 - [Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre](#): Support for survivors. Call 01865 725 311.
 - [Victim Support](#)
 - [Woman's Aid](#)
 - [Alcohol support](#): Help for alcohol issues.
 - [Turning Point](#): Support for substance misuse.
 - [Talk to Frank](#): National drugs helpline. Call 0800 776600.
 - [Sexual Health \(GUM\) Clinic](#): Testing and counselling. Call 01865 231231.
 - [Terrence Higgins Trust \(THT\)](#): HIV and AIDS support. Call 0845 1221 200.
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Glossary

Modesty Garments – A protective garment that is used to cover areas of the body that are implied to be nude, or to be worn under costume for protection and comfort. They are often flesh coloured and are sometimes worn like underwear or taped to the body. See examples of these garments here – [Link to Intimask](#).

Intimacy Barriers (External and In-underwear) – Intimacy barriers come in multiple forms but there are two main types, External and In-underwear.

- **In-underwear barriers** are pieces of neoprene or silicone that are moulded to hug the body and placed inside a pouch inside a modesty garment, they offer desensitisation to genital areas and act as an additional barrier from accidental or intentional touch.
- **External Intimacy barriers** are not attached to any costume and placed between performers during physical contact to act as a barrier between genital areas and other parts of the body. These might be small cushions, a deflated exercise ball, or made from a thick neoprene.

Placeholders – A placeholder is an action or point of contact used in rehearsals when choreographing intimacy instead of the final intended intimate action. For example, instead of kissing, two actors may touch foreheads, go cheek to cheek, or place their hands

together. This enables the performers to rehearse the scene, including its emotional beats and timing, without doing the full intimate action.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

I'd firstly like to thank OUDS for recognising the need for specific guidance around intimacy in student theatre, and for commissioning this document. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Lydia Free, former OUDS President, for her work with me in the early development and conception of this guidance, and Theo Joly, current OUDS President, and the OUDS Committee for their continued engagement and commitment to embedding consent-based practice within OUDS productions and improving practice across student theatre. I would also like to thank Rosie Morgan-Males, current OUDS Events Rep, for her sustained advocacy for this guidance and her support in planning its practical application through Intimacy in Performance workshops for OUDS.

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Finally, my thanks to the many intimacy professionals, educators, and practitioners whose work, advocacy, and research have laid the foundations for safer, more ethical approaches to staging intimacy. This document would not exist without their groundwork and forms part of a wider, evolving conversation about how we approach intimacy in performance. It owes a debt both to those who were doing this work long before it was formally named and to those who continue to move the practice forward with care and rigour.