Appendix J: Children and Adults Missing from Education

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1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this appendix of the UCQ Safeguarding Policy is to provide a clear set of guidelines to staff regarding the actions they must take if a child stops attending UCQ during their course without a legitimate reason; or a vulnerable adult goes missing and the circumstances give cause for concern.

1.2 Please note that the term 'UCQ' is used throughout this appendix, as a generic term that encompasses all organisations within the wider UCQ group. The term 'staff' is also used as a generic term that encompasses all groups of workers as outlined in the paragraph above.

2. Scope

2.1 The UCQ Safeguarding Policy has been developed in line with statutory guidance and the locally agreed inter-agency procedures put in place by the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board and the Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board. The policy applies to all students and all staff (including agency, associate and hourly paid staff) irrespective of anyone's position or role in UCQ, together with the Academic Council and any workers who are at UCQ on a voluntary/placement/other professional basis.

3. Definitions

3.1 The key terms in this document are defined as:

Child: Those under the age of eighteen

CME: Child missing education

Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP): From September 2014 EHCPs began to replace Statements of special educational needs and Learning Difficulty Assessments from those under the age of 25. An EHCP outlines information about the person including how they communicate, what support they need and what they would like to achieve

Vulnerable Adults: For the purpose of safeguarding, and the UCQ duty of care, a vulnerable adult is defined as any adult considered to be at risk of harm.

4. Relevant external guidance

4.1 The policy has been developed in line with the Department for Education's statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and Children Missing Education September 2016, which identifies that children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

4.2 Particular concerns are noted in the guidance regarding children who go missing or run away from home or care as they may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction. This could include travelling to conflict zones and forced marriage.

4.3 UCQ is committed to the protection of the most vulnerable and all staff must ensure action is taken when a student's attendance record is poor and urgent action must be taken if a student

under the age of 18 or a student under the age of 25 who is in receipt of an EHCP stops attending UCQ during their course without a legitimate reason. Action must also be taken if a vulnerable adult goes missing and the circumstances give cause for concern.

4.4 The risks are significantly higher for children who go missing on repeat occasions and all staff must act to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of students going missing in the future.

5. Legitimate reasons for non-attendance

5.1 For the purpose of this guidance, legitimate reasons include:

- Authorised absences where there are no reasons to suspect abuse or neglect may be a contributory factor; and the parent/carer and any professionals/schools involved with the student are fully aware of the absence;
- Withdrawals due to:
    - Progression to employment; or alternative education or training provision;
    - Moving out of the area or ill health where there are no reasons to suspect abuse or neglect may be a contributory factor; and the parent/carer and any professionals/schools involved with the student are fully aware of the withdrawal;
    - Disciplinary issues dealt with under the UCQ Academic Misconduct Policy. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed (and involved) for a student who is under the age of 16 at the start of the academic year and for a student under the age of 25 who is in receipt of an EHCP and/or in receipt of high needs funding so they can liaise with the local authority;
    - The outcome of a safeguarding risk assessment panel;
    - A custodial sentence where UCQ does not reasonably believe the student will return to UCQ at the end of the sentence

6. Actions to be taken in response to non–legitimate absences

6.1 All curriculum staff must monitor attendance and address it at the earliest opportunity with the student, and their parent/carer or any professionals/schools involved, if it starts to decline.

6.2 Ongoing concerns about a student's attendance must be referred by curriculum staff to department managers. In addition, the DSL must be informed if the student is under 18 or if the student is under the age of 25 and in receipt of an EHCP and/or high needs funding.

6.3 Managers must ensure significant concerns (e.g. unable to contact a student who is under the age of 18) are referred to the DSL.

6.4 The DSL will use all reasonable means to contact a student under the age of 18, and their parent carer or any professional/s involved, to determine the reason/s behind the lack of attendance and agree a plan of action to improve the student's attendance or to get a child

missing education (CME) back into education. Means of contact will include home visits where appropriate or where other methods have failed.

6.5 The DSL will alert the appropriate authorities if they are unable to make contact and will also immediately refer any information that indicates the child is at significant risk of abuse or neglect, following the referral routes outlined in the UCQ Safeguarding Policy.

6.6 In accordance with UCQ policies and procedures, significant concerns about vulnerable adults should be referred immediately to the DSL. An urgent referral is required if there is any suspicion the absence is connected to radicalisation or terrorism. The DSL will report directly to the necessary authorities.

7. Training and communication

7.1 All staff will receive annual safeguarding training. Staff and students are invited to review the wealth of resources available on UCQ's safeguarding, Prevent and wellbeing page, available at https://ucq.ac.uk/safeguarding-and-prevent/

7.2 Ongoing support will be provided by the Safeguarding Team. This appendix will be made available on the UCQ website for all staff and stakeholders to access.

8. Review and revision

8.1 This appendix to the Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier as required to ensure best practice.

9. Document history

ISSUE NO.	DATE	PAGE	REVIEWER	DETAIL OF AMENDMENT
06	02/02/2024	3, 5	Tara Henderson	Periodic review conducted. Appendix revised to fit recommended document template as specified in quality procedure QP02. Sections 2, 7, 8 & 9 added.
07	31/01/2025	All	Michelle Elliott	Periodic review conducted. Web links checked for currency.
08	30/01/2026	All	Michelle	Periodic review conducted. Web links checked for currency. Added KCSIE to 4.1