

Intimacy Coordination Policy and Protocols

Introduction

The Bristol Old Vic Theatre School is committed to fostering a safe and supportive culture for all staff, students and guests. Additionally, we are committed to applying best practice from within the industry where it is appropriate and applicable to our unique context as an institution. This commitment extends to our rehearsal rooms, productions and classrooms.

It is generally considered industry best practice to consider intimacy coordination when working with intimate scenes in productions - and many drama schools have adopted best practice from the industry such as having dedicated staff members trained in intimacy coordination and intimacy coordination policies.

This policy and protocols set out the ways in which the School will apply best practice from other comparable institutions and the industry, as well as Equity and [BECTU's Higher Education Intimacy Coordination and Direction Guidelines](#), to ensure that intimacy coordination is upheld at the School in a professional and proper manner.

This policy is supported by, and works in conjunction with, UWE's statement on [Zero Tolerance to sexual and domestic violence, abuse and harassment](#), UWE's [Policy for Bullying and Harassment of or by Students](#), BOVTS [Inclusion Protocols](#), the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.

Context

Definition of Intimacy

Intimacy is defined in this policy as 'any moment of stage action which portrays intimate physical contact or engagement'. This includes but is not limited to:

- Embracing and affectionate gestures
- Kissing
- Family/friendship intimacy
- Intimate touching, including as part of care or acts of violence
- Implied intimate moments such as moments of attraction, romantic chemistry with, or without, physical contact

- Sexual or physical abuse, including sexual assault
- Revealing clothing
- Full or partial nudity
- Sexual innuendo and implied sexual actions

Definition of Consent

In the Sexual Offences Act for England and Wales 2003 a person consents when that person agrees to an action 'by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice'. Consent previously given can be retracted at any point.

In rehearsals, classroom spaces or productions, only the performer can consent to an action proposed to them, i.e. a director can propose a performer to be intimate with another performer but both performers must consent to the director's proposition.

Intimacy Support Worker

The school has one Intimacy Support Worker, Clare Fox (Dance Tutor), who is available for support and discussion on minor intimacy scenes (such as implied intimate moments and affectionate gestures) or can assist with full intimacy coordination (such as full or partial nudity and implied sexual actions).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and protocols is:

- To ensure the safety and respect of all staff, students and visitors when directing intimate scenes.
- To help students understand industry best practice in regards to intimacy coordination and prepare them to self-advocate when they transition into careers in the industry.

Scope

This policy and protocols apply to all members of the School community including;

- Full, part-time and freelance staff
- Students, prospective students and visiting alumni
- Students who are employed at BOVTS

- Visiting practitioners

Any complaints received in regards to any deviation from this policy will be dealt in line with UWE's Policy for Bullying and Harassment.

1. Pre-Rehearsal

- 1.1. All visiting directors will be sent a copy of this policy and protocols as part of their onboarding. This is with the expectation that they read the policy in full and send any questions or concerns to the designated Intimacy Support Worker or EDI Manager.
- 1.2. For public performances and films only, the EDI Manager will review the script for content warnings and any potential areas which may require intimacy coordination.
- 1.3. If a student discloses that sexual violence or abuse is a trigger for them then they will not be cast in a role which requires this.
- 1.4. If a student discloses that sexual violence or abuse is a difficult theme for them to work on additional considerations should be given to the student undertaking a role which requires this. Additional support will also be offered if the student is cast.
- 1.5. If a student discloses that due to their religion or belief they cannot perform certain intimate scenes then they will not be cast in a role which requires this.
- 1.6. Any areas that may require intimacy coordination will be noted in the 'Rehearsal Considerations' section of the EDI Review and shared with the designated Intimacy Support Worker and director, alongside other members of the creative team.
- 1.7. Where intimate scenes have been identified the director (whether visiting or full time) will be expected to set up a meeting with the Intimacy Support Worker to discuss what is needed for the scene. This may include but is not limited to:
 - 1.7.1. Full intimacy coordination carried out by the Intimacy Support Worker
 - 1.7.2. Advice given to the director from the intimacy Support Worker on how to handle a minorly intimate scene sensitively
 - 1.7.3. Budgetary guidance on items needed to enact the scene, such as modesty garments
- 1.8. Performers are to be made aware at the point of their casting being announced if their role will require intimate scenes and an offer of support given to speak with either:
 - 1.8.1. The link tutor on the production

- 1.8.2. The Intimacy Support Worker
- 1.8.3. The EDI Manager
- 1.8.4. A member of the Student Support team

2. During Rehearsals

- 2.1. The Intimacy Support Worker will give specific production-by-production advice to the director on how to navigate any intimate scenes. This advice must be adhered to throughout the rehearsal process.
- 2.2. Additional considerations should be given to performers who have a marginalised identity, such as LGBT+. Where this is the case and it is appropriate the Director or Intimacy Support Worker may gain further advice and guidance on handling of the scenes or rehearsals from the EDI Manager, or the EDI Manager may offer additional support during the rehearsal process.
- 2.3. Alongside advice given by the Intimacy Support Worker, the School will expect the director to adhere to following best practice:
 - 2.3.1. The director must ensure clarity to performers on the context of intimate scenes.
 - 2.3.2. Closed rehearsals must be scheduled into the rehearsal schedule for intimate scenes with only necessary cast members, director, Intimacy Support Worker and one other person as pre-agreed with the performers (for example DSM or Link Tutor) present. Additionally, these rehearsals must be given appropriate rehearsal time.
 - 2.3.3. No mobile phones to be permitted during rehearsal of intimate scenes.
 - 2.3.4. Performers or members of the creative team must be able to use a 'button word' throughout the rehearsal of intimate scenes to stop the rehearsal and take a break as and when needed.
 - 2.3.5. Depending on the level of risk regarding the intimate scene directors' may wish to consider creating alternative choreography which can be used to either mark the scene or to be used if consent is removed from the performers.
 - 2.3.6. Directors or other creative team members should not have any physical contact with performers during rehearsal of intimate scenes, unless due to necessary first aid.
 - 2.3.7. Notes, guidance and direction must be kept neutral i.e. not utilise humour or make offensive comments on the performers' bodies.

- 2.3.8. Notes, guidance and direction must use the characters' name(s) when discussing or rehearsing the scene.
- 2.3.9. No use of innuendo or suggestive language must be used by staff, students or visiting practitioners, inside or outside of the rehearsal room, when discussing or rehearsing intimate scenes.
- 2.3.10. Directors must only change agreed intimacy choreography during the rehearsal or production period due to unavoidable external circumstances, such as sickness or injury. Any changes must only be made with the consent of the performers.
- 2.3.11. Performers can remove consent at any time and it may be best practice for Directors to consider alternative choreography if consent is removed at any point during the creative process.

3. During Productions

- 3.1. During technical rehearsals, certain intimate scenes may need to be rehearsed. Equity gives the example, 'For example, simulated sex is usually checked in tech and levels of nudity will need bespoke considerations'.
- 3.2. Where intimate scenes are rehearsed during tech, the same rules set out in item 2.2 still stand and should be adhered to.
- 3.3. Stage management and the director should have regular check-ins with the performer(s) involved in the intimate scenes (frequency to be decided amongst the cast and creative team) throughout the length of the run. These will be to check comfort levels and ensure active consent throughout.

4. Post Production

- 4.1. Performers involved in intimate scenes must be offered an optional debrief with either:
 - 4.1.1. The link tutor on the production
 - 4.1.2. The Intimacy Support Worker
 - 4.1.3. The EDI Manager
 - 4.1.4. A member of the Student Support team

5. Additional Considerations for Screen Projects

- 5.1. Where applicable, all of the above considerations should also be met when rehearsing and shooting intimate scenes for screen based projects.

- 5.2. Additionally, we expect that all Screen Projects will follow the relevant guidance laid out in the [BECTU *guidance for shooting intimacy*](#).

6. Additional Considerations for Teaching Specific Productions (i.e. not public performances)

- 6.1. Where applicable, all of the above considerations should also be met when rehearsing intimate scenes for teaching specific productions.
- 6.2. The EDI Manager **will not** review each script for teaching specific productions. In this instance the responsibility for reviewing for the potential need for intimacy coordination falls to, as appropriate:
 - 6.2.1. The Course Leader
 - 6.2.2. The Tutor
 - 6.2.3. The Director
- 6.3. Full or partial nudity is not permitted in any student performance at first or second year level.
- 6.4. Any theatrical intimacy (including kissing) must be kept to an absolute minimum and be essential for the story telling. Alternative staging is advised where possible.

7. Additional Considerations for MA Directing Students

- 7.1. MA Directing Students will receive basic training in intimacy coordination from the Intimacy Support Worker before doing any work with actors.
- 7.2. Students will also be signposted to additional resources to support them with coordinating minor intimate scenes.
- 7.3. Students will be expected to, where applicable, adhere to all of the above considerations in any project they are working on with actors.
- 7.4. Students will hold responsibility for contacting the Intimacy Support Worker if they are directing pieces with intimate scenes which have a higher level of risk, for example nudity or simulated sex scenes.

8. Consideration for Performers in Intimate Scenes

- 8.1. Performers involved in intimate scenes must not change the choreography for any reason without the consent of the director, Intimacy Support Worker and their scene partner(s).
- 8.2. Performers are allowed to remove consent at any time, and we encourage performers to do so where this is needed.

- 8.3. Performers are allowed to use a predetermined 'button word' to halt the rehearsal of any intimate scene at any time, and we encourage performers to do where this is needed.
- 8.4. We encourage performers to continually check-in with their scene partner(s) to ensure active consent at all times.

9. Misc.

- 9.1. From academic year 24 - 25 all incoming students will undertake mandatory consent training as part of their induction at the school (unless they have a specific reason to opt out of this).

Version	Author	Signed off by	Effective date	Changes
V1.0	EDI Manager			

Resources informing this policy:

RADA - Protocols for Intimate Scenes in Performances

Equity - Higher Education Intimacy Coordination and Direction Guidelines

BECTU - Guidance for Shooting Intimacy