

## **Child Protection Policy**

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### **Introduction**

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences Ltd. (hereafter Metropolia) is committed to promoting the safety, well-being, and participation of children and young people who engage with its learning, research, and development environments and activities. As a multidisciplinary university of applied sciences, Metropolia works with a wide range of partners, including children, young people, and their families, in various educational, social, and co-creation projects. In all of its activities, Metropolia respects and promotes the rights of children and adheres to ethical and legal obligations related to child protection. Metropolia also follows the guidelines [Keeping children safe: the International Child Safeguarding Standards](#).

This Child Protection Policy ensures that Metropolia's actions support the best interests of children and that no harm comes to them during any form of engagement within its operational scope.

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### **1. Commitment to Child Protection**

Metropolia's Child Protection Policy is grounded in human rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The policy applies to all staff, students, trainees, researchers, project partners, and volunteers involved in activities with or affecting children (persons under the age of 18). It ensures equal protection for all children regardless of background.

#### **Key commitments include:**

- Promoting the rights, participation, and protection of children in all interactions.
  - Minimizing risks through proactive planning and risk assessments.
  - Responding appropriately and ethically to concerns about a child's safety or well-being.
  - Training and supporting all staff and students to recognize and report suspected abuse or harm.
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### **2. Code of Conduct for Safe Interaction with Children**

All members of the Metropolia community involved in activities with or affecting children must:

- Respect every child's dignity, individuality, and rights.
- Ensure interactions are safe, inclusive, and appropriate to the child's developmental stage.

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- Avoid any form of discrimination, violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
  - Speak and act in ways that promote trust and safety.
  - Obtain consent for taking photos or collecting data from minors in accordance with data protection legislation.
  - Report concerns immediately to the appropriate authorities or designated staff within Metropolia.
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### 3. Inclusion, Safer Spaces & Diversity

Metropolia actively fosters a safe and inclusive learning and working environment for all. The principles of safer space apply to interactions between adults and children:

- Acknowledge and respect diverse identities, experiences, and voices.
  - Use inclusive, gender-sensitive language and avoid assumptions.
  - Promote accessible physical and attitudinal spaces free of discrimination.
  - Intervene constructively when witnessing inappropriate behavior.
  - Encourage children's agency and voluntary participation.
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### 4. Digital Environments and Data Protection

Metropolia applies ethical guidelines in digital activities involving children. All online interactions must:

- Be respectful, safe, accessible and age-appropriate.
  - Ensure children are not exposed to harmful content.
  - Comply with the EU GDPR (2016/679) and Finnish data protection legislation.
  - Securely store and handle any personal data concerning minors.
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### 5. Research and Ethical Practice

Metropolia ensures that any research involving children follows The ethical principles of research with human participants and ethical review in the human sciences in Finland (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity). The following ethical principles of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity are followed in all research and development activities involving minors:

a) Minors must be informed about the research in a way that they are able to understand.

b) If the minor is 15 or older, their own consent is sufficient for participation in the research. The parent or carer should be informed of the research also in these situations, if the research design or research questions permit it.

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- c) The participation of minors under the age of 15 is primarily decided by the parent or carer. For survey-based research involving a large number of respondents, it is sufficient to inform the parent or carer of the research so that they can refuse their child's participation in the research if they so desire. The number of respondents is large if the survey targets at least 400 people. Informing the parent or carer is also sufficient in research that does not involve the processing of the personal data of the minor participant (for example observation without recording devices and processing of personal data).
- d) Even if participation in the research requires the approval of the parent or carer or a legal representative, minors primarily give their own consent to participating in the research.
- e) Researchers must always respect the autonomy of minor research participants and the principle of voluntary participation, irrespective of whether the consent of the parent or carer has been obtained for the research.
- f) If participating in the research is not in the minor's best interests and the minor does not wish to participate in the research, the researcher must discontinue the minor's participation.

The researcher can submit a child welfare notification, if the researcher observes or becomes aware of factors that indicate a necessity to investigate the need for child welfare. If the researcher decides to report to social services under the Child Welfare Act, it is important that they carefully consider the ethical questions involved, such as whether the parties involved should be informed. ([Guidelines for ethical review in human sciences 2021.](#))

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## 6. Monitoring and Continuous Development

This Child Protection Policy is reviewed and updated regularly, in alignment with Metropolia's strategy and evolving best practices. Feedback from children, staff, students, and partners is encouraged and used to improve policies and practices.

Metropolia's designated safeguarding officers oversee the implementation and compliance of this policy and ensure awareness and training across all departments.

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## Contact & Reporting

In case of concern regarding a child's safety or well-being within Metropolia's activities, contact the designated safeguarding lead or responsible person in your department. All reports are taken seriously and handled with discretion and urgency. If necessary and in line with the Finnish legislation, Metropolia will contact the Finnish authorities in any suspected child misconduct or abuse.

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**Approved in Helsinki, date:** 10.04.2025 06:44:36 (UTC +0300)

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