

University of Salford launches first student safety and wellbeing accreditation scheme

A new accreditation scheme launched by the University of Salford will make it easier for prospective students and their parents to identify safe universities in the UK.

All higher education institutions across the UK are now being encouraged to join *ProtectED* – an accreditation scheme assessing the work done by universities to ensure their students' safety, security and wellbeing.

They can then work towards accreditation by providing details about the services and structures they provide to enable students to avoid problems and achieve their full potential.

ProtectED is the first accreditation scheme in the UK's higher education sector to comprehensively consider practices across the areas of student safety, security and wellbeing.

It is founded on the belief that HEIs have a critical role to play in student safety, security and wellbeing — one that does not end at campus boundaries but encompasses the wider student experience.

Professor Helen Marshall, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Salford, said: “An issue which the higher education sector has grappled with for years is that institutions have varied and different ways of considering the safety and wellbeing of their students, without a higher education specific code of practice and benchmark for policies and best practice.

“These are huge issues to students and parents, but up until now there has been no standard way of benchmarking and assessing how effectively universities manage the issue. I really welcome this work developed by our dedicated and internationally-recognised security and community relations team at Salford.”

Through the accreditation process, *ProtectED* will gain insight into issues and collect evidence on what works. This will be anonymised, aggregated and analysed, and findings shared with members, enabling them to focus resources on effective strategies that provide demonstrable benefits.

ProtectED accreditation focuses on five areas: Core Institutional Safety and Security - covering campus security measures; Wellbeing and Mental Health; International Students; Harassment and Sexual Assault; and the Student Night Out.

There are [2.3 million](#) university students in the UK's 162 HEIs — more than the population of [Qatar](#). Office of National Statistics [figures](#) show full-time students are more at risk than the general population of being victims of crime, while an NUS survey of more than 1,000 students found 78 per cent had experienced mental health issues during the previous year.

ProtectED brings together university staff and students in tackling these issues, and requires HEIs to implement practical measures. For example, *ProtectED* universities will deliver training and awareness-raising initiatives to highlight the support available to students, and to facilitate conversation around sensitive subjects such as mental ill-health and sexual assault.

Research suggests that international students are particularly [concerned about safety in their choice of where to study overseas](#).

Helen Clews, External Relations Adviser for the British Council and member of the *ProtectED* Advisory Board, said: “Personal safety in the UK for students, their dependents, visitors and workers coming to the UK is a duty of care the British Council takes very seriously and we work with partners such as *ProtectED* to help international students take care of themselves and settle happily into their community.”

Student retention is another significant issue. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, 26,000 UK students failed to complete their first year in 2010/11. *ProtectED* is based around the need for effective prevention, early intervention and timely support, raising levels of student satisfaction and enabling more students to complete their studies.

Mark Sutton, chairman of the Association of University Chief Security Officers (AUCSO), said: “The *ProtectED* code of practice gives a clear opportunity to benchmark processes and procedures that will allow universities to focus on sector best practice, continuous improvement and the student experience. It will raise standards throughout HE and therefore I fully support this excellent initiative.”

Ben Lewis, chairman of the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE), said: “*ProtectED* gives real potential for institutions to think more strategically about how they structure their security and support services, how they work with one another and how they can improve all aspects of the student experience. AMOSSHE is fully supportive of the work being led by *ProtectED* and the team at Salford University.”

Dave Humphries, Director of Partnerships & Interventions at the Security Industry Authority, said: “As the UK Government’s regulator of private security, we support the *ProtectED* initiative as it is an innovative way to ensure a higher university security standards. We have been pleased to work alongside colleagues at the University of Salford.”

Institutions wanting to join must sign up to the five key *ProtectED* Principles, committing to adopting within their policies, structures, processes and culture.

To gain accreditation, applicant institutions must self-assess their own policies, processes and practice against the *ProtectED* Code of Practice. This is followed by peer review and a verification visit by a *ProtectED* approved assessor and student assessors.

Membership is open from Monday 6 February 2017, with the first group of *ProtectED Accredited Institution* award holders expected to be certified in early 2018.

For more information, visit www.Protect-ED.org, follow [@ProtectED HEI](https://twitter.com/ProtectED_HEI) or email info@protect-ed.org

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. *ProtectED* has benefitted from the support and guidance of organisations including the Association of University Chief Security Officers (AUCSO), the British Council, the Security Industry Authority (SIA), the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education (AMOSSHE), the University Mental Health Advisers Network (UMHAN), Greater Manchester Police, student insurers Endsleigh, International Professional Security Association (IPSA), National Landlords Association, College & Universities Business Officers (CUBO).
2. The launch of the *ProtectED* Code of Practice is especially timely given the publication in October 2016 of the Universities UK '[Changing the Culture](#)' task force report, which examines violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students. For example, the National Union of Students (NUS) '[Hidden Marks](#)' report (2010) found that 68% of female students experienced one or more incidents of sexual harassment at university — a problem that has been increasingly [reported](#) upon in recent months. Further, the NUS '[No Place for Hate](#)' survey (2012) found that 18% of students from ethnic minority backgrounds described experiencing at least one racial hate incident whilst at university. The Universities UK Task Force report clearly signals that HEIs can no longer continue to ignore these issues. The *ProtectED* Code of Practice incorporates all of the report's recommendations and goes further in addressing [staff-to-student](#) sexual harassment, hate crime and cyber bullying.
3. The wide-ranging measures contained in the *ProtectED* Code of Practice (the indicators universities must meet to achieve accreditation) were developed using an evidence-based approach. To better understand the issues facing contemporary HEIs and their students, the *ProtectED* team conducted a literature review of the mental health and wellbeing of students and young adults. They also ran focus groups with University Security Managers, Police Higher Education Liaison Officers and Students Union Sabbatical Officers, and surveyed 800 university NUS students.
4. Eric Baskind, senior lecturer in law and consultant in violence reduction at Liverpool John Moores University, and a member of the *ProtectED* Advisory Board, said: "*ProtectED* provides institutions with an excellent tool for implementing best practice procedures

and improving campus safety and thereby enhancing the student experience. It is an excellent initiative and has my full support.”

5. It is proposed that the *ProtectED* accreditation scheme will eventually be expanded to cover UK further education (FE) colleges, as well as universities in other parts of Europe.

For press enquiries please contact: Conrad Astley, Senior Press and PR Officer, University of Salford at c.l.astley@salford.ac.uk / +44 (0) 161 2956363