

The NIU School of Theatre and Dance Best Practices and Policy for Intimacy, Violence, Extreme Physicality, and Nudity in Production

Statement of Purpose*:

This policy seeks not to define artistry, prescribe how it is created, or value one kind of work over others. It seeks rather to create awareness and systems that respect and protect the human in the art – to foster safe places to do compelling work.

Arts environments require risk, courage, vulnerability, and investment of our physical, emotional and intellectual selves. The NIU School of Theatre and Dance (SOTD) has a history of authenticity and risk on our stages. SOTD is proud of that legacy, and seeks to nurture spaces with strong safety nets that support that ethos without compromising a visceral and authentic experience for artists and audiences.

While the creative process challenges our personal comfort zones, creative environments that are unsafe can compromise both the artist and the art. This document seeks to define the difference and distinction between what is uncomfortable and what is unsafe. It is part of an educational experience to be uncomfortable within a learning process while trying on a new character, learning a new technique, or learning new choreography; it is not acceptable to be physically unsafe within the learning environment. To be uncomfortable is to deal with inner feelings and experience a range of emotions like vulnerability, uncertainty, excitement, and the like. To be unsafe deals with behavior that is physically or verbally threatening, and/or to be asked to make art in an environment that does not respect one's body, identity, and/or dignity.

*This language was inspired by and adapted from the *Chicago Theatre Standards* available at NotInOurHouse.org.

This policy is not meant to replace any College or NIU policies or any local, state, or federal laws. More information on relevant policies can be found at the end of this document.

Intimacy, Violence, and Extreme Physicality in Production/Performance

- This policy defines **Intimacy** as any stage movement, choreography, or physical contact portraying content of a sexual nature. This includes but is not limited to the touching of genitals, buttocks, breasts, lips, or any other body part in a sexual or illicit manner.
- This policy defines **Violence** as any stage movement, choreography, or physical contact portraying content of a violent nature. This includes but is not limited to

extreme physical actions, fight choreography, use of weapons or stage firearms, and use of any object or body part in portraying violence, aggression, or brutality.

- This policy defines **Extreme Physicality** as any stage movement or choreography that requires physical skill that is outside of the range expected of a professional stage actor or professional dancer. This includes but is not limited to physical stunts, aerial work, theatrical flying, acrobatics, or any other circus art.
- This policy defines **Expert** as a qualified professional in a specific area. This includes but is not limited to Choreographers, Coaches, and Directors of Intimacy, Stage Violence, Flight, and Extreme Physicality.
- This policy defines **Captain** as a person designated by the Expert to maintain the integrity and safety of the choreography. The specific duties of a Captain are defined by the supervising Expert.
- This policy defines **Consent** as a verbal agreement between the specific partner(s) pertaining to a specific choreographed moment or sequence in a given piece/production. Consent must be informed, uncoerced, and reversible during the creation process. Once choreography is set, any changes must be mutually agreed upon by the Director/Choreographer, Expert, and Participants.
- This policy establishes the role of a **Faculty Deputy**. This person is independent of the production and will be chosen from and by SOTD faculty specifically to serve in this role. The Faculty Deputy is responsible for education, mediation, and dissemination of this policy for the assigned production(s).
- **SOTD Responsibilities:**
 - SOTD will make every effort to identify moments of Intimacy and/or Violence and/or Extreme Physicality prior to auditions and/or callbacks.
 - Intimacy/Violence:
 - If a production requires Intimacy and/or Violence, a qualified Expert must be provided before any Intimacy and/or Violence can be choreographed.
 - Intimacy and/or Violence Experts are members of the production team and should be involved in design and production meetings.
 - If Intimacy and/or Violence and/or Extreme Physicality are deemed relevant by the Director/Choreographer to the storytelling/choreography during the rehearsal process, a qualified Expert must be provided before any Intimacy and/or Violence can be choreographed.
 - If Intimacy and/or Violence are *not* announced prior to auditions, but are deemed necessary by the Director/Choreographer to the storytelling/choreography, all involved parties will be given at least 48 hours to agree to the Intimacy and/or Violence choreography.

- Extreme Physicality:
 - If Extreme Physicality is deemed relevant by the Director/Choreographer to the storytelling/choreography during the rehearsal process, an Expert will be provided and the necessary safety protocols will be put into place before relevant choreography begins.
 - If Extreme Physicality is *not* announced prior to auditions, but is deemed necessary by the Director/Choreographer to the storytelling/choreography, all involved parties will be given at least 48 hours to agree to the Extreme Physicality choreography.
 - If a production requires aerial work, theatrical flying, acrobatics, or any other circus art, an expert in that field will be assigned to the production.

- **Student Rights:**
 - Students will be informed at auditions or callbacks if a production requires or may use Intimacy, Violence, and/or Extreme Physicality.
 - Students will *not* be asked to perform Intimacy in auditions or callbacks.
 - Students may be asked to demonstrate abilities related to Violence and/or Extreme Physicality in auditions or callbacks based on the needs of the production and a student's skills. A student may decline.
 - Students will *not* be asked to perform Intimacy, Violence, and/or Extreme Physicality in rehearsal or performance without the following:
 - A conversation about context and how the choreography serves the storytelling.
 - Clear and informed consent of specific choreography.
 - Continued communication throughout the rehearsal and performance process.
 - If Intimacy and/or Violence and/or Extreme Physicality are *not* announced prior to auditions, but are deemed necessary to storytelling/choreography, all involved parties will be given at least 48 hours to agree to the choreography.

- **Implementation:**
 - The designated Expert will outline the appropriate procedures and policies for rehearsal, technical rehearsal, and performance.
 - Prior to rehearsing scenes or choreography the Performers, Director/Choreographer, designated Expert, and Stage Manager should discuss the content/context and establish consent for the rehearsal.
 - No rehearsals involving Violence, and/or Extreme Physicality should take place without the relevant Expert and/or designated Captain.

- No rehearsals involving creation or adjustment of Intimacy choreography should take place without the relevant Expert.
- Initial rehearsals may be limited only to personnel deemed necessary by the Expert and/or Director/Choreographer.
- Once the choreography has been agreed upon, set, and rehearsed to proficiency, it is no longer changeable unless mutually agreed upon by the Expert, Director/Choreographer, and Participants.
- In the event a participant is removed, replaced, or unable to perform the choreography as created, the Director/Choreographer and the Expert will alter choreography as needed.

Nudity in Production/Performance

- This policy defines **Nudity** in production/performance as exposure of chest area, genitals, and/or buttocks.
- **SOTD Responsibilities:**
 - Nudity will only be considered if integral to the storytelling.
 - Nudity in productions will be considered after discussion and consensus is reached by the Director/Choreographer of the piece, relevant designers, relevant area representatives, director of SOTD, and playwright (if involved). The following questions must be deliberated:
 - *Is it explicitly stated in the stage directions and/or dialogue?*
 - *Is it necessary to communicate an idea referenced in the dialogue/choreography?*
 - *Is it implied by the dialogue/choreography?*
 - *Is it a necessary storytelling element?*
 - *Does it serve the student's development and training within a specific program of study?*
 - If Nudity is part of a production, Intimacy protocols must be applied and a Coach designated. Please refer to the section on *Intimacy, Violence, and Extreme Physicality in Production/Performance*.
 - If Nudity is part of a production, the student will be given private space to prepare and provided a body covering when not on stage.
- **Student Rights:**
 - Students have the right to withdraw from consideration for a role at or before auditions if Nudity is required for a specific role.
 - A student's refusal of Nudity will *not* result in retaliation or affect future casting decisions.
 - Nudity will *never* be required in auditions or callbacks.
 - Students under 18 will *never* be cast in a role requiring Nudity.

- If a student feels unsafe exposing any part of the body, they should initiate a conversation with the Director/Choreographer as soon as possible or no later than five days after seeing the costume design (whichever is sooner).

Harm Repair/Conflict Resolution

- This section establishes two different ways to repair harm, resolve conflict, and address breaches of this policy:
 - SOTD *Ouch/Oops/OK Process*
 - SOTD *Concern Resolution Procedure*
- This policy works in conjunction with NIU Policies and Procedures on Ethics and Compliance. Please see Appendix.

The Ouch/Oops/OK Process

- The *Ouch/Oops/OK Process* is a way to handle negative comments or actions in real time. This suggested tool allows any person in the room feeling harmed to express their agency and begin repair in the moment. The *Ouch/Oops/OK Process* is voluntary, not enforced or required, and will not be refereed.
- If any experience feels larger than or escalates above an Ouch/Oops/OK moment, please move directly to the *Concern Resolution Procedure (CRP)*.
- This is a three-point protocol: there must be an “Ouch”, an “Oops”, and an “OK”.
- An “**Ouch**” is defined as a verbal acknowledgment of a comment or action that is perceived as hurtful, discriminatory, derogatory, or offensive. The “Ouch” can be said out loud by any person present at the time of the comment or action. It does not have to come from the person who is the focus of the potentially hurtful remark.
- An “**Oops**” is defined as a verbal acknowledgment of regret or recognition of an “Ouch”.
- An “**OK**” is defined as a verbal recognition of the “Oops” and that it is “OK” to move forward.
- For example:

Speaker A is trying too hard to be funny and makes a thoughtless remark. Speaker B says “Ouch!” This cues Speaker A to realize that the funny remark was potentially hurtful. Speaker A says “Oops” to indicate recognition and regret. Then there’s a Pause.

It’s up to Speaker B, the Ouch-caller, whether this moment requires some conversation. The decision to move on must come

from Speaker B, the Ouch-caller, with verbal acknowledgment of the “Oops” and indication that it is “OK” to move on.

- Again, if it is not OK to move forward and the issue is larger, please consult the *CRP* or the NIU resources listed in the Appendix of this document.

Concern Resolution Procedure (CRP)

- The *CRP* provides the protocol for addressing concerns or conflicts within the production setting. This includes rehearsals, performances, costume fittings, and production-related meetings. It is understood that reported concerns will be kept confidential within the reporting structure (unless mandated by NIU Policy or federal/state/local law) and given priority within a reasonable timeline for resolution.
- In case of a concern and/or conflict, please proceed in this order:
 - **Step One**—Participants are encouraged to discuss challenges and concerns with one another first. Sharing and hearing concerns with openness and respect can prevent situations from escalating further.
 - Participants involved
 - **Step Two**—If participants are not able to resolve the concern/conflict, it should be brought to the attention of the Director/Choreographer of the Production. If the participants are not comfortable reporting to, or the conflict involves the Director/Choreographer, the participants are encouraged to move directly to Step Three and contact the designated Faculty Deputy.
 - Director/Choreographer of Production
 - **Step Three**—If the concern/conflict is not resolved in Step Two, the participants and/or the Director/Choreographer are encouraged to bring it to the attention of the designated Faculty Deputy. The Faculty Deputy is independent of the production and has been chosen from and by SOTD faculty specifically to serve in this role. The Faculty Deputy is a resource to help participants resolve the concern/conflict through impartial listening, holding space for mediation, and offering non-binding recommendations.
 - Faculty Deputy
 - **Step Four**—If the concern/conflict is not resolved in Step Three, the Faculty Deputy will bring this matter to the attention of the Director of the School of Theatre and Dance. If the

Director/Choreographer of the Production is also the Director of the School, proceed to Step Five.

- Director of the School of Theatre and Dance
- **Step Five**—If the concern/conflict is not resolved in Step Four, the Faculty Deputy and/or the Director of the School will bring this matter to the attention of the administration.
- Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts

Application of Policy

- Distribution:
 - This policy will be provided annually to faculty, staff, guest artists, and students of SOTD.
 - It is the responsibility of the Director of the SOTD to ensure the policy is distributed by the end of the first week of classes each academic year.
 - If new students/faculty/staff/guest artists join after distribution, it is the responsibility of the Director of the SOTD to ensure the policy is received.
 - A simplified, student-focused version of this policy (one-sheet) will be shared at auditions and callbacks.
 - A simplified, student-focused version of this policy (one-sheet) will be posted at rehearsals and backstage during performances.
- Committee Membership/Responsibilities:
 - The Intimacy Committee will operate with four members on a rotating three-year term. Each academic year the most senior member will rotate out and a new member will be elected by the faculty. Consecutive terms are permitted. Every attempt will be made to maintain area and program representation on the committee.
 - Intimacy Committee responsibilities include but are not limited to:
 - Compiling a list of potential Faculty Deputies for faculty approval
 - Reviewing of this policy annually
 - Providing an updated policy to SOTD office staff for annual distribution
 - Serving as a resource for Faculty Deputy training as needed
 - Creating/Maintaining a list of qualified Experts
 - Establishing qualifications for Experts based on current industry standards
 - The Intimacy Committee is NOT responsible for approving or editing Intimacy, Violence, Extreme Physicality, and/or Nudity in productions.

- The Intimacy Committee in consultation with the Production Committee will compile a list of potential Faculty Deputies for full faculty approval in the semester before rehearsals begin.
- Faculty Deputy:
 - A Faculty Deputy will be assigned for each SOTD production. The Faculty Deputy is independent of the production and chosen from SOTD faculty specifically to serve in this role.
 - The Faculty Deputy is a resource that can be called upon during the *Concern Resolution Procedure* to help resolve concerns/conflicts through impartial listening, holding space for mediation, and offering non-binding recommendations.
 - The Faculty Deputy is not part of the artistic team and will not interfere with the creative choices.
 - The Faculty Deputy will not be present unless called upon by someone within the production except:
 - At or before the first rehearsal for each SOTD production, the designated Faculty Deputy will review and explain the policy and how it applies to the specific production.
 - At or before the first technical rehearsal for each SOTD production, the designated Faculty Deputy will review and explain the policy and how it applies to the specific production to anyone not present at the first rehearsal.

Appendix: NIU Policies on Sexual Misconduct, Nondiscrimination, Harassment, Retaliation, and Title IX***

Northern Illinois University (“NIU” or “the university”) is an equal employment opportunity institution and does not unlawfully discriminate against its students, faculty and staff on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, pregnancy, religion, age, physical and/or mental disability, marital status, veteran/military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, political affiliation, order of protection status, victim of domestic or sexual violence status, citizenship status, arrest record in employment/personnel matters, genetic information, and/or other protected categories in compliance with applicable federal and state statutes, regulations and orders pertaining to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action that violate university policy. Additionally, conduct that results in sexual misconduct, sexual harassment and/or retaliation is covered under Title IX and is also considered unlawful and prohibited by university policy.

Any employee or student who experiences or witnesses possible acts of discrimination, harassment and/or retaliation has the right to report this activity to the applicable university administrator or to the Ethics and Compliance Office (ECO) immediately. Complaints or allegations of discrimination, harassment or retaliation will be examined in a reasonable, objective, private and expedient manner, and in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

The NIU's Complaint Resolution Process is to address and resolve issues in a manner that maintains and promotes positive academic and working environments that are consistent with the values of NIU. The university is committed to maintaining an educational/employment atmosphere that is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, unfair treatment and retaliation. <https://www.niu.edu/ethics-compliance/complaints/index.shtml>

Useful resources:

- Sexual Misconduct Response and Prevention
 - <https://www.niu.edu/sexual-misconduct/>
- Ethics and Compliance Office
 - <https://www.niu.edu/ethics-compliance/index.shtml>
- Office of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 - <https://www.niu.edu/diversity/index.shtml>
- Office of the Ombudsperson
 - <https://www.niu.edu/ombuds/>

NIU's complete policies on discrimination, harassment, retaliation and Title IX can be found on the NIU website at:

- NIU Title IX/Sexual Misconduct Policy and Complaint Procedures for Students, Faculty and Staff
 - <https://www.niu.edu/policies/pdf/title-ix-policy.pdf>
- NIU Nondiscrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Policy and Procedures for Students, Faculty and Staff
 - <https://www.niu.edu/policies/pdf/nondiscrimination-harassment-retaliation-policy.pdf>

***This language and relevant policies are taken directly from the NIU website.