



# **Intimacy Direction Guidelines**

A guide produced specifically for theatre in Cambridge  
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## Introduction

These are guidelines, not a rulebook. There are lots of circumstances that may affect how Intimacy needs to be handled. The priorities are that these scenes are given careful consideration, that everyone's well-being is upheld, that people's boundaries are respected, that open communication is encouraged, and that consent is central to the entire process.

The primary aims of the guidelines are:

- To safeguard the emotional and psychological health of students.
- To put protocols in place to safeguard the students from potential harassment, misconduct, or abuse (whether intentional or unintentional) when dealing with intimate work.
- To understand when and how an Intimacy Director should be brought onto a process.
- To encourage a clear reporting structure for students and ADC Theatre staff.
- To enrich and diversify thoughtful conversations about consent, intimacy, gender, sexuality, and sex on stage.
- To open up new possibilities for Cambridge Theatre regarding the nature of staged intimacy, enabling bolder, braver, and more considered staging of intimacy in productions, with care and best-practice at its core.
- To prepare students who are acting, directing, producing, stage managing and taking technical roles to approach intimate work with knowledge, confidence, and empowerment.
- To equip students with professional language and tools for open communication when working on intimate material, including the use of non-exclusionary terms.
- To educate students about consent and uplift clear processes of consent when working with sensitive material.

## My Background & Personal Approach to Cambridge Theatre

I graduated from Cambridge in 2016. During my time at Cambridge I acted in and directed a number of shows at the ADC, Corpus Playroom, in Colleges, at the Cambridge Arts Theatre, for Edinburgh Fringe and tours - so I have an in-depth understanding of how student theatre is made at Cambridge, in all its wonderful forms. I also know where the idiosyncrasies of Cambridge Theatre mean that there are spaces where improvements could be made regarding consent and care around Intimacy.

I did my first Intimacy workshop in 2018, and then was accepted onto *Intimacy for Stage and Screen's* training programme for 2019-2020. I was trained and certified by them in 2020 and have worked as an Intimacy Director and Coordinator since then. Credits include Intimacy Coordination for Netflix, ITV, Apple TV, Channel 4, and for feature films. I've run Intimacy workshops for LAMDA, RADA, Mountview, Carnegie Mellon University, Victoria University, Long Cloud, and at theatres. More info can be found on my website: [www.robrietaylorhunt.com](http://www.robrietaylorhunt.com).



## Applications

Show applications for the ADC Theatre and Corpus Playroom now have an Intimacy section (see next page for screenshots), so that the ADC (and other societies involved in show selection) can know what content is in a show. This means that they can then know whether they need to get an Intimacy Director and provide extra support.

Applicants should note if they *know* there is intimate content (it's an essential part of the story and is in the script, e.g. *Spring Awakening*). Applicants can also note if they *think* they will include it or it's in their 'vision' (e.g. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the fairies are partially nude).

**Remember:** it is better to flag the highest potential for Intimacy, and have best practice in place, and then actually pull back to a lower level of Intimacy if needed. For example, if it *might* be part of the 'vision' to include partial nudity, flag that now, even if it might not actually be needed.

If Intimacy is flagged, then it will trigger some processes:

- The ADC puts wheels in motion for an ID to be hired in some cases (see later graphic).
- The ADC sends the Producer, SM and Director these guidelines, requiring confirmation that they have read and acknowledged their responsibilities.
- The Producer sends the Actors (when cast) these guidelines, letting them know whether an Intimacy Director is involved, as well as information as to who they can approach throughout if there are problems (see reporting structure below). The ADC will check with the Producer that this has been done.

## Intimacy Workshops

*Basics of Intimacy Practice* Workshops will be made available to the student body once a term through the ADC Theatre. These will provide students with some basic knowledge of the pedagogy and methodology behind Intimacy practice. They will primarily be offered to students who know they are definitely or likely to be working on productions with Intimate content, but additional spaces are opened up if they become available.

**These workshops are not replacements for the need for Intimacy Directors in productions with Intimate content.** Where a show has Intimate content, the ADC Production Manager will be in touch with representatives from the show to discuss arranging a separate session with an Intimacy Director to work specifically on the content in that production.

Intimacy Content: Please select one of the following \*

- There will definitely be intimacy content in this production
- There will maybe be intimacy content in this production
- There will definitely not be intimacy content in this production
- Other...

Intimacy Details \*

[CW// sexual assault] Please note here whether any moments of intimacy are likely to take place in the show, based on the script or your plans for the show so far. Your answer to this question will help the ADC to be able to advise if your show should hire an Intimacy Director. If you have any questions related to this, please contact the ADC Theatre Manager, Jamie, at [jamie@adctheatre.com](mailto:jamie@adctheatre.com), or the ADC Production Manager, Lucia, at [lucia@adctheatre.com](mailto:lucia@adctheatre.com)

- There is nudity or partial nudity
- There is simulated sex
- There is simulated sexual assault or non-consensual action
- There is intense kissing or "making out"
- There is physical touch or groping of the body that might be sensitive or triggering
- There is light and/or casual physical touch
- There is light kissing
- There is chemistry or sexually charged content
- None of the above
- Unknown



## Reporting Structures

All parties must be made aware of who they can contact in the case of issues. There should be multiple levels to a reporting structure, to be decided. These could include:

- People in the room (Professional Intimacy Director, Stage Manager, Director, Assistant Director, designated Actor who isn't involved in any Intimacy).
- Members of the production who are not in the room (Producer, Assistant Producer, members of the Stage Management team).
- Relevant members of student societies or funding bodies (e.g. CUADC, CUMTS, Footlights, Fletcher Players, etc.)
- ADC Staff.
- College Staff.
- [Cambridge University Office for Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals](#).

A diverse array of reporting options is important in case of personal conflicts. Particularly in a theatre scene where people are likely to know each other and be friends, productions must be aware and mindful of these pressures. For example, it is not sufficient for a production to think that an Assistant Director can be designated as someone for the cast to talk to in case of a problem, if: they are best friends with the Director; just finished a tour with half of the actors; are currently auditioning some of the cast for another project.

## Hiring an Intimacy Director

When applying for a show through the ADC, the points on this graphic (next page) will be offered as tick boxes, to determine whether an ID is hired. This is a basic, initial guide and there are many circumstances that fall beyond this, so think critically about the content involved in the production.

Productions should also be mindful of any notable personal power dynamics that could cause a conflict of interests or tension that could be assuaged by having an Intimacy Director present. For example, if a director and cast is made up of third-year friends with a first-year performer involved who has to perform some mild Intimacy.

Err on the side of caution. An Intimacy Director will always make a process better. They will work alongside a director. They give the director, actors and whole team a chance to work with a professional.

# Do you need to hire an Intimacy Director?



- There is nudity (exposure of anything that would be covered by swimwear) or partial nudity.
- There is simulated sex (including simulated manual stimulation, oral sex or penetrative sex).
- There is intimacy including minors or vulnerable artists.
- There is simulated sexual assault or non-consensual action (also requires a Fight Director).
- An actor or member of the creative team has requested an Intimacy Director.

## Essential

- There is intense kissing or "making out".
- Physical touch or groping of the body that may be sensitive or triggering.

## Recommended

- There is light and/or casual physical touch.
- There is light kissing.
- There is chemistry or sexually charged content.

## Beneficial

Still unsure or have any further questions? Contact an ID.


## Student Intimacy Directors

Students should not hold the role of Intimacy Director on productions.

Intimacy Directors undergo rigorous training in consent, communication, closure and choreography to ensure everyone's well-being is upheld throughout a theatre process. They receive awareness training in Unconscious Bias, Sexual Harassment, Bullying & Harassment, LGBTQIA+ Awareness, and Bystander Intervention, and complete Adult Mental First Aid training to respond in the case of any problems. They receive mentorship support from Intimacy Directors as they begin work in the industry.

Intimacy Directors are impartial professionals. By the nature of being a student in a very busy theatre scene at a University, students are likely to have worked together a lot before, be friends, dislike each other, be trying to impress each other, know about each other's personal lives, and more. This is not conducive to the clarity and professionalism needed.

Untrained, unprepared (or partially trained) Intimacy Directors can do more harm than good. This does not mean that students cannot possess a comprehensive understanding of how to navigate



basic Intimate content and bring this into their theatre-making, and support each other through these processes.

Students should not be responsible for Intimacy because this is high-risk content, and it should not have to be on their shoulders to respond if something goes wrong, for example, someone feeling uncomfortable, a crossing of boundaries, a trigger response, an anxiety attack.

## Consent

Intimacy is based on a thorough consent-based approach. There are a few central tenets of consent that must be upheld for consent to be truly possible. The **FRIES** acronym (originating from Planned Parenthood) is a helpful resource here. Consent must be:

### Freely Given

Performing Intimacy with someone is a decision that should be made without pressure, force, or manipulation. Examples where consent is not being freely given include:

- “If you don’t do the kiss we might have to cast someone else.”
- “The scene isn’t working, it’ll look rubbish unless there’s more physical touch, come on.”
- “The costume with the long trousers looks weird, everyone else is just doing it in the shorts and they’re fine, can’t you just wear them?”

### Reversible

Anyone can change their mind about what they want to do, at any time. Even if they’ve done it before or are in the middle of performing Intimacy.

- Just because a performer is topless in the first scene doesn’t mean they’re happy to be topless in every scene.
- Just because a performer had a simulated sex scene in a play last term doesn’t mean they’ll be happy to perform one in every play they do.
- A performer may say they are happy to perform a kiss and then change their mind when it comes to trying it.

### Informed

Be honest and communicate what is going to happen.

- Let performers know beforehand when a rehearsal is going to include Intimacy, try to give them at least 48 hours’ notice.
- Let performers know whether a run-through will include the Intimacy or not. Perhaps a quick run which is mainly for lines needn’t have Intimate content and the performers may be unclear whether they should be performing the Intimacy or not.





## Enthusiastic/Engaged/Embodied

Enthusiastic consent is the notion that performers should be completely happy with performing an action for it to be true consent.

- Some people have noted that this perhaps puts extra barriers in place for people who may not be able to be enthusiastic about performing Intimacy but still want to have the opportunity to do so. This has led to the use of Engaged and/or Embodied. For example, a performer with sexual trauma may never be enthusiastic about performing a certain Intimate act, but they may still want to perform the moment if they are present, aware, confident, mindful of themselves, and supported.

## Specific

Saying yes to one thing doesn't mean they've said yes to others. There are no uncertainties over the physical choreography.

- Just because a performer has agreed to passionately kiss someone with firm touch on their back, head and arms, doesn't mean they're okay with their buttocks being squeezed.
- Saying "those two characters should go and be intimate with each other on the sofa" or "on that line, touch them" is not clear enough, that can mean very different things to different people, and therefore someone cannot consent because they don't know what they're consenting to.



## Working with an ID

Intimacy Directors don't all work in exactly the same way, and they will adapt their processes depending on the content, the performers, the timescale, the venue and much more. It may also depend on whether those involved have attended any of the *Basics of Intimacy Practice* workshops. However, you can expect the ID to:


- Check in with how the performers are feeling about the scene.
- Establish the context of the scene.
- Understand how the director views the scene, or what they want to establish or see in the scene (if anything).
- Check the performers' physical boundaries (where they are comfortable with touch).
- Establish the choreography of the Intimacy, with basic physical steps, in conversation with the performers.
- Depending on the content, this may include the use of modesty garments with internal barriers, and/or external barriers.
- Give notes and direction.
- Add the emotional journey onto the choreography.
- Establish closure practice.

During this time, it's important to make sure that notes are written up over the decisions that are made regarding the choreography. These are for the performers', director's and stage manager's reference and shouldn't be shared around with anyone unless there is a good reason and it is agreed by the performers.

## Working on Intimacy Without an ID

If you're working on a Production that has an ID attached, and the ID has facilitated and choreographed a moment of Intimacy, but the ID is not present in rehearsal, below are some guidelines to help you oversee this content.

- Decide whether you need to, or want to, perform the Intimacy during that rehearsal. Perhaps someone is feeling exhausted or sick and would rather not, or perhaps everyone is very confident with the Intimacy so thinks it's not necessary, or maybe people aren't sure about it so would really appreciate the chance to practice.
- You should have your clear notes on the choreography that can be referenced as a reminder.
- Be mindful of who is in the room. It's likely that no other performers were present when the Intimacy Director rehearsed with the relevant performers. Check in with whoever is performing the Intimacy, and make sure to prepare the whole cast: they may not want to watch the Intimacy and should be given an option to look away or leave the room. Remind the company to be respectful and professional, to avoid whispering, and to put their phones away.
- Check in about the performers' emotional state that day and how they're feeling.

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- Check in about the performers' physical boundaries that day and see if there are any changes.
  - Go through the Intimacy separately before running the scene or play, to refresh memories and see if any clarification is needed.
  - Mark through the physical choreography in clear, simple beats.
  - Check that everyone is clear and confident with that choreography and that they're comfortable with performing it during the scene or run-through.
  - If so, perform the scene or run-through with the Intimacy.
  - Afterwards, make sure there is a moment of closure between the performers.

If there are changes:

- Small alterations and notes may be easy to give between performers and from the director.
- If the intimacy needs to be reduced or made less intense, that can be done with open dialogue, consent-aware practice, and plenty of time and care.
- If someone decides they would like to increase the intensity of the Intimacy, and/or change the physical choreography to include new content, you should check in with your Intimacy Director. For example, there is an agreed passionate kissing scene, and one performer thinks that the other performer should grab their buttocks, or the director thinks they should remove their tops and continue kissing.

### **Whose responsibility is it?**

In the industry, it is often the stage management team who ensures that check-ins happen and keeps a close eye on the choreography records and whether this is being maintained in practice, as they are always present in rehearsals. If the Stage Manager (or an appointed DSM or ASM) is confident with this and can commit to being in these rehearsals and run-throughs, this would be preferable.

However, because in Cambridge theatre-making it is uncommon for Stage Managers to be at every rehearsal, it may be decided that the Director, or Assistant Director, or selected member of the cast (who is not involved in any Intimacy) is going to oversee this process of ensuring check-ins and keeping an eye on the choreography. In this case, there should be extra care taken over consent-based practice (see earlier section) and there should be open communication about this beforehand with opportunities for the actors to flag any concerns.



## Auditions

There should not be any Intimacy in an audition. If there are going to be recall auditions which require an element of checking “chemistry” between performers, it should be made explicit that this will not include Intimacy (i.e. kissing, intense physical touch).

If there is Intimacy required of a role, that should be made apparent when performers audition. This may mention “essential” requirements of the role (e.g. they refer to kissing in the script, or the director is certain that they want nudity) and “preferable” factors (i.e. the director thinks it would be good to include and it may be taken into consideration when casting, but isn’t needed). This could look like the below:

### ***ROMEO.***

Handsome, intelligent, and sensitive. Though impulsive and immature, his idealism and passion make him an extremely likable character.

*Essential Skills:* confident singer.

### **Intimacy**

*Essential:* kissing, nudity above the waist.

*Preferable:* rear nudity below the waist, touching of Juliet’s breasts through clothing.

Performers can then be asked if there are any roles that they are not interested in playing, allowing them to opt out. They can also specify if they are interested but wouldn’t be comfortable with the “preferable” content. This could be done via a short form to fill out and give in to the audition panel, to avoid students having to discuss this if they don’t want to. This information should be confidential to the audition panel.

There are lots of variables when it comes to the nature of a production and the casting process. Ultimately, those who are casting should be clear, honest, direct and upfront about the Intimacy in the show, ready to provide all the information that they can, respectful of the performers, and very aware of the power dynamics that come from them deciding who gets a role and who doesn’t.

**Performers:** when there is a role that you really want, it can be hard to take stock of how you feel about performing the Intimate content that it entails. Take the time to reflect on whether you feel able to perform this level of Intimacy and whether you feel confident in the processes in place to support you. Being involved may not be worth the strain it puts on you. There will always be other roles. Your wellbeing is the priority.



## Intimacy During Tech

Follow the above guidelines regarding working on the Intimacy without an ID present. In addition:

- Informing the whole company about the Intimacy also extends to the technical team. They must be made aware of what content they will be watching and when it is happening.
- Tech the Intimacy specifically, for performers to get used to it in the space, which can feel like a very different experience. There may be factors to get used to, for example:
  - Set (on a bed, against a wall, etc.)
  - Lighting (very exposed harsh lighting, very dark, blinding side-light, etc.)
  - Costume
  - Temperature in the space
- For more heightened Intimate content, nudity, or if it is requested by a performer, you should turn off any unnecessary monitors (e.g. behind the bar) or make sure that they are not accessible to everyone, e.g. the DSM's monitor is needed but shouldn't have extra performers standing around it watching.
- Signage should be applied to doors to the stage and auditorium so that only essential personnel are present in the space. For example: **Closed Rehearsal in progress, please do not enter. Call: 07xxxxxxx if necessary.** [with Director/SM/AD's number.]

## Nudity

- A performer might be rehearsing the nudity for the first time during the tech.
- Ideally an Intimacy Director is present for this process.
- If not, and it has been agreed that the performer does not need an ID to be there, this process must be handled with the utmost sensitivity and care. The above guidelines apply regarding signage and monitors.
- Robes should be available to the performer where possible and appropriate, i.e. if they undress on stage and then there's a blackout, a robe is made available for them in the wings at a specific point that is placed on a chair, or if they have to enter while nude, they are provided with a robe that they can shed just before going onstage. Stage management or a fellow cast-member that is chosen by the performer may aid them in this process (i.e. shining a small light in the wings so the nude performer can find the exit in the dark, and help them into their robe).
- Unnecessary cast should not be in the wings during nudity on stage or when the performer leaves the stage, and if they must be in the wings they can adopt "Privacy Positions": an agreed position with averted eyes which affords the performer some privacy.



## Intimacy During Dress & Performances

All of the above best practice must be maintained throughout the dress rehearsal and performances.

A performer has the right to change their mind and refuse to perform the Intimacy. Even if this provides logistical and/or creative issues, this must be respected.

For simulated sex and more intense or heightened Intimacy (or anything requested by the performers) there should be an Intimacy Call before the performance. Here, much like in rehearsals, there should be a check in about boundaries, and a review of how the Intimacy felt during the previous performance (where applicable).

Performers should go through the Intimacy as basic physical beats, to ensure clarity ahead of the performance. The Intimacy Call does not need to include lip-to-lip contact, nudity, or a full performance of the Intimate content with emotion and character.

## Inclusivity

When working on Intimate material, be careful of making assumptions over someone's experiences, comfort levels, knowledge, gender, sexuality, or body. That being said, it is not appropriate to ask or require performers to disclose any of these details. Remember:

- Not everyone has experience of any intimate behaviours or attractions in their personal lives.
- Someone's comfort levels cannot be assumed based on their general personality or previous behaviours.
- People may not know about certain sex acts or parts of the body.
- Someone's gender identity cannot be assumed.
- Someone's sexuality cannot be assumed.
- The body that someone has cannot be assumed.

## Extra Details

### Photography

If there are photos being taken in the rehearsal room or of a Dress rehearsal or performance, there should be a conversation around the Intimate content so the photographer knows not to take pictures of certain moments. There should never be photos of simulated sex or nudity. Performers can decide how they feel about photos of partial nudity, kissing, and other types of Intimacy.



## Language

One should maintain anatomical, professional language when discussing Intimacy (e.g. breasts, penis, vagina, genitals).

## Content Warnings

Consent-practice extends to the audience. Content Warnings allow the audience to be Informed about the Intimate content, and they should be Specific.

## Guidelines for reference

The below are resources for the wider industry. These guidelines have been specifically created for Cambridge University student theatre. They are not comprehensive to the intricacies of working in the industry at large, and provide extra specifics that are not relevant to the theatre industry.

- <https://www.intimacyforstageandscreen.com/guidelines> - then “Guidelines for Live Performance”. A set of guidelines for professional theatre.
- <https://www.bectuintimacybranch.co.uk/intimacy-guidelines> - a range of guidelines from countries around the world (note that many will be for screen).

## Other Intimacy Directors/Coordinator Collaborators

Adelaide Waldrop  
Joshua Okapala  
Lucy Fennell

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## Feedback

If you have any feedback, questions or suggestions for improvement regarding these guidelines, please email Robbie at [taylorhuntr@gmail.com](mailto:taylorhuntr@gmail.com), or the ADC Production Manager at [production@adctheatre.com](mailto:production@adctheatre.com).