

Student Confidentiality - Responding to Calls from Third Parties

Guidance for staff about protecting student confidentiality while responding sensitively to the concerns of parents, carers and other third parties

It is not uncommon for staff to be contacted by parents or friends who are worried about a particular student.

It is important to respond to enquiries with sensitivity, tact and reassurance where possible.

While it is useful to listen to and acknowledge their concerns, personal information must not be disclosed to third parties without the consent of the student.

If as a result of a call you have any concerns about the well-being of a student contact 4321 to discuss options.

If a parent, carer or other third party seeks information about a student:

- It is often best to ring the caller to give you time to think about your response, discuss with a colleague and clarify your duty of care and legal obligations.
- Inform the caller that:
Because UK law (the 1998 Data Protection Act) and University policy prohibit the disclosure of an individual's information except in certain situations, we are unable to give any information to anyone about a student either applying for a place at the University or a student currently studying at the University, without that student's express permission.
- Offer information about University policies, procedures and support services.
- Speak hypothetically about student situations and how we would help.
- It may be also useful to suggest they discuss the issue directly with the student and encourage the student to contact Student Services for guidance.
- In emergency situations theoretically explain how we are able to try to pass a message on to students. It should be made clear that this may not be possible, and take care not to inadvertently confirm that the student is enrolled at the university.

"Hi there, my daughter attends Bath University. I am worried about her and really want to know how she is getting on with her studies. Also, I think she is having problems in accommodation and I don't think she is getting on with the others in the house."

Caller...

"I understand why you are worried about your daughter. If a student presented with these types of issues we would encourage them to contact Student Services where there is a range of support available. For example, our Wellbeing Service would be able to work with the housemates to resolve the issues."

Staff member...

Summary

If a parent, carer or other third party seeks information about a student:



You should:

- Ring the caller back to give you time to think about your response and discuss.
- Make sure to acknowledge callers' concerns and to respond sensitively.
- Speak hypothetically about student situations and what we can do to help.
- Offer information about support services so they can encourage the student to access support.



You should not:

- Confirm that a person is a student or attends this University.
- Discuss a student with any third party without their explicit permission.
- Share ANY student contact details or ANY information regarding a student's situation or academic progress.
- Accept complaints or feedback on behalf of the student as they must lodge these themselves.
- Offer a call back to update on the situation. Advise that if an emergency situation arises we have next of kin details on file.

In an emergency:

- If you are concerned about an immediate threat to the safety of the student or others contact security on 666.
- If you have concerns about the welfare of a particular student, contact the Student Services Staff Advice Line on 4321.

For further information see the following:

Data Protection Policies <http://www.bath.ac.uk/data-protection/index.html>



If in doubt call the Student Services Advice Line on

01225 38 4321

or email
studentservices@bath.ac.uk