

Paper for Policy Committee, June 2014

Guidance on Confidentiality in Student Health and Welfare

The college endorses the University's policy on confidentiality in student health and welfare, as set out in a document authored by the University's Committee on student health and welfare, and set out on the University's website at the following address:

[https://www.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwoxacuk/localsites/studentgateway/documents/health/Guidance on Confidentiality in Student Health and Welfare.pdf](https://www.ox.ac.uk/media/global/wwwoxacuk/localsites/studentgateway/documents/health/Guidance%20on%20Confidentiality%20in%20Student%20Health%20and%20Welfare.pdf)

The college recognises the same practical and legal obligations as set out in the University document. In all cases, the duty of confidence is not absolute and may be overridden in circumstances where there is an obligation to do so. The following paragraphs are essentially summary statements, and the above document should be referred to for fuller guidance.

Information given in confidence by a student will, as a general rule, be treated in a confidential manner. This would include information about a student's physical or mental health or financial circumstances. Disclosure of such information will be on a need to know basis. Confidential information should not be disclosed to parents or other family members. However, in exceptional circumstances (e.g. where there appears to be a risk that the student will harm himself/herself or others, or where the student is seriously ill), confidential information may be disclosed to parents or other family members, usually with the consent of the student.

The college owes a duty of care to all its members, staff and students, and in some circumstances it might not be able to discharge this duty without infringing confidentiality. There will be circumstances in which the disclosure of information may be necessary; students will normally be asked to give their consent, but the college reserves the right to use its professional judgement to decide whether any such disclosure should be made.

Those to whom information has been given in confidence, or who have acquired information which they regard as confidential, may be concerned about the welfare of a student but uncertain whether they should disclose this information or not. In these circumstances it may be sensible to seek advice from an appropriate person e.g. a senior college officer or the college doctor, on whether the matter is sufficiently important to breach confidentiality and, if so, to whom they should report their concerns. A concern for confidentiality need not, and should not, prevent communication that is necessary to help students, or fellow students, in difficulty.

This statement on confidentiality is being made available to students and staff to provide reassurance to students but also to clarify the limits of confidentiality. If any member of college wishes to seek clarification on this policy please see the Deans of Arts.

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