



## Confidentiality Statement

Specifically focusing on information relating to students' health, wellbeing and welfare  
*Revised most recently in March 2023*

### Introduction

1. This document sets out the College's practice relating to the confidentiality of information relating to students' health, wellbeing and welfare. It is written in the light of the University of Oxford's [Guidance on Confidentiality in Student Health and Welfare](#), most recently updated in May 2022. That guidance document<sup>1</sup> contains more detailed information for staff than is contained in this summary document, and should be consulted by staff alongside this document.

### General principles and procedures

2. In general, information provided to college staff by students about their health, wellbeing and welfare will be treated as confidential and not shared with others without the student's consent. This is because information relating to the health, wellbeing and welfare of an individual amounts to special category data (as defined by the UK GDPR).

3. Consent will be sought from students to share information to enable support or protective measures to be put in place for, or around, that student. When seeking consent, is important to explain to students what information will be shared, who it will be shared with and in what way.

4. In practice students usually give consent for the sharing of limited information with key individuals (including tutors) who they interact with, to enable them to be supported in the most effective way. The sharing of appropriate information about a student with their consent can release students from the burden of explaining their situation to multiple people. Even when a student has given consent, information should only be shared with those who have a legitimate 'need to know'.

5. Staff advising students should make it clear to students (preferably at the outset of a conversation or at any time during it where a student seeks assurances of confidentiality) that in exceptional circumstances (when there is a risk of serious harm to the student or others) it may be necessary to disclose information to others without their consent.

### Confidentiality within the Health, Wellbeing and Welfare (HWW) team and with other teams

6. On occasion there may be a need for information shared by a student with one member of the HWW team to be shared within the team where this is in the best interest of a student. For example, the Welfare Officers inform the Dean for Welfare about overnight call-outs so that the Dean for Welfare can ensure that appropriate support is in place for the

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<sup>1</sup> The guidance document also defines key terms used in this document, including *risk*, *serious harm* and *capacity*.

student. Such information-sharing takes place only within the HWW team.

7. College Officers (such as the Dean or the Tutor for Undergraduates), in seeking to ensure that any potential disciplinary processes (non-academic or academic) are appropriate and proportionate, may contact the Dean for Welfare to ask if a student has accessed support from the HWW team. On these occasions the Dean for Welfare will simply respond yes/no unless the student has consented to the sharing of further information.

### **Balancing confidentiality with the need to act in cases of risk of serious harm**

8. In rare instances, a student might lack capacity to give consent and need intervention from medical professionals. In other cases, a staff member may judge that there is a risk of serious harm (either to the student themselves or to other individuals), and thus determine that it is necessary to disclose information to others without consent having been given. Staff members should consult with the Dean for Welfare (initially on a no-names basis) wherever possible.

9. Any decision to contact a student's nominated emergency contact, or other family members, without their consent should be taken by, or in consultation with, the Dean for Welfare (or, in her absence, the College Registrar). The Master would be consulted or notified in such cases. Such contact would only be justified if the student is physically incapacitated, has been medically assessed as lacking capacity or where the student is at risk of serious harm or creating a risk of serious harm to others.

10. If a student discloses information that indicates that a person under the age of 18 may be at risk of harm, then the College's *Safeguarding Policy* must be followed and confidentiality cannot be assured.

### **Dealing with contact from students' family members**

11. If a member of staff is contacted by a student's parent (or other family member) then no information about a student's health, wellbeing, welfare or academic progress should be shared without the student's consent (unless paragraph 8 above applies). Often a query from a parent (or family member) can be answered by giving general information about the College's policies or procedures, or by offering to pass on a message to a student (for example, to ask them to call home if a lack of contact is giving rise to concern).

### **Financial information**

12. Information about a student's financial situation, including any need to seek additional financial support from the College or University, is kept confidential by the Student Finance Officer. Tutors, members of the HWW team and College Officers are never privy to detailed information about a student's financial situation unless the student has consented to that information being shared. Such sharing would rarely be appropriate or necessary.