

## **Code of Practice in Relation to Parental Contact**

### **Statutory Responsibility**

1. Staff must not disclose personal information about students, former students or applicants to anyone outside the College, including parents or guardians, without the written consent of the individual concerned. However, information may be disclosed to parents with the agreement of the Principal, a Vice-Principal, the College Secretary or the Head of Support & Advisory Services, as appropriate, if there is a demonstrable emergency or risk to life.

### **Guidance on General Contact with Parents**

2. Students over the age of 18 are legally adults, and students under the age of 18 are also legally entitled to confidentiality. Where the College is approached by a parent or guardian requesting information about a student, the parents must be treated with courtesy, tact and diplomacy but the student's right to confidentiality must be protected. It may be appropriate to inform the student that the parent has contacted the College, but no personal information can be disclosed without the express permission of the student concerned.
3. In general, students are expected to act on their own behalf when dealing with offices and departments within the College, and when requesting services or making complaints. Parents should not normally be allowed to make requests, or otherwise act on behalf of their son/daughter, unless they hold a power of attorney. **Parents should not be regarded as the sponsors of students, even if they are paying fees and other charges.**

### **Responsibility of Staff Working in Student Services**

4. It is essential that students are able to explore personal matters in confidence with those working in Support & Advisory Services. In the cases of the Counselling Service, Chaplains and Health Centre, strict professional codes of conduct would guide any disclosures of information. Other members of Support & Advisory Services should not disclose information to parents without a student's written consent.

### **Responsibility of Departments**

5. Departments keep records about student attendance and progress. These records are confidential to the students and the College. Departments should ensure that such information is kept securely and its confidentiality respected.

### **Responsibility of Personal Advisers**

6. Personal Advisers who are worried about any issue in relation to their contact or discussions with a student may discuss their concerns with their Head of Department, or the Head of Support & Advisory Services. Personal Advisers may not discuss any issues concerning a student with a parent/guardian without the express permission of the student.

### **Emergency Contact**

7. Students over the age of 18 must expressly give permission for contact to be made with parents/guardians. Students living in Halls of Residence and those participating in field trips, sporting events or other such activities are normally asked to give emergency contact information which may be utilised by appropriate College staff.

### **Exchange Students**

8. Contact with parents or sponsors must be made only with the consent of the student. An exception, however, is made in the case of a student on an exchange programme, where the transfer of academic information to the student's home institution is integral to the programme. This transfer must be made within the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **Disabled Students**

9. It is recognised that parental contact may be necessary in order for the College to support some disabled students. The principle of obtaining the student's permission still applies, and written permission for parental contact should be recorded within the student's file maintained by the Educational Support Office.

Office of the College Secretary

**APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL 21 JUNE 2007**