
Confidentiality and boundaries

When a student discloses a personal matter to you, in your role as a Personal Tutor, it is helpful to ask them who they would like you to share this with and keeping a note of their response. When making a note of the conversation, it is advisable to simply record the facts relating to that dialogue and avoiding any judgemental terminology. Remember that a student can ask to see all information held on them at any stage. A student might also ask you to provide a letter for them to submit to a Progress Committee, in which case it should be sufficient for you to say that that the student has disclosed a personal matter of a significant nature, which you believe to have had a likely adverse effect in their performance, but without disclosing the actual nature of this, unless the student specifically asks you to.

In some cases, a student might disclose something to you, which they ask you to keep completely confidential. This request should be respected wherever possible, but you should explain to the student that you might need to seek advice from colleagues, if they disclose something that is an issue that you do not feel comfortable or competent to deal with. You can normally seek this advice anonymously, e.g. by contacting the Student Advice and Support Office for guidance but not giving the name of the student. Alternatively, you can encourage the student to make an appointment to speak with someone within Student Support and reassure them that their confidentiality will be respected and that nothing would be disclosed without their knowledge or consent, except in very extreme circumstances.

In some situations, it might be necessary for a Personal Tutor to set some very clear boundaries with a student. An example of this would be where a student repeatedly reports information that is outwith your professional competence to handle but has not taken your advice to access other appropriate services. In such situations, it is important that you seek advice from your Senior Personal Tutor in the first instance who might, in turn, contact the Head of Student Support for further guidance. Although these conversations can initially be anonymous, a point might be reached where the student has to be advised that this confidentiality had to be breached to a limited extent, due to a concern for their safety or the safety of others.

Finally, it is important to be aware that no information about a student should be disclosed to an external third party without their consent and/or relevant paperwork. This includes sponsors, family members and even the police, unless they have provided an appropriately completed data disclosure form. If in any doubt, you should contact the Head of Student Support or the Student Records Team in Academic Services"