



PRIFYSGOL  
BANGOR  
UNIVERSITY

# COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS / GUARDIANS / CARERS

## A guide for staff

### **Background**

This guide describes how the University will respond to requests for information on individual students from parents, guardians or other persons.

The majority of students at the University are aged 18\* or over and are therefore adults. In accordance with Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's Data Protection Policy, information about students cannot be released to another person without the student's consent, and there are therefore some limitations on how staff can respond to requests for information from Parents, Guardians or other individuals.

### **For example: what the University cannot do**

- The University cannot confirm whether an individual is a student at Bangor University.
- The University cannot provide details of a student's address, their attendance, or their general whereabouts.
- The University cannot discuss details of a student's academic progress or any other matters related to the student's records (e.g. payment of fees).

- The University cannot give information on optional modules chosen by a student, or give specific details about a student's timetable, assessments or assessment dates.
- The University cannot provide details of any disciplinary action being taken by the University against a student.
- The University cannot provide an update on any ongoing investigations related to a complaint or appeal lodged by a student.
- The University cannot instigate an investigation, under our complaints procedure, based only on a third party's account of a situation.

It is expected that students will assume responsibility for all communication with the University and for drawing attention to any problems or concerns. However, we are aware that parents/guardians or other individuals may on occasion contact the University if they have serious concerns and, therefore, whilst maintaining our duty of confidentiality, we would not wish to dismiss, or treat lightly, any such request.

**The following guidelines apply to a range of instances where the University will seek to assist parents/guardians:**

- The University will contact the parent/guardian (or any other person nominated by the student), or will supply information, via the Registrar's Office, to the relevant statutory authority in any circumstances where a student's emergency contact is needed (e.g. in the event of an accident, or where the student has been deemed by the appropriate staff group to be at serious risk). [Further advice is available from Student Support Services on such procedures].
- If a parent/guardian is seriously concerned about the wellbeing of a student, the University will make appropriate

enquiries as to the student's situation. In exceptional circumstances, the University is able to relay a message to a student on behalf of a parent/guardian but cannot confirm if the message was received.

- The University will direct parents/guardians to any relevant information that is publicly available, for example University procedures; Rules and Regulations; information on fees and financial support; details of core modules and assessment methods for individual courses; Student Support Services.
- If a parent/guardian wishes to complain on behalf of a student about any of the University's services, the University will supply information on the University complaints procedures; however, students must lodge the complaint or appeal themselves.
- The University will release information to a parent/guardian only with the express written consent of the student and will on receipt of such consent communicate directly with the parent/guardian acting on behalf of the student.

### **\*Student consent**

- Under exceptional circumstances, for example due to major illness or debilitating accident or disability a student may give consent for a parent/guardian to act on their behalf.
- Consent will normally be given in relation to a specific matter. For example, if a student has given consent to a parent/guardian pursuing a complaint on his/her behalf, the parent/guardian will not have access to information relating to the student once the complaint process has been concluded.
- Ongoing consent may be given to the parent/guardian of a student with complex support requirements and where the situation is unlikely to change. The decision will be determined by the nature of the student's disability.

- The University requires that the student normally gives consent for a parent/guardian to act on their behalf in writing and that the request should be submitted to the Academic Registrar. In exceptional circumstances students can give consent verbally, by informing an appropriate member of staff of the University, however the University would require this to be backed up in writing as soon as possible.
- Where a student gives consent for a parent to act on their behalf, the University will take reasonable steps to ensure that relevant staff members are aware that consent has been given. However, parents should appreciate that not every staff member they may contact will be aware that consent has been given, and that this may lead to a delay in providing the requested information until the staff member has verified that consent has been given. This is to ensure that personal information is only shared with those individuals with a need to know.

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\*Where a student is 17 at entry, but attains the age of 18 within their first academic year; the above principles will apply. However, where students are considerably younger, the University has specific guidance contained in the University policy on Under 18's.

Where a student may be deemed to be a Vulnerable Adult, within approved definitions; the University has a Vulnerable Adults policy which offers additional guidance.

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Staff should contact Student Support Services (2024) if they have concerns for a Student's wellbeing, and Gwenan Hine (2413) for further guidance on Data Protection issues.