

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY
Student Services Hub
University of Essex

1. Confidentiality Statement

The Student Services Hub at the University of Essex provides you with a confidential service. Students have the right to confidentiality to protect their interests, and to ensure a relationship of trust between student and the service. This policy covers the Student Services Hubs at Colchester, Loughton and Southend.

2. Definition of Confidentiality

Everyone working within the Student Services Hub treats all information discretely, sensitively and with respect, and in adherence with the Data Protection Act. Staff working in the Hub may share information with colleagues, including with other parts of the University community, but only when necessary to help us to support you.

At times, there may be a small number of student staff who work within the Student Services Hub. These staff adhere to the Data Protection Act and SSH Confidentiality Policy and have access to limited information about other students, based on the requirements of their role.

3. Data Protection Act

The University is a data controller, registered with the Office of the Information Commissioner. We have a data protection policy that all staff must abide by. You have a right to ask for a copy of the information that we hold about you:

http://www.essex.ac.uk/records_management/request/default.aspx

4. Sharing information with third parties outside the University

Information provided to the Student Services Hub forms part of the personal record of each student, and in general will not be shared externally.

Information will not normally be shared or discussed with sponsors (except in the cases described below), parents, guardians, family members, spouses or partners, without the express written permission of the student¹, in line with the University's third party contact policy: http://www.essex.ac.uk/records_management/policies/third_party_contact.aspx.

Records of all such contact will be kept on the student's file. However, occasions may arise where staff feel that information needs to be shared; for example, by contacting the local NHS service or an emergency contact. The circumstances where this may apply could include:

- If there is good reason to believe that you, or someone else, may be at risk of serious harm.
- If there is a safeguarding concern

Where appropriate and practicable, we will seek to inform you of the decision to share information and the reasons why the decision has been taken. Other circumstances are laid out below.

5. Complaints

If you make a formal complaint or appeal that cites services provided by the Student Services Hub, the service will disclose information relevant to the complaint or appeal to the Student Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office (SACCO) (see also section 10 below).

¹ While the Data Protection Act does enable students to give permission to the University to disclose information about them to third parties, the University is not then legally obliged to do so.

Furthermore, if legal action is pursued against the University or a complaint is made to an external body, e.g. the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, then all information relating to interactions and support provided by the University (excluding the content of counselling sessions) will be made available to all relevant parties within the University and to the University's legal advisors if appropriate.

6. Home Office

As a Tier 4 sponsor the University has many duties. We are required to disclose certain information and concerns to the Home Office. If you disclose information to us as part of an enquiry that we believe should be reported to the Home Office, we will pass relevant information to the International Team. The International Team will make a report to the Home Office and advise you of this. Independent immigration advice can be sought from the Students' Union Advice Centre or an immigration lawyer if you are concerned about this.

7. Embassies

Where we have received written permission from the sponsored student, or where there is a sponsorship agreement between the University and the student's embassy, we may provide information related to sponsored students normally related to their registration status and confirmation of attendance.

8. Law enforcement

The University may be required to release information to the Police, a court of law or other law enforcement agencies. A written request made under Section 29 of the Data Protection Act 1998 will normally be required before this information is released.

9. Statistical data

Statistical data, i.e. data that cannot be used to identify any individuals, could be shared across the University to help spot trends and plan services. It could also be shared externally, e.g. in response to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

10. Highly sensitive personal information

We apply a higher level of confidentiality to information provided to our disability and wellbeing teams. This means that information provided to staff working in these teams will not be shared outside of those teams without your prior, expressed consent; except where issues of safety or legality apply (see Section 4 above).

You will be asked to provide consent by completing the 'Student Services Hub Consent to Disclose' form. If you choose not to give consent for information to be shared, this decision will be respected, except where issues of safety or legality apply. However, you should understand this may limit the kinds of support that are available to you.

If you choose to lodge a complaint or appeal that cites these services, or other highly sensitive personal information, then that information may be required from those services in order to consider your complaint/appeal. In such instances, the SACCO team will discuss this with you prior to requesting any information.

11. Counselling & Psychotherapy

Counsellors working within or on behalf of the Wellbeing service owe a duty of confidentiality to the client because of the special nature of the counselling relationship. Counsellors and Psychotherapists working in the Wellbeing service adhere to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) ethical frameworks. Our service is currently accredited by the BACP.

The content of counselling sessions would not normally be shared with anyone, including within the Wellbeing service. It may however, be appropriate in some circumstances, to

consult the Manager or Clinical Lead of the service and/or other Wellbeing practitioners in order to work in the student's best interests.

12. Further information

If you have any questions about the confidentiality of your conversation with any member of the Student Services Hub please ask and we will be happy to explain to you what information we need to share in order to support you.

If you have any concerns about information that has been shared and would like to raise these you should follow our complaints policy.