

## Jesus College Policy on Privacy and Confidentiality in Student Health, Welfare and Finance

- Jesus College treats matters relating to the health, welfare and finances of its students in confidence, wherever possible. In doing so, the College respects the requirements of the law, whether under provisions thereof that protect confidentiality, or under statutory and other provisions that require confidences to be broken, under the criminal law or otherwise.
- The College attaches great importance to providing a supportive environment for all its students, and within the bounds of confidentiality set out in this policy, it is often necessary or helpful for students' difficulties to be discussed between members of College or the University and also with those providing professional care.
- Any necessary discussion of students' personal problems should not in general result in adverse academic, employment, or other consequences. College discussions of students' academic progress will generally be confined to the exchange of information on issues relating to academic performance and discipline.
- Any College person dealing with a student should, where possible, seek the consent of the student for the onward disclosure of relevant information to those with a clear need to know. Where such consent is not forthcoming, the person entrusted with the information should make it clear to the student that in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to disclose the information to others, on a need-to-know basis only, preserving strict confidentiality in relation to any other third party.
- Any College person dealing with a student about their personal problems should make it clear at the outset that absolute assurances of confidentiality cannot be given, as it may be in the best interests of the student and the College to share the information with others who need to know, in a discreet fashion. The College person should indicate which individuals or bodies might need to be informed.
- In certain circumstances the College may owe a duty of care to individuals that cannot be discharged unless the College takes action on information provided in confidence.
- Those in receipt of confidential information, whether tutors, College officers, staff or students, who are uncertain about whether they should disclose this information, may seek advice from a College Officer, College doctors or nurse, or College Welfare Officer or Counsellor without divulging the name of the student concerned. The College is clear that its concern for confidentiality need not, and should not, prevent communication where it is necessary to help students in difficulty.
- Any College person who wishes to seek advice about a student from the College doctors, nurse or the University Counselling Service should obtain that student's consent, except in exceptional circumstances. If consent is not forthcoming, advice may be sought without identifying the student concerned.

- Representatives of the College will not normally speak to students' families without consent, as almost all undergraduate and graduate students are aged above 16 and therefore entitled to confidentiality. Contact may occasionally be justified in a student's best interests, for example when a student is at risk of self-harm or suffering from a serious illness or poses a risk to others. The decision would be taken by a senior College person and the student would normally be informed.
- The College considers that students have the same general obligation as College officers, tutors and staff to respect the privacy of others in their everyday behaviour and also in what they say to the student, local and national press and in the use of electronic communication.
- Some but not usually all of the following people in College may need to be part of a 'circle of confidence' in dealing with a student's health, welfare or financial problems: the Principal, Academic Director, Estates Bursar, Director of Accommodation, Catering, and Conferences, the Chaplain, College doctors, College nurse, College Counsellor, Welfare Officer, the Welfare Fellow, the Dean, the Junior and Welfare Deans, the student's tutors (whether in or out of College) or supervisor or College Advisor, the Academic Services Manager, Accommodation Services Manager, and members of the Hardship Committee. The number of people in the 'circle of confidence' will be kept as small as possible. The Chaplain, College doctors and nurse, and College Counsellor will continue to be bound by professional confidentiality as set out below.

#### Information on professional guidelines concerning confidentiality

- *Professional medical staff* – including the College doctors and nurse – follow explicit and strict guidelines on medical confidentiality codified by the General Medical Council. They have the discretion to share information with other members of the healthcare team. They can disclose information if it is in the public interest, for instance where a failure to disclose information may expose the patient, or others, to risk of death or serious harm: such disclosure would normally be within the 'circle of confidence'.
- *The College Chaplain* operates with a strict ethical code as regards information disclosed to them in confidence, whether the student has made an approach in a religious context or through the Chaplain's wider pastoral role. The Chaplain may occasionally need to divulge information given in confidence if the student concerned is seen to be a danger to themselves or to others.
- *The Welfare Team* comprises the Academic Director, Academic Services Manager, Welfare Officer, Chaplain, and Nurse. The Nurse will share non-medical information within the team where appropriate. The Chaplain will share welfare information within the team when a student has approached the Chaplain in their role as a member of the Welfare Team.
- *The University Counselling Service* (which includes the College Counsellor) will not normally convey information outside the service without a student's permission. If a student were considered to be a danger to themselves or to others, then the student's consent would still be sought before information was conveyed to others. If this consent was not given then a

counsellor would consult with a senior member of the service before a decision to break confidentiality was taken.

#### Sources of advice in College on health, welfare and financial matters

- There is a section on the College website dedicated to Welfare at <https://www.jesus.ox.ac.uk/study-here/life-at-jesus/wellbeing/> and <https://jesuscollegeintranet.web.ox.ac.uk/welfare>. The College's Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks also set out the arrangements for advice on health, welfare and financial matters in College in the sections on Bursaries and Funds for Student Support, and Welfare. These handbooks are available on the College intranet at <https://jesuscollegeintranet.web.ox.ac.uk/academic-office/student-handbooks-guidance>.
- The JCR has a section on welfare on its website at [jcr.jesus.ox.ac.uk](http://jcr.jesus.ox.ac.uk), as does the MCR at [mcr.jesus.ox.ac.uk](http://mcr.jesus.ox.ac.uk). Both the JCR and MCR have welfare reps on their committees.

February 2022