

## UNIVERSITY OF KENT

### **GUIDELINES ON MEETINGS AND CORRESPONDENCE WITH THIRD-PARTIES, INCLUDING PARENTS, AND THE DATA PROTECTION ACT**

**Note: References in these guidelines to ‘parents’ shall be taken to mean parent, parents, guardian(s) or other close family member. ‘Student’ shall be taken to mean current or former student.**

- 1 Members of staff should only meet and/or correspond with third parties, including parents of students, to discuss aspects of the student’s academic progress in the presence of the student. Whilst it is acknowledged that in certain circumstances it is not always possible for a face-to-face meeting to take place, discussions via by telephone, email or post are acceptable where this does not exclude the student. If in exceptional circumstances, the student is unable to be in attendance, their written consent to the meeting taking place will be required and the member of staff should ensure that the permission detailed in paragraph 4 has been obtained. In this instance, it would be necessary for there to be a form of verification via which the staff member(s) concerned could ensure that they were communicating with the agreed third party/parents. This information should be specific personal information relating to the student, i.e. Student ID number or date of birth.
- 2 Students are not permitted to appeal against the academic judgement of examiners or to request a review of a mark, hence parents may not challenge marks awarded to a student.
- 3 When a member of staff is approached by parents and/or their son/daughter seeking a meeting or for staff to discuss an on-going issue regarding an appeal, the member of staff should draw their attention to these guidelines to which all parties involved adhere and the member of staff should provide a copy for third parties/parents so that the procedure is transparent from the outset. The member of staff should explain that the University is bound by the requirements of the Data Protection Act in regard to release of information about a student and that it is University policy that students must be consulted about and their written consent obtained to the release of any information, hence there must first be a meeting with the student as explained in paragraphs 4 and 5.
- 4 The member of staff should first establish to what extent any information can be shared. This will require seeing the student alone to establish:
  - (a) that the student has given permission for their academic progress to be discussed with the third party/parents;
  - (b) to establish if there is anything the student wishes to say in the absence of the third party or their parents, especially about any factor(s) which may have affected their academic progress, medical or otherwise;
  - (c) to establish those matters that the student gives permission to be discussed at the meeting with the third party and/or his/her parents.
- 5 A standard pro-forma should be completed as an agreement between the member of staff and student clearly indicating that all matters relating to the student’s registration

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will be disclosed/discussed in the presence of the third party/parents. It is essential that this pro-forma is completed so that there are no misunderstandings later about the agreed parameters for the meeting with third parties/parents. This pro-forma will be signed by the member of staff and by the student and a copy will be given to the student which they should retain.

- 6 Although members of staff are not authorised to discuss the academic performance of a student with third parties/parents in the absence of the student, they may, when approached by a third party/parent, explain the generality of a situation by reference to the relevant regulations and procedures. For example, in the case of plagiarism the third party/parents may be informed of the regulations and procedures which are available in handbooks and on the University web site.
- 7 Members of staff should write and retain a contemporaneous file note of any meeting in which they discuss the academic performance of a student with the third party/parents.