

STUDENT TRUSTED (EMERGENCY) CONTACT PROCEDURE

February 2024

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Student Trusted (Emergency) Contact Procedure
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<p>External queries relating to the document to be referred in the first instance to the Corporate Governance team: email SSSDirectors@port.ac.uk</p> <p>If you need this document in an alternative format, please email SSSDirectors@port.ac.uk</p>	

The latest version of this document is always to be found at:

<https://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-276.pdf>

Summary

What is this document about?

This document confirms the University's approach to collecting information for and engaging with a student's trusted (emergency) contact.

Who is this for?

This document is relevant to staff, students, parents/supporters, and third parties such as emergency services or placement providers.

How does the University check this is followed?

Any decision to engage a student's trusted contact will be recorded, including the rationale for doing so; these will be reviewed to ensure consistency in application.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?

Student Support Services Leadership team - SSSDirectors@port.ac.uk

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To explain how student trusted contact details are collected and updated and confirm those with authority to authorise enacting the procedure.
- 1.2. To clarify when a trusted contact can be contacted by the University without student consent and in what circumstances they will be contacted when a student has given advance consent by 'opting in'.
- 1.3. To provide a clear procedure for University staff, students, parents and supporters, the public and relevant external agencies to ensure the correct procedure is followed.

2. Providing and updating trusted contact details

- 2.1. All students are required to provide details of a trusted contact person on registering with the University; this information is held securely on the University's student record system, SITS, in accordance with the University's Data Protection statement. It is mandatory for students to provide a trusted contact.
- 2.2. Students can nominate anyone they choose to be their trusted contact, with the exception of another University of Portsmouth student, unless that student is their next of Kin. It is expected that for the majority of students their trusted contact will be a parent, partner or guardian, however, it can be another responsible adult such as a trusted friend.
- 2.3. Students should ensure that the trusted contact is aware that they have been nominated, that their contact details have been provided to the University and that they have given their permission to be nominated as a trusted contact. Students should ensure that the contact details are correct and that the phone number provided is the quickest and easiest way to engage the trusted contact.
- 2.4. Students are asked to keep this information up to date and can make any changes to the trusted contact information or consent preferences by logging into the student portal, and will be prompted to review this at each registration point as a minimum. The University will assume that the information is correct, as in an emergency situation it may not be possible to check with the student first.

3. Circumstances when the University may contact a student's trusted person

- 3.1. Under data protection legislation, the University can legally use trusted contact information, without prior consent, in situations where it is in students' vital interests to do so. This normally implies a life or death situation, or one where the student is physically or mentally incapable of giving consent.
- 3.2. Trusted contacts are not routinely given information about academic progress or any other aspect of the student's life at University. Those nominated will only normally be contacted when there is a significant concern about the student's physical or mental health, wellbeing or safety.
- 3.3. Examples of circumstances when the University may decide to contact the nominated trusted contact include, but are not limited to:
 - When the University is made aware of an emergency admission to hospital, or collection of the student by emergency services in what appears to be a potentially life-threatening or critical condition;
 - When, in the opinion of the University, it is not possible to reasonably keep a student safe, such as when they might be considered to be a significant and material risk to their own life, or when the University is managing an emergency suspension or break from studies (i.e. under the Fitness to Study Procedure);
 - When the University has received a credible report that the student is missing, and there is genuine concern for their safety or wellbeing.
- 3.4. In addition to attempting to contact the trusted contact, where appropriate the University may also share their details with the emergency services, for example to police, paramedics or hospital emergency departments, where the information will assist in maintaining a student's safety.
- 3.5. In the event of a suspected or confirmed death of a student, the University will pass the trusted contact details to the Police or other emergency services to support them in their role of contacting the next of kin. It is not the role of the University to first inform Next of Kin of a death, and it should be noted that the trusted contact chosen by the student may not be their legal Next of Kin (see 2.2).

4. Providing advance permission – Opting in

- 4.1. When students register for their studies they are invited to opt-in, i.e. give advance permission for their trusted contact to be contacted. Opting in will allow the University to contact the student's nominated person if there is serious concern about the student's wellbeing.
- 4.2. Opting in (or not) will be reviewed by students at each registration point i.e. at the start of every academic year.
- 4.3. Students are able to change their permissions at any time by logging into SITS Student View.
- 4.4. Examples of circumstances when the University may decide to contact the trusted contact include, but are not limited to:
 - Serious physical or mental illness, or concerns about behaviour which might mean that someone is seriously unwell;
 - When a student has missed key events without explanation, this is out of character, and we are unable to contact them;
 - When there has been a prolonged lack of contact, despite efforts to get in touch with them.
- 4.5. Where students do not opt in, the University will only decide to contact a nominated trusted contact in the circumstances explained in section 3.3.

5. Authority to use the trusted contact

- 5.1. In all cases where engaging a student's trusted contact is being considered, staff should first inform the student of this intention and clearly outline the rationale for doing so.
- 5.2. All requests for a student's trusted person to be contacted should be referred to Student Support Services in the first instance:
 - During usual working hours requests should be submitted via the 'Raise a Concern' form or by calling +44 (0)23 9284 3468.

- Out of hours, by calling Security on +44 (0)23 9284 3333
- 5.3. The person nominated to liaise with the trusted contact will be agreed and informed during the approval process.
 - 5.4. On no account should any employee of the University contact a student’s trusted contact without the authority of a final approver, explained in 5.5.
 - 5.5. Requests to engage the trusted contact must be authorised as below

Recommendation from	First approver	Final approver
Student Support Services staff member	Senior Practitioner - Student Wellbeing Service	Head of Student Wellbeing or Director/Deputy Directors of Student Support Services
Student Wellbeing Service Practitioner	Senior Practitioner - Student Wellbeing Service	Head of Student Wellbeing or Director/Deputy Directors of Student Support Services
Senior Practitioner - Student Wellbeing Service	Senior Practitioner - Student Wellbeing Service	Head of Student Wellbeing or Director/Deputy Directors of Student Support Services
Head of Student Wellbeing	Senior Practitioner - Student Wellbeing Service	Director/Deputy Directors of Student Support Services

- 5.6. In practice, the Deputy Director (Specialist Support & Inclusivity) will typically be the ‘Final approver’ in the absence of the Head of Student Wellbeing.
- 5.7. In cases where the Head of Student Wellbeing, Director and Deputy Directors of Student Support Services are the sole point of out of hours escalation, they are permitted to authorise engaging the trusted contact without a ‘Final approver’.
- 5.8. The reason for, and decision to, engage the trusted contact should be recorded for both audit and management information purposes.

6. Engaging with the trusted contact

- 6.1. Following approval, the nominated staff member should engage the trusted contact as soon as reasonably possible, using the contact information provided by the student in SITS.

- 6.2. Consideration should be given to ensure the information shared is necessary, relevant and proportionate to the concern, and does not pose a risk i.e. disclosure of information related to gender, sexuality or previous trauma.
- 6.3. While the information provided to a trusted contact may be limited to concerns that the student is at risk of significant harm, information can be taken from them and their concerns should be listened to. If helpful, information should be given to the trusted contact about how they can seek further help and guidance either for themselves or relevant others.
- 6.4. In all cases, it is imperative that information shared is appropriate to social, cultural and ethnic context. This is especially important in interacting with minority and hard-to-engage groups and individuals.
- 6.5. Accurate records relating to the information shared must be recorded, including what has been shared and with whom. This information will be recorded on students' records with Student Support Services.