

## MISSING STUDENT POLICY - Accommodation

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### 1. Aim

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can live and learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. As such, it is important to us to actively investigate any report of a missing student or students who take leave without permission who are enrolled at the College as either a full or part time student.

### 2. Introduction

There are two thresholds which allow for different procedures to be adopted in the case of missing students and students who are absent without leave. The two thresholds are Under 18's and Over 18's. In most cases, staff will be dealing with students who have gone missing without proper authorisation and rare is the case where a student is missing. In order to ascertain which policy should be followed when a student is missing or missing without permission the person in charge should determine the age of the student and adopt the procedure which is relevant.

#### 2.1 17 years and under students

For the purposes of this policy an under 18 student is defined as missing where they fail to return back to the residence at curfew time, they are unresponsive to phone calls and no one is aware of their whereabouts.

- Ask other students if they are aware of any reason for the absence - though their information should only be taken as a guide to be followed up, and certainly not as the only evidence. Known friends or acquaintances may have alternative numbers;
- Begin a search of the halls as it may be that the student has bunked with a friend and not told anyone;
- Check movements folder and try to obtain CCTV footage of when they were last seen, what they were wearing and if they were taking any luggage with them;
- Inform Student Services Manager to check to see if there is any other relevant information that they may have e.g. for example student has telephoned another member of staff;
- Once the Student Services Manager is satisfied that student is missing without proper authorisation the member of staff on duty should then inform the parents of the missing student to ensure they are not aware of their location. If they are not, then the police should then be informed and provided with all relevant details (age, date of birth, clothes they are wearing etc). The police will record details but may not actively investigate until twenty four hours have passed;
- If student returns within 24 hours the staff member on duty must telephone the Police, then inform the Student Services Manager.
- If the student returns then the member of staff on duty should conduct an interview documenting where the student has been, who they have been staying

with, reasons for being absent, etc. This should be typed and sent to the Student Services Manager and Vice Principal: HR & Student Services.

## **2.2 Over 18's General Principles**

Most students are adults, and have the right to be treated as such. Students have the right to privacy, and there is no automatic or necessary requirement to reveal their whereabouts to parents, carers, next of kin and members of staff or fellow students. Indeed, to do so (without the permission of the student concerned) would be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. For the purposes of this policy a student aged 18 and over is defined as missing when they have been absent from halls and college for more than 48 hours without proper authorisation or notification and where all other avenues of information gathering have been exhausted.

### **2.2.1 Procedure upon discovery that a student aged 18 and over is missing**

The safety of the student is paramount. The absence of a student from the College for a prolonged period, or an extremely anxious enquiry from a friend or relative, may give rise to concerns about the student's safety. These concerns may be particularly acute if it is known that the student is suffering from a health problem. Therefore, it is essential that the member of staff dealing with the enquiry checks with all relevant sources of information to ensure that they have a full picture of the circumstances before disclosing information to senior management or third parties, such as the police.

Information gathering can be done by carrying out the following, following unresponsive phone calls to the student:

- Ask other students if they are aware of any reason for the absence - though their information should only be taken as a guide to be followed up, and certainly not as the only evidence. Known friends or acquaintances may have alternative numbers;
- Begin a search of the halls as it may be that the student has bunked with a friend and not told anyone;
- Check movements folder and try to obtain CCTV footage of when they were last seen, what they were wearing and if they were taking any luggage with them;
- Inform Student Services Manager to check to see if there is any other relevant information that they may have e.g. for example student has telephoned another member of staff;
- Once the Student Services Manager is satisfied that student is missing without proper authorisation the member of staff on duty should then inform the parents of the missing student to ensure they are not aware of their location. If they are not the police should then be informed providing all relevant details (age, date of birth, clothes they are wearing etc). The police will record details but may not actively investigate until twenty four hours have passed;
- If student returns within 24 hours the staff member on duty must telephone the Police to inform them and the Student Services Manager.
- If the student returns then the member of staff on duty should conduct an interview documenting where the student has been, who they have been staying

with, reasons for being absent, etc. This should be typed and sent to the Student Services Manager and Vice Principal: HR & Student Services.

### **3. International Students**

It should be remembered that international students are often isolated and vulnerable, with their friends and family living thousands of miles away. They may have an imperfect command of English, and be unfamiliar with British customs. As such, requests from the families of international students should be dealt with particularly sympathy; as persons may not appreciate the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, or the College's position on confidentiality.

### **4. Data Protection**

With students over 18 it is a serious matter to disclose personal details of a student to a third party, even if it is a student's next of kin. This should only be done by the Student Services Manager or Vice Principal: HR & Student Services.

It is important to remember that any person who decides to breach confidentiality must be able to justify their action in terms of the prevention of serious harm, or a genuine and reasonable belief that serious harm to the student might be prevented by such disclosure.

When collating information, members of staff will need to be aware of a number of issues before making a decision. Below is a list of things that they might consider:

- Is the student despondent or mentally or physically disabled?
- Is the student experiencing academic, personal, or financial problems?
- Has the student disappeared before?
- Does the student have a known drug and/or alcohol problem?
- Has the student received any threats or warnings?
- What was the student's lifestyle? Does the student have a criminal record?
- Did the student leave a note?
- Have similar incidents been reported within the area? (attempted abductions, suspicious persons)
- Obtain locations of his or her residences, places frequented, and employment;
- Obtain information about cars registered to or used by the student;
- Continue to verify when, where, and by whom the missing student was last seen;
- Interview individuals who may have had contact with the student prior to the disappearance;

- Secure the student's residence as a potential source of information and evidence. It may be necessary to instigate a room search;
- Advise family members about support services;
- Advise parents/family members to maintain a log that records information about all visitors and callers;
- Assign a liaison to ensure that family members are provided with information and support;
- Obtain and examine e-mail records. Monitor instant messaging and chat room activity.

## 5. Confidentiality

Staff cannot and should not promise total confidentiality. The boundaries of confidentiality should be made clear to the student. If the student discloses information that is sensitive, not generally known and which the student asks not to be passed on, the request should be honoured unless this is unavoidable in order for accommodation staff to fulfil their professional responsibilities in relation to:

- Safeguarding and inclusion;
- Co-operating with a police investigation;
- Referral to external agencies;
- Every effort should be made to secure the student's agreement to the way in which the college intends to use any sensitive information.

## 6. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and may also be reviewed in the light of new legislation or incident that may occur related to this policy.

Quality Assurance – version control			
Review period	Annually	Review carried out by	Student Services Manager
Approved by	SLT	Date approved	5.11.18
Equality Impact Assessment date	October 18	Last review date	October 18