

Guidance note for Staff regarding Parental Involvement

Student – Parent relationship:

Many students¹ may have very close relationships with their parents or relatives – they may still be living at home or parents may be providing financial support. Parents are concerned for the student's best interests and may wish to assist students with communication on key issues, therefore some level of involvement will likely be inevitable.

University – Student Relationship:

However, the University's relationship is legally with the student and therefore we must manage our relationship with the student in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA). The DPA protects an individual's rights to privacy and the University must comply. The University should therefore only disclose information to parents if the student themselves has given explicit fully-informed consent in writing, see Student Consent.

What it means for the University – Parent relationship:

No assumptions regarding the student-parent relationship should be made; for the University to even confirm or deny an individual is a student here could infringe privacy. If a parent would like to know more than general information we would need the explicit consent of the student, see Student Consent. However, we may be able to help the parent by making them aware of the policies and procedures available on our webpages, see general information.

Serious concerns and no contact:

In instances where the parent has not been able to get hold of the student and has serious concerns, you can advise the parent that they can leave contact details/correspondence with you and you will endeavour to pass them on and encourage the student (assuming the individual is a student at the University) to make contact themselves. If the individual is not a student at the University the details will be destroyed.

Student consent:

Student consent should be explicit fully-informed written consent. We ask that the student send an email (from their University email account) to studenthelp@reading.ac.uk stating that they are happy for us to speak with the **specified person** about a **particular matter**.

What the University can disclose:

The University is able to freely discuss general information, for example: University procedures, examination processes, implications of failing modules, accommodation costs etc., all of which should be accessible on our webpages.

Exceptional Circumstances:

In life or death situations the University is able to disclose information without the student's consent, for example, to the emergency services, next of kin or an emergency contact. In some circumstances the decision to disclose information may require an assessment of the specific context and circumstances; advice should be sought from imps@reading.ac.uk

For more information on Data Protection please contact imps@reading.ac.uk

¹ the term 'students' here includes applicants, enrolled students and alumni