

Confidentiality - a very short introduction

While it would be easy to write a book on this subject, this very short introduction will explain how we understand and use confidentiality at Kellogg College.

Many of us will have had an experience where something personal has been shared without our permission leaving us feeling at best, let down, and at worst, exploited. Here at Kellogg College we want to underline our respect for you as a student and any information, personal or otherwise, which you give us.

We wish to be as clear as we can about how confidentiality works. Any information given to a fellow, College officer, College advisor or a fellow student with responsibility within the College **may** need to be shared with the Dean, Senior Tutor, Bursar or Academic Administrator **especially** if this information puts the individual or other people at risk. The sole reason for sharing information is to support any student going through complex or difficult circumstances as far as we can. We do know that it may be difficult to ask for help, or that sometimes our concerns result in 'tunnel vision' and we fail to see what support is available, although we 'ask' for this help by our 'acting out' behaviours.

For example, if a student told their College advisor that they thought they were being harassed by another student (in the same or a different College) or staff member or academic, it would be in their best interests for their advisor to share some of this with the Dean or Senior Tutor. Sharing this information would likely result in a further meeting but doing so could ensure that such harassment stops and would allow the student to resume studying and enjoying their time at Oxford supported and enabled by Kellogg College.

On the other hand, if a student tells someone they are upset because they have split up with a boyfriend/girlfriend, it is unlikely this would be shared any further.

Another example, suppose a student finds it increasingly difficult to sleep, becomes dominated by negative thoughts, is unable to work and as a consequence is seen by their College advisor who becomes concerned that the student may be depressed. Their advisor could share their concerns with a fellow or the Dean - that have some knowledge of mental health issues - with the intention of getting appropriate help or support. This help could be to get the student to see their G.P., talk to their academic department or tutor on the student's behalf, or support the student in accessing the professional help available at the University Counselling Service.

Members of the College staff are not subject to confidentiality in the same way. As employees of the College they have a responsibility to the College and so would normally be expected to share any concerns with their line manager. In a small College this is likely to be the Bursar or Academic Administrator. As a College we have a responsibility for their well-being, as well as yours, and that includes supporting them if they are concerned about particular issues.

For example, suppose a student under the influence of alcohol were to say something to a staff member on reception. If the member of staff felt there was an issue of risk to that person or to others they could inform their line-manager. It is usually helpful to tell the person the action they are taking. If this were to result in the student being abusive in any way this would be an issue for the Dean to deal with.

Finally the Dean, Senior Tutor, Bursar or Academic Administrator meet from time to time (not necessarily as a group) to consider the overall life of the College and concerns may be raised or information shared that results in further support or actions being taken.

If you are concerned at all about any aspect of confidentiality please contact the Dean.

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