

Confidentiality policy: Student Support Office at the Institute of Dentistry

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With input from: Rebecca Hunter, Mangala Patel, Paul Smallcombe, Fiona Whelan and two undergraduate students. Reviewed by the BDS, BSc and PGT SSLC representatives.

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1 Personal data

This privacy notice explains how the Student Support Office (SSO) at the Institute of Dentistry (IoD) collects and uses students' personal data.

It is essential for us to keep details about students and their appointments with us so that we can offer them appropriate support over what may be several years of study. As students at the IoD are training to be professional registrants, we also need to keep records in case of issues that might affect their professional capability.

When students have a meeting with a member of the SSO we add a record of the meeting to Co-Tutor, which is a confidential system for student support notes accessible only to:

- Dr Dominic Hurst (Academic Lead for Student Support, IoD)
- Becky Hunter (Student Support Officer, IoD)

These notes record information such as:

- Background information about the student e.g. information they have shared with the SSO about their family situation or health.
- Issues raised by the student e.g. concerns about the course or their wellbeing
- Points of concern and action taken by the student and/or SSO e.g. concerns about the student's fitness to practice or a student having visited their GP

- Details of follow up actions for student or SSO e.g. that a student will seek counselling from the Advice and Counselling Service or visit the Disability and Dyslexia Service
- Occupational Health reports about the student e.g. vaccinations or hair follicle tests for drugs
- Uploads of documentation relevant to a student's support e.g. letters provided by students from healthcare professionals looking after them

In Co-Tutor and email archives, we also store emails sent to the SSO email and individual staff within the SSO that relate to absence, ill health and other issues that may require support to be offered or relate to a student's professional capability.

SSO notes are confidential and are only visible to the members of the SSO.

Ordinarily, the SSO will not let staff outside of the SSO know details of any interaction with a named student without the student's consent. However, see below for the occasions when we cannot maintain this.

2 Access to personal data

Students have a right to see their personal data that we keep about them. If their notes contain references to other people, this information will not usually be available to students, as protection is also granted to third parties. When we show students their notes, we will talk to them about what is in their file and why. Some notes are in

shorthand and may need explaining. Changes to notes cannot normally be made. If students want to see the notes and other records on file, they should ask the staff member that they usually see. We will deal with all subject access requests within the mandatory one month but hope to be able to do so within two weeks.

3 Retention of personal data

In line with legal requirements, student notes are kept for six years from the date of graduation. After this time, they are deleted from our system. Anything physical is securely shredded. For further information, including on students' rights, please see <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/privacy/>.

4 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

The SSO provides a confidential service. The SSO is not a counselling service and, therefore, not bound by the formal codes and procedures that underpin client confidentiality. However, we ensure that information about what is discussed during appointments is kept confidential to the service.

There are rare situations where we will need to break confidentiality without a student's consent:

- We would be liable to civil or criminal court proceedings if the information was not disclosed.

- We believe that a student or someone else is in danger. This may include when a student does not maintain contact with the Dental School and a concern is raised about their whereabouts (please see the IoD Absent Student Policy).
- Referrals to Professional Capability Committee when there is a Professional Capability or Fitness to Practice concern.

5 Liaison and correspondence

If students have agreed to us communicating with someone outside of the SSO, we will agree with students in advance what information can be discussed. If we are writing to someone outside the SSO on a student's behalf, we will normally offer them the chance to approve the letter/email before it is sent. Sometimes, we will ask them to complete a disclosure authorisation form if we are dealing with an external agency on their behalf.

We do not communicate with parents / next of kin without a student's consent, except for the rare occasions when we are concerned about a student's whereabouts. In such cases, the information shared with parents / next of kin is kept to the minimum needed to ascertain the location and wellbeing of the student. Where students do not wish the SSO to contact their parents / next of kin, they should inform Dr Hurst or Becky Hunter by email.

6 Security

All the computers and systems we use are password protected. Files are held on drives with access restricted to members of the Student Support Office.

7 Complaints

If students wish to raise a concern about the service offered by an individual member of the SSO or the SSO as a whole, please contact Dr Dominic Hurst (Academic Lead for Student Support, IoD, r.d.hurst@qmul.ac.uk) in the first instance.

If this feels uncomfortable or inappropriate, please contact Monica Canosa (Institute Manager, IoD, m.canosa@qmul.ac.uk) and/or Prof. Paul Coulthard (Dean, IoD, p.coulthard@qmul.ac.uk).

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