

ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES

General principles and expectations:

Confidentiality and anonymity are required in order to protect service users and carers, student working environments, placement providers, supervisors and mentors, other individuals and the assessment candidate. It is also necessary in order to comply with good ethical principles and data protection legislation.

Anonymity should be maintained in all activities associated with the module such as group work, class discussion, on-line discussions, and the actual assignment at all stages of development, from conception to completion. This applies to **ALL** submitted work including, case studies, essays, posters, reports, presentations, proposals, projects, images, and work in any other format. It covers paper, hard copy, electronic and any other format. *It **DOES NOT**, however, apply to practice assessment documents or portfolios which must include the names and locations of staff involved in the assessment, but **NOT** service users, carers or colleagues.*

When submitting a summative assignment students formally declare that the work has adhered to the following guidelines.

Advice on maintaining anonymity and confidentiality:

- Information must not be disclosed where it is unlawful to disclose it by reason of the common law or any legislation, including the Data Protection Act 1998. This means that inclusion of information in your work, such as names, dates of birth, contact details, clinical locations and photographs, or any other material through which an individual might be identified is prohibited.
- If an assignment requires reference to individuals (e.g. in a case study), they should be referred to using either a pseudo name or by use of the format - Mrs "X". Where pseudo names are used it must be made clear that these are not the service user's real names using the form of words "*all names have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality*".
- Do not write down, store on computer or memory stick or share any information by which patients / clients, their relatives, health professionals or organisations could be identified.
- Use generic descriptors where appropriate e.g. a community trust or hospital in the South East of England.
- Relevant printed material (e.g. oral assessment tools or pain charts) incorporated into an assignment should be rendered anonymous and any personal details (including signatures) must be removed.
- It is permissible to use local information that is currently in the public or professional domain – such as in Trust publications or on Trust websites – this should be referenced in the normal way in accordance with the UEA Learning Enhancement Service document *Referencing your Work* (available on Moodle).
- If referring to local information that is NOT in the public domain – such as policies or other organisational documents, the reference should be anonymised – for example: NHS Trust (name withheld) (2010) *Disciplinary policy*.

Best Practice and professional guidance:

Best practice changes over time and is formulated for each profession through specific professional codes of conduct. You should at all times ensure that you are familiar with, and follow the code of conduct for your professions.

Examples of these are given below:

- British Dietetic Society - *Code of Professional Conduct*:
www.bda.uk.com
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy - *Code of Professional Values and Behaviour*:
www.csp.org.uk
- College of Occupational Therapists - *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*:
www.cot.co.uk
- Health & Care Professions Council - *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*:
www.hcpc-uk.org
- Nursing and Midwifery Council - *The Code, Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for Nurses and Midwives*:
<http://www.nmc.org.uk>
- Society of Radiographers – *Code of Professional Conduct*:
www.sor.org

Support within the Royal Marsden School:

We appreciate that there may be situations when exactly how confidentiality should be maintained may be unclear. Because of this there will be an opportunity to clarify your understandings with academic staff in the preparation of assignment tasks. 'Assessment specific' guidance will also be provided by Module Leaders or Personal Tutors regarding any particular considerations that may apply to atypical coursework or assessment activity (e.g. use of video, testimonials etc.)

Actions following the identification of a breach of confidentiality:

A framework is provided below which summarises the considerations and actions that may arise following identification of a breach of confidentiality within students work.

It is underpinned by the shared view across the Schools within the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences at UEA that a failure to protect confidential information is primarily of professional concern.

It is also recognised that it is possible where a breach has occurred that a student may also not meet relevant assessment learning outcomes which refer to themes of professional behaviour/ awareness and therefore may receive a referral or fail grade.

BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY FRAMEWORK

This framework will be used where a breach of confidentiality is identified in work submitted for assessment and will inform judgements made to determine the 'level' of that breach, and identify any action to be taken.

Any work which breaches the rules of confidentiality may incur a penalty

The sanction will depend upon the nature of the disclosure and the risk this could present to the parties involved, taking into consideration the level of professional awareness expected from the student, and their academic experience.

Please be aware that the examples given below are provided to indicate the type of scenarios that may present but is not an exhaustive list.

Where the level of breach is inconsistent across the differing criteria an overarching outcome will be identified which appears to most accurately reflect the context in which the brief has occurred.

There are three categories of risk and associated penalties:

Criteria	Low Level	Medium Level	High Level
Academic Experience of the Student	<p>An inexperienced student who may be unaware of the expected practice within academic work.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> A within the first written submission of post-qualifying study where there is no other recent relevant study experience;</p> <p>A student who presents significant mitigation;</p> <p>Where there are significant cultural considerations;</p>	<p>A student who is likely to be aware of expected practice.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> A student who holds a professional registration who is beyond their first module of study but still within the first year;</p> <p>Any student after completion of known instruction regarding the importance of maintaining confidentiality in coursework;</p> <p>A student who has received a previous LOW level warning regarding breach of confidentiality;</p>	<p>An experienced student who is aware of expected practice.</p> <p><i>For example:</i> A student who holds a professional registration who has completed more than a year of post-qualifying study;</p> <p>A student who has received a previous MEDIUM or HIGH level warning, sanction or fitness to practice referral relating to a breach of confidentiality;</p>
Nature of the Breach of Confidentiality	<p>Raises only minor professional concern</p> <p><i>For example:</i> Appears to be an oversight on the part of the student who has ensured confidentiality elsewhere in the work;</p> <p>Includes identification of a non-specific geographical area;</p> <p>Identification of a large organisation;</p>	<p>Is a cause of significant concern</p> <p><i>For example:</i> Identification of a specific practice setting;</p> <p>Inclusion of unnecessary detail that may jeopardise confidentiality of individuals or the care context;</p> <p>Lack of due regard to the protection of confidentiality such as inadequate 'blacking out' or removal of confidential information;</p>	<p>Is a cause for major concern and clearly contravenes the relevant professional code</p> <p><i>For example:</i> Explicit identification of an individual (service user, carer or practitioner);</p> <p>Inclusion of unnecessary detail that indirectly breaches the confidentiality of an individual;</p> <p>Apparent disregard for the importance of protection of confidentiality;</p>

Extent of the Breach of Confidentiality	Minor. <i>For example:</i> In one instance within the body of the work; In one instance within supplementary materials, appendices etc; Where the student appears to have taken steps to ensure confidentiality throughout the majority of the work;	Significant. <i>For example:</i> Two or three instances within a piece of work; In one instance within a piece of work but in more than one occasion such as in multiple portfolio elements;	Substantial. <i>For example:</i> Throughout the work; In several instances; In all sections of the work;
Expected Level of Professional Awareness	The student would not be expected to have awareness of the professional expectations regarding protection of confidentiality. <i>For example:</i> A student who has not received any explicit guidance (in theory or practice) regarding the necessity to protect confidential information;	The student would be expected to be aware of the need to ensure confidentiality but may not fully appreciate the range of implications arising from this, or has superficial understanding. <i>For example:</i> A student who has received a previous LOW level warning regarding breach of confidentiality;	The student is expected to be fully aware of the necessity to protect confidentiality; <i>For example:</i> Any registered practitioner;
Overall Outcome	Low Level Breach	Medium Level Breach	High Level Breach
Action to be taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relevant Course Leader should be informed; • A written warning should be given on assessment feedback documentation by the marker identifying the specific nature of the breach; • Where a script has also received a referral grade the breach MUST be rectified on resubmission. 		
		The student may be referred to the School Lead for Educational Quality and Standards for consideration	The student should be referred to the School Lead for Educational Quality and Standards for consideration