Emergency Contact Protocol

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Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and School or unit	Date
1.1	Updated Student Services' contact details and references to case management system	Approved	S Browne, Student Services	12/08/2025
2.0	New Policy Templated	Approved	S Browne, Student Services	12/08/2025

- British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via the online BSL Video Relay Interpreting Service: https://contactscotland-bsl.org
- This document and forms associated with this document are available in an alternative format upon request.

Contents

1. Statement and Purpose

1.1 The University, in extreme circumstances i.e. to mitigate against the risk of life threatening or significant life-changing events, will seek assistance from a student's emergency contact and/or other third parties to try and protect the health and wellbeing of the student and/or their family members or supporters. This protocol outlines the process which is followed when contacting a student's emergency contact and serves to manage the expectations of students and their emergency contacts on how the University may act.

2. Definition of an Emergency Contact

2.1 An emergency contact is the person who the University will share information with, as necessary, should significant and/or urgent concerns for the health and wellbeing of a student, as introduced above, arise. As necessary, the University may contact and/or share details with other parties in addition to an emergency contact e.g., medical health practitioners, the police. Such contact will be made either if it is determined that it is not appropriate to seek consent from the student i.e. it is assessed that the student is not capable of giving consent, and it is necessary to communicate with the emergency contact to provide support to the student, or when the student has consented to the University approaching a third party such as an emergency contact. The contact details of the emergency contact will have been provided to the University by students, usually during the matriculation process, for this purpose.

2.2 It is the responsibility of the student to provide accurate and up-to-date information about their emergency contact. Students can update this information at any time through MySaint and should do so when they, for any reason, become out of date.

2.3 It is the responsibility of the student to confirm with their emergency contact that they have shared their information for this purpose.

2.4 It is up to the student to decide who would best act as their emergency contact. Examples of emergency contacts are:

- A parent/carer

- A supporter

- Another close relative e.g. sibling (who is over the age of 16)

2.5 When considering who to list as an emergency contact, students are advised to consider the following:

- How easy is it to contact the person?

- Are they usually responsive when contacted by phone?

- Will they be able to respond to the circumstances listed in 3.3?

- Where possible, the emergency contact should be able to understand and speak English so they can engage in discussions with the University and/or health care practitioners and/or the police about emergency situations.

2.6 While we recognise that some students might want to list another student as an emergency contact, we would strongly encourage individuals to consider if the person they are listing best fits the criteria outlined in 2.4 and 2.5.

2.7 The University reserves the right to contact alternative parties (if we have any alternative contact details) should circumstances arise where we need to preserve the vital interests of a student and/or others.

2.8 Students are encouraged to contact Student Services should they feel unsure and wish to discuss the emergency contact process. They can contact Student Services by completing this form.

3. Circumstances when the University might contact an emergency contact

3.1 Where a student is capable of giving consent and has consented for an Emergency Contact to be contacted.

3.2 When supporting a student, the steps we take when considering what information can be shared and with whom, are governed by Data Protection law. This means that, where possible, we will ask for a student's consent prior to sharing personal or sensitive information. However, in some cases (e.g. where there are significant and/or urgent concerns regarding a student's health and wellbeing) we may proceed without a student's consent (e.g. where a student is not capable of giving or withdrawing their consent) should circumstances arise where we need to preserve the vital interests of a student and/or others.

3.3 Circumstances where the University would consider information-sharing with an emergency contact and/or statutory services e.g. NHS or Adult Support and Protection are those where it is necessary to provide for the welfare and support of the student, including (but not limited to): medical emergencies (e.g. a student has had an accident, has experienced serious physical injury,

developed a life-threatening condition and their condition is deteriorating etc.), mental health/wellbeing concerns and disengagement.

3.4   If emergency services are called because a student is incapacitated, incapable of providing consent and requires hospital admission and their life is in danger, the University can share information (with the emergency services and the emergency contact) that is necessary and proportionate to preserve the life and/or to prevent serious physical, emotional or mental harm.

3.5   Where there is no immediate threat to life and where the student is capable of giving consent, they will be asked if they want their emergency contact to be informed. For non-life-threatening events where a student is capable of giving consent, this must be sought and documented. Student Services document this as part of their risk assessment procedures for 'at risk students'. More details can be found in Section 4.

3.6   If a student is incapable of giving consent and there is not an immediate threat to life, an emergency contact can be informed that medical assistance has been sought. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis and is dependent on the set of circumstances. If it is likely that the student will require support from their emergency contact to help protect their health and/or wellbeing then contact should be made with the emergency contact. Unless there is a good reason, the student must be informed in advance of the University's intention to share their personal details. This is to advise the student and is not about seeking permission.

3.7   If we have good reason to believe that a student has disengaged from their studies, and we are unable to reach them directly, we might assess that this raises cause for concern and we will contact the emergency contact, or an alternate, where appropriate.

3.8   It should be noted that if a student is under 18 years of age, the guidance for breaching confidentiality differs. Please see the [University's Safeguarding Policy](#) for more information.

4.   Putting consent in place: developing a plan for information sharing

4.1   Student Services, as part of their risk assessment procedures for 'at risk' students and when discussing how to provide for student welfare, alert students to the benefits of calling on others for support. Consent to share will be sought as part of both the care planning and Support to Study processes.

4.2   Consent is actively sought from the student for nominated others to be informed. The opportunity to share information with other relevant professionals is also discussed.

4.3   Explicit consent to share information is not general. Students have the option to determine what information is shared with whom and when.

4.4   Consent is not indefinite; when a plan for information sharing is first agreed, it will be reviewed in subsequent meetings/engagements with the student.

4.5   During discussions on information sharing, students are informed that consent previously given is only valid whilst they are capable of giving and withdrawing consent – a student may not be capable of giving and withdrawing consent if they are suffering from a mental or physical health condition, or under the influence of alcohol, medication or addictive substances.

5.   Process for contacting an emergency contact

5.1   If a member of staff considers that it is appropriate to contact a student's emergency contact, they should contact the Director/Assistant Director in Student Services to discuss and agree next steps.

5.2   If the vital interests of a student and/or another person e.g. their life is in immediate danger, staff should first take whatever action is deemed necessary to protect life.

5.3   When the Student Services office is closed please call 01334 462020 and the Security and Response Team on 01334 46 8999.

5.4   If it is agreed that contacting an emergency contact is appropriate, Student Services will lead on this.

5.5   In some instances, the University may be required to act to protect the vital interests of a student e.g., their life and/or quality of life and will do so on that basis – meaning it will not seek consent. This would only happen in situations where the University is unable to provide for a student's health and wellbeing and requires third-party support. In instances such as this, the University would normally inform the student that they are acting and that if the student is concerned about this they can ask the University's Data Protection Officer to review: dataprot@st-andrews.ac.uk

5.6   The decision to contact an emergency contact without seeking consent from the student will be based on the necessity to protect the vital interests of the student and/or other people.

5.7   The decision to contact an emergency contact, as introduced above, must be taken by two senior members of University staff. In the first instance this will normally be The Director of Student Services and an Assistant Director. Where one or both of these officers are unavailable, nominees to make a decision can be called from:

- Principal's Office

- Head of Information Assurance and Governance

- Chief Legal Officer

- Deputy Chief Legal Officer

- Student Services Responder

- Academic Registrar

- Deputy Academic Registrar

5.8   All decisions to contact an emergency contact will be confidentially recorded by Student Services on Advocate and should include:

- What information was shared;

- Who it was shared with;

- The date it was shared;

- The method of sharing (e.g. email, phone call etc.)

- The basis on which the information was shared e.g. threat to life.

6.   Management of personal data

6.1   If a student feels that the University has managed their personal data incorrectly, they can seek assistance from the University's Data Protection Officer: dataprot@st-andrews.ac.uk

7.   Other relevant policies/procedures

- Data Protection and Privacy Notices
- Student Services Confidentiality Statement
- Information for parents or guardians

8. Version control

Version number	Purpose or changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and School or unit	Date
1.0	First version published	Published	S Browne, Student Services C Milne, Information Assurance and Governance	14 April 2024
1.1	Updated Student Services' contact details and references to case management system	Approved	S Browne, Student Services	12 August 2025
2.0	New Policy Template	Approved	S Browne, Student Services	12 August 2025