

# Communication with Third Parties Policy

**Created:** June 2020  
**Author:** Catherine Fenn  
**Originating Directorate:** Student and Academic Services  
**Approved by:** Academic Board  
**Date of approval:** 1 July 2020  
**Effective date:** September 2020  
**Due for review:** June 2021

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines the De Montfort University's policy in relation to communicating with people other than registered students (e.g. family members, other representatives etc.) in relation to Student Complaints, Academic Appeals, Academic Misconduct, Fitness to Practise Disciplinary Procedures and Change to Registration status.
- 1.2 The University is committed to providing a fair, consistent and accessible service for all students and this includes the management of its student regulations and procedures. It is important that communications related to the bringing, consideration and resolution of complaint and conduct proceedings enable matters to be conducted in an effective and respectful manner, for the benefit of all concerned.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 With the exception of the limited circumstances outlined below, and taking into account contractual, pastoral, data protection and other considerations, it is the University's expectation that its students will engage and communicate directly with the University and its staff. This includes communications sent in the course of any Complaint, Appeal and Conduct procedures [as above].
  - 2.2 The excepted circumstances are:
    - It is permissible for third parties to enquire, in general terms, about process and procedure, but not about the facts of a specific case.
    - Students may be accompanied by a companion to meetings as per the University's General Regulations & Procedures Affecting Students.
    - Requests for third party representation made on the basis of a disability will be given due consideration and, if appropriate, reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that students who have a disability as defined by the Equality Act will have an equitable experience and are able to enter into communication with University staff and engage with University processes.
    - Requests to accept representations via a legal representative will not normally be considered. Complaint and conduct procedures are not judged against law but against the internal regulations of the University. As such, legal representation is unlikely to be necessary or appropriate for a student. It should be noted that legal representation in complaint and conduct proceedings is only usually permitted in cases where there is satisfactory evidence that it would be a reasonable adjustment to make for disability reasons or at Fitness to Practise panels in the case of a student registered on a professionally accredited programme. Where requests of this nature are approved, the University will normally appoint legal counsel to act on its behalf.
- Exceptional circumstances where a student is temporarily prevented from being able to

communicate directly for themselves, for example, on medical grounds or being abroad without reasonable access to email. Evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the student is not able to act on their own behalf and the length of time this is expected to last. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will require written permission from the student for any third party communications. It is expected that one person be nominated as point of contact for the student and this will be agreed by the University.

- 2.3 Students and anyone communicating on behalf of a student are expected to behave reasonably and with respect at all times. Where a student or third party's behaviour is considered to be unacceptable the University has the right to apply the procedures outlined in the **Unacceptable Behaviour Policy**.
- 2.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with The General Regulations & Policies Affecting Students, in particular Chapters 3, 5, 8 and 9.