



Information Assurance
Information Technology

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Sent via email only: request-734797-92fb16f4@whatdotheyknow.com

1st April 2021

Reference: FOI IRR0001257

Dear Gillian Green,

Thank you for your recent information request received via email on 9th March 2021. Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 (the Act).

In your email you requested the following information:

Following a spate of sudden student deaths in 2018, an 'opt-in scheme' was pioneered by the University of Bristol as part of a set of measures aimed at preventing suicide. In 2019, a coroner wrote to the Department for Education and Minister for Suicide Prevention suggesting that these measures might be shared throughout the sector. I am now seeking to establish the extent to which 'opt-in' has been subsequently adopted and/or utilised.

The 'opt-in' or 'consent at registration' scheme implemented by Bristol University comprises an additional personal information sharing agreement that supplements when information might be shared. It gains consent at annual registration for the university to contact a 'safe and nominated' parent, guardian or friend in situations that are not emergencies, but where staff have serious concerns that something bad might happen to an enrolled student, and/or where their health, wellbeing or welfare could be affected. Essentially it involves lowering the bar at which parents or nominated others could be contacted by a designated professional at the university, from 'vital interests' to 'serious or significant concerns'. It could for example apply in cases of trauma or distress associated with suspension / expulsion / non-attendance / mental health issues etc.

To qualify as 'opt-in' a scheme must be optional and additional to the regular emergency contact protocol. The latter is compulsory and typically restricted to serious incidents and/or emergency situations, that may present an imminent threat to a student's vital interests.

Further particulars can be found at:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/contacting-people/parent/>

<https://thetab.com/uk/2018/09/20/these-are-the-unis-with-policies-to-tell-parents-if-students-are-suicidal-81552>

<https://thetab.com/uk/bristol/2019/10/31/93-of-new-bristol-students-opt-in-to-mental-health-scheme-37916>

This important scheme has been implemented at a number of universities, and perhaps at your institution as well. If so, please provide me with the following information as absolute numbers and percentages.

For each academic period (2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21) and year-of-study (e.g. 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year) sub-division:

- *How many students opted-in at registration?*
- *How many students subsequently rescinded their consent?*
- *How many times was the opt-in consent used to contact somebody?*
- *How many times was use of the opt-in consent considered, but with you deliberately choosing not to contact a parent or nominated individual?*

Response

City, University of London has taken the decision not to adopt an opt in system. However, we are keeping this decision under review.

Conclusion

City has a formal complaints and internal review process. If you are dissatisfied with the manner your request for information has been managed, please send us your complaint in writing, describe the original request, explain your grounds for dissatisfaction and include an address for correspondence to the Information Assurance Team Leader at:

Information Assurance Team Leader
City, University of London
Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB

By Telephone 020 7040 4000

By Email foi@city.ac.uk

If after contacting City, University of London you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner Office (ICO):

By Post Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow Cheshire
SK9 5AF

By Telephone 01625 545700

Website www.ico.org.uk

Yours sincerely,



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